

NEGATIVE ADVERTISING ... EPIC FAIL

Exactly a month before Tuesday's election, the McCain team announced they were going to go negative.

Sen. John McCain and his Republican allies are readying a newly aggressive assault on Sen. Barack Obama's character, believing that to win in November they must shift the conversation back to questions about the Democrat's judgment, honesty and personal associations, several top Republicans said.

With just a month to go until Election Day, McCain's team has decided that its emphasis on the senator's biography as a war hero, experienced lawmaker and straight-talking maverick is insufficient to close a growing gap with Obama. The Arizonan's campaign is also eager to move the conversation away from the economy, an issue that strongly favors Obama and has helped him to a lead in many recent polls.

"We're going to get a little tougher," a senior Republican operative said, indicating that a fresh batch of television ads is coming. "We've got to question this guy's associations. Very soon. There's no question that we have to change the subject here," said the operative, who was not authorized to discuss strategy and spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Being so aggressive has risks for McCain if it angers swing voters, who often say they are looking for candidates who offer a positive message about what they will do. That could be especially true this year, when frustration with

Washington politics is acute and a desire for specifics on how to fix the economy and fight the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is strong.

And the result???

Obama's favorable rating is 62% – the highest that any presidential candidate has registered in Gallup's final pre-election polls going back to 1992.