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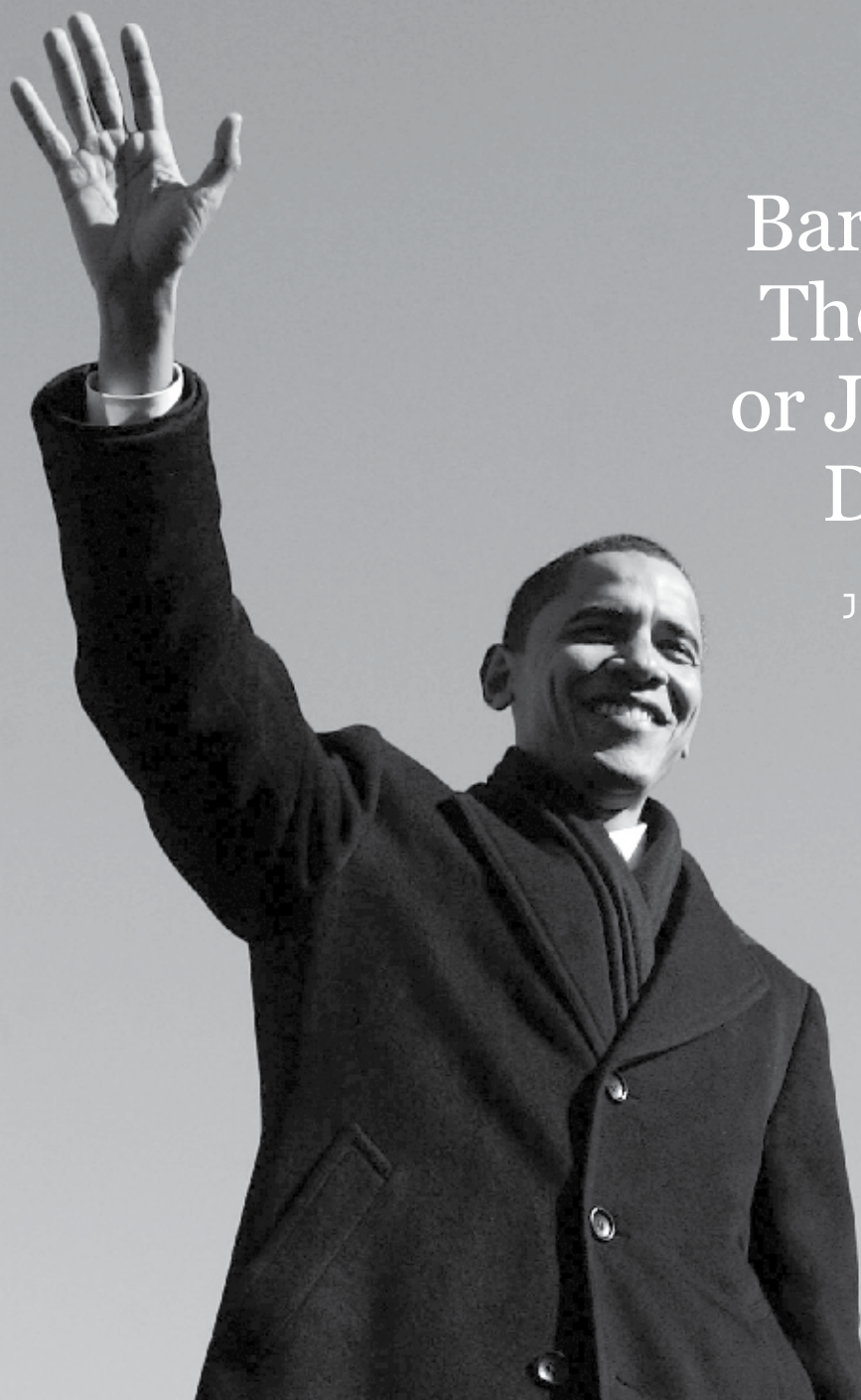
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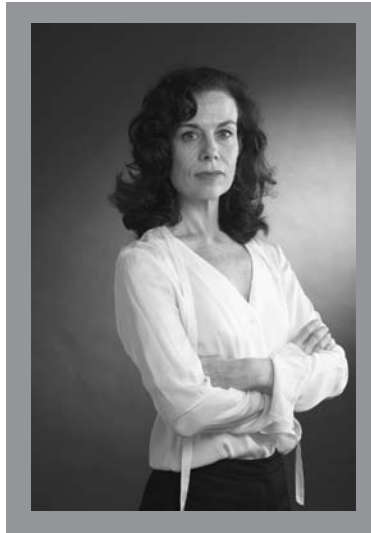


Barack Obama:
The Real Deal
or Just Another
Democrat?

JACQUELINE SALIT

neo-independent (nē'ō in də pen'dənt)

adj. 1 of, or pertaining to, the movement of independent voters for political recognition and popular power ____ **n.** an independent voter in the post-Perot era, without traditional ideological attachments, seeking the overthrow of bipartisan political corruption ____ **adj. 2** of, or pertaining to, an independent political force styling itself as a postmodern progressive counterweight to neo-conservatism, or the neo-cons



EDITOR'S NOTE

There is a lot of talk these days about the possibility of a major independent presidential candidacy in 2008. The speculation about such a run by New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg, for example, is a favorite topic for political writers and prognosticators, and I don't exclude myself from that list. I even bought several domain names including *www.mikebloombergindependent-forpresident.org*. I figure that if he does decide to run, he'll have to call me to claim his website. We don't talk much since my independent friends and I got him elected.

Some days the talk is about Mike. Some days it's about Senator Chuck Hagel. And some days it's about an undeclared fusion ticket made up of a disillusioned (moderate) Democrat and a disillusioned (moderate) Republican who team up as independents to organize all the disillusioned people in America – albeit in a moderate way. Call me simple-minded, but I'm one of those people who find it hard to believe that a major disruption of the two-party paradigm could be construed as moderate under any circumstances: it would be far too radical a departure from the status quo.

I was heartened to read an article by Greg Giroux in *Congressional Quarterly* recently about Unity08, the bipartisan experiment in catalyzing a fusion presidential ticket in 2008. Giroux points out that “the most successful third party candidates have generally not positioned themselves as centrists, however, but instead have staked their claim to issues that the public perceives the parties as ignoring – and that don't fit neatly on a liberal-conservative spectrum.” Giroux even managed to find an actual political scientist at the College of William and Mary, Ronald Rapoport, who argued this point rather neatly. “So, what is the lesson of the Perot campaign for 2008?” According to Dr. Rapoport, who points to Perot's focus on outsider issues like political reform, economic populism and deficit reduction, “Third party candidates succeed not because of their centrism but because of the rest of their issue agenda, which is not centrist.” Three cheers for Dr. Rapoport. Finally, a political scientist who relies on actual evidence, and not the Beltway's tried and true pursuit of “the political center.”

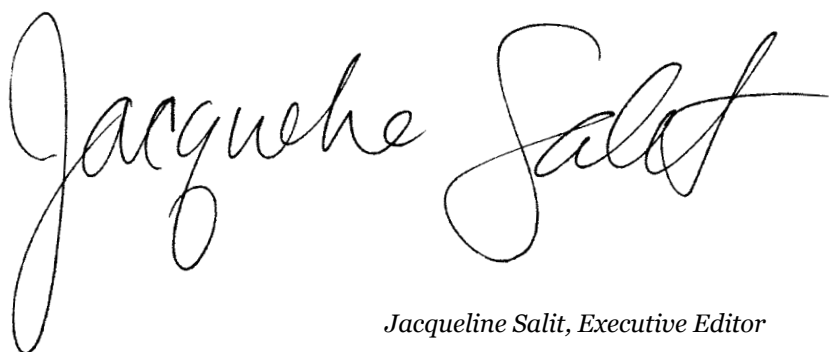
Indeed, 2008 is shaping up to be anything but the

year of the tried and true. The Republican and Democratic primary schedule is being compressed and none of the campaign gurus, even by their own account, can formulate a stable strategy. The field is huge. Bloggers, web-based campaigning, and 24-hour cable have limited the impact of traditional media buys. Voters want out of Iraq, but we're still there. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll has 66% of Americans saying the country is on the "wrong track." And 40% of voters say they are independents, rather than Republicans or Democrats.

Does an independent presidential candidate step out into this mix? We don't know. Maybe. Maybe not. Under the auspices of the Committee for a Unified Independent Party, (full disclosure: I'm CUIP's president) independent voters in 40 states have been building on-the-ground local organizations based on the premise that a bottom-up movement of independent Americans can shape a major independent candidacy, should it occur, and an independent presidency, if that candidate were to win. As for the major party hopefuls, my colleague and friend Jim Mangia, formerly the national secretary of the Reform Party and currently head of IndependentVoice.org in California, has met with presidential candidates to discuss their relationship to independent voters. He reports that they are feeling the pressure to make their interest in and support for independents more explicit than ever before.

I'm a big fan of historian Joseph S. Ellis and his book *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. The book opens with this line: "No event in American history which was so improbable at the time has seemed so inevitable in retrospect as the American Revolution." For all the speculation about an independent presidential bid, a radical electoral revolt led by the non-aligned seems almost unimaginable at the moment. But, as Ellis observes, "the creation of a separate American nation occurred suddenly rather than gradually, in revolutionary rather than evolutionary fashion..." It happened "with dynamic intensity" over a relatively short period of time.

There are too many unpredictables, too many uncertainties, too many "moving parts" to forecast history's hand, in 2008, 2012 or beyond. The key for non-aligned voters is to have their own hand, to be organized sufficiently to shape and reshape America's independent political development.



Jacqueline Salit, Executive Editor

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Barack Obama: The Real Deal or Just Another Democrat?

Jacqueline Salit

I

The idea that black America is a political monolith is beginning to fade. Competing forces within the Democratic Party are creating new divisions. The party's been stung, even if slightly, by independents who succeeded in peeling away sizable portions of the black vote and by polls showing that 30-40% of African American adults under 30 now consider themselves independent rather than Democrat; there are generational conflicts over hot button issues, like censorship of hip hop lyrics and support for school vouchers.

Conventional wisdom has it that in spite of these political stress fractures, they will all heal – knitting together again in the crucible of a Democratic bid for the White House in 2008. The smart money is certainly there. But short term outcomes are not necessarily predictive of long term stability when newer and unaccountable forces are in the mix. Just ask the architects of the American invasion of Iraq. And there is no one who should be more acutely aware of the fact that you can't always get the genie back into the bottle than Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama.

II

The high-profile, self-promoting Sharpton ran for president in 2004, but had a dismal showing in the Democratic primaries.

Sharpton has also been involved in a longtime and highly publicized rivalry for recognition as the nation's leading African-American political activist with the Rev. Jesse Jackson, also a former Democratic presidential hopeful.

Obama, a polished Harvard-educated lawyer, puts forth a drastically different image from the street-smart high-school grad Sharpton.

"It's driving Al crazy that Obama is as impressive and popular as he is, and he's not happy about it," said another black Democratic activist. "Sharpton is just terrified of being overshadowed by someone of Obama's class and character."

New York Post, March 12, 2007

The Reverend Al Sharpton wasn't happy about the *Post* story and with good reason. No doubt it was planted by supposed allies, black Democratic Party elected officials who are backing Hillary Rodham Clinton for the Democratic nomination. The infighting within the infighting flared up just days after Obama's announcement. But it wasn't envy that tormented Sharpton. He's too shrewd a political player to indulge himself in that way.

It's rather that Sharpton, the recognized – if not fully anointed – “president” of black America, had been operating on his own timetable for challenging the Clintons' control of the Democratic Party. Obama's entry into the race forced Sharpton to scuttle that timetable, confronting him with a difficult choice: He could join Obama's black-led insurgency, in which he would play second fiddle but which might stage an extraordinary upset and thereby reshape the entire American political scene, or he could back the establishment Clinton team, standing to be an influential “all access” figure in Hillary's White House should the Clintons win.

