

Obama proves a hit with his comedy routine

By Guy Adams
in Los Angeles

FOR ALL the ups and downs of Barack Obama's Presidency, he has proved that he can still deliver a mean punch-line, using his second turn as comic speaker-in-chief at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner to tell topical jokes about his political opponents, his aides, and the US media and, from time to time, to poke fun at himself.

The President stayed true to tradition at the star-studded annual event, serving up a series of scripted gags about such topical issues as Wall Street reform, Arizona's controversial new immigration, the excesses of the so-called "birther" movement, and his own falling popularity in opinion polls.

He began by offering thanks to the night's other headline speaker, the talk-show host Jay Leno, describing him as "the only person whose ratings fell more than mine last year". That joke had been sponsored by Goldman Sachs, he added. "So I don't have to worry: they make money whether you laugh or not."

The well-refreshed audience, which contained a mixture of high-brow White House journalists and occasionally lowbrow celebrities, cheered dutifully when Obama name-checked his wife, Michelle, saying: "There are few things in life that are harder to find and more important to keep than love. Well, than love and a birth certificate."

Though Obama was born in Hawaii, the "birther" movement continues to noisily claim that he is actually born overseas. He also took a pop at John McCain, who is supporting Arizona's new law requiring police to ask anyone they suspect of being an illegal immigrant to produce their ID papers. "He recently claimed that he had never identified himself as a maverick," said Obama of his former electoral opponent. "We all know what happens in Arizona when you don't have ID."