

Opinion



Another Viewpoint

So, Biden brings experience to ticket

Critics were quick to theorize that Sen. Barack Obama's decision to choose veteran U.S. Sen. Joe Biden as a running mate centered solely on the experience factor.

Those critics should step back and review history. Obama follows a long list of so-called inexperienced presidential candidates who chose seasoned running mates. Take the present occupant of the White House, for example.

The only experience George W. Bush brought to the table when he decided to seek the presidency was his stint as governor of Texas. He had no foreign-policy experience and no U.S. House or Senate experience, unlike Obama, who at least has four years of national political service under his belt. ...

Pundits and critics alike ought to deep-six the experience label they've attached to Obama. Clearly, voters in the past have elected equally or less-experienced candidates for president who chose experienced vice presidents.

And if sound decision-making is the mark of a good leader, then Obama's first big decision ought to assure voters. Biden is a congenial, thoughtful and experienced senator. His depth of knowledge on world leaders and issues broadened as chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and his recent trip to help cool tempers between leaders of Russia and Georgia made his stock rise as vice presidential material. ...

Yes, American voters want a presidential ticket stacked with two individuals ready to meet head-on the myriad of problems — a war, high energy and food prices, global warming and a flawed health care system — left by the departing Bush administration. But Americans also need to see a slice of themselves and a dose of humor in their president and vice president.

Biden brings those qualities to the Democratic ticket, and he brings out those traits in Obama.

And if he happens also to bring experience to the Democratic ticket, well, he's not the first vice presidential candidate to do that in the 20th and 21st centuries. — *The Hutchinson News*

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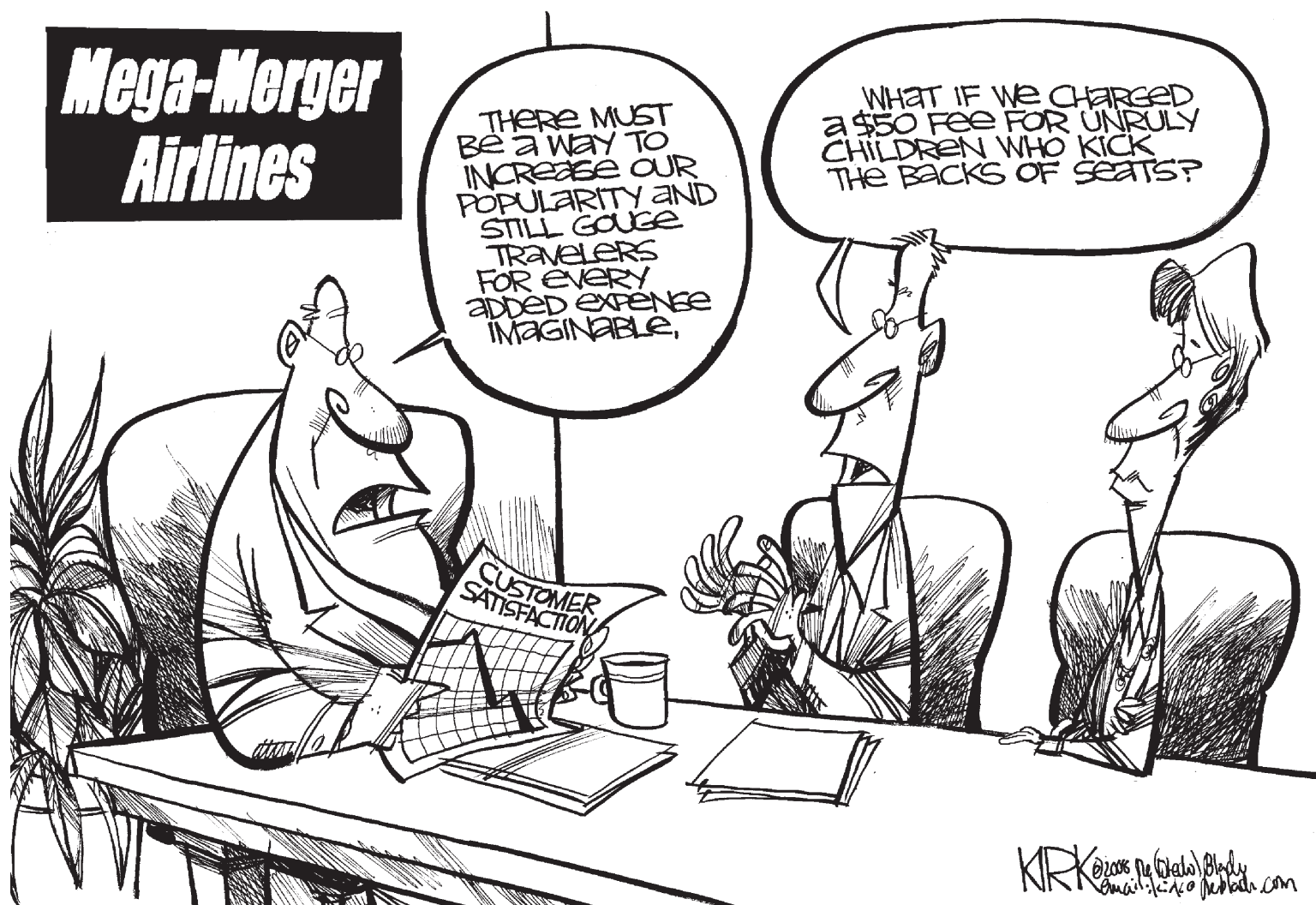
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Journey to Democratic convention long

