

《美国重量级团体支持希拉里参加2016年总统竞选》

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Jim Messina said that Priorities USA Action, which played a key role in Mr Obama ' s election success in 2012, has started start raising funds for a prospective presidential run by the former First Lady.

"I think the numbers clearly show that she's the strongest presidential candidate on the Democratic side," he told The New York Times. "And Priorities is going to be there for her if she decides to run."

Mr Messina co-ordinated the president's re-election and has been hired by the Conservatives as a campaign strategist for next year's British general election. He is the most senior Obama lieutenant to come out in support of a Clinton candidacy.

Priorities, a so-called "super PAC" (political action committee) also announced a new pro-Clinton leadership structure as Democratic heavyweights line up behind the former secretary of state.

Mrs Clinton, who lost out to Mr Obama in a bitter Democrat primary campaign that she entered as the frontrunner, has said that she has not decided whether to run again in 2016.

But with nearly three years until the next election, senior former aides to Mrs Clinton and her husband Bill, who was president from 1993 to 2001, have openly been pushing her to run.

Mr Messina's comments will drive impressions that Mr Obama is privately supporting a Clinton bid, although Joe Biden, his vice-president, is another prospective candidate.

Mr Messina, who has strong ties to major Democratic donors, will serve as co-chairman of Priorities with Jennifer Granholm, the former Michigan governor who is a prominent Clinton cheerleader.

"This is a very major development and a huge advantage for Hillary Clinton if she decides to run," Tad Devine, a party strategist who played a senior role in the presidential campaigns of Al Gore and John Kerry, told The Telegraph. "Priorities will be able to attract enormous support and it means the Democrats will be able to compete with Republican big money donors in financial terms in 2016.

"Presidential campaigns in the US are endless and in order to compete you have to raise unimaginable amounts of money. It's a financial arms race."

Clinton loyalists had already formed a Ready for Hillary PAC to raise smaller sums from grass-roots supporters. But Priorities will be seeking big money donations to fund major advertising campaigns and respond to conservative

