

OUR VIEW

Early Election:
Hold Your Vote

The premise ascribes to the theory that Americans, whose lives are already intensely convoluted, might show more interest in the political process, mainly voting, if it only were convenient. Politics is hard enough to digest, with all the false sloganeering, advertorial mudslinging, outright lying and campaign finance-violating without the added indignity of waiting in line, sometimes for an hour, to vote for people who you're not completely sure have your best interest at heart. Thus, early voting.

Judging by all the municipalities across the nation pushing it—available from Aug. 16-30 in Broward County, Fla.; beginning on the 17th day before an election and ending on the 4th day before election day in most Texas elections; starting here on Saturday—it'd appear that early voting was the greatest thing since, well, voting itself.

Wrong.

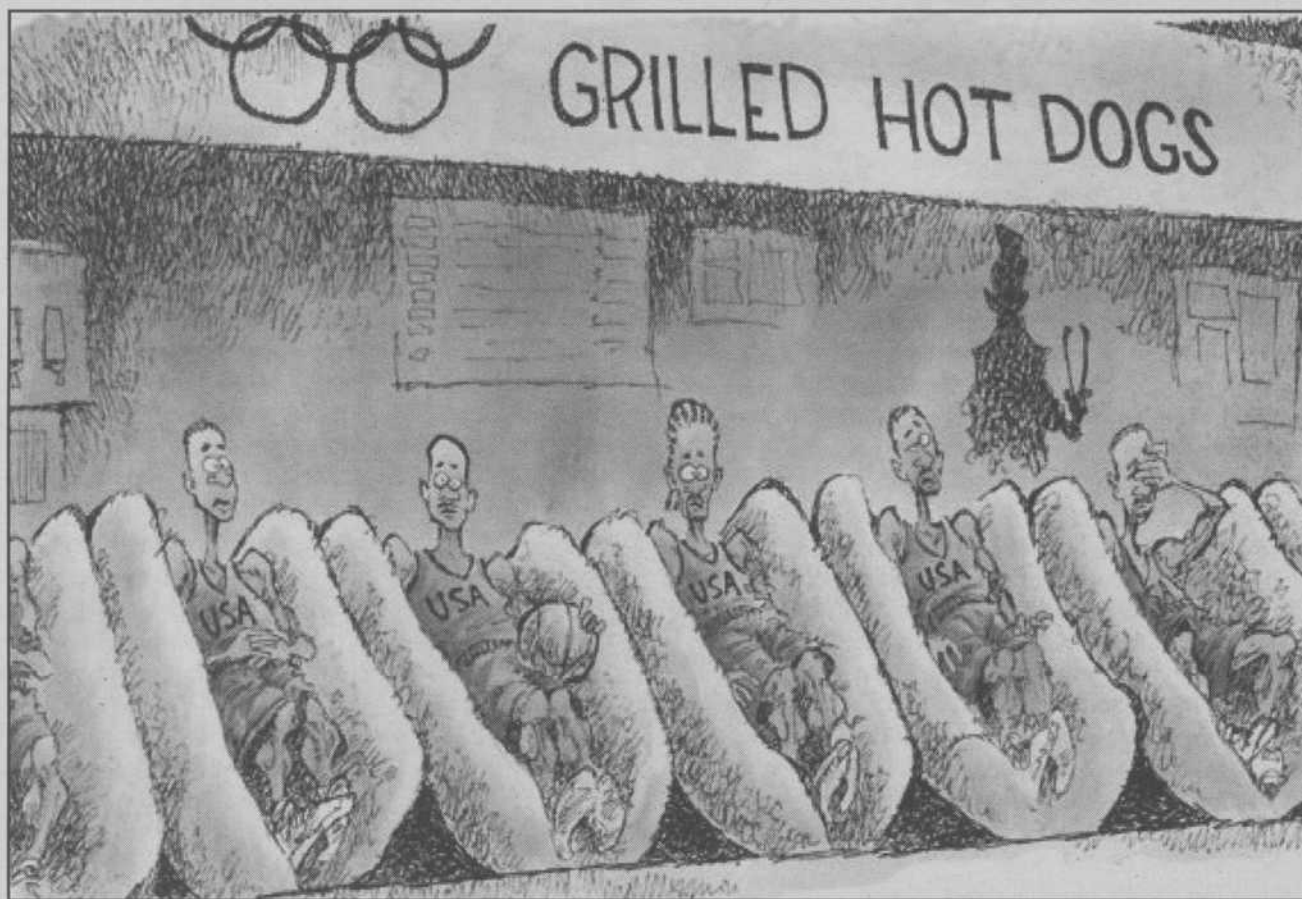
Perception isn't necessarily reality when comes to early voting. Since politics is as much about perception as reality, it behooves John and Jane Q. Public to spend time meditating and examining the difference between the two as they pertain to political candidates. Elections are won and lost, political careers born or destroyed, on how politicians think, act, react and behave. Bush the Younger's improbable ascension into the governorship of Texas in 1994 has been credited to his stellar performance in a debate against Ann Richards, the irascible but brutally intelligent and generally well-liked incumbent. Coming in as a huge underdog, Bush out-charmed and outwitted the once-impervious Richards in a televised debate. Early voting hadn't swept the country yet, so Bush benefited from being able to spar with Richards, an opponent who figured to wipe the electoral mat clean with the son of the nation's 41st president.

