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Celebrating our Freedom

This week we celebrate our Nation's birthday. For most of us it means a day off of work; spending time with family and friends; attending the parade; attending a barbeque; and watching the fireworks.

As we celebrate all these events let's not forget about the men and women who have served in our military, many who have given their lives for the freedoms we celebrate each year on this date. Each day we wake up and go about our very busy lives without truly thinking about our freedoms and the costs endured by some families.

This year let's take a few extra minutes during this coming week to say thank you not only to those men and women serving this great country, but to their families for the service of their loved one. Regardless of your thoughts on our current involvement in the Middle East, we have brave soldiers laying their lives on the line each day for us. Many of these soldiers have not seen their families in quite a few months. Let's all say a prayer that each one of them comes home safe very soon.

This country was and still is dependent on those who defend our freedoms. We don't always wake up thinking about this, but this week is a good time to reflect on what we have and why we are able to enjoy these freedoms, where so many countries can't and don't.

I want to take this moment to say thank you to all the soldiers and their families who have and are currently serving. Thank you for keeping my family safe and keeping us a free country. I also want to say a very special thank you to my father George Miller for his years of service of this country. I am proud to call you my father and proud to say you are a veteran of this great country.

Gas Prices

Time and again, when Members of Congress (Democrats and Republicans alike) come back from weekends in their home districts, they report that gas prices are the number one concerns of their constituents. The cost of fuel seemingly has overshadowed the War in Iraq, War on Terror, global warming, or even the housing crunch.

With gasoline now at a national average of more than \$4.00 per gallon, the American people are pleading for relief. In an effort to increase production from overseas, President George W. Bush requested that Saudi Arabia increase output of oil. At first, the Kingdom refused this increase; however, as the weeks have worn on, there has been hints that increased pumping will occur.

The bigger question is, will it help? A more comprehensive, holistic approach to energy policy in this country is needed. This statement is said so often that it borders on becoming trite; however, it could never be more true than today. Congress must work to find a better way to enable Americans to fuel their cars, heat and cool their homes, ship their goods, and live their lives. Whether the big answers lie with wind, nuclear, solar, geothermal, ethanol, water, fuel cell technology, biofuel, or any other alternative out there is for our elected officials to determine (with our help as concerned citizens).



Regardless, something must be done. Americans have always heeded the call to service when it was needed the most: moving westward to explore the Louisiana Territory in the 19th Century, sending a rocket into outer space to search the heavens' untamed wilderness in the 20th Century, or responding to sheer acts of terror levied against us at the birth of the 21st Century. What does the rest of this century hold in store? Surely, we can develop a new method for fueling our livelihoods.

Nuclear Mistakes Averted

On of the most frightening scenarios in the military world is a mistaken war. Numerous novels and movies have been written about it, and they make for great entertainment. However, earlier this year, several U.S. Air Force aircraft were armed with nuclear missiles and flown from one coast to the other, crossing the entire country. This snafu of potentially enormous repercussions startled a populace that, in some ways, had pushed the idea of nuclear war from its psyche. In the aftermath of this mistake, the Air Force fired four individuals that it deemed responsible for the mix-up, two of whom were top brass.

Global Warming

The much touted global warming legislation proposed by Sens. Lieberman and Warner is most likely not going to come to a vote before this Congress comes to a close. Instead of moving forward with this debate, the Senate became bogged down in a judicial nominee fight that took up more than its fair share of time. Supporters from both sides of the aisle had hoped that a debate in 2008 would be the precursor to more concrete action with either a President McCain or a President Obama. This particular presidential election is intriguing because both candidates are sitting senators who might have to come out for or against far-reaching legislation, such as the global warming bill. However, it is more and more likely that that will not occur at this time.



FISA

Towards the end of the month, Congress passed an overhaul of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) which has at the forefront of the War on Terror. The Bush Administration's wiretapping program has been the source of a second look at how the government should be acquiring warrants within the world of terrorism. Within the new law, there is retroactive immunity for the telecommunications companies that cooperated with the Executive Branch in its wiretapping program. This provision was a bone of contention for segments of the Democratic Party.

