

Bush, Clinton: Haiti response not about politics

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WASHINGTON (AP) - Former Presidents George W. Bush and Bill Clinton say the earthquake in Haiti offers a chance to put aside politics and help people in despair. Bush and Clinton appeared on five Sunday talk shows as part of their effort to lead private fundraising efforts for Haitian relief, including immediate needs and the long-term rebuilding effort. President Barack Obama asked them to lead the bipartisan effort.

"I'd say now is not the time to focus on politics," Bush said in an interview taped Saturday for CBS' "Face the Nation" when the ex-presidents' visited the White House.

"You've got people who are ... children who've lost parents. People wondering where they're going to be able to drink water," Bush said. "There's a great sense of desperation. And so my attention is on trying to help people deal with the desperation."

Bush said that he doesn't know what critics are talking about when they claim Obama is trying to score political points with a broad response to Haiti's woes. The most vocal critic has been radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, who urged people not to donate and said he wouldn't trust that money donated to Haiti through the White House Web site would go to the relief efforts. He said people contribute enough by paying income taxes.



(AP) President Barack Obama walks with former President Bill Clinton, center, and former President...

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Clinton said, "I just think it doesn't do us any good to waste any time in what is in my opinion a fruitless and pointless conversation."

He added: "In a disaster of this magnitude there's no way that the government, which has other responsibilities as well, national security and other responsibilities - you just can't deal with this just with government money."

Clinton, speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press," said a disaster like the earthquake in Haiti "reminds us of our common humanity. It reminds us of needs that go beyond fleeting disagreements." He said political debate is healthy in normal times, but it would be perverse in a time of disaster to let politics get in the way of helping.

He said the timing is important to fundraising efforts and long-term goals for Haiti.

"Everybody who's seriously followed Haiti over a long period of time believed that Haiti ... had the best chance it has had in our lifetimes to break the chains of its past," Clinton said on CNN's "State of the Union," "to build a truly modern state, to have a more thriving economy, an honest and competent government, better health care, better

education, more self-generated clean energy - the whole nine yards."

The former presidents also appeared on ABC's "This Week" and "Fox News Sunday."

On the Net:

Former presidents' fundraising site: <http://www.clintonbushhaitifund.org>



(AP) Former President Bill Clinton listens to former President George W. Bush speak Saturday, Jan. 16,...

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