Sharpton has always been torn between the legitimacy afforded by gaining admittance to the inner circles

of Democratic Party political power and the fundamental illegitimacy of being a black man in America. His political career has been shaped by that conflict and it has been especially operative in his relationship to the Clintons.

Beginning in 1992 the Clintons redefined the Democratic Party's relationship to black voters by signaling southern white Reagan Democrats that they were more than willing to put black people “in their place.” Bill Clinton's public slap at Jesse Jackson at his Rainbow Coalition convention – the so-called “Sister Souljah moment” when Clinton criticized Jackson for giving the stage to a nationalistic black female rapper – set the tone for the new Democratic Leadership Council (DLC) triangulation. Black America ultimately went along for the ride. But Sharpton was never comfortable with that.

Over time, and after she was elected to the Senate in 2000, Hillary and Sharpton reached an accommodation. As his political profile rose, and he emerged as the country's preeminent black civil rights leader, she began to make the pilgrimage to the annual Dr. King event at his National Action Network. In 2004, when Sharpton ran his presidential campaign, he brokered an agreement with then Democratic National Committee chair Terry McAuliffe, a Clinton ally, guaranteeing him inclusion in all of the televised primary debates. Privately, it was assumed that the price of admission was Sharpton's agreement to give Hillary a free pass in her 2006 reelection bid. She wanted a hassle-proof Senate run that would give her the room she needed to tee up for the 2008 presidential.

Sharpton's own presidential run – which consisted largely of giving well-received performances in the debates and qualifying for \$100,000 in federal primary matching funds (the FEC later forced him to return it) – culminated in his speech to the Democratic Convention at which John Kerry was nominated. It was at this same convention that the soon-to-be-elected Senator from Illinois, Barack Obama, stunned the political world with his nonpartisan eloquence in a prime time address. The magnitude of Obama's potential was apparent. The dimensions of his ambition were, as yet, unknown.

Soon, though, Sharpton became less concerned with the national scene than he was with the goings on in his home base of New York. In 2005 his longtime friend and frequent ally, Lenora Fulani (who'd run two minor presidential campaigns as an independent but who'd established major precedents – among other achievements she became the first woman and the first African American to access the ballot in all 50 states), emerged as an influential figure in the Independence Party of New York. Mayor Michael Bloomberg had run on the Independence Party line as well as on the Republican line four years earlier. Independence provided his margin of victory in a perilously close race. Four years later, Fulani and a Coalition of Outsiders – black and Latino insurgent Democratic activists – led 47% of black voters to abandon the Democratic Party ticket and vote independently for Bloomberg.

Sharpton was stung by the results. He had supported, however half-heartedly, the Democrat Fernando Ferrer. The black exodus to Bloomberg, instigated by the independent Fulani, was an unwelcome bellwether for Sharpton. But his position was made even more uncomfortable when Hillary Clinton trained her sights on Fulani, and – together with then gubernatorial hopeful Eliot Spitzer, a fellow Democrat – presented state leaders of the Independence Party with an ultimatum: Dump Fulani and her entire New York City organization or else...the “else” being that Clinton and Spitzer would refuse to run on the party's line in 2006. As the Clinton/Spitzer script played itself out – they received IP's endorsement but were ultimately unsuccessful in their crusade to crush the Fulani forces – Sharpton claimed to have attempted to intervene behind the scenes on Fulani's behalf.

It was not the Clinton/Spitzer takeover of the Independence Party that bothered Sharpton, however, but their takeover of the Democratic Party. By early 2006 Sharpton knew he faced a defining political fight. The Clintons were on a course to control both the party and the White House. Sharpton saw himself as a pivotal figure in blocking their unimpeded path to power. His plans for the presidential race and for the run-up to the 2009 New York City mayoral election, he told friends, would be shaped by that fight.

Then came Obama. Overnight Sharpton's game plan had to be recalibrated. A national black leader was taking on the Clintons – but it wasn't Al Sharpton. What's more, this challenger had tens of millions of dollars and was a magnet for adoring media and huge crowds.

Then came Obama.
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Barack Obama

Obama was presenting voters – including black voters – with a new political vision. He wasn't just *against* something – Bush, the white power structure, racism, the war in Iraq, failed anti-poverty programs; he actually seemed to be *for* something – a new generation of leadership, a reform-oriented anti-partisan rejection of the “old politics.” He was seen as a racial healer, not a divider, someone who could transport America out of its self-destructive impulses to a new political culture. And Obama was a Democrat who might attract the all-important independent voter, the constituency that had handed the Democrats control of Congress in the 2006 midterm elections.

Sharpton had to pause and take a deep breath. In mid-March, when he reportedly met to talk, and smoke a cigar with, Bill Clinton in Harlem, he must have expected that the former president was going to pitch him hard.

III

Barack Obama is a formidable contender for the presidency. In the first three months of 2007 he raised \$25 million dollars from 100,000 contributors and moved up in the polls, surpassing Clinton among black voters, where the former first lady had expected to dominate. The “roll-out” of Obama by his skillful handlers began with positioning him as the anti-Clinton. The Clintons had to downgrade the Democratic Party's longstanding attachment to the black community as the conscience of America; Obama resurrected it. To break the Republican Party's hold on the South, Bill Clinton, himself a southerner, had to free his party from the influence of insurgent black power brokers – like Jackson – and interrupt the rise of Jackson's Rainbow Coalition; to restore the Democratic Party's control of the White House, Obama is hoping to construct a new coalition, one in which race matters, but does not define.

But the political electricity surrounding the Obama campaign is more than just the money, the size of the crowds, and the media frenzy. It is the character of the response to his message. Obama speaks of Americans' lost faith in government and calls restoring their confidence “the most difficult task that confronts us, even harder than dealing with Iraq...We have a sense that

special interests and big money set the agenda, so there's reason for cynicism, but there's also reason for hope.”

Obama's message, in its essence, is that *he* is the reason for hope – and that is not accidental. “Lost faith in government” is also a lost faith in the political parties, a public revulsion at the partisanship that permeates the Beltway. In other words, Obama seems to believe he is a man who can transcend the institutions that misguide and corrupt our democracy.

Obama must walk a fine line with that message. He is popular, deeply popular, because he is seen as other than a partisan, someone who can lead America out of party-based rancor and gridlock. But he is also a Democrat, a “true believer,” and he relies on the party to pursue his political path, without criticism or rebuke of its role in the degrading of American democracy. He may remember that in 2004 Howard Dean told the political world that he was out “to remake the Democratic Party” and found himself confronted by party elders who were not merely inhospitable, but hostile. It was they who remade Dean, ultimately as the chairman of the Democratic National Committee. Obama does not want to fall into the same trap.

But if Obama expects to channel all the expectations he is raising into a political party that has been a primary source of the corruption of American progressivism, he runs the risk of dissipating the movement that is driving his candidacy. The polls show him leading among independent voters – according to the latest Rasmussen poll he has a 19-point advantage over Hillary Clinton. Obama is simultaneously party loyalist and independent populist, a becoming hardened political operator and a visionary radical reformer.

American history reserves a special place for such controversial and conflicted social transformers. Obama has already been compared (and compared himself) to Abraham Lincoln, another Illinois politician with humble roots. Lincoln, like Obama, rose to national prominence in the context of the search for a new America, one in which the sins of slavery could be cleansed. In the mid-1850s Lincoln challenged the voters of Illinois, arguing that their love for the Declaration of Independence – at the time still a resonant spiritual and political motivator – could not co-exist alongside the institution of slavery. Meanwhile Stephen Douglas, in his famous Senate campaign debates with Lincoln, insisted that America did not have to make a choice; the Founding Fathers were slave owners, Douglas said, and

the Constitution recognized and permitted slavery.

Lincoln countered by distinguishing between the Declaration and the Constitution: the Declaration, he said, “meant to set up a standard maxim for free society” while the Constitution was but an expression of the effort to attain that ideal – as Lincoln historian Gary Wills explains, “to be tested against it, kept in motion toward it.” The Constitution does not use the words “slave” or “slavery,” Lincoln argued, because “...the thing is hid away, in the Constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer, which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death; with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at the end of a given time. Less than this, our fathers COULD not do; and more they WOULD not do...”

When Abraham Lincoln spoke those words, the country was already embroiled in a profound social crisis that would soon drive his election to the presidency as a third party candidate and thereafter escalate into the Civil War. America is not currently at such a dramatic crossroads and, many would insist, whatever the injustices wrought by partisanship and political corruption, they do not compare to the inhumanity of slavery. That is as it should be if America can claim to have progressed in the past 150 years. Nonetheless, there are manifest signs of political discontent. Our country is now mired in a war, at an annual cost of tens of billions of dollars, that lacks the support of two-thirds of the public. The environment is being degraded so as to cause scientists and policy makers to predict that we may destroy our planet before we can save it. Untold misery afflicts much of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Poverty and disease remain intractable here at home.

These are the issues Barack Obama says he wants to address. For Lincoln, and the voters of 1860, the social crisis of the mid-19th century could not be resolved within the pre-existing political framework; the Republican Party was born out of that impasse. Obama may face a similar challenge in 21st century postmodern form.

And what of the independent movement – the 42% of Americans who have ceased to identify themselves as either Democrat or Republican? They are not as politicized or steered as the diverse elements of the broad anti-slavery movement that gave rise to Lincoln’s presidency and a new political party. But they are searching for a new America, even if they have yet to find their own distinctive voice. Many are drawn to Obama.

But they also want to know if Obama is drawn to them. Will he connect himself to the independent movement, including the significant portion of it which is African American, even if he is a Democrat? There are countless pragmatic arguments for doing so. Half of the states hold open primaries in which independents may vote. No less a prognosticator than Andrew Kohut of the Pew Center for the People and the Press says independents will decide the presidential election.

Barack Obama has good practical arguments for connecting with – even legitimizing – independent voters and the independent movement. But there is also a friction that is not easily overlooked. Independents do not like partisan politics. Obama must persuade them that he is more interested in doing good for the country than he is in empowering the Democratic Party, that he is not just another Democrat but the “real deal.” This is a difficult challenge in a political world where there is no such thing as a “real deal” because everything and everyone in the public square have been molded to maximize the chances of winning.

How will independents judge Barack Obama? They will look to see if he acknowledges them, the leaders who have shaped the movement thus far, and their cause for reform. He would have to become a new kind of abolitionist – someone who seeks the abolition of unbridled party control of the political process. These sound like simple things, and they are. But the partisan machine will want to deny independents even that. Obama will have to challenge the partisans – the Democrats most of all – to fully engage with the independents.

IV

Ironically, there is one political figure who could act as a bridge to help Obama make these connections: Al Sharpton. He has witnessed the intransigence of the Democratic establishment when it comes to empowering independents. He has observed the full force of their wrath toward Fulani and the Independence Party. He has some sense of how to navigate the terrain. He also knows that the political ground is shifting in the African American community. He’s seen half of black voters, under the right circumstances and with the right leadership, turn away from the Democrats. He’s cultivated his relationship to Fulani and to the independent movement over many years, using it to



PHOTO: CUP ARCHIVES

Lenora Fulani (with microphone) and Reverend Al Sharpton: A key connection

enhance his leverage within the Democratic fold. He could play the role of power broker, laying the groundwork for effecting a black and independent alliance that crosses the lines between being inside and outside the Democratic Party. And in doing so he could reassert his long-held ambition to be the black leader who halted the forward march of Clintonism.