Iraq Supplemental

Bipartisanship or failed partisanship? Regardless of how one views it, Congress passed, and the President subsequently signed a bill that funds the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan into next year. Some of the citizenry view this as a failure of the Democratic Party to hold true to its principles by demanding a timeline for withdrawal. Even though the law lacks this provision, it does include a section that funds opportunities for returning veterans to receive a higher education.

Tim Russert

Last month the nation mourned the loss of Tim Russert the host of NBC's Meet the Press. Everyone here at Miller/Wenhold want to send out our thoughts and prayers to the Russert family.

Washington and the nation came together to remember and celebrate the life of the late Tim Russert, a Washington icon, who died from a heart attack. At only 58, Russert's passing reminds all of us to truly take one day at a time and live life to its fullest. A man who reveled in the world of politics and seemed to eagerly await each election cycle, Tim always reminded his viewers that politics could still be a civil affair, regardless of political party. So to you, Tim, a model Irish-American, we say Erin Go Bragh and Rest in Peace.

Does One Person One Vote Add Up

This election cycle is not only shaping up to be the most costly in our nation's history, but it is shaping up to be one that could disenfranchise millions of voters in the future.

The buzz words for this Presidential campaign appear to be "transparency", "special interest", "change we can believe in", "new direction", and "my campaign will be lobbyist free." All flashy and intended to garner support by unhappy voters.



It's obvious the candidates have done their homework on these phrases as all of them scored well with primary voters. The reality however is, they are just slogans with very few if any concrete ideas behind them. The new electoral victory map appears to be scaring the voters into supporting a candidate instead of providing them with details about how you will solve some of the major issues like healthcare, energy, immigration and taxes, facing the country.

The downside to these slogans for all of us is that it appears this rhetoric is winning over voters as one can't pick up a newspaper, magazine, turn on the news or radio without hearing about these warm and fuzzy ideas. What we should be doing as voters is asking candidates to provide us with a detailed blueprint of their plans for the country and the costs to the budget and tax-payer. Submit these to the American people and then let us make an informed decision on who is best equipped to lead our country for the next four years. This is a nice idea, but never going to happen. These candidates are smart people and they won't risk offending any voters as they need every vote they can get this year, even if that means scaring you into voting for them or offering pie in the sky ideas with no actual details behind them.

This year we saw record voter turnout in every state, which was refreshing to see. This is in part because we have an unpopular President and an ongoing war which led many people to get out and vote this time around, but even so, high turnout is good for our country. However, we still hear from people of all ages who say they don't vote because their vote doesn't matter or doesn't count. In many cases these are the same people who complain every time something goes wrong in this country. Maybe these people have it right and the rest of us who vote have it wrong? Maybe our votes don't count like they should.

We just completed one of the most bruising Presidential primaries in our nation's history. Along the way we saw record voter turnout, which again, was great to see. However, one could make a case that the one person one vote rule really didn't matter this year. In the Republican primary you had winner take all, which means that the person with the most votes won. You didn't have that in the Democratic primary and we should all ask why.

Continued from page 4

In 2000 the Democratic Party criticized the Republicans accusing them of highjacking the election from Al Gore who received more of the popular vote than George Bush yet George Bush was elected President. We saw the Democratic Party point to Florida where they claim the votes weren't counted and the will of the people was undermined by the Electoral College process. We saw yet again in 2004 the Democratic Party make the same claim except this time they said voters in Ohio had their votes highjacked by Republicans.



What we aren't hearing this year is anyone from the Democratic Party or press, making the same accusations against their own party for the exact same things that just occurred in the Democratic primary for President, that they accused Republicans of in 2000 and 2004.

According to the rules of the Democratic Party one person one vote still applies. What doesn't apply is that the person with the most votes wins. According to the Democratic primary rules, the will of the people doesn't necessarily win out.

What the Democratic party has said to voters is we will allow you to vote and we will spend hundreds of millions of dollars getting you to the polls, but at the end of the day we don't trust your decision-making and have created a system whereby we will anoint Super Delegates (or Democratic elites) to ultimately decide who the candidate will be.

This process goes against everything this country stands for and tries to promote in other democratic countries around the world. It's amazing no one was talking about this. We had tens of millions of people vote in the most historic Presidential primary in our history, yet we are not certain whom the real nominee is because it wasn't a winner take all system. It was a race decided by the elite few in the Democratic Party.

