

## OUR VIEW

## Attack Ads

Every two years Americans are buried under a fusillade of political attack ads. The recently completed mid-term elections were no exception. What was surprising wasn't the mudslinging itself—that's politics in the modern age. It was the depth of the vitriol, the feeling that no terrain was safe, that candidates could say anything they wanted, truth, respect and decency be damned.

In Kentucky, a gubernatorial candidate accused an opponent of murder. In Tennessee, five-time congressman and failed Senate candidate Harold Ford Jr. was targeted by an ad in which a Black woman said "he looks nice"—implying that there's little substance behind the handsome face—and a White woman told Ford to call her—implying that he has a thing for interracial relationships. It was a craven, but apparently effective attempt to stir anti-race mixing passions among Tennesseans.

A gubernatorial candidate in Texas accused an opponent of sexist propaganda. A New Jersey ad insinuated that a candidate had Mafia ties. Closer to home, there was a smorgasbord of negative attack ads: governor-elect Jim Gibbons getting tarred and feathered for an alleged but-so-far-unproven assault on cocktail waitress Christy Mazzeo; the combined power of the Culinary Union and the Police Protective Association trained on ousted County Commissioner Lynette Boggs McDonald (for allegedly not living in her commission district); the they're-nothing-but-Bush-yes-men ads directed at congressmen indistinct Jon Porter and John Ensign.

By many accounts, the attacks ad had become so vicious, so omnipresent and so below-the-belt that voters couldn't wait for the election to come. With the federal balance of power now thrown off-kilter, and Republicans and the Bush White House eager to use the ensuing two years to regroup, 2008, a presidential year, figures to see a return of debasing, bombs-away political attack ads.

Unless... Yes, there's a way to stop this. We'll continue to be inundated by political attack ads unless television stations take a stand. It's obvious that they're not being critical of what's run—insinuating that an opponent is a murderer. One option would be to allow the accused a free ad to rebut the charges. Yes, we know that television stations aren't in the business of free. But they are interested in eyeballs and ratings, which can translate into money and offset the revenues lost by giving candidates free air time to respond to character assaults.

If campaign directors knew that for every slight they put on the air, the opposing campaigns would get free airtime for rebuttal, it might limit the number of ads and force candidates to focus on the issues. In the end, that's a win, win for everyone.

