

from our viewpoint...

# Pundits pushing for Dem end game

Tonight, the country will be watching the results of the latest round of state primaries to see whether Sen. Hillary Clinton can mount another comeback or if Sen. Barack Obama will move closer to taking the Democratic nomination.

The polls indicate the race is close, and the day could go to either candidate. Texas and Ohio are the big prizes at stake, plus Rhode Island, Wisconsin and Vermont.

Pundits were saying on Sunday it could be the end for Clinton if she cannot take at least one of the big states. There would be pressure on her to withdraw.

This continues to be one of the most extraordinary political campaigns the country has seen in more than 40 years. The Democrats have the most unique set of candidates in U.S. history, and no matter which one wins, it will be a first for the country.

The question for Clinton tomorrow may be to decide what she does if she has lost again. She is behind in the delegate count and Obama could be close to the magic number needed to take the nomination.

After today's primaries and caucuses, about 600 delegates remain to be elected before the Democratic convention Aug. 28-30 in Denver.

With Clinton and Obama on the campaign trail over the past year, they have created a new sense of excitement, and brought many new people out to participate in the nomination process. It would be a shame if the process were shortchanged before the delegates really have a chance to determine who wins the party nomination.

The commentators were saying on Sunday that if Clinton does not win today, she should consider withdrawing to allow Obama to begin his campaign against Sen. John McCain, who has all but wrapped up the Republican nomination.

It was interesting to note the pundits Sunday were all Republicans, and were talking about how if Clinton stays in after today, she could be hurting the Democratic party's chances to win in November.

Historically, Democrats have enjoyed the give and take of a good campaign, and not having a clear winner heading into the convention could be a good thing for the party. Having an open process that allows everyone to participate has been the hallmark of the Democratic party for many years, especially since the 1968 convention in Chicago.

Political campaigns are long and arduous today, and with the unprecedented number of debates over the past year, the American people have had more exposure to ideas than was possible in past years.

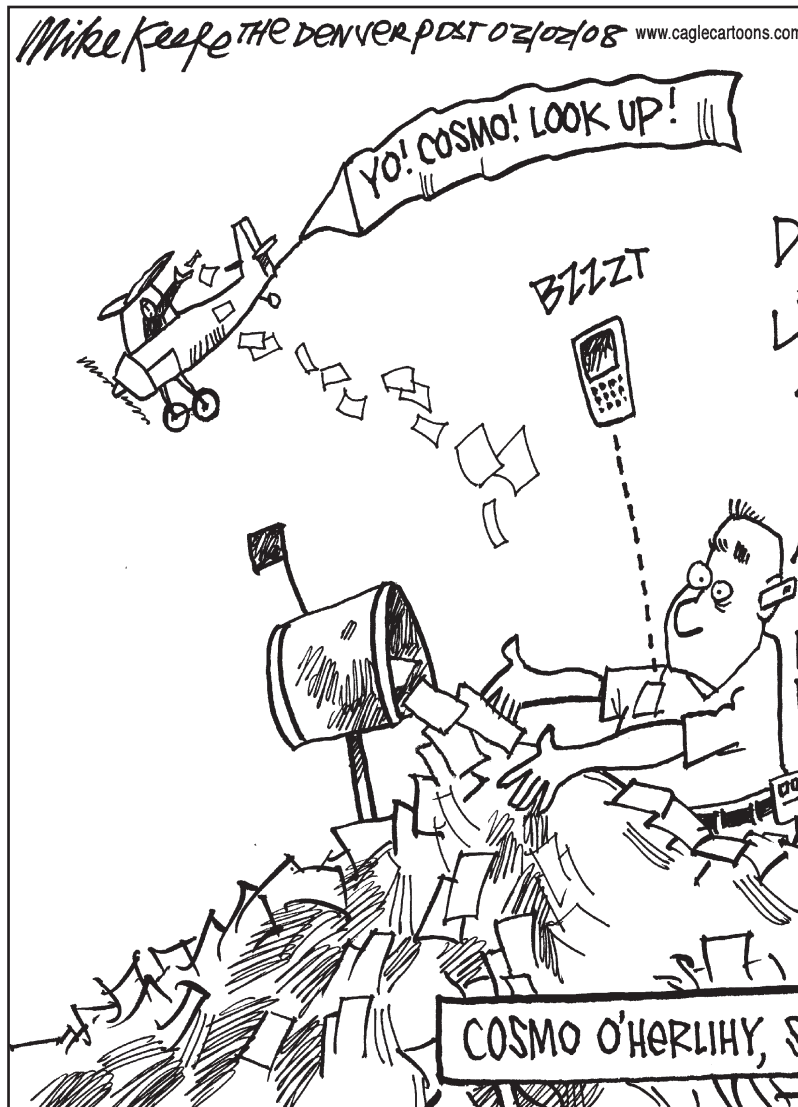
Obama is leading in the delegate count, but one of the commentators said that a number of the states Obama has won, including Kansas, are considered Republican states that he will not be able to carry in November. Clinton has won the big states of New York and California, two she should carry in November. The race may not be over, and the pundits will have to wait another week or maybe three months to predict the Democratic nominee for sure.

