

# commentary

from other pens...

## Dems craft strategy to take back House

By Will Lester

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Democrats aiming to regain control of Congress say they're miffed Republicans in the election borrowed their most reliable issues like prescription drugs, patients' rights and Social Security. Republicans counter they are only offering alternative policies.

This week, Democrats offered a preview of a campaign strategy for the 2002 House elections — contrasting votes of swing-district Republicans with their campaign promises before the last election.

"This is what they specialize in — deception," said House Democratic Leader Dick Gephardt of Missouri. "Try to concoct a bill that looks like our bill, but it isn't enforceable. ... this is illusion — that they are for something they are not for."

During the fight over the patients' bill of rights this week, Democrats released a spoof video with themes likely to be repeated as the campaigns heat up.

The video, titled "I know what you did last summer" shows Republican campaign ads from lawmakers in swing districts promising they will support patients' rights in dealing with HMOs.

The Democrats say many of those GOP lawmakers have abandoned bipartisan legislation that offers the strongest protections. Similar contrasts between campaign ads and actual votes could be effective on prescription drugs and Social Security, Democrats say.

Republican Rep. Tom Davis, chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, scoffs at Democratic attempts to show GOP lawmakers have broken promises.

"We'll vote for a patients' bill of rights," Davis said. "The average guy doesn't know what that means. For the average person, they want to know they can appeal their HMO's decision."

A bipartisan bill supported by the Democratic leadership would allow patients' expanded rights to sue, while the Republican alternative would limit those rights and offer alternative appeals. President Bush wants the version that limits lawsuits.

Republicans expect to have their usual financial advantages in the campaign for the House, said Carl Forti, a spokesman for the Republicans' congressional committee. He said the GOP has raised more than \$38 million and has \$14 million in available cash. Democrats say they have raised \$18 million and have \$9 million on hand.

"I know they can run millions of dollars of ads again and create the perception they support these issues," Democrat Gephardt said. "But it gets harder, voters get disappointed. You can fool people one time, but they won't be fooled again."

"The Democratic issues are the issues of the majority of the American people — prescription drug benefits, Social Security, protecting the environment, protecting Medicare," said Rep. Nita Lowey of New York, chairwoman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. "Our job is to define the issues and make it absolutely clear who's for real patients' bill of rights, real prescription drugs."

The victory in Virginia's District 4 by Randy Forbes gave the Republicans a 12-seat lead in the 435-member House, and Democrats think they can win enough seats in the off-year election to take over.

"We don't know what state the economy is going to be in," he said, "what our energy situation will be. But we ran on certain themes and we'd better produce."

Rapid changes in the political winds could mean issues that seem critical now may recede and the Democrats' plans "pose no threat," Davis said.

Both sides acknowledge a severe downturn in the economy could have a dramatic effect on the elections.

"Economic conditions could change things," said Davis. "In a deep recession, people look at the alternative party — not necessarily what the alternative stands for."

**EDITOR'S NOTE** — Will Lester covers politics and polling for The Associated Press.



HERBERT BOSTON HERALD 2001

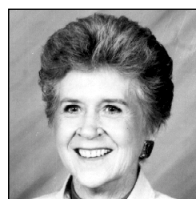
## Living in a small town is 'great, not great'

I don't know about you, but I live in a small town. In fact this is the smallest one ever — except for the time I lived in England.

Small towns are great!  
Small towns are also Not Great!  
Like everything else in life, a lot depends on your attitude.

Recently I saw this article in a monthly publication. I can't credit the author, as none was listed. This is entitled 'You might be from a small town if...':

- 1) You can name every person you graduated with.
- 2) You know what 4-H is.
- 3) You ever went to parties at a pasture, barn, or in the middle of a dirt road.
- 4) You used to 'cruise the drag.'
- 5) You said a cuss word and your parents knew within the hour.
- 6) You ever went cow-tipping or snipe-hunting.
- 7) School gets canceled for state events.
- 8) You were ever in the Homecoming parade.
- 9) You have ever gone back home for Homecoming.
- 10) It was cool to date someone from the neigh-



**lorna  
g. t.**

• commentary

boring town.