The question to the American people is why don't we deserve a better system? Why does one party believe that the American people aren't smart enough to decide who they want as their next leader? The only answer one could conclude is the Democratic elite don't believe the American people will make the "right" decision.

This would seem to be an arrogant way of thinking. The heads of the Democratic Party are basically telling voters that we want your votes and your money, but at the end of the day we will ultimately decide for you. Doesn't sound like the government by the people for the people our Founding Fathers had envisioned.

As voters we should all be outraged by this process. One person one vote should actually mean something or what's the point in voting? We need to demand the rules be changed by 2012 so that the American people elect our leaders and not the elite of any one party. Our system of government is built on that philosophy and it's principles we ask other countries to live by.

Continued from page 5

We deserve more and we are smarter than the elites give us credit for. If the slogan is change you can believe in, then why not give us real change and it begins with ensuring our votes count for something more than television drama.



As voters we hold the power. Let's begin using it by demanding the rules change so that our votes do count. We shouldn't head into an historic election with an asterisk next to any candidates name because we aren't sure they truly won their party's nomination since the votes of the people really didn't elect the nominee.

We should all support the need for a change in how campaigns are waged, but it has to start with the parties and the rules they make. Until changes in how votes are counted we will be no better than we were four years ago regardless of who the candidate is.

Candidates have complained about "special interests" running Washington for too long, maybe we should ask the candidates to cut their ties with the "special interest" elite party leaders. Voting is a privilege and should actually mean something. It's time our candidates understood that.

Senate Races

New Mexico

Democratic Rep. Tom Udall finally has an opponent after the close GOP primary battle came to a halt. Udall will be facing Rep. Steve Pearce for the seat of retiring Sen. Pete Domenici. The more conservative Pearce defeated Republican Rep. Heather Wilson for the right to carry the GOP banner for Senate in November. Pundits believed that the more moderate Wilson would have had a better chance against the Democratic nominee; however, Pearce was better able to distinguish himself in the GOP primary.

North Carolina

Incumbent Republican Senator Elizabeth Dole is getting a run for money with Democratic challenger Kay Hagan. Recent polls have put Hagan within striking distance of the current Senator and wife of former Republican nominee for president, Sen. Bob Dole. Hagan, who several months ago was well behind the North Carolina Senator, has made up a lot of space. Similar to the Maine race, this election may come down to the presidential coattails.

Senate Continued

Maine

Maine Republican Senator Susan Collins is facing a tough reelection in current Rep. Tom Allen, ME-01. Throughout the spring, Collins seemed comfortably ahead in the polls. However, Allen and national Democrats continually stated that the race would tighten up. Here at the end June, it seems as those prophecies have come somewhat true. Latest polls have Tom Allen within 7 points of Collins, with plenty of time to come closer by Election Day. Allen will be riding on the coattails of Barack Obama, the Democratic nominee for President, while Collins is sure to be stumping with the GOP nominee, John McCain. It may very well come down to which of the presidential candidates has a more effective Get Out the Vote (GOTV) machine.



House Races

CT – 04

Incumbent Republican Rep. Chris Shays is a perennial target for Democrats who earnestly want to claim the last remaining GOP congressional seat in New England. His presumptive challenger, former Wall Street investment banker Jim Himes, faces a primary match against Lee Whitnum, a substitute school teacher. Himes has raised over \$1 million for his race. Shays barely eked out a win in 2006 over challenger Diane Farrell – his margin of victory was 6,060 votes.

CO – 04

GOP Rep. Marilyn Musgrave is being challenged in November by Democratic former Senate aide Betsy Markey. Musgrave would be wise to be as vigilant as possible as she won reelection in 2006 with only 46% of the vote. Polls have been showing the two contenders neck and neck; however, there are still many weeks to go before the polls open.

