

In This Issue:

- Why Can't Mom's be Vice President
 - Battle in the former Soviet Union
 - Beijing Summer Olympics
 - Making a Claim For Transportation Overhaul
 - GOP Energy Sit-In
 - Senate Questions Michelle Obama's Ties to Hospital
 - The Lion Roars
 - The Life of Michelle Obama
 - Hillary Clinton Truly Concedes
 - Al Gore: Environmentalist, former Vice President, Oscar Winner, Nobel Laureate
 - Vice Presidential Nominee Joe Biden
 - 84,000 Spectators
 - Governor Sarah Palin
 - On the Ground
-

Why Can't Mom's be Vice President

At both national party conventions we saw history being made. For the first time an African American was nominated as President and for only the second time a woman was selected as her parties Vice Presidential nominee. Both historic and encouraging events.

I don't know if the quiet announcement of Governor Sarah Palin just caught the national media off-guard or they were playing pay-backs to the McCain campaign, which put out false information to the media prior to the official announcement. Either way, the media's handling of the Sarah Palin announcement was appalling.

Let me start with the medias handling of Gov. Palin's daughter. It has been an unwritten rule that children are off limits during campaigns. It appears the only one's listening this campaign season are the two candidates. I applaud Senator Obama for immediately coming out and condemning the attacks on this young girl. As Sen. Obama pointed out that his mother had him at a young age of 18.

Forget about what your personal feelings are about the pregnancy. It is out of bounds to target this girl because it's all you have to run with to point out so-called flaws of her mother. Every family in this country deals with issues that are private and between them – this is one of those.

Why is it that the press never reported on Amy Carter in the same way or Chelsea Clinton? It seems that the only time the press feels the need to attack children of candidates is when they are Republican's. It happened early on in the Bush administration with Laura and Barbara and is now continuing with Gov. Palin's daughter.

As a journalist and “respected” member of the media you don’t get a pass because you say to your audience that you didn’t break the story, but you’re forced to report on it. That’s nothing more than an excuse. Stand-up and say no. The media expects candidates to be of higher character; why shouldn’t they expect it from themselves.

The bigger question for the media is why do they feel that a woman shouldn’t be able to be a mother and serve her country? For some reason Gov’ Palin having five children should preclude her from being Vice President. Yes, I will agree with you that having young children is a juggling act, but it can be done. Gov. Palin proved that during her term as Governor.

For some in the media to say that she’s not a good Mom because her daughter is pregnant is a ridiculous claim. Parents can’t be held accountable for the actions of their children. I don’t hear the press writing about and praising the Palin’s for the accomplishments of their son, who has decided to serve his country. You won’t because it won’t sell papers or bring in viewers.

Kids make mistakes. We all have and as a parent you hope the mistakes your kids make are not devastating and that they learn from them. I wonder how many in the media know or have in their family someone in the same situation?



Will Gov. Palin be a good Vice President if elected? Only time will tell, but let’s not count her out just because she’s a woman. I didn’t see the press today or in the past question Senator Joe Biden for being a single parent when his first wife died. Why is it okay for a man to be a single parent and hold a high level government or private sector position, but not okay for a woman?

This is an historical time in politics. Let’s not diminish the role of anyone, man or woman. Let’s support these people and hope they will begin to really make the changes we all want in Washington. Changing the culture is key to our country’s ability to solve the critical issues facing all Americans. Partisanship has become the norm in Washington and it’s time for change and I hope either Senator McCain or Obama begin to change that culture.

Let’s get beyond the gender and race question this election and focus on what’s important – the issues.

And, let’s not discount a woman being Vice President just because she’s a Mom. Where would we all be without the love and care of our Mom’s.

AROUND THE GLOBE

Battle in the former Soviet Union

At the beginning of August, as most of the world had its eyes turned towards China for the Summer Games, the former Soviet republic of Georgia sent its military into the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Immediately, the Russian Federation came to the aid of the rebel area and sent troops across the border into Georgia itself. Georgia, which has been pro-Western, received the vocal support from the United States, Europe, and, to some extent, the United Nations. This standoff between the old Cold War adversaries sent a chill throughout the world as she remembered the frigid days of the fight between capitalism and communism. Since the outbreak of hostilities, Russia and Georgia have come to a fragile ceasefire agreement. However, the United States has since sent American ships to the Georgian shores filled with recovery aide and assistance.



