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FIORINA WILL MAKE RUN AT PRESIDENCY

EX-HP CHIEF TREADS A FINE LINE PLAYING UP
VALLEY LINKS

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Carly Fiorina is as close as it gets to a Silicon Valley candidate for president. So why did the former Hewlett-Packard CEO move 2,400 miles across the country to leave her California story behind?

It's a question Fiorina, who officially launched her campaign on Monday, must carefully manage as she sells herself as the secretary who rose to CEO of a legendary tech company, the first woman to run a Fortune 20 firm but one whose Silicon Valley experience could bust as much as boost her candidacy. With big business in California eyeing Jeb Bush, the Bay Area's libertarians leaning toward Rand Paul and progressives and women backing Hillary Clinton, it's no wonder Fiorina relocated to Virginia to make her unlikely run at the White House.

"She's got a troubled history here, to say the least -- she has a lot of critics and a track record at HP that leaves her open to some fair criticism," San Jose State professor and political expert Melinda Jackson said. "If she's going to run as the Silicon Valley, tech-savvy candidate, she will need to have at least some support from the valley."

Yet some of the region's most prominent Republican voices stayed mum Monday about "Carly for America."

Representatives for Peter Thiel, the libertarian-leaning San Francisco billionaire venture capitalist and PayPal co-founder; Meg Whitman, HP's current CEO and the 2010 Republican nominee for governor; and Sun Microsystems founder Scott McNealy, of Portola Valley, said they weren't available for comment Monday on Fiorina's candidacy. Major GOP donor Charles Munger Jr. of Palo Alto and Internet browser pioneer

and venture capitalist Marc Andreessen, of Atherton, didn't respond to inquiries.

Even respect among the California GOP party leadership as "a self-made woman" who "earned what she got in life" will only get Fiorina so far. California GOP Vice Chairwoman Harmeet Dhillon said Monday she could envision Fiorina's campaign propelling her to a cabinet post or even a vice presidential nomination.

"But I don't know a single person who thinks she'll be our presidential nominee," Dhillon said.

Valley support

Other Republican contenders are making a serious play for Silicon Valley's hearts, minds and checkbooks. Bush, the former Florida governor, and Paul, the Kentucky senator, may find significant support here even while relying on their home states for firm footing; they have prior elected experience, and they have better national name recognition.

And even if she still lived in California, Fiorina would have a hard time breaking out beyond party lines -- polls show most Californians don't agree with Fiorina's stances on climate change regulations, immigration, the nation's health insurance law, gun control, abortion choice or net neutrality.

Fiorina, 60, was HP's top executive from 1999 to 2005, before being ousted by the board amid flagging stock prices and net earnings. After supporting President George W. Bush's re-election in 2004 and GOP nominee John McCain's campaign in 2008, she ran for U.S. Senate in 2010 but lost by 10 points to incumbent Democrat Barbara Boxer even as Republicans racked up big victories elsewhere across the nation.

Less than a year later, she and her husband sold their Los Altos Hills home for \$7.25 million and bought a \$6.1 million home in the wealthy Washington suburb of Lorton, Virginia. Since then, she has worked with Republican presidential nominee Mitt Romney's campaign and the Republican Senatorial Campaign Committee in 2012 and has served as the American Conservative Union Foundation's chairwoman - - all of which helped her start laying groundwork for this presidential campaign.

Fiorina on Monday was touting her lack of experience in elected office as a selling point.

"We know the only way to reimagine our government is to reimagine who is leading it," she said in a video announcing her candidacy. "If you believe that it's time to declare the end of identity politics, if you believe that it's time to declare the end of lowered expectations, if you believe that it's time for citizens to stand up to the political class and say 'enough,' then

join us."

HP legacy

Fiorina's website, Carly ForAmerica.com, boasts that in six years as HP's CEO, she doubled its revenue, more than quadrupled its growth, tripled its patent rate and quadrupled its cash flow. Yet Fiorina laid off 30,000 people as she reshaped HP and then followed them out the door as the board forced her resignation; unlike those she had cut, she had a "golden parachute" of \$21 million cash plus \$19 million in stock and pension benefits billowing behind her.

As people sought more information about her during Monday's media splash, many probably hit upon CarlyFiorina.org, a simple page that notes "Carly Fiorina failed to register this domain. So I'm using it to tell you how many people she laid off at Hewlett-Packard. It was this many:"

Then come 30,000 sad-face emoticons. And way down at the bottom, "That's 30,000 people she laid off. People with families. And what does she say she would have done differently? 'I would have done them all faster.'

Josh Richman covers politics. Follow him at [Twitter.com/Josh_Richman](https://twitter.com/Josh_Richman). Read the Political Blotter at IBAbuzz.com/politics.

Caption: Photo: Carly Fiorina

Photo: Nati Harnik/Associated Press.

Former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina relocated to Virginia from Silicon Valley after a failed 2010 Senate race.