

from other pens...

## Everyone surprised in New Hampshire

The pundits knew how New Hampshire was going to vote. Obama! The pollsters knew how New Hampshire was going to vote. Obama! Exit polling knew how New Hampshire was voting. Obama! Just about everybody in the country knew how New Hampshire was going to vote. Obama!

As it turned out, none of the above knew anything. No, it wasn't Obama, it was Clinton — Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, who won in what some experts are calling “a stunning development.” That's a real stretch because New Hampshire is filled with liberal Democrats and Hillary's win shouldn't have been called “a stunning development,” but rather an expected victory, albeit slim at that.

And her victory, we think, isn't as pronounced as we are being told. A win is a win, yes, but when you consider she was betting her 35 years of experience against someone she thinks hasn't got enough experience to mow a lawn, it wasn't that pronounced.

Sen. John Edwards came in third again, a really poor third, but insists he's in this thing to win and has no plans to drop out. But we've heard that song before.

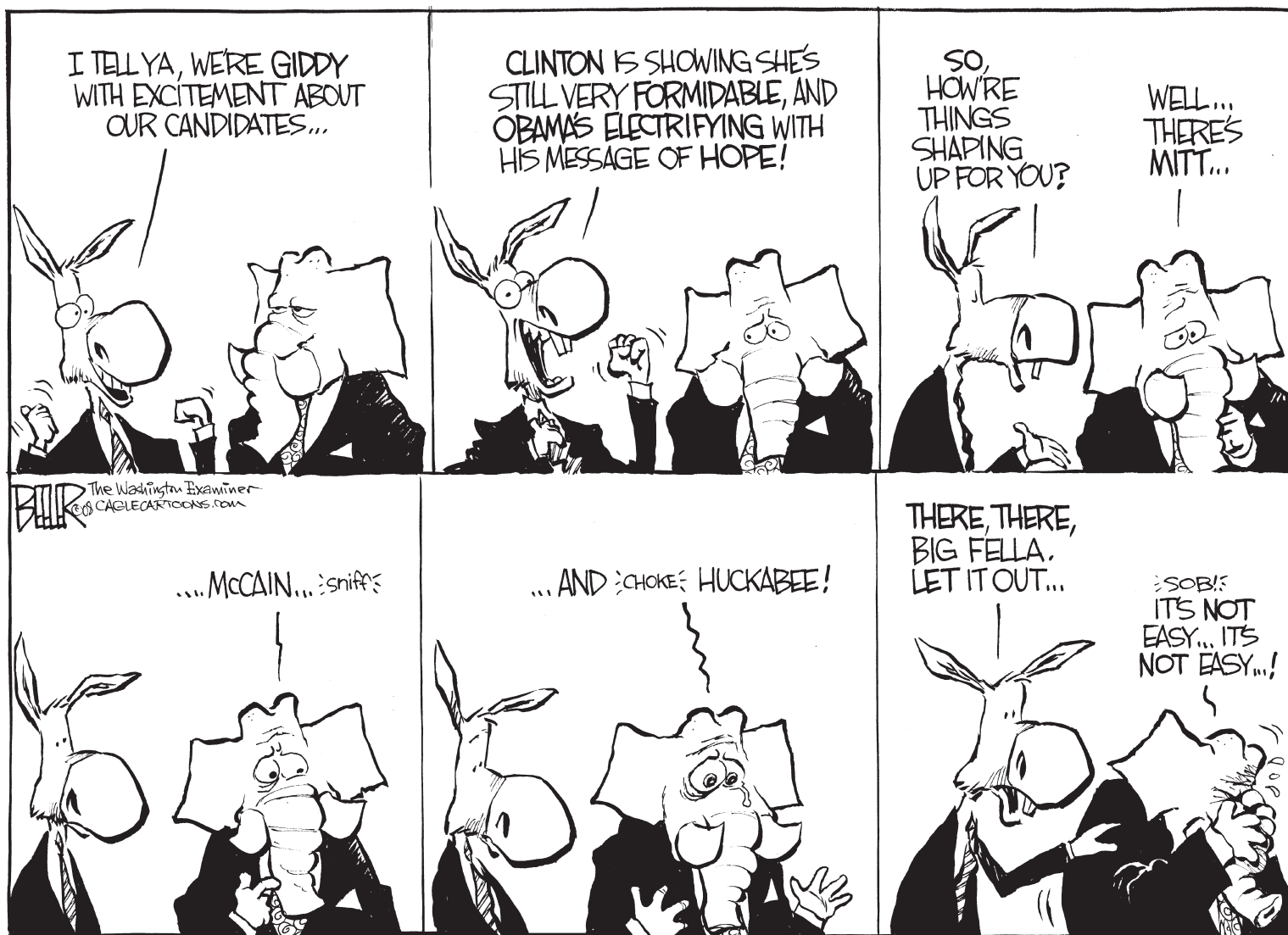
Sen. John McCain won New Hampshire with Mitt Romney coming in second. While Romney has finished second in Iowa and now New Hampshire, he is leading the pack in delegate votes, the most important category. And remember he won the Wyoming caucus last weekend.

