



The Miller/Wenhold Political Report

Vol. 1 Issue 1

February 2008

Welcome to our February edition of the *Political Report*. It was a very busy January and it looks like February is shaping up to be even busier.

The race for the White House has now taken center stage and is expected to dominate the headlines throughout February. This is the start of what is being called a national primary due to the numbers of states moving their primary dates up.



This year will be different as we do not have a sitting Vice President running for the top job. It could also mark the first time since John F. Kennedy was elected that a sitting U.S. Senator is elected President. We may also witness history in 2008 as our country could elect the first woman, African American or Mormon to be this nation's leader.

With so many possibilities and possible history to be made brings along with it so much angst. For most of us, we don't live and breathe the happenings in Washington. We are more focused on our jobs, families and health. These are three critical issues which will face the next President.

As voters, we need to ask those who want to serve as our next President and members of the U.S. House of Representatives and United States Senate what detailed plans do they have to help in these areas. In order to make change, we as voters need to ask more of our elected officials. The days of simply going to the voting booth and pulling the lever for the party you have affiliated with your entire life are over. You won't get change that way. We need to begin electing Republicans, Democrats and Independents who have real plans to fix the problems facing so many of us.

In addition to the possible history we will see this year, let's begin to change our mindset and create our own history by electing people with real ideas and not those with big bank accounts. Are you up for the challenge?

Client Spotlight: Retiree Healthcare

Anyone wanting to win in November must be willing to begin addressing the issues facing a significant voting block—RETIREEES. Retirees face escalating healthcare costs like all of us, but many of them on fixed incomes have a monthly choice of whether to put food on their table or pay for much needed medicine.

In 2008 this group plans to take action if their issues aren't addressed. Retirees are banding together to mandate that Congress pass HR 1322, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act.

To learn more about this legislation and ProtectSeniors.Org, log onto their Website at www.ProtectSeniors.Org.



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State of the Union



On Tuesday evening, January 28th, President George W. Bush gave his eighth and final State of the Union address to Congress and the American people. This speech was given in the midst of a heated Democratic presidential primary race, a sluggish economy, a continued war in the Middle East, and an ever-increasing clash between the Executive and Legislative branches of power. Looking back, President Bush has had his priorities altered from a strong domestic agenda upon election, to an agenda which has become much more internationally oriented.

A sampling of how the goals and visions outlined by President Bush were received Monday.

Economy and Stimulus Package: “I’m glad the economic issue is front and center. He made clear we are going to do the stimulus in a bipartisan way. That has set the tone for the evening.” — Rep. Tom Udall, D-N.M.

Extending Tax Cuts: “Americans know that higher taxes right now would be devastating to an economy that’s jittery, and President Bush is a forward-looking leader when it comes to making tax relief for families, individuals and entrepreneurs a permanent, predictable part of the federal tax code. If Congress doesn’t act, the American people will face the biggest tax increase ever, and it’ll happen without a vote of Congress.” Sen. Charles Grassley, R-Iowa.

Earmarks and Federal Spending: “At least he’s moving in the right direction.” — Sen. Jim DeMint, R-S.C., who expressed frustration that the president had not pledged to go further on his earmark plans.

Education: “It’s a stretch to think we can do that this year.” — Senate Minority Whip Richard J. Durbin, D-Ill., on a reauthorization of No Child Left Behind legislation.

Energy: “President Bush’s call for a \$2 billion clean energy technology fund sends a signal that the United States will do its part to address global climate change. However, as the President noted, we must receive significant contributions from every major economy if we truly wish to address this problem.” — Sen. Pete Domenici, R-N.M.

Health Care : “The President didn’t say enough about our broken health care system. Americans have made their voices clear that we must act now to expand access to quality care and I hope this Congress can take significant steps toward that end.” — Sen. Tom Harkin, D-Iowa.

Free Trade Agreements: “We have taken the first steps in ushering in a ‘New Deal’ for international trade through the inclusion of international labor standards and stronger environmental provisions in the text of free trade agreements... However, each [Free Trade Agreement] must be judged on its own merits. Since President Bush has not decided to send the remaining FTAs to Congress for a vote, we will have to wait and see what decisions he makes in the coming months.” — Rep. Charlie Rangel, D-N.Y.

Overall Speech: “Tonight, President Bush did not put forward bold new ideas to lay the groundwork for bipartisan progress on the issues most important to our nation.” — House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md.



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On The Hill

Economic Stimulus Package

The House of Representatives and President Bush came to an agreement to offer American taxpayers a rebate in an attempt to boost the economy. Under this plan, individuals and families will receive checks in the mail by either spring or summer. The Senate has suggested that it will add addendums to the package to further the aid to seniors among other additions. Those actions may put the entire deal at risk. Congress and the President will be working together to find common ground for their economic initiatives.



