

COMMENTARY

Journalists falling down on presidential reporting

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Few issues are as important in this presidential election as jobs. Yet, when it comes to covering the issue, journalists are doing an extremely poor job.

A recent New York Times story that is atypical of regular political coverage observes: "...Despite the stimulus from three rounds of tax cuts, a spectacular expansion of the federal budget deficit and enormous assistance from the Federal Reserve, which slashed interest rates 13 times, the nation has at least 585,000 fewer jobs now than when Mr. Bush took office."

The article, written earlier this month by Edmund L. Andrews, notes: "It's official. President Bush will be the first president since Herbert Hoover to face re-election with fewer people working than when he started."

If most voters are ignorant of those facts, it can be attributed to the news media.

Pollster Peter Hart, in an article posted this month on www.fair.org, points out a string of misleading headlines and stories. A story in the Los Angeles Times (6/15/04) said, "Kerry's description of the economic climate ran counter to a substantial pickup of new jobs." The Wall Street Journal (6/23/04) declared in a front-page headline,



GEORGE CURRY

"As the Recovery Gains Momentum, Democrats Are Forced to Refocus." And the Washington Post (6/19/04) blasted Kerry for "political gloom-mongering" — whatever that is — because he had been "telling voters this week that although job creation may have recovered, wages are the real problem."

In a correction box (6/22/04), the Post later acknowledged: "...We were wrong and Mr. Kerry was right. Hourly wages for non-supervisory workers rose 2.2 percent, while the consumer price index rose 3.1 percent."

USAToday donned its cheerleading garb with an editorial headlined, "Kerry's Gloomy Notes About Economy Ring Hollow." Of course, Kerry's pronouncements ring hollow only if one doesn't take into account inflation, which is what the newspaper mistakenly did.

Hart, a widely-respected pollster, writes: "As Investor's Business Daily reported late last year (12/8/03): 'The president's Council of Economic Advisers said in February the White House's 'Jobs for Growth Plan' would create 5.5 million jobs by the end of 2004. That would be 306,000 new jobs each month, starting in July 2003, when the plan went into effect.' Monthly job growth has met or exceeded this target

(See Curry, Page 16)

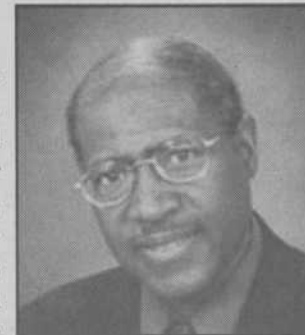
Poll positions: Are Black ministers misleading us?

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies just released its new poll and found that support for George Bush among Blacks, although still exceedingly small, has doubled since its 2000 poll. The question in the 2000 survey was the same as this year: "Suppose the... Presidential election was being held today... who would you like to see win?" In 2000, Blacks supported Al Gore by 74 percent and George Bush by only 9 percent.

In the new poll, however, Blacks support John Kerry by 69 percent and George Bush by 18 percent. A New York Times poll released the same day found roughly the same result. When the author of the survey, David Bositis, Senior Analysts of the Joint Center, was asked why the increase from 9 percent in 2000 to 18 percent in 2004, he said that one of the factors was probably the inroads made by the "faith-based" program of the Bush administration in some Black churches and the strong position of the Black church opposing gay marriages.

However, these are not normally strong voting issues for Blacks. But what if they are this time around? Granted the issue of gay marriage has provoked strong feelings



RON WALTERS

within the Black community, as well as with Whites, and there has been some friction between selected ministers and the Congressional Black Caucus on this issue.

Moreover, Republicans have worked this as a wedge issue to divide the Black vote. As such, it is being used like the faith-based program, where Bush is calling in his chits from Black ministers who have profited from the program.

Let me make it clear that I don't for a minute believe that George Bush will receive 18 percent of the Black vote this year. He will be lucky to get 6 percent or 7 percent, given the strong feelings that Blacks have toward him. But let's look at this.

