

Obama goes social with Reddit online chat

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As Republicans gathered for the nominating convention in Florida, Obama chatted about hurricane relief efforts, the space program and Internet freedom in a wide-ranging discussion.

"Hey everybody - this is barack," he wrote.

"Just finished a great rally in Charlottesville, and am looking forward to your questions. At the top, I do want to say that our thoughts and prayers are with folks who are dealing with Hurricane Isaac in the Gulf."

Obama ignored a wide range of chatter and questions such as "Do you like cats?" while responding in several important political areas.

"Internet freedom is something I know you all care passionately about; I do too," he said.

"We will fight hard to make sure that the internet remains the open forum for everybody—from those who are expressing an idea to those to want to start a business."

But when asked for the recipe for the White House's beer, Obama replied, "It will be out soon! I can tell from first hand experience, it is tasty."

Obama commented after the conversation that it was "an example of how technology and the internet can empower the sorts of conversations that strengthen our democracy over the long run... if you want to know what I think about this whole reddit experience - NOT BAD!"

Reddit is a social online bulletin board in which users can submit news items, which site members then vote up or down to determine its placement. Its name comes from a merger of the words "read" and "edit."

The approximately 39 million users can comment on any news item and also participate in online chats.

The conversation highlighted Obama's wide-ranging use of social media. Last year, he participated in a "Twitter Town Hall" from the East Room of the presidential mansion.

And he promoted the Reddit event with a tweet from his verified Twitter account, writing: "Hey, everyone: I'll be taking your questions online

today. Ask yours here:"

Some participants appeared skeptical or joked about the appearance.

"For proof, did he send you a picture of him holding a dated index card? Or did the Secret Service land a helicopter on your house?" one user wrote.

To which another replied—in a mocking reference to some who still question Obama's nationality: "He faxed a copy of his birth certificate."

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