A pivotal Senate vote on an economic stimulus bill may not come until Monday, Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., signaled Thursday morning. Reid is trying to round up support for a package that would go beyond the House-passed version (HR 5140). He noted that presidential candidates Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., and Barack Obama, D-Ill., are in California will not be available to vote until Monday. They are debating in California tonight, in preparation for the Super Tuesday primaries on Tuesday, Feb. 5.

The package approved by the Senate Finance panel would cost \$158.1 billion in 2008, \$45.7 billion in 2009 and \$155.7 billion over the next 10 years. The House-passed bill would cost \$145.9 billion in 2008, \$14.8 billion in 2009 and \$117.2 billion over 10 years.

The House bill would cap income eligibility for the rebates at \$75,000 for individuals and \$150,000 for couples. The Senate caps are double those levels. Emanuel said the House would insist on three things: a tax rebate that is not “top heavy” toward higher-income taxpayers; inclusion of low-income Americans who were not eligible for payments in 2001, the last time Congress sent out checks; and speedy enactment.

DoD Requests Additional War Funding

The Pentagon confirmed recently that the Bush administration’s fiscal 2009 budget request would only include \$70 billion in emergency funding for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Congress has appropriated \$86.8 billion, or 46 percent, of Bush’s \$189.3 billion request for fiscal 2008 war funding thus far, a \$70 billion “bridge fund” meant to keep the war machine humming through April and billions extra for mine-resistant vehicles and body armor. Lawmakers are expected to consider the rest of the funding request in the spring.

Congress has appropriated approximately \$691 billion so far for activities related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and those costs have climbed steadily with each passing year since 2001, according to the Congressional Budget Office. The president’s move is a reversal from the fiscal 2008 request, when the administration gave a full estimate of war costs, \$141.7 billion, and then amended that number upward to respond to changes in strategy.

In fact, the fiscal 2007 Defense authorization act ([PL 109-364](#)) requires a full and detailed estimate of expected war costs in the budget request. But Bush raised a constitutional objection to that provision when he signed the bill, and federal courts have not addressed the issue.



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House Races

AZ-08

Freshman Democratic Rep. Gabrielle Giffords will be facing the president of the State Senate, Tim Bee, in the 2008 election cycle. In 2006, Giffords won her Tucson-area seat with 54% of the vote. Styled as a moderate Democrat, Giffords will most likely aim to continue her portrayal of moderation in the upcoming election.



VA-11

Rep. Tom Davis (R) just announced his intentions to retire after the end of the current Congress. This revelation will surely make the 11th district a battleground between Republicans and Democrats for the 2008 election. Gerry Connolly, currently serving as the Board of Supervisors for Fairfax County, has announced his intentions to run for the seat. Connolly will likely be facing ex-Rep. Leslie Byrne in a primary race.

Senate Races

IDAHO

With Sen. Larry Craig deciding to not seek reelection following his bathroom incident in Minnesota, the Idaho seat will be an open election. Craig previously won reelection with 65% of the vote. Idaho is generally safe territory for Republicans; however there will be several factors at work in November. There is a presidential election, so Idahoans will be voting on an entire ticket – perhaps basing part of their vote on their views of where the country is headed. The electorate will be constantly reminded of Craig's situation. Moreover, representatives will be on the ballot which may affect how the senate seat is perceived. If nothing else, this race may prove to be entertaining.

NEBRASKA

Sen. Chuck Hagel has announced that he will not run again in November for his Senate seat. Elected last cycle with 83% of the vote, his retirement opens the door for a chance for Democrats to pick up a seat. This chance was diminished, however, when former Senator Bob Kerrey decided against seeking the Democratic nomination. Kerrey is currently working in academia in New York. Former Governor and former Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns is seeking the Republican nomination for Hagel's seat.

NEW MEXICO

Senator Pete Domenici is retiring at the close of this Congress. Domenici has been fingered in the attorney firing scandal which has hit the Justice Department. The Senator has stated health issues as his reason for retirement. He was last reelected with 65% of the vote. Seeking to replace him are Republican Representatives Heather Wilson and Steve Pearce, and Democratic Rep. Tom Udall. This race will most likely pit two current Members of Congress against one another in a battle for Domenici's Senate seat.

MINNESOTA

Senator Norm Coleman will face a tough reelection bid after only winning his race with 50% of the vote. Challenging him so far are Democrats attorney Mike Ciresi and comedian Al Franken. Coleman succeeded over former Senator and Vice President Walter Mondale who stepped into the race after the late Sen. Paul Wellstone passed away in an airplane accident. Both the primary race and general election should prove to be exciting to watch in this upper Midwestern state.



