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Celebrity nods provide little star power

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By [Jennifer Harper](#) - Barbra loves Hillary, Oprah loves Obama.

But does America care? Splashy celebrity endorsements may backfire on White House hopefuls as they face canny voters weary of Hollywood hubbub.

"The proverbial star system is no longer in place. Celebrity has become so loosely defined that it now includes people rejected by the public, or not taken seriously by a large sector of the electorate. That doesn't do a candidate much good," said Robert Lichter, director of the Center for Media and Public Affairs.

"Celebrity endorsements should be used with discretion," he continued. "But that's not a word that appears very often in the same sentence with 'celebrity.'"

It can be a tricky business. One Virginia Tech psychological study found that the public will only follow the examples of celebrities whom they perceive as "successful." University of Washington research revealed the "intrusion" of recognizable celebrities in advertising distracted consumers from major selling points.

An additional ideological dynamic is at work, Mr. Lichter said.

"Liberal Hollywood traditionally favored Democrats. When a star throws support to a Democrat, it confirms the deepest Republican suspicions about bias in media or entertainment," Mr. Lichter said. "When the GOP gets a rare celebrity endorsement, Democrats are annoyed that their territory is getting violated."