Central to this scenario is Sharpton's connection to Fulani. She is the black independent most abused by the Democratic Party bosses. She has been a favorite target, along with other black and progressive independents, of Hillary Clinton, of assorted local and national Democratic elected officials and of the liberal/left media. If Barack Obama wants to restore the lost

faith in government, he could begin by asserting that the demonization of independent black leaders by his own party must stop. Al Sharpton could instruct him in those matters, introduce him to Fulani, and open a gateway to the independent movement she has helped to shape.

Al Sharpton – like every other Democratic Party leader – is going to have to make a choice. If Hillary Clinton wins the Democratic nomination and then the general election, Clintonism reigns supreme. If she is stopped, Clintonism is finished and those who worked against her will be recognized for having finally undercut the DLC. They will lead the new Democratic Party. No Democrat can wait to see how it turns out before making a move. Not even Al Sharpton. **NEO**

The 2008 Presidential: Will Independents Make the Difference?

Since the 2006 midterm elections, in which independent voters powered the Democrats to control of Congress, the attention paid to independent voters has grown exponentially. This may be a case of “be careful of what you wish for.” That attention comes complete with archaic and, sometimes, self-serving attitudes towards the non-aligned. Nonetheless, the attention is worth attending to.

In “Poll Shows Ardor for Democrats Has Cooled, But Lead Over GOP Remains,” the results of a Pew Research Center poll are reported. Pew’s Andrew Kohut notes the midterm “swing” by independents to Democratic congressional candidates, but cautions the public not to over-interpret those results as an endorsement of the Democratic Party.

Congressional Quarterly

Marie Horrigan

Poll Shows Ardor for Democrats Has Cooled, But Lead Over GOP Remains

March 29 — On Election Night 2006, as the Democratic takeover of Congress became increasingly clear, incoming House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared the results a great victory for the American people.

“Today the American people voted for change and they voted for Democrats to take our country in a new direction,” the California Democrat told supporters at national party headquarters in Washington, D.C. “And that is exactly what we intend to do.”

With public sentiment turned against incumbent Republicans and strongly against President Bush, Democrats were able to sweep to victory, and two-thirds of respondents to a Pew Research Center for the People & the Press said they were happy that Democrats had won control.

But public enthusiasm for the Democrats has waned since the heady days of November, according to a survey released Thursday by Pew — the first on the public’s views of the 110th Congress conducted by the polling organization headed by veteran opinion researcher Andrew Kohut.

The poll was released the same day Democrats celebrated the passage of their budget resolution in the House, which Democratic Caucus Chairman Rahm Emanuel, an Illinois representative, lauded as bringing “fiscal sanity” back to Washington.

The budget “funds the right priorities for our country and puts middle-class families first,” he said in a statement. “This is a budget for a new direction.”

Yet the Pew survey, conducted before the budget action, found that American voters appear unimpressed with the Democratic majority’s legislative achieve-

ments thus far. Nearly seven out of 10 people could not name anything important that the new Congress has accomplished.

By comparison, just more than six of 10 respondents in a poll taken in early 1995 said the same about the Republicans' first 100 days after their takeover victory in the 1994 elections.

But the poll found a silver lining for Democrats: While respondents were hard pressed to point to any of the "Six in '06" legislative goals the Democrats set prior to the midterm election, the party's leaders have made striking gains over the GOP leadership in public perceptions.

Forty-one percent of respondents said the Democratic Party had stronger leaders versus 36 percent for the Republican leadership, a reversal from the GOP's 27 percentage-point lead last April. Democrats also ran ahead in terms of having "better" leaders (44 percent to 29 percent), more ability to manage the government (47 percent to 31 percent) and being more honest and ethical (43 percent to 25 percent).

The overall picture painted by the survey was "more positive than negative," said Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press.

There are other signs that Democrats, as they did in the 2006 midterm elections, continue to make gains at the Republicans' expense. Another Pew poll, released last week, indicated that Democratic Party affiliation and independent voters' leanings toward the Democratic Party have increased, even though the party's approval ratings have not risen commensurately.

That, Kohut said, means that rising negative ratings for the Republican Party make the Democratic leadership appear stronger in comparison, pushing voters into their camp.

"It's certainly not a ringing endorsement by the people of what they've seen so far," Kohut said of the Democratic leadership's performance. "Yet the public continues to be happy that they won, and still expect them to be successful. So they haven't disappointed too much, for sure, and in terms of party overall it looks even better than it did a little while ago."

Kohut added that the continuation of issues that plagued Republicans in the 2006 election cycle — including Bush's unpopularity and the war in Iraq — could force Republicans to face the same conundrum in 2008, even though the presidential election will establish new top leadership for the party.

"To appeal to independents, who will decide this election, they are going to have to distance themselves from Bush," he said. "If they do that they may well alienate the Republican base."

The findings are based on a nationwide telephone survey conducted March 21-25 with 1,503 adults, and had an error margin of plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Marie Horrigan is a staff writer for the Congressional Quarterly.

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In "Big Change Expected in American Politics" the New Haven Register describes independents as those "who think like liberal Republicans" and want the government to "get out of my pocketbook and get out of my bedroom." While this accurately describes the Perot independents of the 1990s, the Register doesn't register that 21st century independents want the government to "get out of Iraq."

New Haven Register

Mary E. O'Leary

Big Change Expected in American Politics

January 31 — A major realignment in American politics is in the offing with independent voters — who think like liberal Republicans — likely to fill the pivotal role of swing voter.

That's the conclusion of Arthur Paulson, a political scientist at Southern Connecticut State University, who just published a book, *Electoral Realignment and the Outlook for American Democracy*.

After a three-decade shakeout, Paulson said, we have political parties that are now closer to a parliamentary system, with Democrats and Republicans more ideologically polarized.

Seismic shifts in U.S. party politics take place every three to four decades and the country is due, said Paulson. An important historical marker could be the presidential elections in 2008, or it could be a little later, but it will be soon.

Paulson said major shifts occurred in 1932 when Franklin D. Roosevelt and the New Deal cemented the dominance of the Democratic Party for an extended period; 1968 was another turning point, with Republicans managing to hold the White House the majority of time during the following four decades.

"For 30 years, the swing voter was typically historically conservative Democrats. I would say today the swing voter is someone who historically would have been considered something like a liberal Republican," Paulson said.

Found among unaffiliated voters, he said they are both small-government supporters on economic issues and on social and culture issues. "So the swing voter today is typically someone who is saying, 'Get out of my pocketbook and get out of my bedroom,'" Paulson said.

Their antecedents are those voters who pulled the lever for John Anderson for president in 1980, Ross Perot twice for president or Lowell P. Weicker for Connecticut governor in 1990.

The political shifts are usually incremental, but not inevitable without the right person to assist the tipping point.

It would not have happened in the 1930s without Roosevelt conducting himself the way he did and "making the Depression livable for the middle class," Paulson said.

The Depression plus World War II constructed a rather stable big-government philosophy in the American public for a while, with Vietnam and Watergate switching that off.

"Now we are coming upon a new bunch of crises and who handles them in a way that looks effective, is going to have a lot to do with which party, if either, emerges as majority party anytime soon," the professor said.

Whoever emerges as the dominant party in the near future, Paulson feels voters will elect that party to both the Congress and the White House, with ticket splitting less appealing.

Mary E. O'Leary is Topics Editor for the New Haven Register.

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In "Independents Wield Clout in N.H. Primary" the Associated Press zeros in on the significant role independents will play in the 2008 presidential election including, perhaps especially, in the first-in-the-nation New Hampshire primaries. The AP quotes an expert who says, "I think independent voters are very susceptible to momentum." We're inclined to argue that independents are driving the momentum rather than succumbing to it.

boston.com (website of The Boston Globe)

Holly Ramer

Independents Wield Clout in N.H. Primary

March 19 — Success in New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation presidential primary may hinge on how well candidates win over the politically fickle as well as the party faithful.

New Hampshire's independent voters — those unaffiliated with either political party — have doubled in number since 1992. They make up 44 percent of registered voters, more than Republicans or Democrats, and can vote in either primary, making them a potentially powerful force in 2008.

In a recent poll, 68 percent of undeclared voters likely to vote in the presidential primaries said they plan to vote for a Democrat. That's a significant shift from 2000, the last election with contested races in both par-

ties, when about 60 percent of the independents who turned out voted in the Republican primary.

Andrew Smith, director of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center, which conducted the poll, attributes the shift to three factors:

- Changing demographics have made New Hampshire more Democratic, like the rest of New England.
- Increasing opposition to the Iraq war has made voters generally more interested in Democrats as members of the party most likely to end the war.
- Candidates Hillary Rodham Clinton and Barack Obama have attracted enormous media attention on recent trips, raising the profile of the Democratic contest.

“With the big visits by Obama and Hillary, I think there’s just that attention factor,” Smith said. “It’s in your face.”

Who are the independents? Other than being a bit younger, New Hampshire’s independent voters don’t differ much demographically from party-affiliated voters, said Smith, who argues that few undeclared voters are truly independent. Most vote consistently with one party or the other, he said.

Carroll County, which stretches along the state’s eastern border, has the highest proportion of independents. And the most independent town in that county is – what else? Freedom, where 48 percent of the 1,137 registered voters are undeclared.

Donna Fereira, 46, jokes that just living in Freedom is a political statement. She generally votes for Democrats, but remains an independent “because I don’t particularly like either party.”

In the 2004 primary, Fereira voted for former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards, but she’s leaning toward Clinton this time.

“She’s a very strong person,” she said. “Especially with everything she’s been through.”

Fereira, a project administrator for IBM, lists taxes, gas prices and the war in Iraq as her top concerns, and said she doesn’t care that Clinton has refused to apologize for her vote authorizing the war.

“I think in the beginning, we all thought it was a good idea,” she said.

Though Clinton was the top choice among indepen-

dents and Democrats alike in a February poll by the survey center, Smith believes the former first lady could suffer the most if independents flock to the Democratic race. He said Clinton will have to guess at the depth of their anti-war sentiment and then ask herself, “How far to the left can I tack on the war issue before I get into trouble?”

“It’s much easier to run in a primary when you know who’s going to show up,” Smith said.

Obama, who came in second among both independents and Democrats, probably stands to benefit the most, said Dante Scala, associate political science professor at Saint Anselm College.

“My guess is that New Hampshire’s undeclared voters tend to get excited about the new face in politics, and so far, Obama seems to have laid claim to that,” he said. “The undeclareds also are probably the most wary of another Clinton presidency – they’re tired of the same old faces.”

In 2000, it was Arizona Sen. John McCain who captured the hearts of New Hampshire independents. According to exit polls, 61 percent of the undeclared voters in the Republican primary chose McCain, compared with just 19 percent who voted for George W. Bush. McCain – who won the New Hampshire primary – also captured more Republican votes than Bush, but it was independents who accounted for the magnitude of his New Hampshire victory.

This time around, McCain’s aura as a Republican rebel – which previously proved so attractive to independents in 2000 – has faded as he’s sought to position himself as the party establishment’s candidate.

“It’s going to be a much more homogenous Republican electorate and much more conservative electorate than it was in 2000, so I think it makes perfect sense for him to tack to the right because that’s likely going to be the voter in the primary,” Smith said.

If anyone is going to challenge Obama for the independents, it will be former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Scala said.

Michael Lee, another independent voter from Freedom, said he has voted for Democrats in the past but probably will vote for a Republican next year.

“Unfortunately, none of the Democrats look any good,” said the 43-year-old boiler maker. “They’re liberals, they’re not Democrats.”

Linda Fowler, a government professor at Dartmouth College, cautioned against reading too much into how independents say they will vote this far ahead of the election. Her research has shown independents to be easily swayed by events. She points to 2004, when tracking polls showed independents favoring Howard Dean just before the Iowa caucus, then switching quickly to John Kerry a day or two after Dean “self-destructed.”

“What we saw was people were churning all over the place,” Fowler said. “I think independent voters are very susceptible to momentum.”