On the Republican side this week, much was being made of a slip that McCain made in one of his town hall appearances where he said he was "a liberal Repub... oops, I meant a conservative Republican."

With the nomination nearly in his hip pocket, some were saying that McCain should admit he is more liberal to begin attracting the members of the unwashed "mushy middle," the unaffiliated voters he will need to win in November.

The Republican right wing is hoping a miracle might stop the McCain train, but the math is against them. What McCain has to do is to keep telling the conservatives that he is their best bet to stop Clinton or Obama.

No matter what happens in today's primary and caucuses, though, the big winners will be the Democratic and Republican voters who gets to participate and be part of the process to decide who faces off in November. — Tom Betz



# McCain cold-shoulders warm-up host

Although I agree with Cincinnati talk-show host Bill Cunningham on many issues, I have to side with Sen. John McCain in denouncing Cunningham for his behavior while appearing at a McCain rally on the candidate's behalf.

During his introductory remarks to the audience Cunningham repeatedly referred to Sen. Barack Obama as a "hack" and as Barrack Hussein Obama with the emphasis on Hussein, Obama's middle name — a tactic used by critics who insist that Obama is really a Muslim.

McCain, who was not in the hall when Cunningham spoke, reacted angrily, telling reporters, "I take responsibility and I repudiate what he said. A person came out here before I arrived and made some disparaging remarks about Senators Obama and Clinton and I regret that. In my entire campaign I have treated Sen. Obama and Sen. Clinton with respect. I will continue to do that throughout this campaign."

For his part, Cunningham acted like a spoiled child being punished by his parents, threatening to vote for ultra-liberal Hillary Clinton in response to McCain's scolding.

Cunningham seems to have forgotten that when you are speaking at a rally for a candidate, you're not there for yourself, but for the person you are representing. Unfortunately, when my fellow conservatives forget what their function is under certain specific circumstance, such as doing a warm-up for a candidate, they get it into their heads that everything is always about them. They forget that it isn't about them, it isn't



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• making sense

about us radio hosts — it's really about the person for whom we're emceeing an event, or introducing.

I go after liberals who start their spiel by using every imaginable obscene four-letter word when they are doing an event for a presidential candidate who just happens to be in the audience.

That's appalling conduct but it's equally appalling when conservatives think they have to prove their First Amendment rights by saying whatever they feel like saying, regardless of the fact that they may be hurting the very person they're supporting.

They don't have the right to say what they feel like saying when they are there in behalf of someone else who may well disagree with their remarks.

You have to understand your role as a warm-up speaker. You can't just take it upon yourself to saddle your candidate with your personal opinions. You can't decide, as Cunningham did, that you can help your man win this election by repeatedly reminding everybody what Obama's middle name is and doing it in a derogatory way. There are, after all, far more important issues at stake. Those who are going out of their way to

stress Obama's middle name know full well that they are really suggesting that Obama is a Manchurian candidate — a Muslim disguised as a Christian. That's garbage politics and McCain was right in denouncing the tactic.

My fellow conservatives had better understand that this election isn't just about us.

If somebody invited me to emcee an event or to introduce them I would keep in mind that my role would be to uplift the candidate, not to use the event as a pulpit from which I could promote Michael Reagan's views.

John McCain is following in my dad's footsteps when even in the heat of an election battle he shows respect for his opponents. Their stands on issues are fair game to him, but as fellow Americans they deserve respect. Anybody presuming to speak on his behalf owes it to him to be just as respectful to his opponents.

My dad understood Christ's admonition that "whatever you do unto the least of my brethren you do unto me." He showed respect for everybody no matter who they were or how often they attacked him — Jimmy Carter, Mikhail Gorbachev, Gerald Ford; he respected them all. He saw Christ in all of them. That's why he was able to accomplish all that he did.