To begin with, although the 2000 Joint Center poll had Al Gore at 74 percent, the final exit polls that November found that Blacks gave him 90 percent of their vote, a 16 point difference. But the main point is that Blacks, like others, usually vote on the "favorable rating" of the candidate, which this year was only 22 percent for Bush. Usually, a president who has less than a 50 percent favorable rating does not win election and Blacks have never given any president more than 10 percent whose favorable

(See Walters, Page 16)

What it boils down to: Politics a matter of economics

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"At the bottom of politics... lies economics." Booker T. Washington spoke those words as he did his best to show us what is really happening in this country, as he tried to convince us to stay focused on the money-side of things, and as he admonished us not to immerse ourselves in the political whirlpool, thereby abandoning our economic resources. Well, as I look at next week's election, and as I have written during the past four years since the Florida election debacle, all I can now sadly say is, "Sorry, Brother Booker; we did not listen to you."

Once again, this is the "most important election of our time," and we are geared up for the fight — this time. We must register to vote — once again — because our people died for the right to do so. We must come out as we have never come out before, you know, like we did in 2000, because 2004 is the "most critical election of our lifetime" — again. Black folks are so hyped about this election that we can hardly hear our leaders, and the man for whom they suggest we vote, say anything about how Black people will be positively affected by the outcome. We definitely hear the negatives, but where are the positives?

Our leaders tell us — once again — that Black folks have the "power" to sway the election in either direction.

The question is: If we have that kind of power, why aren't we using it to get a few

concessions for ourselves? Why aren't we forming an independent political party and leveraging our "power" for a quid pro quo?

While some say Black people, collectively, have the power to swing the vote, according to the latest polls, it doesn't seem to matter.

I suppose a better way to say it is that Democrats need the power of the collective Black vote to win, because all the Republicans needed was one Black vote in 2000 to win; it was cast by Clarence Thomas.

Who are we kidding, folks? This political game, at least the way we are playing it, is one that keeps our attention on the surface and away from what's beneath it all. We have had four years to do many of things we are so feverishly doing now. Didn't we see what happened in 2000? Why did our political leaders go back to sleep after they yelled, screamed, and ranted about the Presidential Selection?

What were the brothers and sisters doing in Florida after their rights were destroyed by Hurricane Katherine (Harris)? Oh, that's right, they sent her to Congress.

What have we been doing to avoid a repeat of the same thing we so vehemently complained about four years ago? Most would say in answer to that question: "We have been registering new voters." Well, here is what



JAMES CLINGMAN

the other folks have been doing. They have been building voting machines to sell to various states for billions of dollars. Private companies have used the past four years to figure out how to make more money from the political chicanery that takes place in this country. Private companies have been wooing our secretaries of state, hawking their wares across this nation, and licking their greedy chops at the thought of raking even more filthy lucre into their coffers.

A couple of companies, the main ones now receiving the contracts to install computerized voting machines, have even offered to open new offices in counties where their systems are purchased and have offered backroom deals such as discounts on software upgrades and who knows what else to the purchasing agents and decision-makers. Lawsuits have already been filed against some of these folks and their e-voting machines.

What has been the response from Black political leaders, other than hand wringing and catchy voting slogans, regarding the irregularities that have cropped up thus far? Have any of them endorsed and pushed for Brother Athan Gibbs' TruVote System, which has real built-in protection against voter fraud and tampering, and provides a paper receipt for auditing purposes?

Before his untimely death, Athan traipsed

across this country trying to get his system endorsed and ultimately utilized in the national election; his system was successfully tested by organizations and other verifiable sources, but we did not hear our Black political leaders cry out in support a Black man's invention that would prevent the disenfranchisement of Blacks and other voters.

As I recall, registering and voting were not the biggest problems the last time; it was votes not being counted, votes being thrown out, and eligible voters being denied the right to vote.

Now, in 2004, just prior to the election, we are probably looking at the same kind of scenario, and this time it will be easier because of corrupted voting machines sold by corrupted companies to corrupted election officials.

We failed to listen to Booker T. when he told us what politics was all about back at the turn of the last century. We also failed to listen to Brother Athan Gibbs when he told us how to overcome the political shenanigans of 2000. Moreover, had we supported TruVote, millions of dollars could have flowed into a Black owned company for many years to come. Maybe by the time 2008 gets here we will have learned once and for all that politics is all about money, power, and maintaining status quo. I sure hope so, because right now Black people are losing on all three fronts.

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