Beijing Summer Olympics

Every four years, the global community comes together to celebrate its shared love for competition and sportsmanship. In the lead-up to the Summer Olympics in Beijing, the West, in particular, was curious to see if the historically secretive Chinese government would permit the foreign press and tourists free reign as the world converged on the capital city for the games. By the end of the competition, American swimmer Michael Phelps had secured a world records by being the first athlete to win eight gold medals at an Olympics. However, perhaps the most memorable aspects of the Games were the Opening and Closing Ceremonies, which were beyond spectacular. The United Kingdom, in 2012, will have to live up to incredible expectations. However, before then, Vancouver will be hosting the 2010 Winter Games.

Making a Claim For Transportation Overhaul

The Republicans' point man on transportation issues in Congress is spending this week selling his \$1.5 trillion infrastructure plan to a tough critic: his own presidential nominee.

John Mica of Florida, the ranking Republican on the House Transportation and Infrastructure, will lead a group of Republicans Wednesday to the site of the Interstate 35 bridge in Minneapolis that collapsed last year. A replacement span is almost completed and Mica aims to show colleagues attending the Republican National Convention what can be accomplished when projects are expedited.

Mica — who is pitching a \$1.5 trillion highway bill plan that would raise a third of the money in federal revenue, another third through public-private partnerships and the rest by selling bonds — has previously expressed deep-seated frustration with the Bush administration's policy on transportation.

Continued from Page 3

Many infrastructure experts worry that a President McCain could be even less friendly to transportation needs than Bush. McCain voted against the 2005 highway law, citing objections to millions of dollars in congressionally directed earmarks.



The next president will have to sign off on a new highway law that Mica has argued should be the greatest overhaul of American transportation policy since the Interstate highway system was proposed more than 50 years ago. Should Democrats retain their majorities in Congress, McCain would have to negotiate with supporters of high spending.

Efforts to fund transportation infrastructure projects will be complicated by declining motor fuels tax revenue. The tax, which has been the main source of the Highway Trust Fund since the Eisenhower administration, is drying up, and lawmakers will face the choice of raising the tax or finding new revenue sources.

GOP Energy Sit-In

Congressional Republicans, who were upset that Congress adjourned for the August recess without an overhaul to energy legislation, vowed to continue to make oil an issue throughout the summer break. A rotating group of GOP Members of Congress spoke from the House of Representatives about the need for more drilling in order to lower the price of oil. Democrats, who generally favor alternative sources of energy and a crackdown on oil speculation, have been hesitant to have a broad discussion on drilling for oil on American soil. When Congress comes back into session in the fall, the public will see whether or not the GOP strategy of an energy sit-in will have paid off.

Senate Questions Michelle Obama's Ties to Hospital

The top Republican on the Senate Finance Committee is raising questions about Michelle Obama's job at a Chicago hospital, using his oversight power on nonprofit institutions.

Chuck Grassley, R-Iowa, on Tuesday released a letter he sent Aug. 29 to the chief executive of the University of Chicago Medical Center, where Obama, the wife of Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Barack Obama, worked as vice president of community and external relations until going on leave.

Without naming Obama, the letter asks for information on the hiring and selection process for her post and on how her compensation package, reported at \$317,000 annually, was determined. The questions are among dozens Grassley addressed to Dr. James L. Madara regarding the medical center's operations.

Continued from Page 4

Citing a newspaper report, Grassley said the center “appears to be culling the least profitable patients from its emergency room.” The Aug. 22 Washington Post article said Michelle Obama launched a program to send patients with non-urgent conditions to neighborhood clinics. The hospital provided some of the clinics with part-time medical personnel.



Grassley, a long-time critic of tax-exempt hospitals that he thinks do not adequately merit the tax advantage, referenced the Post article that detailed various connections among the Obamas, their friends and associates, and the hospital. The article, which discusses the hospital’s level of charity care and its use of the public-opinion firm of Barack Obama adviser David Axelrod, was “troubling” to Grassley, according to the letter.

The article cites a report from a bipartisan center noting that the hospital provided less charity care as a percentage of its expenses than other hospitals in the Chicago region and that it received five times as much in tax breaks than it provided in charity care.

Grassley is also seeking information about the employment of Axelrod’s firm, other Obama associates and the Urban Health Initiative spearheaded by Michelle Obama. That program aims to use community health centers to treat patients who might otherwise go to the emergency room and receive more expensive care. Grassley also wrote to the M.D. Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, regarding billing of a leukemia patient that Grassley called “exorbitant.”