The young woman smiled as she handed me my prize — press credentials to the Democratic National Convention in Denver — and asked if I had any questions.

I had taken six months of waiting and several applications to get to that point, but it certainly seemed worth it Sunday morning as I arrived in Denver to begin a new adventure attending and covering my first national convention.

A lifelong Democrat, I had hoped to attend the convention both as a delegate and as a reporter, but the snow storm on Feb. 5 sort of stopped me from driving to Oakley for the caucus — the first phase of the delegate selection process.

With the delegate side out of the question, I turned to the press credentials. The first step was to find out how to apply, and that I found on the Internet. The credentials were being handled through the U.S. House of Representatives Press Gallery in Washington.

Step one was to fill out a form on-line and then send three copies of the newspaper and a cover letter to Washington. The web site said the decision on press credentials would not be made until May. I had the package with the newspapers — I picked out the ones I had done stories about the Democratic caucus process and the congressional assembly — and had it mailed before the end of February.

As I waited outside the special room at the Sheraton Plaza, I thought about the months of waiting to get there. When May came and there was no word, I started checking. The first thing I found out was there were at least five different levels of press credentials, and the periodical press was not at the top of the list.

I was assured that the decision would be made in June, and that yes they had my file.

The Press Gallery people sent me an e-mail in June saying I had to fill out another form on-line, and give them details about what I planned to cover. I dutifully filled it out.

I actually got a phone call the first week of July saying that the press gallery had not received the on-line form and that unless I filled it out, I would not get credentials. I assured the girl I had filled it out in June. She said they knew I had done that, but that the system had



Tom Betz

• Mountain Time

fouled up and I was one of many.

I got an e-mail at the end of July saying the letters on credentials had been mailed. The e-mail said I would have to bring the original letter to Denver on Sunday to get credentials.

When I got to Denver and tried to find a parking place at the Sheraton, I kept thinking it was a familiar location, and then remembered it had been the Hilton when I had been at a state Democratic Convention with my grandfather, Fred Betz. Granddad introduced me to his friend, Vice President Hubert Humphrey, who happened to be running for president in 1968. My grandfather, who had been Colorado Democratic chairman in the 1960s, was a longtime supporter of Humphrey, and I still have the photo of us taken those 40 years ago.

The credentials were being handed out across the street in the basement of the expanded portion of the Sheraton, where the May D&F store used to be. I walked past the room for the Democratic National Convention Committee credentials, then the Congressional Daily Newspaper credentials, the radio/television credentials, the photographer credentials and finally came to the last one, the Congressional Periodical credentials.

A man and woman stood guard at the door and she asked for my name, the original letter and my driver's license. I handed them over, and she took the letter and held it up to the light to check the watermark.

