

Obama wins, and partisan fighting continues Obama's Nobel stirs right, left

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President Barack Obama's winning of the Nobel Peace Prize brought nothing of the sort at home, as political combatants were quick to assume their usual battlements: Democrats largely hailed the decision while Republicans and their allies ridiculed Obama and the Norwegian committee that awarded the prize.

"What has President Obama actually accomplished?" said Michael Steele, chairman of the Republican National Committee. "It is unfortunate that the president's star power has outshined tireless advocates who made real achievements working toward peace and human rights."

The Democratic National Committee fired back with a statement comparing Steele's comments with similar remarks from the Taliban and Hamas.

"Whether it's celebrating the nation's loss of the Olympics, or attacking the recognition of American leadership today, Republicans time and again are proving that they're putting politics ahead of patriotism," said Hari Sevugan, a Democratic Party spokesman.

Within minutes of the announcement, a scorching debate broke out on TV airwaves, talk radio, the blogosphere and just about anywhere people of opposite political persuasions meet.

Some critics suggested Obama won the award because he is black. "I did not realize the Nobel Peace Prize had an affirmative action quota," blogger Erick Erickson posted on the conservative Redstate Web site.

Others on the right renewed their criticism of Obama as an apologist for America who, through attempts at conciliation, has weakened the country abroad.

"I'm not sure what the international community loved best," said Republican Rep. Gresham Barrett, a candidate for governor in South Carolina, "his waffling on Afghanistan, pulling defense missiles out of Eastern Europe, turning his back on freedom fighters in Honduras, coddling Castro, siding with the Palestinians against Israel, or almost getting tough on Iran."

Some Republicans, however, echoed Democrats in praising Obama's selection, among them Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger: "The president has consistently shown that he is committed to reaching out to other nations and positioning America to once again be the global leader for peace and prosperity," Schwarzenegger said in a statement.

Minnesota Gov. Tim Pawlenty, who is eyeing a bid for the GOP presidential nomination in 2012, said, "Under any circumstance, an appropriate response is to say, 'Congratulations.'"

Some on the left, meanwhile, joined the chorus of critics, saying the honor was undeserved when Obama is weighing the dispatch of more troops to Afghanistan.

"President Obama needs to prove that he really is a force for peace," said Kevin Martin, director of the anti-war group Peace Action.

Those supporting the president were quick to condemn the GOP response.

"Bad manners, guys," Paul Begala, a Democratic strategist and former aide to President Bill Clinton, wrote on CNN's Web site. "If you pride yourself on being a super-patriot, you really ought to root for America."

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What they had to say

John Bolton, former U.N. ambassador: "The Nobel Committee is preaching at Americans, but they won't be deceived. ... The Nobel Peace Prize should be for achievement, not effort."

Rush Limbaugh, radio personality: "Obama gives speeches trashing his own country and for that gets a prize, which is now worth as much as whatever prizes they are putting in Cracker Jacks these days."