



The Miller/Wenhold Political Report

Vol. 1 Issue 4

April 2008

In Focus

Is Anyone Listening

As we inch closer and closer to choosing the candidate who will be the standard bearers for each party heading into the fall elections, one has to wonder if either party is really listening.



I have been in this business a long time and each election cycle I see poll after poll of how health insurance is the number one priority for most Americans, yet we see no real solutions forthcoming from either party or any of the candidates. Yes, we've heard all about "universal healthcare", but even under some of the candidates plans people will not be covered.

You can look and point the finger at Congress, but I think the American people have to begin accepting some of the blame. Until the American people stand up and tell Congress you either pass healthcare reform, which puts a halt to the runaway abuses, or you can find your self looking for a new job come November. I'm always amazed at how no matter what a voters party does they will continue to vote for the candidate, even when they may not be supportive of issues critical to their lives.

As voters we have to at some point say enough is enough. The funny thing about this is, even during a recession, which we are going through now, most voters won't change their voting patterns. It's one thing to want change and its another to actually take steps to bring about change. Rhetoric by candidates is not enough. As a voter you should want detailed plans. As a voter you should vote the candidate not the party label.

Until we all as a unified voice begin voting for candidates and not part labels will we begin to see the real change we all seem to want. There are some good candidates out there with good ideas. The 2008 elections should be the cycle voters begin choosing candidates on their plans to offer real healthcare solutions.

We hear so much about taxes, guns, immigration, steroids, online gambling, but we hear very little about healthcare. Sure, all the candidates have issued press releases about how important healthcare is, but none has made it a center piece of their campaign. Why is that? Well, because there is no easy solution or a one size fits all solution. If we are going to achieve real change, we need party leaders on both sides of the aisle to put differences aside and do the right thing for children, middle class families and retirees.

It's easy to talk about healthcare and do nothing since most of those in a position to do something about healthcare have pretty darn good healthcare provided to them and their family by the Federal government and paid for by you the taxpayer.



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Shouldn't we all ask for the same benefits afforded our elected officials when it comes to healthcare?

Why not ask your elected official to forgo their tax-payer healthcare benefits until the Federal government passes legislation that would provide quality and affordable healthcare for everyone in this country. The reason is they don't want to pay that heavy cost out of their own pocket.



There is no one size fits all solutions, but there are solutions before Congress now that help children, middle-class families, retirees, and small businesses. The solutions for each of these groups of people is not the same, but neither is the problem. If we cut the fraud and abuse out of the healthcare system, I believe we could fund these programs.

The question I have for you is are you ready for real change or the promised change we hear about every two and four year during campaign season?

2008 will be a telling election. What choice will you make when its time to pull the lever to vote? There are no redos so choose wisely.

Oh ya, if you don't vote, don't complain with what you have or what you get.

The Rise and Fall of Ron Paul

For Republicans and Democrats alike, Republican Texas Congressman Ron Paul's departure from the Presidential race may have been a welcome exit. But for the millions of Americans to whom Paul was a hero and cause, it was devastating. When he entered the race, Paul was a relatively unknown representative from southeastern Texas. Soon thereafter, he exploded onto the national scene.

Congressman Paul's following seemed to center around Paul's vehement anti Iraq War sentiment. In addition to that thinking, he was quasi libertarian in his views. This appealed to Republicans, Democrats, and Independents alike of the younger generation. Historically, the youngest voters might have made a lot of noise, but when it came to results, they wouldn't follow through. With Paul, it might be the case that he didn't get the votes, but he definitely got the money through fundraising.

In early December 2007, Paul racked up millions of dollars in an historic 24 hour fundraising stint. According to federal records, much of Paul's donations came from individuals as opposed to special interests. So where did he fall short? Why didn't Paul's campaign gain traction among the rank and file in the GOP? Those answers may be difficult to ascertain. In addition, the effect of Ron Paul for the rest of the campaign has yet to pan out.



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On the Hill:

Home Mortgages:

While campaigning in Pennsylvania, presidential hopeful Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) introduced her plan to provide \$30 billion to help ease the number of foreclosures on homes. The Pennsylvania primary, which takes place on April 22, will truly be a test between Clinton and Illinois Senator Barack Obama in the ever-lengthening Democratic nomination process. With her \$30 billion plan, Clinton attempted to prove once again that she is the best position to take charge of the Office of the President upon being elected in November.



Tax Incentives:

As the day arrives for American tax payers to file with the IRS, many of those same individuals and families can expect a tax rebate from the federal government in the weeks following April 15. In an effort to boost the sluggish economy, federal lawmakers passed the Economic Stimulus Act of 2008 which will send rebate checks to those who have filed their taxes. Officials are urging the recipients to spend their checks and not just squirrel the money away or pay off debt. It will remain to be seen whether this initiative is too little too late or if this late shock to the economy will reap dividends in the months to come.