- 11) You had senior skip day.
- 12) The whole school went to the same party after graduation.
- 13) You didn't give directions by street names - you gave them by references (turn at Nelson's house, go two blocks east of Anderson's and it's 4 houses left of the track field.)
- 14) The golf course had only 9 holes.
- 15) Your car stays filthy because of the dirt roads, and you will never own a dark vehicle for this reason.
- 16) You think kids that ride skateboards are weird.
- 17) The town next to you is considered 'trashy' or 'snooty,' but is actually just like your town.
- 18) Getting paid minimum wage is considered a raise.

Now don't send me letters of complaint. I only offer this as levity and fun.

Depending on your attitude, the items on the above list can be considered good OR bad.

We all know that it's usually better to rear children in a small town instead of a city; having every adult in town knowing your child's name and helping to watch out for him/her is terrific.

We can list many more things about small towns. As an exercise in appreciation, why don't you try to make a list?

I don't think my column is seen by many people in large cities. (I wish it were.) But if by chance some city-dweller reads this and is so inclined, please itemize all the great things about living in the city. I'll be happy to give you equal space if you'll send your list to me.

Meanwhile, I'm sitting at my computer looking out on a beautifully calm, sunny summer day, and I'm grateful to be living where quiet is actually possible. The phone hasn't rung, only three cars have passed by my house, and I haven't heard an emergency siren all day.

If you have comments for Lorna write to her at <lornagt@nwkansas.com>

## Journalism's 'sex-plus' rule



**chris  
matthews**

• commentary

WASHINGTON — You need a license to write about a politician's love life. It's called "sex-plus."

Here are the rules: If it's a boozy sleepover, finished off with English muffins and French coffee the next morning, it's not a story. But suppose that the excellent young woman a politician meets in a crowded room the night before doesn't show up for work the next day. What if she leaves the face of the earth? Does anyone in the world think that's not a story?

"Sex-plus" is the news reporter's rule of engagement in Gary Condit's Washington. It is the same one that applied in Jack Kennedy's day.

Jack, as we know now, had this long-running thing with a gorgeous Jackie look-alike named Judy Campbell. He engineered each rendezvous with better precision and more secrecy than the Bay of Pigs. He had the room number. She would be ready. He would have a bottle of liquor on the table to make it seem like a party. Twenty minutes later, he would be heading down to the hall to count delegates with Bobby. Judy would be headed back to her other boyfriend, Sam Giancana.

Ah! The "plus." Although it's not reportable that a politician has a very pretty girlfriend from the outside world, it is very reportable if that world happens to be the Mafia. If there's one thing worse than dipping your pen into the company inkwell, it's dipping it into the "family" inkwell. You don't need to be Tony Soprano to know that bit of professional etiquette.

So we could've — should've — would've written about that one. What stopped us — I love speaking for the journalistic priesthood — is that we didn't know. Jack Kennedy knew how to keep a secret. Like Spencer Tracy and Kate Hepburn in the old days, he knew that before some editor could hand-wring over whether to report a story, he

needed to have a reporter bring the news to him.

JFK went to great pains to keep editors from such painful decisions. Once, he had the estimable Adlai Stevenson meet him at the Carlyle in New York, only for the U.N. ambassador to realize that the embarrassingly brief meeting was a cover for a more extended stay with someone a tad more entrancing.

Keeping the lid on an affair also means dating girls hornier for you than they are for publicity. Judy Campbell didn't drop the bomb on him when he was the hot frontrunner in the New Hampshire primary. She waited until Jack was as dead as Julius Caesar.

Bill Clinton either couldn't pick 'em that well or wasn't as nice to them afterward.

Gennifer Flowers called a festive New York press conference to celebrate the announcement of her affair with a certain Arkansas governor. She brought along a party favor: a homemade tape of Big Bill in full schmooze instructing her on the art of the cover-up. Clinton, who unleashed his flacks to say the tape was "edited," blew the denial by apologizing to Gov. Mario Cuomo for comparing him on the tape to a "Mafia" captain.