As the lack of early voting helped Bush then, it could both help and hurt him now. For those Bush acolytes who see the president as God-inspired (he claims as much) and unable to do no wrong, early voting is beneficial, a good way for their man to get a head start in what could be the most significant presidential election since the Civil War or, possibly, ever. It could inoculate Bush supporters from the riptide of negativity surrounding his impetuous march to war in Iraq, his cabinet's bold-faced lies about weapons of mass destruction, the White House's poor economic record (2 million jobs lost, a trillion-dollar deficit), energetic repeal of civil rights laws, manic bureaucratic layering (what good has the Department of Homeland Defense done?), internment camp-style detainment of immigrants (thousands arrested in the wake of 9/11)... the list of screw-ups go on. Those who vote early have a right to know, no, they need to know, from Bush why he's behaved the way he has, why this country is worse off after four years under his reign, why he's become the most polarizing president since Watergate architect Richard Nixon.

And they deserve such answers in a public forum. A debate forum. The Bush camp is stonewalling and, to date, has only agreed to debate Democratic presidential nominee John Kerry once. Word is the Bushies are playing hardball over the format and the questions. And they should. A lot's at stake. If their man loses the White House, those billion-dollar projects funneled to his pals to rebuild Iraq could be in jeopardy. How Bush answers the questions in this debate could convince thousands of Elephant Party loyalists to abandon their man and jump to the Donkey Party, something that's already occurring.

This same scenario must work on a micro level, too. Voters have a right to ask tough questions and to get answers from the city council, county commission, state assembly, state senate, university regent and state board of education aspirants seeking to represent them. Properly exercising that right entails getting as much information as possible in order to make an informed decision. Because the last thing you want to do is vote for someone and, four years later, find out they aren't who they purported to be. President Bush ring a bell?

POINT OF VIEW



Responsibility, accountability: Not the same

By Louie Overstreet
Special to Sentinel-Voice

I seem to recall a time in America when the words responsibility and accountability had compatible and mutually inclusive meanings when used to define a person's character.

Our leaders of the past were willing to accept responsibility and be held accountable for their actions as typified by President Harry Truman who was fond of saying, "the buck stops here."

Unfortunately, public comments and actions by today's newsmakers seem to indicate that the words responsibility and accountability have non-compatible and mutually exclusive meanings that are now used to mask these persons' hidden agendas.

Present day leaders are typified by Ken Lay of Enron, who emerged from a courtroom, after being indicted, and issued the statement, "As CEO, I accept responsibility for Enron's collapse. However, that does not mean that I knew everything that was happening at Enron." Read to mean; I was in charge but don't blame me.

At the national level, the "hawks" in the Administration are willing to accept the responsibility for leading our nation to war, however, they seem unwilling to be held accountable for the fact that nearly a thousand young Americans will never reach old age or that thousands of others will have to live dras-



LOUIE OVERSTREET

tically altered lives for the rest of their days on Earth.

At the state level, the Governor and state lawmakers had no choice but to accept responsibility for placing an additional \$854,000,000 tax burden on Nevadans. However, they are seemingly unwilling to be held accountable for the impact this tax increase will have on the working poor, who primarily comprise the workforce in Nevada's service industry based economy.

Similarly, the Board of Regents of the state's university system is also a piece of work. They are more than willing to spend upwards of \$600,000,000 a year to produce highly questionable results in higher education. A prime example of their latest "keystone cops" routine was the firing the very well regarded president of the community college system, without due process, and hired another person on an interim basis at \$14,000/month. Unbelievably, on top of these foolish actions, the Regents turned right around and hired a new permanent president,

while still trying to settle a lawsuit with the person they fired.

Even with the "dumb and dumber" antics being displayed by the Regents, when collectively compared to the Board of Trustees of the Clark County School District, the Regents come across as being absolute geniuses. The Trustees, in the past four years, have never exhibited the willingness to be held responsible for the annual declines in the academic achievement of the District's students. They certainly have not demonstrated any ability to hold the superintendent accountable for his increasingly inept job performance.

Further, if news stories are to be believed, in the past week or so it has come to light that the District apparently specializes in hiring an assortment of embezzlers, cheats, thieves, and/or sexual predators.

The following stories appeared in the Las Vegas Sun editions between August 6 and 11, 2004.

"Warrant issued for former schools athletic director." Larry McKay is accused of pocketing over \$94,000 worth of district funds and now facing four felony counts.

"Math teacher facing discipline over test." Steven Degalbeck is facing a half-year suspension for giving portions on the state math proficiency exam to his students.

"School officials say they knew of teacher's conviction." Ken Stacy pleaded guilty to a grand larceny charge last November. The District was notified and did nothing. Now the same dude was arrested a couple of weeks ago at Chaparral High School on sexual misconduct charges.

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