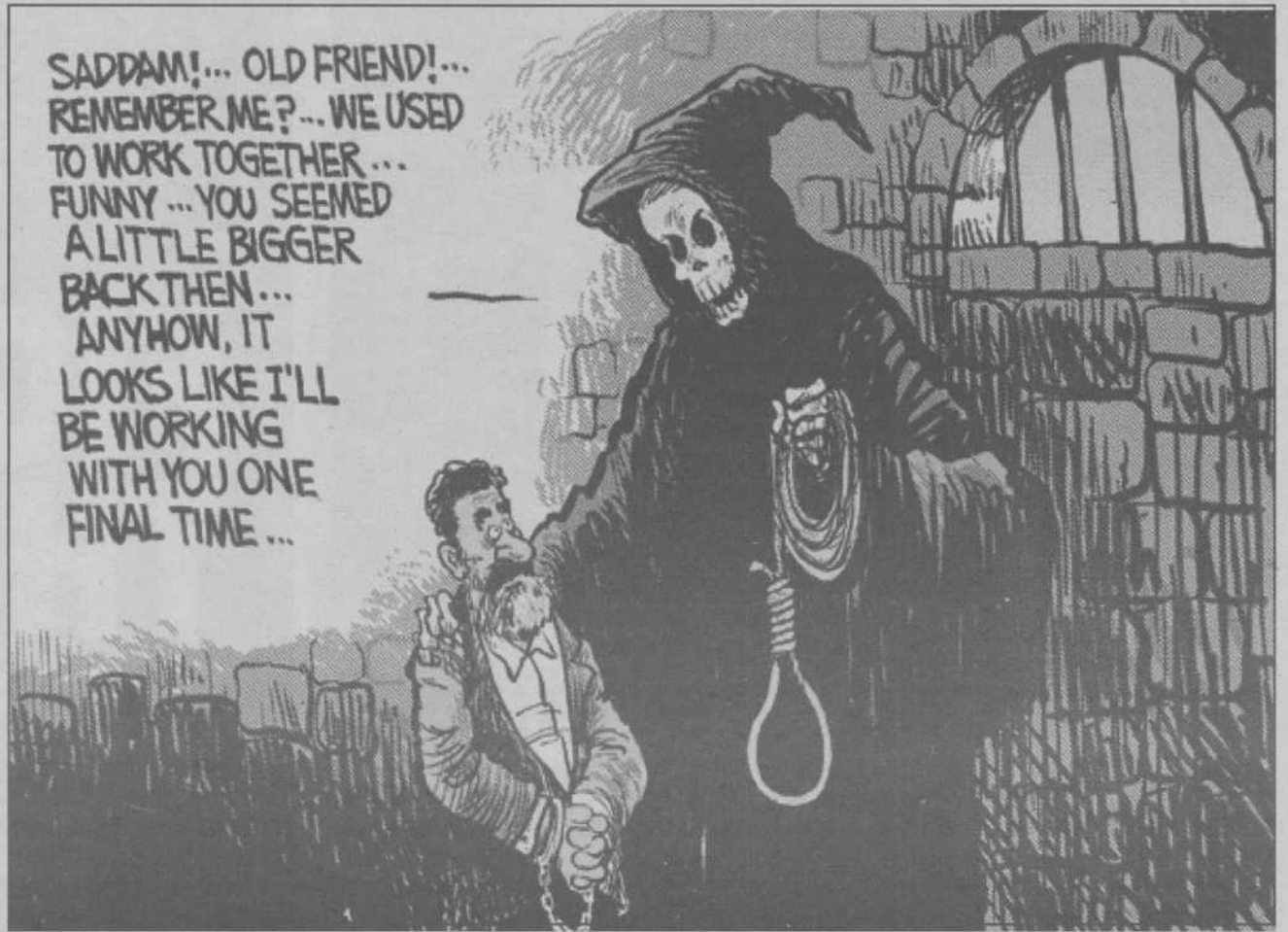
## Little White Lies

What's good for the goose isn't good for the gander. In this case, the goose was governor-elect Jim Gibbons. The five-time congressman's goose appeared cooked after he was smeared with two scandals in the waning days of the election: an assault allegation against and cocktail waitress and a *Wall Street Journal* article questioning his relationships with a Reno businessman who he'd helped win federal contracts. Gibbons' alleged transgressions dominated headlines in the run-up to Tuesday, yet he survived and won the state's highest office (largely on the strength of his support in rural Nevada.)

Then you have former County Commissioner Lynette Boggs McDonald. She was accused of using campaign funds to pay a nanny and of not living in her district. Her travails receded from the headlines in the weeks leading up to the election. In head-to-head competition, she soundly trounced opponent Susan Brager, offering specific answers to how she'd address problems, while Brager spoke in generalities. So, of course, Boggs McDonald won, right? Wrong. It wasn't even close. She was pummeled.

Two eerily similar situations. Two different outcomes. What this goes to show is that Black politicians have to be saints, without whiff of controversy, if they hope to win. Conversely, White candidates with ethical baggage can still win office. Nevada still has a ways to go.

SADDAM!... OLD FRIEND!...  
REMEMBER ME?... WE USED  
TO WORK TOGETHER...  
FUNNY... YOU SEEMED  
A LITTLE BIGGER  
BACK THEN...  
ANYHOW, IT  
LOOKS LIKE I'LL  
BE WORKING  
WITH YOU ONE  
FINAL TIME...



## Clearing the air, finally

By Parker Philpot  
*Sentinel-Voice*

The right to freedom from smoke in public places has been long overdue in Nevada, but the new law passed. So, thank you for responding with the majority voting "Yes on 5." If enacted, enforced and embraced, there can be no losers. Nearly as refreshing as the promise of healthier, breathable air indoors, is the reality that so many voters spoke fearlessly and fully informed at the polls this week.

Soon, there will be cleaner air in many places where we eat, play and enjoy everyday activities in the company of children, seniors and loved ones.

What, then, was the delay? Mainly blame misinformation, fear mongering and trickery on the part of the status quo factions who fought regulations and preempted our rights from passing any local laws protecting ourselves from environmental tobacco smoke.

And then there has been a sort of strange, excess politeness which makes accommodating our smoking friends and family a given, not wanting to ostracize our smoking beloveds, making them feel bad. "Do you mind very much if I smoke?" So, you just say no... Well, yes, I do mind—and so do my lungs, and yours, too.

Be assured, this measure for cleaner air is nothing personal against those who smoke (most smokers are the loved ones or respected co-

workers of a smoke-free person). We still love you, and we love the fact that Americans have lots of freedoms. Overriding the smokers' freedom to smoke, though, is the freedom from smoke for those of us who need and prefer to breathe unadulterated, unclouded, toxin-free air, sans the 3,000 or more unidentified chemicals in cigarette smoke.

Hence, thanks to the smoke-free voters—and a huge hip-hooray to the many tobacco smokers who care enough and voted "Yes on 5" for smarter laws to reduce and eliminate second-hand smoke for children and others. No one should be forced to inhale smoke when a person doesn't want to—even if at times that person smokes.

On Election Day, Question 5 on the ballot won by a vote of 303,842 to 258,300 for a healthier Nevada. There are no losers—oops, yes, there are some: the pompous, puffy, prevaricating, purveyors of putrid packages of poison and the paid promoters and people in high places who protect them. You remember some of them: the "Vote Yes on 4, No on 5" tricksters. They were the ones who masterfully used every Madison Avenue-made trick of mental-messaging, mass media messages, with subliminal, manipulative, market-tested images to misstate why Nevadans should have voted as the maliciously unhealthy campaign urged.

A special note of thanks and understanding for those

voters who mistakenly cast a "Yes on 4, No on 5" vote—and to some who, in confusion, voted no on both because of the well-crafted trick: Your intentions were honorable; the messenger simply lied to you. All's fair in the smoky haze of politics in advertising it seems.

Now, let's go forward in the empowerment of truth. Here are some facts to live by. They are the same facts you can trust, the facts those of us in tobacco prevention coalitions, grassroots organizations, and health awareness initiatives statewide and nationwide have been announcing for years:

Fact: Even in Nevada, which is ranked the "smokiest" state in the nation, only about one-third of the population smokes. Nationally, the number of non-smokers is a majority of about 70 percent. Yes, some smokers and visitors to our state gamble, but most gamblers and tourists don't smoke, maybe about 30 percent or so. Interesting.

Fact: The smoke-free population in the United States has always been in the majority since smoking declined in the mid to late 60s, around the time the U.S. Surgeon General insisted on the early warning labels on cigarettes. (At the same time, the tobacco manufacturers and sellers were blatantly lying to consumers, the government and their own smoking mothers about the dangers of nicotine and cigarette additives).

Fact: No one, to my knowledge, has ever died from not being able to have a smoke. The human deaths caused by first-hand and second-hand smoke each year numbers in the hundreds of thousands. Annually, more than 440,000 people are harmed, made ill or die because of tobacco use or forced inhalation of tobacco smoke. Last year alone, more than 45,000 African-Americans died prematurely as a result of second-hand smoke, according to statistics by the Center for Disease Control.

(See Philpot, Page 11)

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