

OUR VIEW

Know Better

Five African-Americans have made it to the general election in November. Congratulations are in order for Beatrice Turner, Debbie Conway, Cedric Crear, and Michael Douglas—Republican Clark County Commissioner Lynette Boggs McDonald didn't have a Republican opponent in the primary. While we may know about these candidates from what they said, it's time we get to know who these candidates are.

Being an elected official is a partnership with the constituents. There is ample time over the next 13 weeks for voters to get to know their prospective elected officials better. Those, who in the minds of some were long shots but have survived the primary, can now garner broader support—votes, volunteers and campaign donations.

Now, a bit of history about Black politicians and voting in Nevada: Whether you know this or not, African-Americans have had a good recent history of winning elected office, both statewide and in Clark County. Back in 2003, there were seven Blacks in the state legislature; 11 percent of the 63 members, a figure that trumps statewide representation of the African-American population (7 percent).

Of this phenomenon, *National Review* political reporter John J. Miller wrote in 2003: "The political success of Black Nevadans is a compelling rebuttal to the claims of liberal civil-rights activists, who say that black candidates face enormous racial hurdles if they can't run for office in majority-Black voting districts. For years, groups such as the Congressional Black Caucus and the NAACP have done everything in their power to bring racial preferences to the voting booth, in the form of gerrymandered political districts drawn with the intent of guaranteeing the election of minority candidates. The Supreme Court has frowned on this practice, but has not totally overturned it — and the number of majority-minority districts has steadily increased over the last couple of decades. In Nevada, however, Black pols have flourished in the absence of these peculiar arrangements. Nevada's record even puts to shame liberal states that probably like to regard themselves as bastions of racial tolerance. California has 120 members in its state legislature, but only six of them are Black; Massachusetts has 200 legislators, but only seven of them are Black. Nevada isn't the only state where Black candidates have done well: They have strong contingents in the Michigan, New Jersey, and Ohio legislatures, too. Where they haven't succeeded — and this is true almost everywhere — is in statewide elections. And the rise of majority-minority districts is a big part of the reason why. That's because candidates who win in these environments aren't forced to create multiracial coalitions that include Whites ... The lesson of Nevada is a simple one: Blacks can succeed without special help—in the voting booth, and in many other areas as well." Strip away Miller's right-wing, partisan ranting—about the CBC, NAACP, majority-minority districts, etc.—and he does have a point.

Black politicians have succeeded in spite of our small population numbers and, despite not having any majority Black legislative districts, city wards, county districts, we have two Black councilmen (Lawrence Weekly in Las Vegas and William Robinson in North Las Vegas) and two county commissioners (Yvonne Atkinson Gates and Lynette Boggs McDonald). People may dispute their effectiveness and leadership, but each can point to things they've done to improve the lot of the Black community and their constituents; we're certainly better off with them than without them. And that is the same hope we would have for Turner, a Republican running for constable; Crear, a Democratic candidate for university regent; Conway, a Democratic county recorder hopeful; and Douglas, an incumbent state Supreme Court Justice. (Boggs McDonald is a Republican and incumbent Clark County commissioner.) From now to the November general election, it is imperative that we get to know these candidates better; to know as much about what they plan to do during their terms in office and how their judgements will be guided by their morals and values.

In politics, what you know is important, but who knows you is important, too.



Voting for political change

By Ron Walters

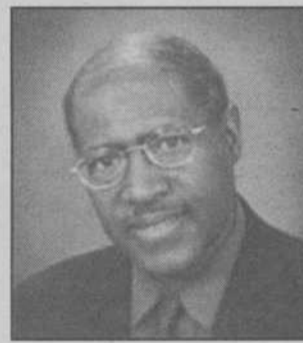
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Last week's elections brought about some substantial change in the landscape of American politics. First, the fact that Senator Joe Lieberman of Connecticut was defeated by Ned Lamont 52 percent to 48 percent was a referendum on the Iraq War. It should also be seen as a referendum on the centrist politics of the Democratic Party.

To cement that point, we should remember that Joe Lieberman, was the first Democrat to take the floor of the Senate to denounce Bill Clinton's tryst with Monica Lewinsky as immoral. And even though it was immoral, the Senate is not a church, it is a political body where the admission of weakness is seen as a sign that the wolves on the other side can move in — and they did.

Moreover, Lieberman approved school vouchers, passed on the first vote to approve Clarence Thomas to the Supreme Court and opposed him only on the second vote, opposed affirmative action, joined the Bush administration in the Terry Schiavo case, refused to support a boycott on Supreme Court nominee Samuel Alito and supported the administration's secretive style of operating the Guantanamo base.

On the other hand, Ned Lamont is not only an anti-



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war candidate, he supports universal pre-K for children with enhanced educational resources, supports universal health care, opposes outsourcing American jobs, supports increasing the minimum wage and other progressive issues. These issues are somewhat unusual for a multi-millionaire cable executive, but he gets it.

In his statement conceding defeat, but vowing to continue, Joe Lieberman characterized his defeat as the people supporting the politics of polarization. But he badly mischaracterized his defeat, because it is not just partisanship; the American people have — by a bipartisan majority — turned against the war. And Lieberman is arrogant for not bowing to the will of the majority in this case.

At one point, he said that there is something beyond partisanship and although he is right, the question is how he defines that "something." Could it be as simple as the fact that he is taking a hit for

having supported the war because it helps to protect the security of Israel?

Perhaps, at the very least, that motivation should be seen against the framework of an ally that includes the United States in its strategic plans in the region, not a cowboy regime that consistently surprises its ally by initiating actions that puts it in political jeopardy with his own citizens. Otherwise, the fact that prominent Democrats, such as the courageous Rep. Maxine Waters, Rev. Jesse Jackson and Rev. Al Sharpton and others campaigned for Lamont, made this an effort to change the direction of the Democratic Party, clarifying its position on the war and, perhaps, other issues for those who run in the fall election and in 2008 as well.

Right now, the Lieberman/Clinton axis has control of the party's direc-

tion. Bill Clinton's support for Lieberman should be seen as protecting Hillary's position on the war in her bid for the presidency. But now that axis is in jeopardy because its position has been defeated and this election has created some daylight for a new direction.

In the South, the defeat of Rep. Cynthia McKinney of Georgia's District 4 should be seen as not only the result of the peculiar Georgia election system that lets Republicans vote in the Democratic primary. The fact that she lost 58 percent to 41 percent in Rockdale, the northern part of her district where White voters are numerous, supports the crossover theory. However, she also lost by the same margin in Dekalb County, where her base is the strongest.

Perhaps there was some McKinney fatigue in the out-

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NEVADA'S ONLY AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER
LAS VEGAS Sentinel Voice
GRIOT COMMUNICATIONS GROUP, INC.

Nevada's only African-American community newspaper.
 Published every Thursday by Griot Communications Group, Inc.
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Member: National Newspaper Publishers Association
 and West Coast Black Publishers Association