

After historic victory, Obama will face limits

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Now that Barack Obama has defeated John McCain, Joe the Plumber and a barrage of negative television commercials, he will now strive to balance the high expectations of African-Americans and other progressives with the reality of an anemic economy and supersized budget deficits. Like McCain, the president-elect promised that shrinking finances will not deter him from keeping his central campaign promises. In Obama's case, it means extending tax cuts to the middle class, providing additional assistance to college students and revamping healthcare.

However, after he is inaugurated, Obama and a Democratically-controlled House and Senate will inherit a batch of red ink, though huge, that does not fully capture the scope of the problem. Consider this: When George W. Bush assumed office in 2001, Bill Clinton left him with a budget surplus of \$128 billion. On the other hand, Bush has posted a budget deficit every year in office; by 2009, it is expected to reach \$482 billion. And that does not include another \$80 billion spent on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

After a \$700 billion financial services bailout — or what should be called “No Bank Left Behind” — Obama has already stated

that a second bailout will be needed, this one for middle class families and those with troubled home mortgages. This will come while the jury is still out on whether the initial \$700 billion will be effective.

An article in the *New York Times* indicates that banks intend to use the bailout money to acquire other banks, not to make new loans as had been promised by Treasury Secretary Henry M. Paulson, Jr.

Times reporter Joe Nocera said he listened to an Oct. 17 conference call between a JPMorganChase executive and company employees. This was four days after the company agreed to take \$25 billion in federal funding as part of the bailout program.

“What we do think it will help us do is perhaps be a little more active on the acquisition side ...” the executive said. As for making more loans to consumers, the official said: “We would think that loan volume will continue to go down as we continue to tighten credit to fully reflect the high cost of pricing on the loan side.”

After listening to the conversation, Nocera wrote: “It is starting to appear as if one of the



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Treasury's key rationales for the recapitalization program — namely, that it will cause banks to start lending again — is a fig leaf, the Treasury's version of the weapons of mass destruction.”

Obama not been elected, it would have been a major setback for the Supreme Court. However, his victory is not expected to change the 5-4

edge that centrists are barely hold. At least, it is unlikely to change during Obama's first term. The two oldest Supreme Court justices — John Paul Stevens, 88, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 75 — are liberals. If they are the first to leave the court, Obama will get a chance to replace a liberal with a liberal, which won't change the court's present balance. If McCain had been elected, he could have tilted the court to the far right by replacing a liberal with yet another conservative, thus impacting the court for several generations.

Perhaps even more important than the Supreme Court, which hears only 0.1 percent of the cases appealed each year, Obama should be able to restore some balance in the lower courts. According to the *National Jour-*

nal, 54 percent of District Court judges were appointed by Republican presidents and 56 percent of all appeals judges. It would probably take a second Obama term to shift the balance in both the Supreme Court and the district and appeals levels.

Obama will be able to make an immediate imprint on how the country treats the least among us and deliver what George W. Bush only promised — compassion. Sure, there will be pressure on Obama to shift more toward the center-right and he has done this on some issues, such as the death penalty. However, he has a straight-A voting record on issues important to African-Americans, according to the NAACP Legislative Report Card. And throughout his campaign, he did not back away from supporting affirmative action or equal justice.

Unlike the past eight years, we'll be able to go to bed at night knowing that the president of the United States is not hostile to our concerns. This is the change that not only have we been waiting for, the world has been waiting with us. It has been a long time coming, but it was worth the wait.

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Americans must take command role in 'change'

By Ron Walters
Special to Sentinel-Voice

Barack Obama will find out something, if he doesn't already know it. The size and number of the challenges he will confront cannot be managed entirely from within the government.

John McCain has used the statement by Joe Biden that Barack Obama will be tested within six months by some foreign enemy because he will be perceived as young and inexperienced in foreign affairs.

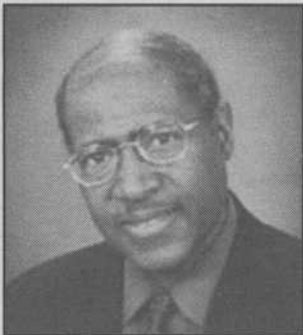
Well, the first place he will be tested is inside his own government in the House and Senate by Republicans and Democrats alike.