Bill Cunningham and all those who think sly personal attacks on their opponents are a justified tactic should take that to heart.

Mike Reagan, the elder son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationally. E-mail comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com.

# Is it time to consider impeaching Bush?

It's been almost 10 years since the House of Representatives voted to impeach Bill Clinton for lying under oath when asked during a deposition in the Paula Jones case whether he had had sexual relations with a White House intern.

I was one of the lead attorneys in that case and had agreed to represent Jones in her sexual harassment lawsuit because I believed the underlying principle in the case was too important to let it slide. Namely, no one is above the law, not even the president.

I did not, however, agree with the impeachment proceedings charging Clinton with perjury and obstruction of justice. Don't get me wrong: what Clinton did was unacceptable and unworthy of his office and his role as a national figure. However, there's a world of difference between lying about sex and blatantly disregarding the Constitution.

As Elizabeth Holtzman, a former member of Congress who served on the House Judiciary Committee during President Nixon's impeachment, explains, "The Constitution specifies the grounds [for impeachment] as treason, bribery or 'high crimes and misdemeanors,' a term that means 'great and dangerous offenses that subvert the Constitution.' As the House Judiciary Committee determined during Watergate, impeachment is warranted when a president puts himself above the law and gravely abuses power."

Unlike Clinton, George W. Bush has repeatedly put himself above the law and abused the power of his office. Over the past seven years, Bush has greatly expanded the power of the president, in addition to unilaterally bypassing federal law to secretly, and illegally, listen in on the phone calls of American citizens and read our e-mails, among other things. His use of presidential signing statements is yet another example of his willingness to subvert the Constitution at almost every turn.

Historically, presidents have used signing statements to thank supporters, provide reasons for signing a bill or express dissatisfaction or pleasure with Congress. The previous 41 presidents combined challenged a total of only 600 laws through signing statements. Bush,



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• rutherford institute

on the other hand, has used the statements as a way to disregard certain laws with which he disagrees and, so far, has used the statements to challenge over 800 laws.

"The laws Bush has challenged with signing statements include a ban on torture, stricter oversight provisions in the USA Patriot Act, restrictions against using U.S. troops to fight rebels in Colombia, requirements that his agencies provide information to Congress, and various affirmative action programs," writes Charlie Savage for the Boston Globe.

Bush's latest signing statement was issued in response to the 2008 National Defense Authorization Act, which adds nearly \$700 billion to the war chest, along with a 3.5 percent military pay raise and improved health care and benefits for wounded troops. The Act prohibits the government from spending taxpayer money to establish permanent military bases in Iraq, requires that intelligence agencies such as the CIA and NSA hand over reports and legal opinions to Congress, calls for an independent, bipartisan commission to investigate allegations of waste and excessive force by military contractors abroad, and strengthens legal protections for whistleblowers who work for and report abuses of government contractors.

Although President Bush disagreed with various provisions in the Act (primarily the ones intended to hold him or other governmental agencies accountable to our elected representatives in Congress), he did not express his disagreement with a veto, as the Constitution requires. Had he done so, Congress would have had to either reconsider it or override his veto. Instead, he issued another of his infamous signing statements in which he essentially tells Congress to stick it.

Such actions place the president outside the rule of law, which is foundational to our coun-

try. It keeps our country free and promotes democratic government. If the president can simply chart his own course and set his own rules, not being bound by either the Constitution or the other branches of government, he is "above the law" and becomes, in effect, a dictator who can do whatever he wants. He then becomes the law, which is precisely what the Founders intended to prevent when they drafted the Constitution. As Senator Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) explains, "If the president is permitted to rewrite the bills that Congress passes and cherry-pick which provisions he likes and does not like, he subverts the constitutional process designed by our framers."

We've never tolerated that before in this country, and we shouldn't start now.

The separation of powers, which is at the heart of our system of checks and balances, allows the president to have as much power as Congress and the courts but no more than that. The importance of this constitutional principle cannot be overstated. It ensures that power does not become centralized in a single branch of government, thereby preventing our country from sliding into an authoritarian regime.

Thus, it's time for Congress to grow a backbone and send this president a clear message: either step in line with the rule of law and heed the voice of "we the people" who speak through Congress or face impeachment hearings. If Congress does not act, this president and those who come after him will continue to amass power at an alarming rate to the detriment of us all.

We must never forget that America was founded on the consent of the governed. As Thomas Jefferson wrote in the Declaration of Independence: "whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it."

It's not time to abolish our form of government, but it's certainly time to bring our elected officials under the rule of law.

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