Holly Ramer is a writer for the Associated Press.

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“Heading ‘em off at the pass” shines a light on the transportation boondoggles engineered by state politicians and their business associates in the Lone Star State. The feisty founder of Independent Texans, Linda Curtis, helped independent voters to flex their electoral muscle in last year’s gubernatorial race, and now is using their power to force the “highway robbers” off the road.

A week after her editorial was published, the Texas legislature passed the moratorium. As we go to press, the ball is in Governor Perry’s court.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram

Linda Curtis

Heading ‘em off at the pass

April 23 — Thousands of voters across Texas are in revolt against a scheme by Gov. Rick Perry and his allies that involves hundreds of billions of dollars, more than 1 million acres of prime farm and ranch land, and what

could well become the largest cost-of-living increase in state history.

How is a true voter revolt even possible, in the crippled (if not broken) Texas electoral process?

The answer: 42 percent. That’s the segment of voters who, according to a *Wall Street Journal* poll last November, self-identify as independent.

Independents shop the ballot, voting for the person, not the party — 1.3 million of us voted in November for either the tough Grandma or Kinky. Our combined votes would have won 47 Texas counties and come in second in an additional 178.

Nationally, we helped the Democrats take back Congress (for now). And for now, we’re helping Barack Obama send a message to the Democratic Party that it must seriously fight the overriding influence of special interests — or lose the crucial support of independents.

Along with many good people in both parties and hundreds of local elected officials, we have been fighting to stop the state from putting one of our most valuable state assets — highways — up for sale (or “leases” of 50 years or more) to private interests.

We have pushed for a moratorium on these projects, like the Texas 121 road in Collin County as well as the mammoth Trans-Texas Corridor.

In the Metroplex, one of the most outspoken critics of the moratorium has been North Richland Hills Mayor Oscar Trevino.

The *Star-Telegram* quoted him Feb. 28 as saying: “We’re going to take the biggest hit if there’s any kind of moratorium on toll roads. The [Loop] 820 project has already been delayed for so many years. If there’s a toll road backlash, it won’t answer our congestion problems today, or for that matter the next five years.”

What the paper failed to tell you is that Trevino is president and co-owner of J.L. Steele LP, a highway contractor, and a Texas Department of Transportation-approved road contracting company. And so it goes with Perry, TxDOT and their supporters.

The Trinity Parkway toll road project in Dallas is, along with Texas 121, engendering much local opposition. In 1998, Dallas voters narrowly approved \$246 million in bonds for park and flood control on the Trinity, only to find out later that they would get a six-lane, high-speed toll road at a cost now approaching \$1 billion.

Independent Texans will be participating in a Dallas citizens referendum, led by City Councilwoman Angela Hunt, to undo this bait-and-switch deal. And Fort Worth community leaders, such as former City Councilman Clyde Picht (who is currently running again), have raised the possibility of flooding problems in Dallas if the Tarrant Regional Water District plan for the Trinity is implemented.

No major media have yet reported that President Bush's nomination for general counsel of the U.S. Department of Transportation is David J. Gribbin IV. He is a former employee of Macquarie Holdings, an investment partner of Cintra, the Spanish company that Perry wants to run these Texas toll roads.

According to Pat Choate, an infrastructure expert and author of *American Ruins: The Decaying Infrastructure*, Macquarie and Cintra are touting projected 12.5 to 18 percent profit margins on toll roads.

"Their investment banker, Goldman Sachs, is promising 18 percent returns to investors," Choate said. "I have talked with people who they have approached with that offer. These are very, very profitable deals."

Independents are looking to be the swing-and-sway votes in the Metroplex's hotly contested May 12 city council and mayoral races: We will help swing candidates' elections if they will help us sway Texas away from these highway heists.

But we need to do this quickly, while our state still belongs to the people.

Linda Curtis is the founder of Independent Texans, has been involved in the independent political movement for 27 years and lives in the Austin area.

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Some commentators believe that this presidential election may represent a sea change in American politics. In "Didn't Hear Nobody Pray," Amsterdam News publisher emeritus Wilbert Tatum says: "Make no mistake about it, this is an historic year." While he gives Barack Obama recognition and respect for introducing a new political vision into the campaign, he also wisely suggests that "a trumpet must sound" before America can galvanize itself to produce an Obama win or a victory by Hillary Clinton. "There has to be a change," he says. "That change has to be now."

The New York Amsterdam News

Wilbert A. Tatum

Didn't Hear Nobody Pray

April 5-April 11 — I was way down yonder by myself and I didn't hear nobody pray. Barack Obama had not yet reported the results of his first quarter fund raising effort. Hillary Clinton's report was already in. She had raised twenty-six million dollars and was sitting on ten million dollars more of funds raised earlier. Other candidates had done reasonably well and Barack Obama was not yet heard from.

Could it be as we had imagined a disastrous fund raising effort? Could it be that after all of this sound and fury that generated so much hope that Barack Obama simply couldn't get it where it counted — in the wallets and pocket books of America? The wait lasted for two days because, he said, they were still counting the money. They well may have been.

Barack Obama came in having raised a spectacular twenty-five million dollars plus, just behind Hillary Clinton and ahead of all of those other guys who were supposed to win. When one gets that close in politics they call it a win.

Barack Obama had won the first outing. This was

real money they were talking about. This was no slipping and sliding and peeping and hiding not knowing which way to go. This meant that Barack Obama was in business and he was in business to stay. That he would indeed be a contender. But then Barack Obama may have surprised us all because he raised six point nine million dollars on the internet alone from more than one hundred thousand people without accepting any money at all from those whom they call the fat cats – lobbyists, well established givers and people in industries with the deep pockets who had much to gain by being in first and early with a lot of money for a candidate who did not have money of his own.

It is too early, we believe, for us to get excited about what will happen with Mr. Obama. Yet there is a sense of pride in those who happen to be Black and others who want a good guy to win. Let us wait with bated breath until the next report is in.

We were not at all surprised by Mitt Romney and his coming into the race on the Republican side with a hat full of rain and twenty million dollars with more where that came from. That was to have been expected. He is a Mormon, a conservative and from the side of the ledger that does not give much unless he sees an opportunity for success. They are not players per se. They are conservatives who bet on real things. They intend to win and will pour as much money into this fight as is required. Walk the streets of any Mormon community and smell the money. So we are off and running.

We have not yet heard from Fred Thompson, who would be a formidable candidate on the Republican side, and although Rudolph Giuliani has already thrown his hat into the ring, he has not really. He is testing the waters, playing it safe, waiting for somebody else to fall.

Everyone, committed or not, is waiting – for what we don't know. They are waiting for a shoe to fall but that shoe is already there. Someone has decided to become President of the United States. It is either those who have already dropped their shoe or it is a person who has not yet decided that this is his or her time, his or her season. Make no mistake about it, this is an historic year.

As we wait from day to day to hear the propaganda coming out of the headquarters of the candidates for office we do not get excited and we do not get angry. We are waiting for something that is new and different to emerge. What that is we can't even imagine although we know that we are going to have an historic year.

Sometime earlier in the game we would have said that Barack Obama had as much chance of winning as a snowball in hell has of surviving when the furnace is fully stoked. Somehow we don't feel that way now. This year is different. Black people are different. They don't believe that Barack Obama can win but the closer he gets to Mecca the more faith they'll have in the story of miracles. They do happen, you know. But as we have continued to say all along it is too early to tell anything. What the trends are we cannot tell. What the odds are not even Las Vegas is posting.

Where is that peculiar something that happens and is evident when a sea-change is about to occur in our midst? We do not see any of it yet. The question that it is too early to ask is: "where will I be when the first trumpet sounds?" For indeed a trumpet must sound before there is an Obama win and for that matter a Clinton win. They are in the same boat you know. A white woman is as Black in an election as Sonny Carson.

So we are stuck with a hat full of dilemmas, all impossible, all improbable and yet entirely plausible if America is going to survive. There has to be a change. That change has to be now. We cannot wait. We must not wait. There is no excuse for yesterday. There is no win for tomorrow unless that win is paid for and structured today.

Where will we be when that trumpet sounds? As you well know that trumpet is supposed to wake up the dead. Given the track record of Blacks and Liberals in America that day has come and gone. Our hope is an unexpected miracle. We can make that happen. If we try.

I am still way down yonder. There is a faint whisper of a prayer. We do not know whose prayer it is. Not yet. Not yet.

Wilbert A. Tatum is Publisher Emeritus and Chairman of the Board of The New York Amsterdam News.

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In “Could Bloomberg Shake Up Race?” The Wall Street Journal revisits the will he?/won’t he? terrain surrounding New York City’s mayor. Bloomberg’s margin of victory in his first run came from votes on the Independence Party line; his nonpartisan approach to governance has enhanced his popularity with fellow New Yorkers ever since. Reporter June Kronholz zeros in on whether the “political vacuum” created by the super-early major party primaries might open the door to a major independent – like Bloomberg – getting into the race.

The Wall Street Journal

June Kronholz

Could Bloomberg Shake Up Race?

Voter Frustration Could Open Door To Independent Presidential Run

May 1 — In 1992, Ross Perot’s quixotic run for the presidency tapped into voters’ deep worries about the state of the country and unhappiness with the major-party candidates. The Texas businessman shook up the race, capturing one of every five votes cast.

Fifteen years later, the political winds that fanned the Perot candidacy might be blowing once again — this time stirring talk of an independent run by another billionaire, New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg. “More people are willing to consider an independent today than in 1992,” says Frank Luntz, a Republican pollster who worked for Mr. Perot, and then for Mr. Bloomberg in 2001. He predicts the mayor could get as much as 25% of the popular vote.

Mr. Bloomberg, who is 65 years old, denies he is running, although the New York gossip columns regularly quote “friends” claiming otherwise. “As Mayor Bloomberg has said repeatedly, all of this speculation is flattering, but he is not running for President,” his press

secretary, Stu Loeser, wrote in an email. Mr. Bloomberg also has said his personal profile — a divorced, Jewish New Yorker — makes him an unlikely candidate. But as in 1992, voter disaffection with Washington — plus an estimated \$5.3 billion personal fortune — has kept Mr. Bloomberg’s name alive as a candidate.

In the most recent *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll, only 22% of voters said the U.S. is “headed in the right direction,” the lowest since July 1992, when Mr. Perot’s poll numbers were at their highest.

President Bush’s handling of Iraq accounts for much of that dissatisfaction. But so does warring partisanship on Capitol Hill, a string of corruption scandals and Congress’s perceived inability to improve people’s lives.

That is leading to talk among even establishment activists that voters might be especially willing next year to look beyond the major parties. Former aides to Presidents Carter and Ford are helping to promote an effort called Unity08 that seeks to put a bipartisan ticket on the presidential ballot, after an online primary. That could be a natural vehicle for Mr. Bloomberg, a Democrat-turned-Republican.

Mr. Bloomberg’s opening would come if voters were to grow so disenchanted with the big-party nominees that they begin looking for an alternative, says Ed Rollins, Mr. Perot’s campaign manager. He attributes Mr. Perot’s 1992 popularity to Republican disaffection with the first President Bush, who had reneged on a pledge not to raise taxes, and Democratic uncertainty about Bill Clinton, whose campaign was rocked by charges of womanizing, draft avoidance and excessive political calculation.

Discontent is a bigger problem now for Republicans than Democrats. In the *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll, only 53% of Republicans said they are satisfied with their field of candidates.

Democrats say they are generally satisfied with their choices but have doubts they can win the general election. The party’s front-runner, New York Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, in particular rattles Democrats because of her reputation as one of the most polarizing figures in politics. In a March 2007 *Wall Street Journal*/NBC poll, 43% of respondents said they had a negative impression of her — seven points more than those who saw her positively.

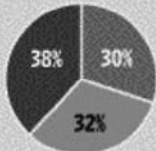
Perot '92, Bloomberg '08?