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On The Ground

IOWA

The start of the presidential primary race began on January 3rd with the Iowa caucuses. On the Democratic front, New York Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, former North Carolina Senator John Edwards, and Illinois Senator Barack Obama were struggling in a very tight race according to the polls right up until caucus night. When all the decisions had been made, Obama took 38% to Edwards' 30%, and Clinton's 29%. On the Republican side, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee won with 34%, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney came in second with 25%, former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson and Arizona Senator John McCain each earned 13%. This outcome proved to be the start of an intense political season.



NEW HAMPSHIRE

Five days after the caucuses in Iowa, New Hampshire voters went to the polls to cast their ballots in both the Democratic and Republican primaries. New Hampshire allows independents to choose at the polls which ballot they would like, and the majority of Granite State voters are undeclared. In the days leading up to primary day, polls and pundits proclaimed that Obama was well positioned to beat Clinton by possibly double-digit numbers. However, the voters said otherwise. In a moment reminiscent of her husband's campaign sixteen years ago, Hillary Clinton stormed back and won the primary with 39% to Obama's 37%. Edwards received 17%. McCain took the GOP side with 37% to 32% for neighboring Romney. McCain won here in 2000 in his race against then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush. This victory portrayed the Arizona senator's rebound from a sluggish campaign only months earlier.

MICHIGAN

Mitt Romney, coming off painful second place finishes in both Iowa and New Hampshire, came storming back and, for the third time for the GOP, a new candidate had won a consecutive primary election. Romney surely benefited from campaigning on the economy, which has hit Michigan especially hard, as well as being the son of a former Governor (and former Republican presidential candidate) George Romney. McCain and Huckabee earned 30% and 16% respectively. Because of Michigan's refusal to abide by national party rules, the Democratic National Committee stripped the state of its delegates. Therefore, even though Hillary Clinton was victorious, she received no delegates from the race.

NEVADA

Just before the caucuses in this western state, the United Culinary Workers endorsed Sen. Obama thus, in the minds of the political experts, giving him an advantage. However, as was seen in New Hampshire, it was not enough. Clinton won Nevada with 51% to Obama's 45%. On the Republican front, Mitt Romney rode his luck right to the Strip and also won with 51%. Texas Congressman Ron Paul finished second with 14% while McCain garnered 13%.

SOUTH CAROLINA

The Republican South Carolina primary was truly neck and neck between Sen. McCain and Gov. Huckabee. McCain was thought to have the advantage with veterans while many believed that Huckabee would succeed in the evangelical community. After the ballots were counted, John McCain won 33% of the vote to Huckabee's 30%. In 2000, McCain lost to George Bush in the primary which began Bush's rise to the nomination. A week later, the Democrats had their time to vote in the Palmetto State. Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards – the state's native son – all battled to win the votes of the people. Barack Obama overwhelmingly won the primary with 55% to Clinton's 27% and Edwards' 18%. For the Democrats, this would be the last stand before Super Tuesday, as the DNC punished Florida for pushing up its primary by stripping it of its delegates as well.



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Recent Presidential Campaign Endorsements

Hillary Rodham Clinton

The Hartford Courant
Fmr Lt. Gov. Kathleen Kennedy Townsend
New York Times
CT AG Richard Blumenthal
Gov. Kathleen Sebelius

Barack Obama

Sen. Edward Kennedy
Rep. Patrick Kennedy
Caroline Kennedy



John McCain

Gov. Charlie Crist
Sen. Mel Martinez
New York Times
Gov. M. Jodi Rell
Sen. Joe Lieberman
Rudy Giuliani
Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger

Mitt Romney

The Hartford Courant

Delegate Totals: Democrats: Obama 63 Clinton 48
Republicans: McCain 99 Romney 59 Huckabee 25

Primary Schedule:

February

February 5: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado (caucuses), Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Idaho (D), Illinois, Kansas (D), Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New Mexico (D), New York, North Dakota (caucuses), Oklahoma, Tennessee, Utah

February 9: Louisiana, Kansas (R), Washington (D caucuses)

February 10: Maine (D caucuses)

February 12: District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia

February 19: Hawaii (D), Washington (R primary), Wisconsin

MARCH 2008

March 4: Ohio, Rhode Island, Texas, Vermont

March 8: Wyoming (D)

March 11: Mississippi

APRIL 2008

April 22: Pennsylvania

MAY 2008

May 6: Indiana, North Carolina

May 13: Nebraska (primary), West Virginia

May 20: Kentucky, Oregon

May 27: Idaho (R)

JUNE 2008

June 3: Montana, New Mexico (R), South Dakota