“The answers to the questions I’m asking are critical to understanding whether these hospitals are setting standards for their peers,” he said in a written statement. “Those standards might include losing sight of the public service that comes with tax-exempt status.”

Baucus linked the issue to broader issues facing the U.S. health care system. “As more Americans struggle to get health care, and as hospitals are asked to serve communities increasingly in need, I intend for the Finance Committee to focus on the root causes of the huge spike in uncompensated care — the facts that 46 million Americans live without health insurance, and millions more don’t have sufficient coverage — and to seek universal health coverage that will allow every American to get the quality health care they need at the facility that’s best for them,” he said.

On the Trail: *Democratic National Convention: Denver, Colorado*

The Lion Roars

Known as the Lion of the Senate, Ted Kennedy has been missing in action the entire summer while recovering from surgery and treatment for cancer. He made a dramatic return earlier in the summer to Washington in order to cast a critical vote on the Senate floor; however, at that time, he made no public comments nor did he speak to the press. On Monday, the first night of the Democratic National Convention, Sen. Kennedy made a surprise and thrilling appearance. In case he could not make it to the Convention, the Party had put together a video compilation celebrating Kennedy's life and achievements and his thoughts on Obama as president. After the film ended, Kennedy spoke strongly and fiercely on behalf of the Illinois Senator. The speech brought the crowd to its feet and tears to their eyes. Kennedy, a unabashed liberal, is known on both sides of the aisle as a legislator who can get work done.



The Life of Michelle Obama

In an extremely anticipated speech to highlight who she is and what values she holds, Democratic nominee Barack Obama's wife, Michelle, spoke on the first night of the Convention. Her job was to humanize herself in front of the nation in order for voters to attempt to understand her a little bit better. She has made a couple of gaffes on the campaign trail that have led to negative press. Monday night's address was an attempt to change that perception and show her as a loving mother, daughter, wife, and everyday American. Time will tell whether or not American voters have warmed up to their possible future First Lady.

Hillary Clinton Truly Concedes

One of the hottest political stories of the summer has been the theory that many Hillary Rodham Clinton supporters would not support Obama in the fall and would, in turn, switch their vote to Sen. John McCain, the Republican nominee. Clinton had the job, during her speaking time at the Democratic National Convention to attempt to convince her undecided supporters that Obama is far-and-away the better choice for president. She spoke about how the differences between her and Obama were far fewer than those between her and McCain. Similarly to Michelle Obama's speech, the election in November will decide whether or not Clinton's plea resonated with her supporters.

**Al Gore: Environmentalist, former Vice President,
Oscar Winner, Nobel Laureate**

Former Vice President, who has accomplished much since leaving the federal government in 2001, addressed the delegates and spectators at Invesco Field on Thursday, the final day of the Democrats' convention in Denver. Always a defender of the environment, since leaving the Naval Observatory, Gore has truly run with his passion by writing the hit-book "An Inconceivable Truth," which was turned into an Oscar winning film. Moreover, because of his work on global warming, Gore won the Nobel Prize. Still, with all of these accomplishments, one thing that he cannot add to his resume is that of President of the United States, which he barely lost in the 2000 election to then-Texas Governor George W. Bush. During his address to the Democratic delegates, the former Vice President spoke about the dire need for a comprehensive energy and environmental policy in order for America to be truly secure. As a man who came within votes from living at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, Obama should heed the advice given to him.



Vice Presidential Nominee Joe Biden

Lately being described as scrappy, Delaware Senator and Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Joe Biden has been chosen as Barack Obama's running mate and possible future Vice President. Biden, who has experience running a national campaign, is known for his expertise on foreign policy issues. The Delaware Senator ran for president in 1988 and again in 2008, before withdrawing earlier in the race after poor showings in the first contests. Biden shores up the areas where Obama is perceived as weak: international affairs and national security. A thirty-five year veteran of Washington, Biden has first elected to the United States Senate in 1972. Delaware's three electoral votes are considered safely Democratic; however, Biden may appeal to voters in his native Pennsylvania, as well as Catholic voters.

84,000 Spectators

On Thursday, August 28, 2008, on the 45th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream Speech," Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama accepted his party's nomination before a mass of 84,000 delegates, celebrities, spectators, and everyday Americans. Men and women traveled from all over the nation to hear this historic speech. Obama, the nation's first African-American nominee from a major national party, would make history as the first black president if elected in November. The crowd, which was electrified by his words, witnessed Obama criticize President Bush and John McCain for their policies and positions.

Governor Sarah Palin

The Republicans now have a Vice Presidential candidate in Alaska Governor Sarah Palin who was tapped by John McCain at a speech in Dayton, Ohio on Friday afternoon. Palin, a first term governor, is a mother of five and has lived in the Last Frontier for the majority of her life. The governor becomes the second woman on a national party ticket, following the 1984 campaign of then-Democratic Vice Presidential nominee Geraldine Ferraro. Moreover, Palin becomes the first female on a Republican ticket. The 44-year old executive is the former mayor of Wasilla, AK. Political observers believe that the choice of Palin, over some of the more public vice presidential possibilities available to McCain, is a clear attempt to woo some of Hillary Rodham Clinton's disenfranchised supporters away from Barack Obama. As the campaign wears on, voters will get a chance to get to know Governor Palin and decide whether they can envision her stepping into the shoes of John McCain.



On the Ground

Senate

ALASKA

Sen. Ted Stevens, the current GOP legislator from Alaska, is facing his most difficult reelection to date. The Senator's political future may very well reside with the outcome of the corruption charges levied against him by the United States Government. Democratic nominee Mark Begich is leading Stevens in many polls. Stevens, who is best known for bringing home federal money to projects throughout the state of Alaska, is now being criticized for being part of the problem, rather the solutions, in Washington. Begich is currently the popular Mayor of Anchorage, AK.

OREGON

Oregon State House of Representatives Speaker Jeff Merkley is the Democratic nominee against Republican Senator Gordon Smith. Smith, who has one of the more moderate records in the Senate, is taking no chances in his reelection bid. Some of his campaign ads have featured Barack Obama stating how much Smith has helped out with legislation. In a state that has voted Democratic in the last five presidential races, Smith must very cautious not to campaign too pro-Republican. Merkley will have to attempt to tie Smith to Bush and McCain in order to pick up some of the dissatisfied voters. Recent polls have Smith leading the State House Speaker, but that could change over the next two months.

VIRGINIA

Former Old Dominion Governors Mark Warner (D) and Jim Gilmore (R) are facing one another to be the Commonwealth's next U.S. Senator. The spot is being vacated by retiring GOP Sen. John Warner. Former Gov. Warner left the Governorship a very popular figure, having worked with both parties to control spending and fix the budget.

Gilmore is the governor who immediately preceded Warner in the Governor's mansion. Polls have Mark Warner with a significant lead over Gilmore heading into the fall campaign season. The political tides may be changing in Virginia, where the commonwealth could see a scenario where several congressional seats, both senate seats, and the governorship all be in the hands of the Democrats come November. Democratic presidential nominee Barack Obama has made it very well known that he intends to make Virginia competitive in the presidential election as well.



House

AK-At Large

Alaska...the Last Frontier as it is commonly known. However, it could also be called the Land of Changing Politics. Alaskan politics is increasingly in the news lately as its Senate race becomes more contested, its current U.S. Senator is under investigation, and its governor has been selected as John McCain's running mate for President of the United States. In addition to these drastic changes, the lone House seat is also heating up. A Republican primary pitted incumbent Rep. Don Young against current Lt. Governor Sean Parnell. The votes from the primary, which took place this month, are still being tallied because of the proximity of the election. Whoever ends up winning the primary election will face the Democratic nominee, Ethan Berkowitz. Berkowitz is a former state legislator and recently was his party's nominee for Governor in 2006.

ME-01

In the race to replace Rep. Tom Allen in Maine's First District, Democratic nominee Chellie Pingree is facing off against GOP nominee Charlie Summers, a Lt. Commander in the Navy Reserve. Allen is vacating his seat in order to challenge GOP incumbent Senator Susan Collins. Allen won reelection races fairly easily. Until recently, Pingree was the head of Common Cause, a Washington-based group based on ethics reforms. The Maine First District is based in the southern part of the state and includes the city of Portland and the capital city of Augusta.

OH-01

Veteran Republican Congressman Steve Chabot from the First District of Ohio is facing a vigorous challenge from State Representative Steve Driehaus. Chabot, who was first elected to Congress in 1994, may be in the closest race yet for reelection. To date, his closest challenger lost to him by six points. The congressional race may boil down to who has longer coattails in the Buckeye State, Barack Obama or John McCain. The Ohio First District includes the city of Cincinnati.

