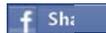


Former Alaska governor expected in New York to answer questions from business group leader

Palin to answer questions from NY business group

By **FRANK ELTMAN** | ASSOCIATED PRESS | Feb 17, 2011 3:56 AM CST in **US**

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Forget Twitter and Facebook, Sarah Palin is answering questions in front of the mainstream media.

The Arizona shooting, President Obama's performance, a possible presidential run and other topics will be on the agenda Thursday when the former Republican vice presidential candidate appears at a luncheon of the Long Island Association, the region's largest business group.

Palin has agreed to answer questions posed by the president of the organization for about an hour with cameras rolling, LIA President Kevin Law said. "It will be interesting to see and hear what direction she thinks this country ought to be heading in," he said.

"Maybe this is the start of a presidential campaign," said Republican strategist Ed Rollins. "She has been beaten up by the media for doing nothing but her Tweets. This may be the first foray. Of course when you stand up in front of the cameras, you have to be on guard and make sure your answers are precise."

The Long Island Association has previously welcomed former presidents and other national leaders to speak at its meetings, but the meetings are usually closed to the media at the request of the speaker, Law said. Palin, however, who has been criticized for limiting access to her by the mainstream media, has agreed to allow cameras and reporters record the conversation.

Law won't say how much Palin is getting paid, but newsmakers of her stature have been known to cash six-figure checks for such appearances. A spokeswoman for the Washington Speakers Bureau, which is representing Palin for the speech, did not return a telephone call or e-mail seeking comment.

Law said the Arizona shooting last month, which provoked criticism of Palin for using metaphors and imagery of gun use during last fall's midterm campaign, would certainly be discussed. "Nobody's out to sandbag anybody, but we'd like to hear what she has to say," he said.

Ruth B. Mandel, director of the Eagleton Institute of Politics at Rutgers University doesn't see Palin's appearance as anything more than another avenue for her to generate income.

"She's building a network, but for who knows what in the future," Mandel said. "It may be income, it may be political."

Mandel sees nothing risky for Palin in appearing before a bank of television cameras.

"At this point, she's been around. The headlines about her lack of experience answering media questions, that was over two years ago," Mandel said. "She's been before innumerable microphones since then. She's somebody who has honed her message and gained a tremendous amount of experience in public give and take."