Texas billionaire Ross Perot shook up the 1992 presidential race with an independent bid. Some political conditions appear similar this campaign, fueling speculation of a run by New York billionaire Michael Bloomberg.

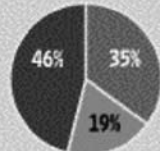
In 1992, both major-party candidates were unpopular through much of the campaign:

Rate your feelings toward this candidate*

■ Negative ■ Positive ■ Neutral/not sure



Bill Clinton
July 1992



George H.W. Bush
July 1992

Source: WSJ/NBC News polls

In 2007, Republicans are lukewarm about their candidates...

Are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the choices for the Republican presidential nomination?

■ Satisfied ■ Dissatisfied ■ Not sure

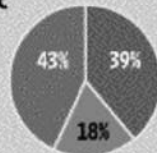
April 2007

Feeling	Percentage
Satisfied	53%
Dissatisfied	33%
Not sure	14%

While many voters feel negatively about the Democratic frontrunner

Rate your feelings toward this candidate*

■ Negative ■ Positive ■ Neutral/not sure



Hillary Clinton
March 2007

The early primary calendar could also help Mr. Bloomberg. Thirty states may choose their convention delegates by Feb. 5, 2008. That means neither party would be able to rethink its candidate during the spring or summer if he or she stumbled or lost steam. In that vacuum, Mr. Bloomberg could “go from zero to 60 overnight,” says Carol Darr, director of George Washington University’s Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet.

A two-term mayor who will leave office at the end of 2009, Mr. Bloomberg is known for a get-it-done management style that helped stoke New York’s turnaround. He has riled some voters with his nanny-state initiatives such as banning smoking and trans-fats in restaurants, but he also has won admirers for taking tough stands. While national Democrats hemmed and hawed about gun control after last month’s shootings at Virginia Tech, for example, Mr. Bloomberg stepped up his campaign against illegal gun sales.

Should he run, Mr. Bloomberg’s fiscal-conservative, social-moderate credentials could undermine the candidacy of Rudy Giuliani, the current front-runner for the Republican presidential nomination. Both play up moderate stands on abortion, gay rights and gun control. Mr. Bloomberg also could draw votes from a Democrat seen as too left of the mainstream on taxes and budget control, such as former North Carolina Sen. John Edwards. He might leach support from Illinois

Sen. Barack Obama, whose appeal relies partly on talk of ending partisan squabbling.

An independent candidacy faces huge roadblocks, though. Each state has its own set of complex rules on who can be on a ballot. Theresa Amato, who managed Ralph Nader’s 2000 and 2004 bids, says he eventually got on 34 state ballots in 2004 but had to go to court in a dozen of those. And the two major parties have grown increasingly aggressive about keeping third-party and independent candidates off the ballot.

Campaign professionals say Mr. Bloomberg could get into the race as late as next spring or summer – about the time voters typically begin paying attention. Mr.

Bloomberg’s wealth and communications savvy – he earned his fortune providing news and analytic technology to business subscribers – would enable him to skirt many of the problems that might doom another late entrant. He could afford to finance a campaign himself rather than spend energy courting donors.

Whether he could actually win the presidency is another question. No independent has done so before, and the winner-take-all nature of the Electoral College means Mr. Bloomberg would have to win states, not just individual votes. Even with 19% of the popular vote, Mr. Perot won no electoral votes.

Mr. Bloomberg’s role could be that of a spoiler, though. Mr. Perot drew his support from Republican deficit hawks and helped Mr. Clinton prevail. Mr. Nader in 2000 helped Mr. Bush.

“I don’t think [Mr. Bloomberg] stands a chance in hell,” says L. Brent Bozell, a conservative activist and president of Media Research Center. “I also think anything could happen.”

June Kronholz is a staff reporter for The Wall Street Journal.

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Some independents have stepped forward to connect themselves and the independent movement to the Obama candidacy. South Carolina's Wayne Griffin, a city councilman in Greer and state chairman of the South Carolina Independence Party, announced the formation of Independents for Obama in mid-April. Griffin, a longtime independent, is a proponent of building a black and independent alliance. "If we can bring those two things together – the Obama candidacy and the independent movement – to develop a black and independent voter alliance," he says, "there is real reason to think we can make serious changes for the good."

South Carolina Black News

Wayne Griffin

It's Time for Independents for Obama

April 12 - 18 — There are two popular myths about politics in America which it's time to challenge. One is that all independent voters are white. And the other is that all black people are Democrats. A presidential election is a good moment to set the record straight, particularly since South Carolina is set to play an important role in the 2008 primaries and all voters – including independents – can vote. Setting this record straight is connected to the political fortunes of one particular presidential candidate – Barack Obama.

I'm a fourth generation African American here in the Palmetto State. I started voting independent in the late 1980s. Today, I'm the state chairman of the South Carolina Independence Party, a ballot-qualified party with roots in the Perot movement but which is also part of an overall national effort to bring independent politics to black voters.

Roughly 35% of voting-age African Americans under 30 consider themselves independents, not Democrats. They feel that the political process has become partisan and the Democratic Party has become unresponsive, so being an independent is the only alternative, since the Republicans have never been especially hospitable to black people. (They're still trying to fly the Confederate flag on statehouse grounds.)

There are many signs that a significant portion of black America is looking to break the mold on partisan politics. Right next door, in Augusta, Georgia, a black independent, Helen Blocker-Adams, running for the state assembly, garnered 32% of the vote against an incumbent black Democrat in 2006. In 2005, 47% of black voters walked away from the Democratic Party in the New York City mayoral election to back Independent/Republican Mike Bloomberg. And this is not just a "black thing." Polls show that 40% of all Americans are now independents, and base their votes on the candidate, not the party. The question for us, for the independents, is how to best use the new power that we have to influence the 2008 presidential election.

Now, you might ask, what does any of this have to do with Barack Obama? I believe that Obama – and his campaign – are both products of the swing towards political independence. Here's what Senator Obama has to say about the cynicism and partisanship of American politics. He says restoring confidence in the political process is "the most difficult task that confronts us, even harder than dealing with Iraq." He adds, "We have a sense that special interests and big money set the agenda, so there's reason for cynicism, but there's also reason for hope."

Those words are spoken by independents every day of the week. And, the real hope lies in the fact that so many Americans – black and white – are waking up to the corruption of partisan politics and becoming independents. If we can bring those two things together – the Obama candidacy and the independent movement – to develop a black and independent voter alliance, there is real reason to think we can make serious changes for the good. Barack Obama is the presidential candidate who stands for that new politic. That's why I'll be voting for him in the Democratic primary. And that's why I'm forming South Carolina Independents for Obama. We'll be mobilizing independents of all hues to vote for Barack Obama in the Democratic primary on January 29, 2008.

A new poll of independent voters in the state over the last three weeks shows Obama to be the most popular presidential candidate with independent voters. But the pressure is on, particularly in the black community, to back Hillary Clinton. The word out in the churches, for example, is that some ministers (the ones who are supporting Hillary) are unhappy that Obama is even running because, "It's not his time. It's Hillary's time."

Well, time is a funny thing. As the saying goes, time doesn't stand still. And neither does the political clock. When the moment for change comes, you've got to grab it, or it passes you by. Black people need to provide leadership to a new multiracial mass movement for reform. It's time for a black and independent alliance. It's time for progressive change that brings Americans together. It's time to end the war in Iraq. That means it's time for South Carolina's independents to support Barack Obama.

Wayne Griffin is chairman of the Independence Party of South Carolina.

This guest editorial also appeared in Carolina Panorama, The Community Times, and Black Star News.

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In "Democrats Duke It Out Onstage," the Augusta Chronicle looks at the first debate among the announced Democratic presidential candidates through the eyes of independent Helen Blocker-Adams; she is the Augusta businesswoman who received nearly one-third of the vote last year when she ran for Georgia's House of Representatives as an independent against the Democratic incumbent. As a participant in Debate Watch, Blocker-Adams is part of a team of hundreds of independent voters around the country who are surveying the field of presidential contenders for signs of independent life.

The Augusta Chronicle

Kirsten Singleton

Democrats Duke It Out Onstage

Party's first debate is part of an 'uphill battle' in state

April 27 — ORANGEBURG, SC — Augusta's Helen Blocker-Adams doesn't care about John Edwards' \$400 haircuts or Barack Obama's ties to indicted Chicago developer Tony Rezko.

"What does that have to do with him being president?" she asked.

What she does care about: health care policies, plans for Iraq, a commitment to bipartisanship.

Unfortunately for the eight Democratic candidates who debated here Thursday night, Ms. Blocker-Adams didn't hear enough details on any of those to impress her.

Moderated by NBC's Brian Williams and broadcast live, it was the first opportunity Americans had to compare the party's two major presidential candidates side by side.

They didn't make much of an impact on Ms. Blocker-Adams, though.

"I'm just so sick of the politically correct answers," she said.

Ms. Blocker-Adams represents one of two groups any Democratic candidate will have to impress in order to win the presidency in 2008: independents.

Proud of her history of voting for the candidate, not the party, Ms. Blocker-Adams participated in The Committee for a Unified Independent Party's Debate Watch '08 survey.

Participants nationwide watched Democratic candidates square off in Orangeburg on Thursday night and analyzed what they heard.

Ms. Blocker-Adams – a 46-year-old business consultant – caught half of the debate. None of the candidates made a significant impression, she said – though she liked former Alaska Sen. Mike Gravel's candor.

Asked about a comment he made a while back saying it didn't matter whether he won the presidency, Mr. Gravel responded: "You're right. I made that statement. But that's before I had a chance to stand with them (the other candidates) a couple or three times. It's like going into the Senate. You know, the first time you get there, you're all excited, 'My God, how did I ever get here?' Then, about six months later, you say, 'How the hell did the rest of them get here?'"

Ms. Blocker-Adams does want to hear more from Mr. Obama, the Illinois senator, and Sen. Joseph Biden of Delaware: Mr. Biden, because he's experienced; Mr. Obama, because he's not a career politician – yet, she said.

"He does seem to have some fresh ideas because he's a new face out there," Ms. Blocker-Adams said.

There's one other group of voters Democrats have to woo: Democrats themselves.

Sen. Hillary Clinton, Mr. Obama, Mr. Biden, Mr. Edwards, Sen. Chris Dodd of Connecticut, Gov. Bill Richardson of New Mexico, Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio and Mr. Gravel all are fighting for the right to go head-to-head with the Republican Party's choice for president in 2008.

And to do that, they'll have to win the Democratic primaries.

Planned for Jan. 29, South Carolina's primary is one of the earliest.

As a result, Democrats here are in the national spotlight and are hoping to use that to the party's advantage.

The Democratic Party has a deep bench this time around, and the debate will prove it to America, said Aiken County Democratic Chairman John Brecht.

For South Carolina in particular, Mr. Brecht said, it's an opportunity to show what Democrats can offer: fiscal responsibility, "responsible" foreign policy in Iraq, affordable education.

A Democratically controlled Congress already is a good start, he said.

"Aiken County is probably within the top 13 Republican Party (counties) in the state, and I'm trying to grow a Democratic Party," he said.

"It's an uphill battle."

Kirsten Singleton is a writer for the Morris News Service.

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Nebraska's Senator Chuck Hagel, Republican, announced in mid-March that he would not enter the presidential race but nonetheless asserted that great changes are underway. "We are experiencing a political reorientation, a redefining and moving toward a new political center of gravity," Senator Hagel said, adding that "this movement is bigger than both parties." More recently, speculation about a possible independent run by Hagel has picked up steam.

The New York Times

Jeff Zeleny

Senator From Nebraska Says No to Presidential Bid, for Now

March 12 — WASHINGTON, DC — Senator Chuck Hagel, Republican of Nebraska, said Monday that he would not enter the 2008 presidential race — for the time being, at least — so he could concentrate on domestic and global concerns, particularly helping secure an end to the Iraq war.

