

Michael Bloomberg plays hard-to-get with Romney and Obama

The New York mayor let his views about the two candidates slip out over a glass of wine – but he's unlikely to do so publicly

- [Ed Pilkington](#) in [New York](#)
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In a year in which the injection of big cash donations has the potential to reshape the electoral landscape, [Barack Obama](#) and [Mitt Romney](#) could both benefit from the endorsement of a billionaire politician like [Michael Bloomberg](#). But it seems they are both likely to be disappointed.

Having kept resolutely mum over which candidate he favours in this electoral cycle, Bloomberg has now let his views slip out over a glass of wine at a charity dinner. On Monday he vented his opinions of the two candidates on a rooftop on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, evidently speaking rather too loudly because he was overheard by a gaggle of guests that happened to include a reporter for the [New York Times](#).

According to the inevitable report that followed [in the Times's Caucus blog](#), the mayor of New York opined that of the two men, Romney would be better at running the country. But he added that he could not endorse the Republican candidate because of his views on social issues such as abortion and gun control, and thus would remain neutral.

Joyce Purnik, author of the biography *Mike Bloomberg: Money, Power, Politics*, said that by airing his intention to endorse neither of the presidential candidates, Bloomberg was being true to form. The mayor remained on the sidelines in 2008, for remarkably similar reasons to those he expressed at the charity event this week.

Bloomberg came very close to backing John McCain in 2008, but held back because of the then Republican nominee's anti-abortion policy.

"I don't think Bloomberg would ever endorse any candidate who was against abortion – he is very consistent like that," Purnik said.

Similarly, Bloomberg's hesitancy in backing Obama would also be true to past behaviour. "Bloomberg has never been very fond of Obama. When I was working on my book in 2008, he told friends, who told me, that he disliked the way that Obama changed positions on political issues which he said showed weakness," Purnik said.

In 2010, Rupert Murdoch [told an Australian newspaper](#) that Bloomberg had once complained to him about the president. Bloomberg had spent the day playing golf with Obama on Martha's Vineyard, after which the mayor came away, Murdoch claimed, saying: "I never met in my life such an arrogant man".

Purnik said that it was possible that Bloomberg could still endorse Obama before November, which might in turn be helpful to the president as he seeks to attract more big-sum donors. "It would send a message to Bloomberg's friends on Wall Street that Obama was OK, and that they could fund him."

Michael Tanner, a senior fellow at the conservative-leaning Cato Institute, said a Bloomberg endorsement of Romney might have been modestly useful to the candidate. "Bloomberg is perceived as a left-of-center politician, and Romney could have used his endorsement to rebut anyone who accused him of being a right-wing extremist."