In McCain's defense, we must say that he was written off as dead in the water just a few months ago. Too old. No money. He needs to get out of the way. But here he is, the winner at 70+ years of age, still full of energy. But, will his energy continue to hold?

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee is still the guy to watch. His down to earth style continues to catch fire. He talks like a lot of us talk. He keeps hanging around in the polls. He's running even with some of the bigger names at this point in time.

There's a long road ahead before the party nominating conventions this summer. However, many are pointing to the super Tuesday on Feb. 5, when 24 states will be voting or caucusing. The experts think this could determine the nominees of both parties. But then again, it may not decide anything.

Hang on for what could be the ride of your life.  
— Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*



## After holiday we could use some exercise

With the holidays, all the meals and snacks and goodies and parties and fun, we could use some exercise.

And it hasn't been that easy to come by the last month.

First was the ice. Then the snow. More snow. And more snow.

Then it warmed up a little, and things got really slick.

Even after several days of warmer temperatures, there's not a lot of good places to walk around town.

We'd been walking at Sappa Park quite a bit, but the snow closed off the trails. With the streets all snowpacked and turning to ice, though, we took a second look at the park.

It turned out the road there wasn't all that bad. With powdery snow on top, you could walk safely, watching out for icy spots. We went to the lake for most of a week.

Then the road there glazed over, just like in town.

Where to go? The Gateway, while a nice place to walk, often isn't open when we have time, like after work and on Sunday, or when they've set up for dinner or an event in the arena. Mostly, it



**steve haynes**

• along the sappa

hasn't worked for us this winter.

The streets in town were slick and getting slicker, but we noticed some people out walking, even on snowy nights. Many sidewalks in residential neighborhoods haven't been cleared since the first storm, either because the house is vacant or the owner can't shovel them. Or won't.

Downtown, we noticed, seemed to be mostly clear of ice, at least on the walks. All but a few businesses cleared their walks and south of Hall, you could walk in the snow or the street.

Even if the walks are clear, Cynthia pointed out, you still had to cross a street every block, and those weren't. So you have to be careful.

So we started walking in town, sticking to cleared walks and places where there was a little powder over the ice, and staying out of

the street as much as possible. That's a reversal of our usual practice, which is to walk mostly in the street, at least at night. Some of the sidewalks around here are pretty broken and unsafe when you can't see them, and many yards don't have a walk at all.

We've had to be picky. No walking when the wind is up. Watching traffic so the dog doesn't get run over. We figure we can walk most of the time it's not raining and the wind isn't too brisk. When the breeze gets up, it's just no fun to be outside.

And by this week, who knows, the road out at the park might just be clear enough to walk on again. It looks like the streets in town could be icy, at least in spots, for the rest of the winter.

Though you never know what the weather will bring here.

From a low point of maybe half our walking goal, this week we're up to nearly 90 percent and gaining. At first, the legs complained, but now they're back in shape.

The dog is happier. I'm happier. Even Cynthia is happier.

Spring and the trails, I can't wait for that. But at least we're walking.

## where to write

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## Voter identification laws menace to freedom

Most Americans, when asked for a photo identification, will pull out their driver's license and not think twice about it. After all, we have to show proof of our identity when we drink, when we drive and when we fly. Identification can be required to rent a movie, borrow a book or write a check. So why shouldn't we be required to show a photo identification in order to vote? That's the question presently before the U.S. Supreme Court.