"America is facing its most divisive and difficult issue since Vietnam — the war in Iraq, an issue that I have been deeply involved in," said Mr. Hagel, a critic of the war. "I want to keep my focus on helping find a responsible way out of this tragedy, and not divert my energy, efforts and judgment with competing political considerations."

Mr. Hagel did not extinguish the prospect of jumping into the Republican contest later this year. But he conceded that his decision, reached two weeks ago and held privately until Monday, would complicate any later effort to join the race, saying, "I cannot control that, and I don't worry about that."

For months, Mr. Hagel had done little to tamp down speculation that he was considering a presidential bid. He staged his announcement at the University

of Nebraska, Omaha, with such suspense that many Republicans expected him to declare he was naming a committee to test whether there was room for a vocal war critic in a Republican presidential primary.

But even as he walked away from the microphone, three possibilities remained: running for president at the 11th hour, seeking re-election to a third term in the Senate or retiring from politics.

"The political currents in America are more unpredictable today than at any time in modern history," Mr. Hagel said. "We are experiencing a political re-orientation, a redefining and moving toward a new political center of gravity."

"This movement is bigger than both parties," he said, while vowing not to abandon his Republican past.

Aides said Mr. Hagel had no intention of seeking the presidential nomination as an independent or third-party candidate.

Had Mr. Hagel entered the race, he would have become the 11th Republican either declaring or exploring a presidential bid. Candidates in the race, Democrats and Republicans alike, watched his announcement with interest, particularly Senator John McCain, Republican of Arizona and a close friend.

Mr. McCain, whose support for the Iraq war has complicated his own candidacy, said last week that he believed Mr. Hagel could have found support for his views among Republicans. But Mr. Hagel was far behind other Republicans, having not built an organization or raised money for a possible presidential bid.

Fergus Cullen, the chairman of the New Hampshire Republican Party, said he did not believe that Mr. Hagel's decision would preclude him from entering in the race later. Many hopefuls, Mr. Cullen said, could be out of money and steam by Labor Day.

"When I look at the pace of this year's presidential campaign," Mr. Cullen said, "not all of these candidates will be able to sustain this race for the whole time. In Senator Hagel's case, especially for his views against the war, events in Iraq might dictate the course of his campaign more than anything they can do on the ground."

Jeff Zeleny is a congressional correspondent for The New York Times.

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Turning to the more frustrating aspects of independent political life, the Joplin Globe chronicled efforts by Republican legislators in Missouri to cripple future candidacies by independents in the wake of strong showings by non-major party contenders in 2006. While many acknowledge the emergent power of the independent movement, at the local level some cunning elected officials are finding new ways to curtail that power.

The Joplin Globe

Susan Redden

Election Experience Turns into Bills

February 20 — Two things that happened to Sen. Gary Nodler on his way to re-election last November are targeted in bills he has introduced in the Missouri Senate.

One measure would require independent candidates to declare their candidacy at the same time as partisan candidates for statewide offices, congressional districts, the state Senate and House, and circuit judge seats. Nodler drew opposition from an independent candidate — Kim Wright — in November. He won, receiving nearly 64 percent of the vote.

The other bill would clarify the requirement on ballots that must be supplied to each polling place for elections. Jasper County ran out of ballots at some polling places in the November election, forcing some residents to vote on photocopied, paper ballots. The ballots included some that were copied at the polls, and there were reports that some showed votes that had been cast for other candidates. Nodler said he was told that some of the ballots used in a Royal Heights polling place in Joplin were copied after being marked, showing votes for Wright.

Nodler, R-Joplin, characterized state law as having a “quirk” that provides “special conditions for independent candidates.”

He said it is “preferential treatment” for independent candidates to be allowed to declare for office months after partisan candidates have filed.

Jackie Salit, political director with the Committee for a Unified Independent Party, said the goal of Nodler’s legislation is to make it more difficult for independent candidates to compete against party nominees.

“When independents show their strength — as Kim Wright did when she polled 36 percent of the vote — the major parties strike back and try to make it more difficult for independents to compete,” Salit said. “We take that as a clear sign that the power of the independent movement is growing.”

Wright disagreed that independent candidates “could ever be perceived as having an unfair advantage, compared to an incumbent or other candidates who have a party’s support and financial backing.”

“The only advantage an independent may have,” she said, “is that they might come closer to reflecting the concerns of the public, rather than the party.”

Nodler said he believes the bill addresses “an equal protection issue.”

“The way it is now is an invitation to political mischief and could allow parties to organize phony independent candidates to tilt the outcome of the general election,” he said. “There’s less of a chance of that if everyone has to identify themselves at the same time. But the timing is the only difference. It (the bill) changes nothing else on the procedure by which an independent gains a place on the ballot.”

Nodler also said that Wright “was not really an independent because she was identified as a local representative of the Howard Dean campaign, is listed among progressive Democrats of America and received support from local Democrat organizations.”

Wright agreed that she had been involved in Democratic politics in the past. She noted such in her campaign.

“I make no bones about that, but as an individual I have been very disheartened by both parties,” she said. “I did accept contributions from some Democrat groups, but I didn’t solicit them, and they wouldn’t have been giving to me if they had their own candidate.”

Regarding the second measure, Nodler said he has been talking with the secretary of state’s office since

the November election because of what he believes were “significant voting irregularities” as a result of the ballot shortage in Jasper County.

He said the bill, based on a suggestion from the secretary of state’s office, changes one word in the law to specify that voters have an opportunity to cast “an actual ballot” in elections.

He said that addresses arguments from some election authorities who say that an electronic tally in a voting machine constitutes a ballot, and that it addresses other issues, such as photocopied ballots. Jasper County election officials said there were some ballots that showed previous votes, but they had no impact on the outcome because photocopied ballots were hand-counted and election judges were able to distinguish the actual ballot markings.

No opposition

The two bills encountered no opposition, Nodler said, when they were heard Monday by the Senate Financial, Governmental Organizations and Elections Committee. The committee chairman is Sen. Delbert Scott, R-Lowry City, who co-sponsored the legislation on independent candidates.

Susan Redden is a staff writer for The Joplin Globe.

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David Broder has given consistent and positive coverage to Unity08, the independent effort to mobilize ordinary citizens to assert a grassroots demand for nonpartisanship; at the same time he has tried to engage Unity08’s architects in a public dialogue on the pluses and minuses of their strategy. Here he reports on developments.

The Washington Post

David S. Broder

Third-Party Campaign Seeks Nonpartisan Advantage

February 25 — Somewhere in America, there are 35,000 people looking at the preliminaries to the 2008 presidential race from a different perspective than that of millions of their fellow citizens.

They are the people who have signed up so far to participate in Unity08, the effort to launch a bipartisan third-party campaign with the first Internet nominating convention in history. I wrote about this unusual venture when it was launched last year by Hamilton Jordan and Jerry Rafshoon, both formerly of Jimmy Carter’s White House; Angus King, the former independent governor of Maine; and Douglas Bailey, a veteran Republican consultant and political adviser.

I contacted Bailey recently to ask what had happened to this bold gamble, and he was the source of that 35,000 figure for the number of people who have lent support to the scheme. They obviously have a long way to go before they can claim to be a viable political force, but they are making slow, steady progress.

When I called Bailey, it had been just a week since the group announced that anyone who was interested could sign up at <http://www.unity08.com> as a vot-

ing delegate to a national convention planned for June 2008. Most of the sign-ups came before that formal start, Bailey said, in response to last year's publicity about the formation of Unity08.

"The need [for a third party] is as great as it's ever been," Bailey said. "The partisan bickering in Washington continues nonstop, and the contest for the nominations in both parties is likely to make it worse."

He pointed to two problems that many of us have decried. "The leading candidates in both parties have suggested they will decline federal matching funds and plan to spend unlimited sums," he said. "They expect the bundlers — the people collecting for them — to raise a million dollars each, and what do they [the bundlers] expect in return?"

Second, Bailey said, "the likelihood is that the nominees of both parties will be determined by the first three or four primaries, which means that 99 percent of the people who will vote in November will have absolutely no say in the names that are on the ballot. It's not surprising that they may be looking for an alternative."

None of that is implausible. But where does the alternative come from? Bailey and his partners have an answer, but the process they have in mind still strikes me — as it did when it was first outlined — as extremely cumbersome.

In a few weeks, they will outline provisional rules for their own nomination process, determining how candidates will qualify and how the voting will be conducted. The goal is to pick either a political independent for president or to form a ticket with both a Democrat and a Republican. Feedback will be welcomed before the rules are made final, he said.

Then comes the hard part. Thirty-nine states allow a new party to petition its way onto the presidential ballot, without having a named candidate, but the deadlines and numbers of signers required vary widely. The first test will be whether Unity08 attracts enough volunteers and money to carry out that effort.

And then comes the challenge of recruiting a candidate or candidates for Unity08 to back. If its organizers had a compelling person already lined up, their task would be much easier, but they do not.

I suggested to Bailey that the underlying premise of this campaign — the need to cure the partisanship of Washington — might be undercut if the Republicans and Democrats nominated people who are not closely

associated with those partisan battles — mentioning Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney and Mike Huckabee on the GOP side and Barack Obama and Bill Richardson among the Democrats.

"To the degree that the nominees of the two parties recognize that bipartisan leadership is essential, then it shows the political process has made a self-adjustment, and that is good," he said. "But the usual game is to target the base of your party, rile it up with wedge issues and ignore the middle."

"If they do that again, we will be ready. It is possible the parties can right the ship themselves, but I don't have a lot of confidence in that happening."

David S. Broder is a columnist for The Washington Post.

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Are you one of those political junkies who can't wait to get up on Sunday morning to turn on the TV so you can hear your favorite pundit

opine? Or do you find the blah-blah-blah of the talk shows long on pomposity, short on relevance, and altogether something of a turn-off?

Either way, you may enjoy tuning

in to *Talk/Talk*, wherein each week *Neo* editor Jacqueline Salit and the postmodern philosopher Fred Newman deconstruct and attempt to make new meaning out of what the talking heads are talking (and not talking) about.*

The talk in *Talk/Talk* most often centers on NBC's Sunday morning talk show lineup: *The Chris Matthews Show*, *Meet the Press*, and *The McLaughlin Group*.

*The most recent *Talk/Talk* is available every week on the website of the Committee for a Unified Independent Party, www.independentvoting.org. An archive of previous transcripts is also located on the site.

Talk / Talk



Broken Hearts, Broken Politics

April 8, 2007

SALIT: Chris Matthews looks at the financial reports from the presidential candidates. He looks at Hillary's number, Obama's number, the whole field's number, and, of course, observes that Obama nearly matched Hillary in dollars raised and doubled her in terms of numbers of contributors – 100,000 for him, 50,000 for her. Matthews then asked the following question: “Does this mean that the Democrats are not ready to commit to Hillary Clinton?” He thinks it shows they're not. So let me ask you the same question.

NEWMAN: I think he's right.

SALIT: Let's break this down a little bit. It was supposed to be Hillary's turn.

NEWMAN: So Bill and Hillary have said.

SALIT: Okay. But it turns out that they haven't made the sale. They haven't made the sale to the Democratic Party base.

NEWMAN: And, as long as the magic number stays below 50% – that is the percentage of voters who say they are willing to support Hillary – that will be their position. She doesn't have an outright winning position. She's got a good position, a strong position, but not a winning position.

SALIT: To state the obvious here, what is ramming her position is a guy named Barack Obama.

NEWMAN: I don't agree with that. What is ramming her position is a lack of totally strong support in the Democratic base. And what comes after that, not before that, is Barack Obama.

SALIT: That's well put. What comes after that is Obama and his team of people...