With an expanded Democratic majority in both houses, they will also feel they have a mandate by the American people to go in the

direction they feel is a priority.

So, Barack Obama's campaign was superlative for having made the right decisions but, in my opinion, when he wins the presidency he will have one more to make and that is to organize the political resources accumulated by the campaign into a force of civic action that can influence government.

It should be something like — The Change We Need, Inc. — a new organization that would inherit and use the formidable campaign resources accumulated, such as a funding mechanism that has raised more money



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than any in American history, a rolodex of millions of names, an awesome communications structure, but a new administrative structure of trusted veterans to staff and keep open strategic offices in states or regions of the country.

Its job would be twofold: first to continue to assist liberal to progressive Democrats

to get elected and to put pressure on the old dogs in Congress to get in line with the change agenda. But the second one is to lead in the arena of ideas to put to bed the tired old conservative mantras.

For many veterans of Rev. Jesse Jackson's presidential campaigns of 1984 and 1988, perhaps the only real failure was that between 1984 and 1988 the Rainbow Coalition did not use the position it had gained nationally and locally to develop civic organizations into a national network that could influence policy and politics.

By 1988, the energy of 7 million votes could have been bottled into a grassroots force effectively that could have challenged Republican right-wing ideas and limited the slide of many Democrats in that direction.

As it was, after the 1988 campaign the Democratic Leadership Council was born inside the Democratic Party unopposed as a rightward-leaning entity that mimicked conservative Republican ideas of balanced budgets, opposition to affirmative action and corporatist growth over workers' rights.

The progressive wing of the party founded the Rainbow Coalition and the Campaign for a New America as its home.

After Bill Clinton left office, the Center for American Progress was founded, which, together with his foundation, gave him and

his colleagues a base to continue their activities.

In many ways, Republicans pioneered this dynamic, because shortly before and after Ronald Reagan became president, the money people in Republican Party reasoned that they would not be successful with their movement unless they had an infrastructure that could support conservative ideas with research organizations and impact the media with talk shows and new print outlets.

This was the culture that led the way to putting liberal politics on the defensive and ejecting the political leaders who supported it.

The Change We Need, Inc. should also lead in the direction of ideas and debunking conservative ideology. This time is right because Americans are privileging the pain of their personal circumstances and opposition to war more than Republican attacks on “tax and spend liberals.”

But this mood could quickly disappear if the movement for change does not build an intellectual weapon that supports its ideas and trashes others onto the dump heap of history.

So, the Obama money machine could support new publications, thinkers, think tanks, forums and etc. that could support the thrust of change in government and give politicians some ideas and talking points to cement their support.

In short, the change movement will not be lasting unless, as Obama has said, it is accompanied by a change in attitudes. But change has come, as it always has, from outside the government, and it should be organized there into a force that moves the political system to support the wishes of the people.

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the opportunity to establish and solidify our presence, our resolve, and our unity around a sound economic principle — and the Maat Principle of Reciprocity.

The Biblical passage upon which this article is based comes from the Book of Esther, a young lady who had to make a tough decision regarding the future of her people. After seeing what happened to Queen Vashti when she defied the king, and after hearing the words of her cousin, Mordecai, “Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?”

Esther realized that even at the risk of losing her own life, she must act. Why? Because it was the right thing to do and the right time to do it.

We are also faced with a decision, maybe not a physical life and death decision, but certainly an economic decision that will impact our daily lives. What will we do in our

moment of “such a time as this?” Will we step forward as Esther did, as David did, as Joshua and Caleb did? Or will we cower in a dark corner of anonymity, afraid to speak out and afraid to organize a chapter of the CBG? We must not be timid; we must let the “kings” know that they will treat us fairly or they will not be treated to our dollars.

At such a time as this, do what's right, because there is never a wrong time to do the right thing, and there is never a right time to do the wrong thing.

We are called to be good stewards of the resources under our management; the CBG will help us in that effort.

Go to www.collectivebankinggroup.org and call Pastor Jonathan Weaver, CBG National President, at (301) 249-7545, and get your chapter started today.

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