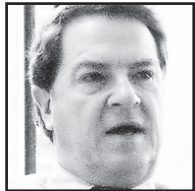
More than 20 states, including Indiana, currently have voter identification laws in place requiring that citizens show some form of valid, government-issued identification such as a driver's license or passport in order to vote. However, with a presidential election on the horizon, these laws have become the center of heated debate.

The debate is largely divided along partisan lines (Republicans tend to favor such laws, while Democrats generally oppose them). It pits protecting the integrity of the voting process from voter fraud against making sure as many eligible voters as possible take part in the process. Yet critics argue that these laws do little to protect against fraud and actually prevent legitimate voters from exercising their right to vote.

According to a 2007 report by the Brennan Center for Justice at the New York University School of Law, photo identification laws are effective only in preventing individuals from impersonating other voters at the polls — an occurrence “more rare than death by lightning.” Furthermore, as the Brennan Center's report “The Truth About Voter Fraud” points out, there is a great deal of misunderstanding related to what constitutes actual voter fraud.

Too often, other forms of election misconduct or irregularities are improperly labeled as voter fraud when, in fact, they are due to technological glitches, mistakes by election officials or voters, misconduct by individuals other than individual voters and a host of other problems that voter identification laws fail to address. Moreover, what little voter fraud does occur generally takes place through absentee ballots, rather than in-person voters.

While voter identification laws seem to have little effect on preventing election misconduct, they do pose a threat of disenfranchisement to millions of Americans lacking valid identification. As Robert Brandon, president of the Fair Elections Legal Network, points out, “Millions of eligible, registered voters lack identification — they do not drive, fly or routinely enter



**john whitehead**

• rutherford institute

office towers, although they do vote and have done so most of their adult lives. Many of them — poor, elderly, disabled and student voters — lack the stringent government-issued photo identification required by Indiana and four other states.”

According to Brandon, 18 percent of voters over 65 and more than 3 million disabled people lack government identifications. “African Americans obtain driver's licenses at half the rate of whites. Many rural elderly were born at home and have no birth certificates. The costs of getting a government identification can be prohibitive: up to \$45 for a driver's license, \$97 for a passport and more than \$200 for documents proving citizenship.”

What's more, writes Mark Sherman of the Associated Press, “Homeless people wanting to vote might face the most difficulty under the law. While the state will provide a voter identification card free of charge to the poor, applicants still must have a birth certificate or other documentation to get the identification card.” Carter Wolf, executive director of Horizon House, which provides services to the homeless, adds that it can cost up to \$70 just to get a birth certificate.

Any law that denies American citizens unfettered access to the voting booth should be viewed with great skepticism. Unlike driving, flying or even writing a check, voting is a fundamental constitutional right, one that should have few barriers in its way. And while on their face voter identification laws may seem relatively benign, they are a menace to freedom and bring to mind the poll taxes and literacy tests that were used to keep African-Americans away from the voting booths prior to the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Voter identification laws also take us one step closer to a “show your papers” society. In this regard, they are part of a far-reaching agenda to ensure the adoption of a de facto national identification card, which has repeatedly met with opposition — and for good reasons.

The idea of requiring citizens to carry a national identification card is not new. Many current authoritarian regimes, like those of the past, use an identification system to control

the people. Furthermore, the technology used in creating such a card, considered the ultimate human tracking device, poses a grave threat to our privacy rights, enabling government agents to access our most personal information and track our moment-by-moment movements — even in our homes. Such a card would necessarily include biometric information such as finger or retina print or genetic data, along with personal information such as race, age and residential status.

In order for such a card to be effective, police authority will necessarily be expanded so that law enforcement agents can demand the card in a wide range of circumstances. Also, a greater sharing of information among all government agencies will be established through a national database.

In addition to pushing the constitutional limits of privacy, a government-maintained, national information database immediately gives rise to worries about the misuse of information and abuse by those with access to databases — which includes private corporations, as well as identity thieves.

Voter fraud is clearly the least of our concerns right now, and voter identification laws appear to be nothing more than a backdoor attempt to institute a national identification card. Let us hope that we don't wake up one morning to find ourselves living in a police state.

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