

# COMMENTARY

## The Hour

The Hour

Chet Valiante PUBLISHER  
Donna Bertoli EDITOR  
John P. Reilly EDITOR EMERITUS

### Voter turnout was exemplary, should grow

There is no doubt that the turnout in this year's presidential election was outstanding, reversing a trend of lower and lower voter totals in recent years.

While a state official predicted a 90 percent showing, we came up a bit short of that mark with an 80 percent preliminary total. That's still commendable.

Obviously, voter registration drives and great interest in the presidential elections had great impact on the turnout.

We hope the interest continues — especially among those who voted this year for the first time — remember democracy is not a one-time thing, it's an ongoing struggle.

There are still some towns that have not submitted final totals to the state, so the complete number may well be a record but still fall short of the 90 percent.

There was an interesting contradiction between the state and national levels when it came to campaign financing.

Connecticut's public financing law gave senatorial candidates \$85,000 in campaign money and House candidates \$25,000, but only if participants agreed to finance limits and to rely almost entirely on the public funds.

A total of 185 House candidates availed themselves of the program, while 51 senatorial aspirants took part. The program revealed an increase in interest in running for office, since many who could not afford to go it on their own were able to run.

This not only increases the candidate pool but diversifies the representation.

On the national level, however, there was a different result.

The desire to have as much money as possible kept President Bush and Sen. John Kerry from accepting public funds four years ago.

This year, Sen. John McCain, a strong advocate for campaign reform, participated, but President-elect Barack Obama did not.

The reason for his decision was that by accepting public financing he would limit how much money he could raise.

He rejected public financing for both the primaries and the general election.

The question is, given the response in the past two presidential elections, is public financing — at the national level — doomed?

We fear so.



### LETTERS

#### Lame duck president still serves corporate interests

**To the Editor:**  
Is the Mack really back now? Is he himself again? His gracious election-night phone call to the president-elect and humble concession speech to the public suggest that.

Meanwhile, the once-lauded Sarah Palin, whose self-serving vice presidential effort has fallen into some disrepute as she's accused by the former McCain campaign of causing the senator's defeat, may yet bounce back. Although denying it, she may appoint herself to a vacant Alaskan U.S. Senate seat.

The last 10 and one half weeks of the Bush administration looks to be very busy, with Congress out of session until early January, allowing the president substantial

discretion, plotting extensive new federal regulations weakening government rules that protect both environment and consumer.

Approximately 90 such regulations are planned. Among these, executive orders for mining for uranium in the Grand Canyon area, which will make the Colorado River radioactive. An important food source, the Imperial Valley in California, irrigated by the Colorado, will be affected, too. Millions of tons of additional carbon dioxide will also be released into the atmosphere with the rule that limits such emissions overturned, seriously worsening global warming.

Said John Walke of the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Americans will be forced

... to choke on dirtier air for years to come, unless Congress or the new administration reverses these eleven-hour abuses." John Podesta, of the Center for American Progress and co-chairman of the Obama transition team, assured that the Bush orders to drill and mine in Utah could be repealed without congressional action.

As ever, Bush and company are rushing to serve corporate demands rather than the welfare of the people. One would think that this outgoing president would want his last acts to be of benefit, not detriment, to his country.

Elizabeth Gerteiny  
Westport

#### Thanks to Community Foundation for supporting teachers

**To the Editor:**  
I am writing to thank the Fairfield County Community Foundation (FCCF) for their commitment to public school teachers in Bridgeport, Stratford, Norwalk, Stamford and Danbury. Recently, the FCCF donated \$25,000 to a national non-profit called DonorsChoose.org to help teachers in these five cities. At DonorsChoose.org, public school teachers can post requests for classroom items on a national

Web site that anyone can fund and receive a tax-deductible charitable donation. The grant automatically funded 50 percent of our teachers' requests while the FCCF grant lasted.

Our classroom teachers face unique educational challenges, often with adequate resources. Now, resources in the form of basic classroom supplies are being provided with private philanthropic help.