NEWMAN: ...and Edwards. There's still an opening there.

SALIT: What is the opening? How would you characterize the politics of the opening?

NEWMAN: That is determined by Obama and Edwards. Edwards thinks that the opening – which is measurable, after all, by what goes through it – is for a kind of old-fashioned Democratic Party populism. He thinks he can sell that. He thinks that what the Democrats need is not so much a new vision, a new face, but a return to a traditional liberal values face, with vigor and strength and electability. Obama has a different message. I'm biased, of course, but I'll put it this way anyway. The message is there has to be a hook-up with this new independent movement, without going so far as to leave the Democrats. So he's more of a follower of Howard Dean, whereas Edwards is more of a follower of President Roosevelt. Edwards thinks there's still a victory left in that, that Kerry ran a bad campaign and didn't pick up on that sufficiently. Nor did Gore, although I'm sure he would add *Gore won the popular vote*. So there are two different views of the opening. Then there's Hillary, who's saying there is no opening. And she's saying it from a very powerful position. That's the look of the Democratic primary, it seems to me. The other candidates are not relevant.

SALIT: Matthews, who's struck by the advance of both the Obama and Edwards campaigns, but particularly the Obama insurgency, says, “However, we've got to caution ourselves because the Democratic Party has

a history of 'broken hearts,' insurgencies that lost their momentum." He named Gene McCarthy, Gary Hart, Paul Tsongas, Howard Dean. They came on early, they came on strong, they had a vision, they had a message, they went up against the old-line establishment, but they couldn't put it over the finish line.

NEWMAN: None of them were black and gifted.

SALIT: And what's the implication of that? What are you pointing to?

NEWMAN: There's a synthesis in Barack Obama of the old Democratic alliance, in which black America is central, and the new outsider insurgency. That creates a genuinely new vision that has a real base and real strength. The black/independent alliance – as we call it – has strength beyond its numbers. And God knows what its numbers are. We're only just now finding that out.

SALIT: Also very well put. I was struck, when Matthews went through his list of "broken hearts," that Jesse Jackson wasn't on the list. I suppose he would say that no one ever believed that Jackson was going to go all the way to the nomination...that it wasn't that kind of campaign, though I don't know that everybody who supported Jackson felt that way.

NEWMAN: I don't know that everybody who supported Paul Tsongas felt that *he* was going all the way.

SALIT: That's certainly true. Matthews asked another question that you and I had already discussed prior to the show: Can Obama remain an outsider all the way through? The pundits talk about being an "outsider" in terms of who you take money from. He's not taking money from lobbyists and, as Mike Duffy from *Time* pointed out, Obama left \$2-3 million on the table from Washington, DC alone because he wouldn't take money from those kinds of donors. But my point is that they frame being an outsider simply in terms of where your money comes from.

NEWMAN: Obama has something going for him that suggests that he *can* remain an outsider because he's part of a group, namely black America, which has always been an outsider. You can't easily portray Obama as an insider, Charlie Rangel's encouragement notwithstanding. In a way, he's an eternal outsider in the political culture of this country.

SALIT: Do you think part of his message is: It's time for the outsiders to govern?

NEWMAN: No, I think his message is that this country can no longer proceed in a progressive manner if there are going to be insiders and outsiders.

SALIT: That's a powerful message.

NEWMAN: Yes. And, uttered by a black man, that's a very, very powerful message. Not to mention that he's a gifted, bright, Harvard graduate who's raised \$25 million. That's a very powerful message by a black man.

SALIT: George Bush came under the microscope again.

NEWMAN: Never has so insignificant a personage spent so much time under a microscope.

SALIT: Exactly. In a new poll, 56% of Americans say that going to war was a mistake *and* it's a hopeless cause. The numbers are roughly the same as they've been but the focus here is on the formulation – "a hopeless cause." There was a lot of discussion about Bush having become totally isolated. He's living in a bubble. He's out of touch with what's happening.

NEWMAN: Where?

SALIT: In the country, in the world.

NEWMAN: You don't think George Bush reads different news reports?

SALIT: What do you make of this commentary about him?

NEWMAN: That under the influence of certain elements, like the neo-cons (who we no longer hear about because they're almost all gone now) and the Far Right, Bush and his people were motivated to make a huge play, not only in Iraq, but on American foreign policy overall. They tried to transform the whole character of American foreign policy, from working within a coalitional, largely liberal-minded framework to being unilateralist and tough. He created the Tough America. But the Tough America hasn't worked. Europe said, *hey, we're not going to go along with that*. The Middle East comes together and says, *we're not going to roll over for a Tough America*. Who's going to support a Tough America?

SALIT: So is Bush in a bubble? Or is he just in trouble?

NEWMAN: He made a policy change and it failed.

SALIT: So has he now changed his policy but not his rhetoric?

NEWMAN: It doesn't make a difference.

SALIT: It doesn't make a difference.

NEWMAN: Americans know the basic truth here. This guy tried to make a takeover play and it failed.

SALIT: Does Bush not know that?

NEWMAN: Of course, he knows that. Karl Rove tells him that.

SALIT: So what's he doing in the face of that?

NEWMAN: Finishing out his term. What else is there to do?

SALIT: The talk about him being "in a bubble," isolated, etc. – is that what you say on Easter Sunday about the President of the United States when his policies have failed?

NEWMAN: What else are those pundits going to say? You can't say what I think a lot of them would like to say – that he's finished, completely finished, of no significance. Still, you've got to talk about him. He's the President of the United States.

SALIT: Tim Russert featured the interview that Matthew Dowd did with the *New York Times* last week. Dowd was a Bush confidant, part of the inner circle, one of the key people in the '04 campaign. He gave an interview to the *Times* in which he expressed a great deal of disappointment, personal and political, about the direction of Bush's second term. He's one of the people who are saying that Bush is disconnected from the world.

NEWMAN: He's an important person who's saying that, yes.

SALIT: The Republicans try to ease the blow here by saying, well, Dowd was a Democrat, he was never really a true blue, or a true red, Bush partisan. Kate O'Beirne said that "Dowd fell in love with Bush, as a candidate, and then he fell out of love." Referencing the divorce rate in America, she said: "That happens all the time." This is one of the few times I found myself agreeing with Kate O'Beirne.

NEWMAN: I thought what she said was eloquent and exactly on the money. Exactly right.

SALIT: Nancy Pelosi was also under the microscope this week. She went to Syria and met with Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Obviously, the Republicans and the conservative media machine saw an opening here. They're trying to bash her about it because she went to Syria when the White House asked her not to go. Meanwhile, members of Congress go to meet with the heads of unfriendly governments all the time. Obviously, Syria is a more hot button kind of visit, but nonetheless...So she's getting bashed by the Republicans for doing this and she's also

being criticized by some on the Democratic side for this gaffe, in which she supposedly misrepresented, or incompletely represented, Israel's position on negotiations with Syria. Is this thing a non-event?

NEWMAN: A non-event, no significance. Meetings with foreign leaders can often produce sideshows. This reminds me of the episode when Bush looked into Putin's eyes and "took the measure of the man." Then it comes back to bite him down the road because Putin turns out not to be a...

SALIT: ...liberal.

NEWMAN: A liberal member of the Republican Party. No, Putin is Putin. He runs his country. He doesn't work for Bush. It's the same kind of classical American arrogance. It's not even Bush's personal arrogance. But what's interesting and important is the presidential election of '08. That's what's coming up and that's what they're all feeding off and all living off. And when has the punditocracy ever had two years to do this before? It's somewhat unprecedented in America, with very interesting candidates. It's a great election.

SALIT: With important, strategic issues for the country, for the Democratic Party.

NEWMAN: And for the Republican Party.

SALIT: With huge amounts of money involved.

NEWMAN: And the American people seem a little more interested than usual.

SALIT: Yes.

NEWMAN: Obama's people can say: *Well, we got 100,000 contributors.* And the Clinton people can say: *We didn't need 100,000. We got it with 25% of our donor base. Obama had to stretch all the way out.* Well, the Clintons succeeded in what they were trying to do. And Obama succeeded in what he was trying to do. That makes an interesting election.

SALIT: And Edwards was not far behind.

NEWMAN: Right, he's still in there. And he's still smiling.

SALIT: And he's ahead in the polls in Iowa.

NEWMAN: Right, which might turn out to be more important than all the other stuff.

SALIT: To be continued, Fred. Thanks. NEO

The Consequences...

May 13, 2007

SALIT: Let's talk about John McCain, who was on *Meet the Press*. His position on the war in Iraq is that we've got to focus on what he calls "the consequences of failure." The American people don't seem to be swayed by that argument. At least that's what the polls are showing. And members of Congress, including Republican members of Congress, are sufficiently convinced of the public's position that they're going to the White House and telling Bush: *You've got to start to withdraw from Iraq*. But McCain seems very convinced that his argument can connect. How do you think about the apparent disconnect between that argument and where the public is at?

NEWMAN: Well, he's interested in getting the nomination of the Republican Party, which is by no means equivalent to where the American people as a whole are at. But in terms of "the consequences of failure" argument, I don't know that I agree with his assessment. Who is he? Nostradamus? To me, he's articulating a certain moral principle, which is his right, certainly, but not one that I necessarily agree with. One of *my* guiding moral principles, I would say to John McCain, is: If you can't afford to lose a war, don't get into it in the first place.

SALIT: Especially when it's a war of choice.

NEWMAN: If you can't afford to lose at poker, don't play. And that's what happened here. That's the stupidity of the neo-cons, of Bush, of Cheney. They got us into a conflict that the U.S. couldn't afford to lose. If you can't afford to lose, then you shouldn't get involved. The U.S. intervention was based on a kind of religious, patriotic, nationalistic, chauvinistic posture – whatever you want to call it – which says that We Will Prevail. But for me that moral principle is unacceptable. We have to accept the world situation for what it is. It's a variation of what Colin Powell said. It's not just if you break it, you own it. It's that if you can't afford the consequences, which include the serious possibility of failing, stay the hell out. That's my principle.

SALIT: McCain made the point that we won the war before we started to lose the war. We won Operation Shock and Awe, the taking of Baghdad, the removal of Saddam Hussein, etc.

NEWMAN: Did he advocate getting out then?

SALIT: No. He didn't advocate getting out then. His critique is of what happened next, which he blames on Donald Rumsfeld. However, that doesn't respond to the point that you're making.

NEWMAN: No, it doesn't.

SALIT: So, McCain is seeking the Republican nomination. He's putting forth a set of political positions designed to win that nomination.

NEWMAN: And it's not transparently obvious that he can't win the support of the conservative base of the Republican Party, and thereby win the nomination. He thinks that no matter what Giuliani does, Rudy won't convince the hardcore Republican right wing base to support him. He could be right.

SALIT: You could say that McCain's already forced Giuliani to the left on the abortion issue.

NEWMAN: He didn't force him to the left. He just forced him to be honest about what his views are.

SALIT: Yes, to more fully articulate his position. Giuliani's premise is that if you can elevate national security and defense issues to become the main focus in the primaries, then the fact that Giuliani is pro-choice won't hurt him. But the problem with Giuliani's strategy, it seems to me – and this is where McCain stands to gain – is that if you do keep the focus on national security, arguably McCain is stronger than Giuliani on that terrain. And what you get from McCain is you get all of that stuff on national defense without having to compromise on the "life" issue. So Giuliani's gamble can produce upside for McCain.

NEWMAN: McCain can say to Giuliani: *Listen, Rudy. I think you're a good man. You've done good stuff, but let's face it. Your main credential is that you did the best job possible at handling a terrorist attack on a major American city. Let's grant you that. Some people wouldn't, but let's grant you that. My "know-how," says McCain, is in developing policies which will prevent it from happening again.*

SALIT: He could surely make that case.

