

GOP Raises \$14M at Gala Headlined by Bush

(edited)

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WASHINGTON - The Republican National Committee raised at least \$14 million Wednesday at a gala featuring President Bush expanding an already substantial fund-raising advantage over the committee's Democratic rival.

The event featured a New York theme, with sections reminiscent of various parts of the city, including Chinatown and Little Italy. Donors munched on hot dogs, cotton candy, pizza and other New York sidewalk-stand fare. New York is the site of next year's Republican National Convention next year.



"I've got two goals in '04. One is slightly selfish," Bush said with a chuckle. "The other is to make sure Denny Hastert remains speaker of the House and Bill Frist majority leader of the Senate." Hastert, R-Ill., and Frist, R-Tenn., would maintain control of the two chambers of Congress if the Republicans retain their majorities.



First lady Laura Bush accompanied the president. Several Cabinet secretaries and congressional leaders also attended.

The \$1,500-per-ticket evening event at the Washington Hilton was Bush's first major party fund-raiser since last May, when he headlined a Republican congressional dinner that raised \$22 million for GOP efforts to keep control of Congress. That was the most raised at a single event since the new fund-raising restrictions kicked in last November.

Contributors could buy tickets, or get complimentary ones by donating certain amounts. "Team 100" members, for example, gave the maximum \$25,000 each and received two tickets.

The GOP committee has raised millions more than its Democratic counterpart so far this year.

Through August, the most recent figures available, the RNC raised about \$69.6 million and had \$24.6 million on hand. The DNC took in \$26.3 million and had \$7.8 million on hand.