Earmark Reform

All three presidential candidates, Sens. John McCain, Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Barack Obama, have come out for a varying degree of earmark reform over the last few weeks. However, Congress is also looking at reforming the process. On March 13, The Senate failed to pass a one-year moratorium on earmarks. The measure came in the form of an amendment introduced by Sens. Jim DeMint (R-SC) and John McCain (R-AZ). All three candidates for president voted for the amendment which failed 71-29.

Miers and Bolten

Former White House Counsel Harriet Miers and current White House Chief of Staff Joshua Bolten have been sued by House Democrats in an attempt to compel them to provide information regarding the firing of U.S. Attorneys. Attorney General Michael Mukasey had refused to pursue criminal charges against Bolten and Miers which then prompted Congressional Democrats to take their next step. The White House maintains that the two individuals are covered under executive privilege.



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On the Ground:

House

Alaska

Don Young, the incumbent at-large GOP congressman from Alaska, is facing possibly his strongest challenge yet for his House seat. Facing a perfect storm of nationwide discontent with the Republican Party, earmark reform, and a federal investigation into his dealings, Congressman Young will be battling both a primary challenge in current Lt. Governor Sean Parnell and the eventual nominee will most likely face the Democratic mayor of Anchorage, Mike Begich. Young faced Begich's father in a race in 1980 and defeated him.



NY-26

Republican Congressman Tom Reynolds of New York became the 29th GOP Member of Congress to announce his retirement and not seek a sixth term. Seeking to replace the former chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee are Democrats Jack Davis, Jonathan Powers, and Alice Kryzan and Republicans George Maziarz and James Hayes.

PA-04

After a contentious and close 2006 battle between then-Rep. Melissa Hart and now-Rep. Jason Altmire, 2008 is shaping up to be a repeat. Altmire, as a Democrat, won in a district that leans conservative. Melissa Hart has been campaigning to regain her congressional seat. Altmire, who serves on the Education and Labor Committee and Transportation Committee, is diligently working for reelection and to continue to serve in Congress.

Senate

LOUISIANA

Senator Mary Landrieu, a Democrat, is considered by most to be the most vulnerable Senate Democrat facing reelection this cycle. She will be facing a Republican challenger who will undoubtedly try and make Landrieu out to be a liberal member of the Democratic Party. Louisiana, which leans conservative, will be a battleground for Landrieu and the Party.

MAINE

Incumbent GOP Senator Susan Collins will be facing Democratic Rep. Tom Allen (ME-01) in the November race. Allen, who has easily won reelection in his southern Maine district since 1996, will have to extend that favorability to the larger, more northern second congressional district. Collins enjoys fairly widespread support as a moderate Republican in a state that leans Democrat.



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On the Trail:

TEXAS and OHIO

The Texas and Ohio Democratic contests seemed to have been Hillary's Last Stand, and she prevailed. In Texas, Sen. Clinton was able to nudge Sen. Obama and remain in the race. The final results of the primary were 51% for Clinton and 47% for Obama.



In the Buckeye State, Sen. Clinton won with 54% to Sen. Obama's 44%. The demographics in both Texas and Ohio seemed to favor the New York Senator.

PENNSYLVANIA

On April 22, Pennsylvanians will be going to the polls to cast their ballots for the Democratic nominee. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton have been battling, sometimes ruthlessly, throughout the primary season since the first elections in Iowa and New Hampshire. Pennsylvania could very help to decide if Mrs. Clinton remains in the race or if she concedes to the Illinois senator.

Gov. Mike Huckabee

Former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee who made a valiant run to be the GOP nominee for president dropped out of the primary race in March due to Sen. McCain's overwhelming delegate count. Since his departure, insiders have mentioned the rock band, former Baptist minister as a possible vice presidential candidate or even RNC (Republican National Committee) Chairman.

Delegates

Hillary Rodham Clinton: 1486 (super delegates included)

Barack Obama: 1625 (super delegates included)

John McCain: 1325

Possible Vice Presidential Candidates:

Hillary Rodham Clinton: Sen. Evan Bayh (IN) Gen. Wesley Clark
Gov. Phil Bredesen (TN) Gov. Brian Schweitzer (MT) Former Gov. Tom Vilsack (IA)

Barack Obama: Gov. Kathleen Sebelius (KS) Gov. Bill Richardson (NM)
Gov. Janet Napolitano (AZ) Gov. Phil Bredesen (TN) Gov. Brian Schweitzer (MT)

John McCain: Gov. Charlie Crist (FL) Former Gov. Mike Huckabee (AR)
Sen. Sam Brownback (KS) Sen. John Thune (SD)