NY – 13

And the hits just keep on coming for national Republicans for the 2008 election cycle. After being forced to defend over two dozen House seats from retiring Members, dealing with scandals from coast to coast, a President whose approval ratings are in the 20s, and the party's financial difficulties, the GOP must deal with the new race for the 13th district of New York which is currently filled by Rep. Vito Fossella. Fossella, who ran into legal trouble in May stemming from a drunk driving arrest and subsequent revelation about an affair and fathering a child out of wedlock, has decided to not seek reelection. Democrats had been expected to field a tough candidate again this election cycle; however, now their chances to have been given a boost. Even though there is a contested Democratic primary in September, national Democrats have coalesced around City Councilman Michael McMahon. Republicans have queued up behind a retired Wall Street executive, Frank Powers.

Presidential Politics

Who is Bob Barr?

Many know Bob Barr as the former Congressman from Georgia who was involved in the Monica Lewinsky scandal during the Bill Clinton presidency. However, now, Barr may be a larger thorn in the Republican's side than he ever was to the Democrats. The former Peach State congressman is the Libertarian Party's nominee for President. Depending on how much of a following Barr can generate and how successful he is in wooing supporters of former presidential candidate Ron Paul, the Libertarian Party in 2008 may be the Democrats' Green Party of yesteryear. Several states come to mind that may have a wrench thrown into them from Barr's run. New Hampshire, an historically libertarian state with its lack of state taxes and "Live Free or Die" state of mind could be ripe for Barr followers. However it is important to note that McCain does very well in the Granite State, and has done so since his first presidential run in 2000.



The second state that might be put into play is Georgia, Barr's home state. The Obama campaign already thinks that the Peach State is a possible pickup in November, but with Barr on the ballot, it might siphon votes away from McCain and push Obama across the finish line.

Clinton and Obama Unite, But Is the Party United?

On Saturday, June 7, 2008, New York Senator and onetime Presidential frontrunner Hillary Rodham Clinton conceded the Democratic primary nomination to Illinois Senator Barack Obama, making him the first African-American candidate of a major national political party.

This primary season, which continued far longer than most, saw history in the making. Both Clinton and Obama had (and still have) tremendously loyal followers, neither of which are ready to give in. Clinton has stated that she will do everything it takes to make sure that Obama is the next President of the United States, but the bigger question is, will her followers listen? Throughout the primary fight, Clinton and Obama voters seemed very different from one another.

As many a political pundit mentioned, the Illinois Senator seemed to be catching the imagination of the wine drinking Democrats, while the former First Lady beer and whiskey with her supporters. To put that in more technical terms, younger, white collar, upper class and more highly educated primary voters cast their ballots for Obama while Hillary won the support of the blue collar, older voters. There seems to be a substantial difference in what these two segments of the Democratic Party are looking for in a potential president.

On the one hand, Obama's support demands change and, as evidenced through his "Yes We Can" mantra, an egalitarian vehicle for that change. Clinton backers look to the New York senators experience from her time in the White House to her time in the United States Senate as presidential material.



Truly, these arguments seem moot at this point, as Barack Obama is the presumptive nominee going into the Democrats' convention in Denver. However, a long road awaits him as he attempts to woo for Clintonites to support his candidacy over the Republican nominee, Arizona Senator John McCain. Obama must convince blue collar Americans that he is one of them and understands and truly feels the current middle class squeeze. Obama will have until November to make his case to the American electorate. Hillary's action or inaction might prove to be the pivotal shift for voters, but at what expense to Barack Obama?

Presidential Politics: Vice Presidential Sweepstakes Begin

Barack Obama:

Joe Biden, Senator – Delaware
Hillary Rodham Clinton, Senator – New York
Jim Webb, Senator – Virginia
Kathleen Sebelius, Governor – Kansas
Claire McCaskill, Senator – Missouri
Bill Richardson, Governor – New Mexico
Michael Bloomberg (I), Mayor – New York City
Mike Easley, Governor – North Carolina
Sam Nunn, former Senator – Georgia
Evan Bayh, Senator – Indiana
Tim Kaine, Governor – Virginia

John McCain:

Charlie Crist, Governor – Florida
Carly Fiorina, former CEO – HP
Kay Bailey Hutchison, Senator – Texas
Joe Lieberman (ID), Senator – Connecticut
Mitt Romney, former Governor, Massachusetts
Mike Huckabee, former Governor – Arkansas
John Thune, Senator – South Dakota
Tim Pawlenty, Governor – Minnesota
Mark Sanford, Governor – South Carolina
Condoleezza Rice, Secretary of State