I was told they had three tables inside with the alphabet split up, and that only one person was allowed in per table. I had to wait about 10 minutes for the table with "G" to be available.

As I stood there, I thought about the day I had met Humphrey and that same day I had waited with my camera out in front of the Hilton for him to come back from a speech at the Brown Palace Hotel. The Secret Service guys

on duty were nice, suggesting a place for me to stand, as we expected him to come by motorcade. Humphrey did one of his usual things and walked back to the Hilton after the speech surrounded by people and a circle of Secret Service agents. I stood on top of a flower pot and got some photos of him, but then had to get down and found myself stuck behind the glass door when he came sweeping by.

The girl at the door brought me back to reality, saying it was my turn. I went in and the two young women at the table asked for the original letter and my driver's license. While one got the envelope with the credentials, the other had me sign and date a form and give them a cell phone number in case of emergency.

The girl took the credentials out of the envelope and explained how they worked. One for Perimeter got me inside the Pepsi Center parking area, where all the tents and outside events are held. The second was a Hall pass, which would get me inside the Pepsi Center, but not on the floor. To get a Floor pass, I would have to go to the floor-pass desk and sign up for one. If one was available, I would hand over my Hall pass and they would hand me a Floor pass to get me on the floor for an hour or two.

She said the Hall pass would be my ticket to Invesco at Mile High on Thursday, and asked if I had any questions.

I knew in my mind there were a couple of questions I needed to ask: What about a parking pass and could I bring my camera into the Pepsi Center without photographer credentials — but in the excitement of gaining the prize, I forgot.

I found out later I would have to go to another office to get a parking pass good for the Auarara college campus and walk from there to the Pepsi Center. I will have to ask the camera question when I get there.

It is time to get the real adventure started by going to the Kansas delegation breakfast out at the Doubletree Inn at the Denver Tech Center.

I hate the red tape, but I love this job. — Tom Betz

Tom Betz is editor of *The Goodland Star-News* and a longtime observer of Colorado politics. He formerly was editor and publisher of the old *Lamar Daily News* in Colorado.

Social Security should be top issue

To the Editor:

My understanding is that Pete Peterson is spending a billion dollars to rid the United States of Social Security and Medicare. I'm getting this information from the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare blog, "Entitled to Know the Truth About Social Security and Medicare." It seems that Warren Buffet, Pete Peterson and Dave Walker have a prominent role in this, producing a movie called "I.O.U.S.A."

This is what the president of the National Committee has to say:

"For years, Americans have been told revenue-slashing tax cuts are the answer to our financial woes and a borrow-and-spend economy is not a problem. Now, when faced with the ensuing budget deficits and an economic breakdown, we're being told we can't afford Social Security and Medicare.

"This is not 'speaking the truth,' as David Walker has claimed. Instead, we are seeing the same old anti-Social Security and Medi-

Letter Drop

• Our Readers Sound Off

care ideology now masquerading as fiscal responsibility. We must talk about tax reform, spending and responsible health care reform if we're serious about controlling our fiscal future. Unfortunately, that balance is still missing in this debate."

Sen. Barack Obama announced his choice for vice-president is Sen. Joe Biden, who is the top information guy on Foreign Affairs. Since we're searching all over the globe for oil until the United States can get a good energy plan going, Sen. Obama's choice was excellent. I understand the U.S. has been buying

oil from Georgia, the country that is in conflict with Russia.

The countries surrounding Iraq have been lying about how much oil they have. They keep proclaiming that they have more and more oil while actually their supply has diminished so greatly that trading with them has been our Waterloo. Saudi Arabia! That country produced the group that masterminded the 9-11 attack. As long as the United States skirts the globe and gets into the terrorists territory, it will be necessary to be prepared for terrorist attacks.

I remember Chris Matthews on MSNBC mentioning Social Security and was amazed because to do this, I understand — for politicians — it will cause a "political train wreck."

Well, the choo-choos are bumping head-on. Enclosed is an article from *The New York Times* I got from www.ncpsm.org. "Social Security Too Hot to Touch? Not in 2008."

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley

