

Election tabbed 2008's top news story in U.S.

NEW YORK (AP) — The epic election that made Barack Obama the first African-American president was the top news story of 2008 — followed closely by the economic meltdown that will test his leadership, according to U.S. editors and news directors voting in The Associated Press' annual poll.

The campaign, with subplots emerging throughout the year, received 100 first-place votes out of 155 ballots cast for the top 10 stories. Two other political sagas — the history-making candidacies of Hillary Rodham Clinton and Sarah Palin — also made the list.

The vast economic crisis, plunging the U.S. into recession and ravaging many business sectors worldwide, was the No. 2 story, receiving 49 first-place votes. The precipitous rise and fall of oil prices was No. 3. The top story of 2007 was the massacre of 32 people at Virginia Tech University by a mentally disturbed student gunman.

Here are 2008's top 10 stories, as voted by AP members:

1. U.S. ELECTION: Obama emerged from Election Night as a decisive victor and a symbol for the world of America's democratic promise. But he reached that point only after a grueling battle with Clinton for the Democratic nomination and then an often-nasty showdown with the McCain/

Palin ticket in the run up to the election.

2. ECONOMIC MELTDOWN: The bad news kept coming — collapses of Wall Street giants; huge stock market losses; plummeting home prices and a surge of foreclosures; desperate times for U.S. automakers. It added up to the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, and will cost the federal government well over \$1 trillion in various rescue and stimulus packages.

3. OIL PRICES: The global economic angst produced hyper-volatile energy markets. The price of crude soared as high as \$150 a barrel in July before crashing to \$33 this month. In the U.S., the average price for a gallon of regular gas peaked at \$4.11, then plunged below \$1.70.

4. IRAQ: The much-debated "surge" of U.S. troops helped reduce violence after more than five years of war, but Iraq is still buffeted daily by bombings, ambushes, kidnappings and political uncertainty. A newly ratified U.S.-Iraqi security agreement sets a timetable for U.S. troop withdrawal by 2012.

5. BEIJING OLYMPICS: China hosted the Olympics for the first time, drawing praise for logistical mastery and condemnation for heavy-handed security measures. The games themselves were rated a success, highlighted by the record-



President-elect Barack Obama acknowledges his supporters along with his wife, Michelle, and daughters Malia (2nd R) and Sasha, during an election night gathering in Grant Park on Nov. 4 in Chicago. Obama defeated Republican nominee Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) by a wide margin in the race to become the first African-American U.S. President elected. Obama's huge victory over McCain has been voted as the year's top story.

shattering performances of swimmer Michael Phelps and sprinter Usain Bolt.

6. CHINESE EARTHQUAKE: A huge quake in Sichuan province and left 5 million homeless. Many thousands of children were among the victims — authorities said about 7,000 classrooms were destroyed in shoddily built schools.

7. SARAH PALIN: Few Americans outside Alaska knew much about its governor when Republican John McCain picked her as his running mate. That changed rapidly. To her conservative

admirers, she was a feisty, refreshing change from most politicians; to her critics, she was in over her head and worthy of all the lampooning she endured.

8. MUMBAI TERRORISM: Ten attackers allegedly sponsored by a Pakistan-based Islamic group terrorized India's financial capital in November, killing 164 people in coordinated attacks on hotels, markets and a train station. India's perennially uneasy relations with Pakistan were badly strained.

9. SEN. HILLARY CLINTON: She didn't win, but Clinton came closer than

any other woman in U.S. history to becoming a major party's presidential nominee. Her determined primary campaign, waged vigorously even when it seemed a lost cause, inspired millions of women across the country — and helped persuade Obama to choose her as secretary of state.

10. RUSSIA-GEORGIA WAR: The two nations waged a five-day war in August ignited by a Georgian artillery barrage on the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Russia responded with a drive deep into Georgian territory, causing severe

economic damage and aggravating already troubled Russia-US relations.

Stories that almost made the Top 10 included Cyclone Nargis, which killed more than 84,000 people in Myanmar; Hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which wreaked deadly damage in the Caribbean and on the U.S. Gulf Coast; and the see-saw fate of same-sex marriage in California, where a court ruling approving it was later overturned by a ballot measure.

Several write-in votes were cast for two developments that occurred too late to be included on the AP ballot — the indictment of Illinois Gov. Rod Blagojevich and the efforts of struggling U.S. automakers to get a federal bailout. The alleged financial scam involving Bernard Madoff also was revealed too late to make the ballot.

Several of the editors who voted commented on how two transcendent developments dominated the news in 2008.

"As far as I am concerned, there were only two stories this year," wrote Linda Grist Cunningham of the Rockford (Ill.) Register Star. "Global economy collapses (sending every country into financial, political and personal chaos) and Obama elected U.S. president, changing the way that America does business — financial, political and personal."

"F" Street

(Continued from Page 1)

Center, Clark County offices, Las Vegas City offices, Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Union Park, World Market Center, Las Vegas Premium Outlets, and other business and commercial facilities," it continued. "To them, the foregoing streets are essential corridors for mobility and accessibility that connected West Las Vegas to the rest of Las Vegas."

The complaint alleges a decades-long push to deny residents the chance redevelop West Las Vegas, to lower their property values, to tweak the public transportation routes in order to increase travel times and to purposely keep them in the dark about redevelopment plans.

Estelle Jimerson, one of the plaintiffs in the complaint said, access to "F" Street is literally a matter life and health. "I need this access



Construction workers continue with a controversial state-approved plan to close "F" Street.

This should have never occurred." "I don't think it's fair what they are doing here," Henry Washington, another West Las Vegas resident, said. "People have their homes here and they need to come and go without any restric-

tions on their travel. I lived in this community about 40 years, and now to be forced to go out of my way to travel downtown is inexcusable.

With "F" Street closed, Annette Smith, a relative newcomer to the community, has to walk even further to

catch the bus. She relies on public transportation to reach her medical appointments. "I don't understand why they did this?"

Mattie Snowden-Wormwood's family has lived in the area for five generations. The 64-year-old was born in West Las Vegas. She thinks the closure is a sign of disrespect.

"My mother and Mrs. Pearson initiated a petition in the past when they sought to close this street. By changing the access now, it prevents me from going to the government center, shopping at the Premium outlet center, or traveling to the DTC (Downtown Transportation Center) to catch the buses. We're human beings and we shouldn't be treated like slaves."

Earlene Ventura-Dabila added, "They are destroying our neighborhood and we won't stand for it."

Black gaming pioneer

Sarann Knight Preddy was encouraged by the turnout and the enthusiasm. "We are on the right road to getting something done about this travesty that has been committed on this community. I'm glad for the number of people who turned out today to protest the action taken to close off 'F' street, and prove that if we work together, anything can be done."

"I've been a resident of this community for 35 years, and I'm glad to see the residents stand together and say this is wrong," former Las Vegas NAACP president Rev. Jesse Scott said. "If we stand by and do nothing, then the government will get away with whatever it wants to. We have to fight this thing and not look the other way."

The National Action Network plans to march on City Hall on Jan. 9. The group's national leader, Rev. Al Sharpton, is slated to give an address.

Sentinel-Voice photo by Ramon Savoy