NEWMAN: McCain could pursue it even further: *Did you do some things which people questioned? Like where you put your headquarters and the failure of the communications equipment? Possibly. But that's water under the bridge. We're not talking about responding to a terrorist attack. We're talking about preventing the whole country from being under terrorist attack. I have an aggressive plan for doing that, says McCain. You don't.*

SALIT: That's a strong scenario for McCain and I thought it was a strong performance today on the show. So let's say he gets through the Republican primaries

and becomes the Republican nominee. How does his team think about the following question? McCain's popularity and viability as a national political figure have rested, historically, on his support from independents. That's been a very big part of the McCain coalition. And, as everyone says, independents are going to be the deciding factor in the 2008 presidential. But independents have turned against the war, and they've turned against McCain, as the current polling shows. My polling is showing that, everybody's polling is showing that. What does he do with that?

NEWMAN: Who's he running against?

SALIT: Okay, good question. If he's running against Hillary, he gets a bump from the extent to which the anti-Hillary camp unites around his candidacy. This is presuming there's not an independent candidate in the mix. Hillary's not that fantastically popular with independents, so independents stay home, or are neutralized. If it's Obama, Obama's very popular with independents. If he holds onto that popularity, I don't know how McCain does against Obama.

NEWMAN: The issue is going to be that if McCain is strongly supported by the Right, can he put out enough moderate and bipartisan initiatives, not to dominate the independent vote but in effect to neutralize it – to not provoke independents to go elsewhere in decisive numbers. If the premise is that Hillary or anyone else, including Obama, can't win with just Democrats, it could be a winning strategy for McCain. I think McCain's overall perspective, on both the primaries and the general, is that he has to do what he has to do to not lose them.

SALIT: And that gives him his best chance of winning.

NEWMAN: I don't know that it's a ridiculous plan in light of the fact that there are so many candidates. So McCain's plan, from what I can see – I'm not advising him, of course, but as I see it – is: *Let's come up with a strategy for not losing. That's our best shot at winning.*

SALIT: Do you think Hillary's camp has a similar version of that?

NEWMAN: In the Democratic primaries?

SALIT: Yes.

NEWMAN: I think they *have* had that strategy, but I think there's some reason to believe they were wrong.

SALIT: Because of Obama?

NEWMAN: Because of Obama, who has changed the

status of the field. For one thing, there now *is* a field. I think Hillary's plan – formulated by her team, including her husband – was that they wanted to project her as invulnerable. They've done a not bad job, but things have happened that they have no control over. It's unclear whether that's still a workable strategy for Hillary.

SALIT: Chris Matthews made mention of the “third party on the right” scenario. The scenario is Giuliani manages to win the primary and the social conservatives, who've said that they won't support Giuliani, get behind an independent run on the right. Do you see any prospects for that?

NEWMAN: I think it's unlikely that will happen, frankly. The Right has become accustomed to being in power. I don't think they want to wind up being the obvious cause of electing a Democrat to the White House.

SALIT: *The McLaughlin Group* discussion could perhaps have been titled “The Consequences of Success.” They discussed the state of the international economy and the American economy and how well things are going. They had Maria Bartiromo [a CNBC anchor] and Christa Freeland from *The Financial Times* on the panel. The picture they paint is low unemployment, virtually no inflation, high levels of job creation, etc. and so forth. Everyone gives a nod to the “wealth gap,” the gap between the richest and the poor, and McLaughlin comments: “Well, the biggest problem is the duality,” as he calls it. What's McLaughlin's duality? If you legislate for the corporations who are producing all this wealth, it takes you in one direction. But if you legislate for the country, for the average person and the average family, it takes you in another direction, and those things are not easily reconciled. The history of the country for the last 60-70 years is the reconciliation of those two opposing pulls. McLaughlin seems to be suggesting that the tension is somehow different, or that there are other factors now in the picture that make it increasingly difficult to reconcile. How do you think about this notion of the irreconcilable directions?

NEWMAN: Well, there *are* other factors in the picture. The biggest “other” factor is the environment. In this national sector, attempting to narrow the wealth gap has involved producing more and more goods and services. But there are now limits to production, including limits that come about by virtue of what ever-increasing production does to the earth and the atmosphere, the very source of wealth expansion. I think it's that three-part relationship which is intensifying the pressure.

SALIT: Okay.

NEWMAN: To say the simplistic thing that is often said in economics books or history books: Wars are supposed to make things better. They're supposed to be good economic stimulants. But it's not so clear that this war is having that effect for ordinary Americans. If so, why would they be so seriously opposed to the war? Americans don't like the wealth gap. They also don't want war. Put another way, they want everything. And so does everybody. And if everybody could sit down and try to figure out a rational plan for that, we could have a nice little celebration. But I don't know that they can. Everybody wants to have a “United Nations” of some kind, and globalization of some kind. At the same time, everybody wants to wave their national flag faster and faster.

SALIT: So it becomes harder and harder to impact on that gap. When Maria Bartiromo talked about some of the positive economic indicators, she said, “There is no inflation. It's completely flat, if you take energy and food out of the picture.” Those are rather major things to take out of the picture, however.

NEWMAN: In fairness to her, I think what she's essentially saying is that there are volatile spots in the overall growth – energy and food being two important ones. Now, is there an ability – among the people, among the elected officials, among the policy makers – to do anything about those two areas? If so, how come they haven't done it? That seems to me to be the interesting criticism to raise.

SALIT: Thanks, Fred. 

Betty Ward

A Passion for Principle

Phyllis Goldberg

BETTY WARD waited for over an hour to get into the high school gymnasium in Concord. Third in line, she got a good seat for the Town Hall meeting with Hillary Rodham Clinton, who is “in it to win it” – as the senator told the enthusiastic, largely Democratic crowd, who had braved the chill winds of a New Hampshire winter to see and hear her in person.

It was mid-February and the state’s Democratic partisans were still in a celebratory mood. Nationally, their party had taken control of Congress in a mid-term sweep. They had also won a majority in the New Hampshire state legislature, giving them complete control of state government for the first time since 1874. It was an exhilarating moment; lost in something of a political wilderness for 132 years, now Granite State Democrats could almost taste a 2008 victory. As newly elected Congressman Paul Hodes proclaimed to the crowd in the moments before he introduced the former First Lady, “It’s a great day to be a Democrat.”

When the questioning began, Senator Clinton was politely but firmly confronted by several voters concerning her record on the Iraq War. “I want to know if right here, right now, once and for all and without nuance, you can say that war authorization was a mistake,” a Nashua voter, Roger Tilton, challenged her. Clinton refused. “The mistakes were made by this president, who misled this country and this Congress,” she responded. The Hillary partisans cheered.

Betty Ward sat quietly while the excitement buzzed around her. A vigorous opponent of the war herself, she had nevertheless not come to Concord to engage



the junior senator from New York on Iraq. Ward was there to ask a different, less glamorous sort of question – a question so unglamorous that not a single media outlet covered it when she finally stood face to face with the candidate. Ward’s question: How did Hillary feel about independents – the 42% of the New Hampshire electorate who are neither Democrats nor Republicans?

A note on nomenclature: In New Hampshire, voters who choose not to be affiliated with one of the major parties must check the “undeclared” box on their voter registration forms. It’s a sore point for many. As André Gibeau, a founder, with Ward, of the state’s Committee for an Independent Voice (NH-CIV), says, “I’m not ‘undeclared.’ I’m independent.”

These non-aligned voters have been permitted to cast ballots in party primaries since 1910. But in 2005 New Hampshire state legislators began tinkering with the open primary laws, introducing new procedures that required “undeclareds” to remain members of the party in whose primary they voted for at least 90 days. Ward and NH-CIV led a grassroots lobbying campaign that defeated H.B. 154 and protected the cherished mobility of independents. But in late 2006, after the Democrats had taken control of the state legislature, the bill resurfaced as H.B. 196. Ward, Gibeau, Russ Oulette, Jerome Holden and other NH-CIV activists went back to the base, to mobilize opposition to the

bill. But this time they decided to kick it up a notch by asking all of the presidential candidates – who by then were already dropping in to troll for votes – to take a stand. Which is how Ward, amidst the renewed effort on behalf of the state’s independent voters, came to be in Concord to put the question to Clinton.

Taking the microphone, Ward introduced herself to Clinton by saying that “New Hampshire has 42% of its voters as independents, of which I am one” – sparking an unexpected round of applause from the audience. “We are congratulated when we help a candidate win,” Ward went on, “but now we have legislation pending that limits our voice in elections. What do you feel is the role of independents in the political process, nationally and locally?”

Clinton’s response was brief, nearly perfunctory. “Everyone should be included in the process,” she said, mentioning the Working Families Party in New York, where fusion allows independent political parties to cross-endorse major party candidates. But Clinton was not in a comfort zone on the question of independent voters. Her frame of reference, the Working Families Party, is a third-party fusion tactic initiated by organized labor, not an expression of the disalignment from the Republicans and Democrats that is sweeping the country. As for Ward’s request that she weigh in against HB 196, Clinton simply didn’t respond.

Undeterred, Ward pursued her efforts to bring the presidential candidates on board (and up to speed). Eliciting a support statement from Congressman Dennis Kucinich (“I would urge any Representative to defeat any effort that would restrain this basic freedom”), she waged a phone bank campaign to mobilize independents to lobby their reps to vote “no” on the bill. Meanwhile, at Ward’s request, independents from 15 states, active in the national network spearheaded by the Committee for a Unified Independent Party (CUIP) of which NH-CIV is a part, pitched in by calling New Hampshire independents also. On March 16 H.B. 196 was voted “inexpedient to legislate,” legislature-speak for dead on arrival. Ward and NH-CIV had won the second round, just as they’d won the first.

Betty Ward’s mother, a practicing Roman Catholic, and her father, who was not a religious man, gladly gave their children the freedom to choose how and what to believe; in their little town of Chelmsford, Massachusetts, Betty, the youngest of four, grew up thinking for herself. In 1975, when she moved to New

Hampshire to take up a teaching job that had unexpectedly come her way, she found herself immediately at home in the “Live Free or Die” state.

Ward acquired two passions from her parents that have stayed with her throughout her life. Their reverence for education was what led her to become a teacher; some three decades later, the fervent anti-war sentiment that they inspired in all of their children during the Vietnam era drove Ward to encourage her own son and daughter to become active in Howard Dean’s 2004 campaign for the Democratic Party’s presidential nomination. She signed on as well.

Then, in January of 2004, Dean’s candidacy began to implode. As the single parent of two teenagers, and a third-grade teacher in the Goffstown public school system, Ward had more than enough to keep her busy. But while she continued working on the Dean campaign, she may have sensed that she would soon be at loose ends, politically speaking. So she accepted an invitation to attend “Choosing an Independent President (ChIP) 2004,” a national conference of independents that was taking place just outside of Manchester, the state capital, some 40 miles away. Before long, she was leading the local committee’s efforts to save open primaries.

“When you go up to the statehouse, it’s like a cocoon,” Ward says. “No wonder they lose contact with what’s going on with people’s lives in the real world. What was so striking to me during the hearings was the partisanship – it was all about their parties. There’s no diversity in any of the conversation.”

In the kitchen version of that statement, Ward compares electoral politics to “a cake that comes in just two flavors” and says that not only does she herself need to have more choice but that “many people are looking for a new flavor, something different from the old, something that might be improbable but not impossible.” Young people in particular, she argues, “are thinking of a broader world. Many of them feel a connection with other people. They want something more in their lives...an evolution of culture.”

Of her own evolution, she is characteristically both modest and forthright: “I was home, doing my daily chores. And then I was thrust into this, and one thing led to another. If I can do this, anyone can. And if everybody did a little something...” NEO-

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becoming (bē kum'in)

vi. **1** coming to be **2** growing to be; changing or developing into by growth