

OUR VIEW

Status Quo

And they're off. They, in this case, are the Black politicians seeking to replace Clark County Commissioner Yvonne Atkinson Gates, who is leaving office in March after 14 years, she says, to finish working on a doctoral degree, develop her home-building business and spend more time with her family. Others are speculating if her reasons are related to the misconduct investigation at UMC.

Ever since Atkinson Gates' announcement, the political jockeying has been feverish. Assemblyman Morse Arberry, chairman of the state's powerful Ways and Means Committee, has openly campaigned for the seat, which has to go to a Democrat. Las Vegas City Councilman Lawrence Weekly has launched a less vocal, less attention-grabbing but no less committed run to replace Atkinson Gates.

In comments to the Review-Journal, Arberry expressed tacit concern over how he'd be perceived for leaving the Legislature: "That's the hard part. I've served almost 20 years in the Legislature. I wouldn't want my constituents to think I'm jumping ship. I would still represent them." However, in the same story, Arberry said of his intentions, "We're trying. We're working on it. I'm trying to work every avenue."

Also part of the initial group seeking the post is current Clark County Planning Commissioner Will Watson and a host of others knocking at the door.

How about everyone just take a chill pill?

This is the worst kind of political jockeying, for precisely the wrong reasons. It's being played in public, in the pages of the R-J, no less, a paper that doesn't have a sparkling track record internally with our issues (are there any Black reporters there?) and one that has not treated us the best in terms of coverage. (To be a Black female Democrat is to have three strikes against you, as far as that newspaper is concerned.) Secondly, it splits an already semi-fractious Black community into more disparate parts. And lastly — and we must be cognizant of this — such overt zaniness could do everyone-in and prompt Gov. Jim Gibbons to buck the trend and appoint a non-Black; the district is comprised of a large number of Hispanic residents. (Many thanks to state Sen. Steven Horsford for dispelling any notions of succeeding Atkinson Gates.)

Now for that chill pill, folks.

Everyone should look at the situation and realize that things are fine the way they are, at least for now. Arberry is one of the most powerful politicians in the entire state. Whether or not he's been a staunch, everyday fighter for every African-American cause is up for debate, but there's no question he's been on our side on many occasions. Losing his tenure and voice on one of the most powerful political committees in the state could be harmful.

The story's a bit different with Councilman Weekly. In leading what's likely the toughest ward in any local municipality, he's worked hard. While some people may think he could do more, fact is that Weekly has made progress in the area — and he shouldn't be solely judged by whether he can get a grocery store in West Las Vegas; let's see you try. Simply put, the councilman has a lot of unfinished business. If Weekly leaves, there's the possibility of planning commissioner Byron Goynes taking his place, ensuring a Black presence on the City Council.

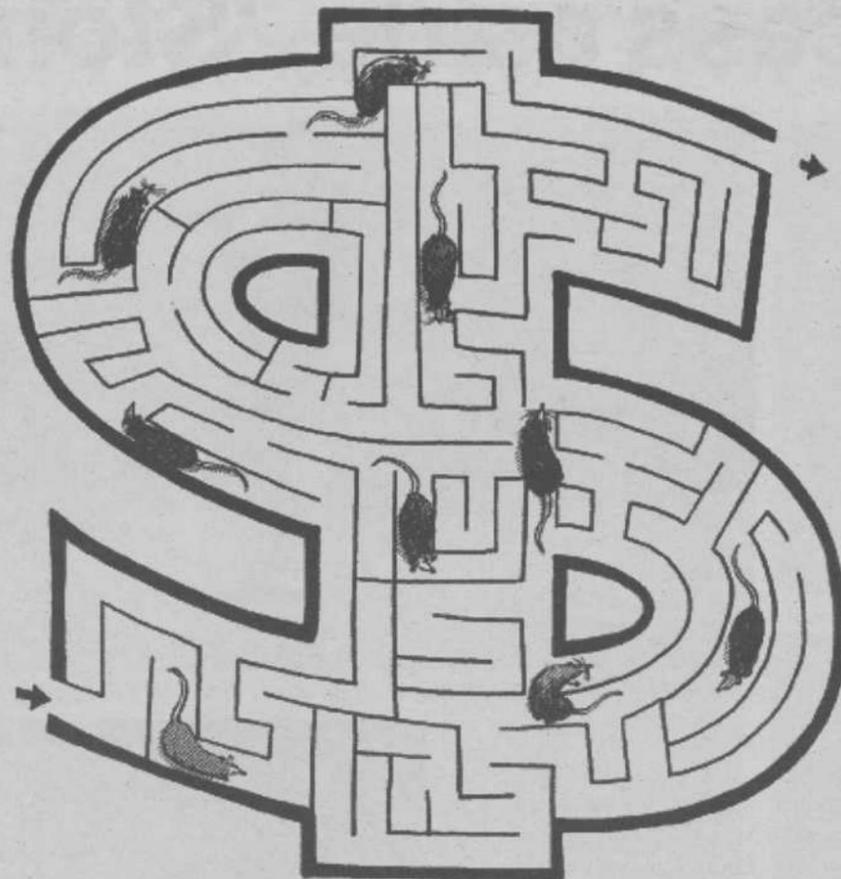
Now there's a new twist: Marcia Washington, who represents District 3 on the Nevada State Board of Education has a newfound interest, to become the next council member for Ward 5.