But the "sex-plus" rule held its ground. Despite the glitter of the Flowers press conference, the quality newspapers buried the story. The New York Times' morning-after account, slugged "Clinton Attempts to Ignore Rumors," ran on page A-16. The Old Grey Lady's first mention of the Gennifer show-and-tell came in the 14th paragraph.

Monica was different. This sex story had "pluses"

in spades. She was an intern working under the president. As an affair, this was pure workplace drama. If you define the president's workplace to include the backroom sink, this one never left it. As an earlier occupant might have put it, this was a sex deal "of, by and for" the workplace.

The bigger "plus" was an American president's denial of the whole thing under oath. When you're trying to keep a story out of the newspapers, perjury is a bastard. So is the suggestion that you're trying to get the girl a job in New York to keep her mouth shut. So is the fact that she had spilled the entire story to the one workmate she knew for a fact hated the boss.

So what are the rules for Gary Condit? The same as they were 40 years ago: Your relationship with Chandra Levy was your business. You kept it that way by taking her to quiet restaurants in the countryside. You didn't flaunt it. Neither did you abuse your authority. Chandra was not in your charge. She didn't work for you, didn't work for the Congress. You met her off-campus. You dated her off-campus.

So far, so good.

But then something happened. She disappeared, and you refused to tell the police what you knew about where this young woman spent her time, what this young woman was dealing with, what her life was all about. For 10 weeks, you let the D.C. police search without clues and her parents suffer without hope.

That, Congressman, is the terrible "plus" that makes you as big a part of this story as the lost Chandra herself.

Chris Matthews, a nationally syndicated columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle, is host of "Hardball" on CNBC and MSNBC cable channels. The 1999 edition of "Hardball" was published by Touchstone Books.

## I'm not happy we're going to have higher taxes

Dear Editor:

Well, it seems we are going to get another raise in our taxes.

Now doesn't that give you real joy to live in such a wonderful city?

I am so happy to see this statement in the paper that it gives me instant constipation, I am that thrilled.

I wonder how anyone can value your home for \$100,000 and turn right around and in the same statement tell you it isn't worth that much? That doesn't quite make sense to me, but I guess it isn't supposed to as I am an eighth grade Kanorado school dropout that retired at the age of 40. I didn't make it big by being stupid.

Which is much more than I can say about some of these rag heads that run our city. Just look at all the big items of expense that has been thrust upon us tax paying citizens.

How much more do you goons think we can bear?

There are more senior citizens in this town that live on a fixed income that cannot go any further, so this winter for them it will be either heat the house or not eat — which comes first.



**from our  
readers**

• to the editor

That miserable swimming pool is one big joke. Most poor people can't afford to send their kids and yet our old pool was discovered that it didn't leak after all. This was just pure propaganda to brain wash the public so the big wheels could show their authority and show their neighbors how important they are.

Just take a good look at the huge expense items that were instigated. That bill board that's supposed to look like a sunflower and doesn't, we really got it jabbed to us there. I guess that is why our city streets are in such bad shape, after all those 8,000 tourists have our streets wore out. Anyone that could make that sort of projection should either be in an asylum or in a re-hab program.

And then our tennis court wasn't good enough. How much did that cost? And the removing of our nice ball park.

And now all entrances to this debt ridden city are blocked off. I guess the purpose of this is so we can't leave.

This is going to make it real nice with the alumni reunion and the fair about to start. We should put up a big sign out on the highway, "Please drive on by, we don't want you."

Did our city rag heads ever look at the number of houses that are for sale? Doesn't this tell them anything? There are about 130 homes for sale. Why would anyone be even remotely interested — mine, for the record, is one of them. I want one further thing from Goodland and that is out!

And now I guess our 4-H kids can't even wash their livestock exhibits due to the bull headed goons that run our city. Really interesting isn't it? I could go on and on, but will stop here.

I know I am going to be cussed and discussed, but there is supposed to be freedom of the press, and also there is supposed to be "government of the people, by the people and for the people."

So why don't we get to vote on some of these issues?

Jim Petrachich  
Goodland

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