For the past 10 years, the

Norwalk Education Foundation has been empowering Norwalk teachers through grants for classroom innovation and technology training. We would like to thank the Fairfield County Community Foundation for its longstanding support of public education and for believing in Norwalk's teachers and students.

Lauren Rosato  
Executive Director  
The Norwalk Education  
Foundation

#### Catholic voter unable to support pro-choice Obama

**To the Editor:**  
I really wanted to vote for Barack Obama. I enjoyed his eloquent manner of speaking, and I wanted to tell my children that I voted for the first African-American president in an historic presidential campaign. But that was not the case. Instead, as a Catholic voter, I told my children that despite what appears to be, we can never vote for someone who supports the legalization of abortion.

At a Call to Renewal conference in 2006, Sen Obama said that "not injecting 'personal morality' into public policy debates is a practical absurdity." Yet, being

"personally opposed" to abortion is not enough to make it illegal. Rather, we "have to explain why abortion violates some principle that is accessible to people of all faiths, including those with no faith at all."

Sen. Obama stated it was above his "pay-grade" to determine when a baby gets human rights (when life begins). I'm sure Michele Obama knew the answer when she was pregnant.

If the president-elect doesn't know when human life begins, then he should err on the side of caution. Being unsure, then logically he would have to admit that human life beginning at concep-

tion is a possibility. And if that possibility of human life exists, then logical thinking would see that abortion is the killing of that life.

It is too bad for Americans that Sen. Obama is not really about change. Having stated the he will pass the "Freedom of Choice Act" as one of his first orders of business, there will be no "Emancipation Proclamation" for the unborn, at least not for the next four years.

Greg Duffey  
Norwalk

### TheHour.com POLL

Where can your child access the internet at home?

Computer in his/her bedroom 25%

Computer in the family room 40.63%

Computer in the kitchen 25%

Other 9.37%

### Never too early to start the 2012 race

year-old governor, Bobby Jindal, will make his initial Iowa appearance by keynoting a Christian conservative gathering in the Des Moines suburbs. Besides the Iowa Family Policy Center ACTION's Celebrating the Family banquet, aides say he'll visit flood victims in Cedar Rapids.

If Palin and Jindal already are eyeing the Hawkeye state, January's top two Republican caucus finishers, Huckabee and Romney, can't be far behind. Two days before Jindal's appearance, Huckabee, the 2006 Iowa caucus winner, will be there as part of a national book tour.

Of course, the 2008 election reminded us of the danger of premature assumptions.

After George W. Bush's re-election victory, pundits agreed that it looked ahead:

—Hillary Clinton would be the Democratic nominee.

—George Allen and Bill Frist were eclipsing fellow Sen. John McCain as a White House prospect

—That promising newcomer, Sen.-elect Barack Obama, needed a full Senate term before seeking the White House in 2012.

Palin seems likely to remain the central figure in early 2012 Republican speculation, despite those negative stories from this year's campaign. After all, long before "Saturday Night Live" mocked her ambitions by showing her hawking "Palin in 2012" T-shirts, she had made clear her long-term ambition.

According to *The New York Times*, when a friend and supporter suggested back in 1996 that she could be Alaska's governor if she played things right, she reportedly responded, "I want to be president."

But as generations of unsuccessful hopefuls can attest, running for president is very hard.

Palin faces a challenge in maintaining support in the GOP's conservative ranks. A key decision will be how to spend the next several years. An early dilemma

could arise if, as many think likely, Sen. Ted Stevens is forced to resign or is ousted from the Senate, assuming he survives his current re-election race.

Palin may face pressure to run and probably would win. But that course is fraught with peril: moving to Washington and having to vote on hundreds of issues is not necessarily helpful for winning national office. Besides, there is no guarantee she would impress all of her Senate colleagues.

Eventually, personality and hype will give way to substantive comparisons with potential rivals. The long primary campaign and the multiplicity of debates tend to expose candidates who lack scope and depth.

Sarah Palin was one of this year's bright new stars, but sustaining that brightness for four years will be no easy trick.

Carl P. Leubsdorf is Washington bureau chief of the Dallas Morning News.