This is the same Ward that Weekly represents, and he has filed for re-election as of Tuesday.

Marcia and Lawrence are supposed to be good friends, but in politics, anything goes — especially if a deal is on the table.

In the absence of newer (read: younger) Black politicians or aspirants — and really, a newcomer could probably do well with the wealth of expertise people like long-time state Sen. Joe Neal could offer as well as a host of others — maybe, just maybe, we should throw support behind a fresh new face.

Sometimes, folks, sometimes, there's absolutely nothing wrong with the status quo. This is one of those times.



PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION RAT RACE

Color not enough in politics

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

The presidential race is on. Hillary Clinton announced on her website that she will be a candidate for president in 2008. Barack Obama took to cyberspace to announce that he will announce. And John Edwards outsmarted both Harvard- and Yale-trained lawyers, by announcing his candidacy in New Orleans' heavily-damaged 9th Ward.

Much is being written about this being the most diverse presidential field in history, with Obama vying to become the first African-American president and Clinton seeking to become the first female president of the United States. This comes on the heel of Rep. Nancy Pelosi becoming the first female speaker of the House of Representatives and two Blacks serving in the non-traditional role of Secretary of State, Colin Powell and now Condoleezza Rice.

There is religious diversity in the 110th Congress as well. For the first time, Congress includes a Muslim (Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota), two Buddhists (Reps. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii and Hank Johnson of Georgia), and the highest-ranking Mormon in history, Harry Reid, the Democratic majority leader.

It should come as no surprise that I am all for diversity, but not diversity simply for diversity's sake.



GEORGE E. CURRY

In declaring her candidacy, Clinton said, "I'm in and I'm in to win." To win? That is, after all, the goal. Who gives the Democrats the best chance of winning in 2008?

Democrats have already proven that they know how to lose national elections. Three of the last four presidents have been Republicans, though Bill Clinton won twice. And they didn't really win back Congress in the last election. Rather, Republicans lost both chambers. For the most part, Democrats regained power because of the unpopularity of George W. Bush and his handling of the war in Iraq. Now, back in power, Democrats are running away from the war, the very issue that propelled them back to power.

No wonder humorist Will Rogers said, "I belong to no organized party. I am a Democrat."

The latest Washington Post-ABC News poll has Hillary Clinton as the Democratic front-runner, the favorite of 41 percent of Democrats. Senator Obama is a dis-

tant second, with only 17 percent. Even more troubling for Obama, a *Newsweek* poll found that Clinton's strongest support comes from non-White Democrats, not women or liberals. Although the polls show Clinton being competitive with Republicans John McCain and Rudy Giuliani, it is early in the political season and it is unknown how she or Obama will fare under a withering attack from the far right.

Democrats can't win by repeatedly nominating weak candidates from the Northeast, whether it's Michael Dukakis, John Kerry or Hillary Clinton, the early front-runner. The Party can't afford to write off the South, a region where more than half of African-Americans live. As I keep pointing out, the only time Democrats have won the White House since the election of John F. Kennedy in 1960 has been with Southerners — Lyndon

B. Johnson, Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton.

What has changed in recent years that would justify thinking that selecting a non-Southern candidate, even one from Chicago, will produce a different outcome in 2008? More than ever, the Party needs to nominate a Bill Clinton-like candidate from the South to win the White House next year. So far, former Senator John Edwards seems to fit that bill. Other candidates from the South may still emerge.

Wherever they're from, candidates in the primaries should be closely questioned in forums sponsored by our political and civil rights organization. African-American journalists — at least the ones who know that they are Black — should be the ones pressing the candidates on the issues. Unlike the last presidential election, the Congressional Black Caucus

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