

# commentary

from other pens...

## Democrats regret Lieberman's limits

By Will Lester

Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Sen. Joe Lieberman is busy traveling the country, raising money and addressing crowds of Democrats these days — very much like someone who has an eye on the 2004 presidential race. But the 59-year-old Connecticut lawmaker has promised he won't run if 2000 Al Gore runs — a pledge that stands in front of any aspirations harbored by Lieberman, who was Gore's running mate.

Some fear that pledge may stifle one of the most promising presidential possibilities. Lieberman made friends and impressed Democrats with his campaign skills and personality during the campaign, they say.

"Lieberman clearly is interested in running," said Howard Reiter, a political scientist at the University of Connecticut. "If he isn't, he's giving the best imitation I've ever seen. But I think he's boxed himself in as far as Gore. It will be awkward for Lieberman if Gore does run."

Some say they wish Lieberman was free to run on his own, but Lieberman aides say he has no second thoughts about his pledge to Gore.

"Joe Lieberman is very loyal and not your typical politician," said Tom Nides, an informal adviser to the Connecticut senator. "He's done what he believes is the right thing to do. Al Gore gave him an opportunity, and he believes that if Al Gore decides to run, then he should not."

Lieberman is crisscrossing the country, appearing before Democratic groups, helping candidates and raising money for his political action committee, which had almost \$600,000 at the end of June.

"Senator Lieberman came out of the 2000 campaign with a deep sense of gratitude for the opportunity he had and his role as a national party leader. He is committed to helping those who helped him and do whatever he can to build the Democratic Party," said spokesman Dan Gerstein.

Lieberman is adept at crafting positions at the center of the spectrum while remaining loyal to core Democratic values, many Democrats say.

It's a long way until the presidential election, and impossible to predict what Gore will do, said Simon Rosenberg, president and founder of the New Democrat Network, a political action committee.

"A lot of people want Senator Lieberman to run," said Rosenberg. "He's a high-profile leader of the party, he was a great addition to the ticket. Senator Lieberman is a... thoughtful, serious leader of the party who should be on everyone's short list."

He remains a favorite of the Democratic Leadership Council, the organization that helped guide the party back to the White House in 1992.

Gore, who narrowly lost the presidency in 2000, hasn't announced his political plans. He retains substantial loyalty within the party, but some Democratic operatives are eager to learn about his campaign approach should he run again. Some maintain the vice president made a strategic mistake when he campaigned on populist themes rather than on the economic accomplishments of the Clinton administration.

Veteran strategists in the party say Lieberman has offered a more balanced and marketable message than most other potential candidates. He's been a vocal opponent of President Bush on the tax cut and the environment, while supporting the president's broad goals on education and government aid for religious charities.

He has a high-profile post as chairman of the Senate's Governmental Affairs Committee, the leading investigative panel. It has looked into such issues as the levels of arsenic in water and protecting forests.

And in his free time, Lieberman will travel, campaign for Democrats and raise money. Lieberman may act like a presidential candidate these days, but that doesn't mean he'll be in the race.

"Joe Lieberman has to keep doing what he's doing... acting like a presidential candidate, with the reservation he's going to give way if Al Gore decides to run," said Ed Marcus, a Connecticut attorney and a Lieberman friend. "It's certainly not the best position to be in, but that's where he finds himself."

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



## Congress and Bush should punish Arafat

President Bush has no coherent policy on the Middle East crisis, but Congress is in the process of nudging him toward one that would begin punishing Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat for failing to control terrorist violence.

Bush has been calling on Arafat to "do a lot more" to stop terrorism, but administration policy lacks any sense of "or else."

On occasion, Bush and Vice President Cheney have indicated they sympathize with Israel's effort to pre-empt terrorist attacks, even by assassinating militant leaders, and to punish Arafat's Palestinian Authority following acts of violence.

At other times, though, pronouncements by Secretary of State Colin Powell and Bush make it seem that the administration considers Arafat and Israel's government equally responsible for the absence of peace.

It's not clear whether this is a good cop-bad cop act designed to appease both Jewish voters in the United States and oil-rich Persian Gulf Arabs, the product of a fundamental split within the administration — or evidence of confusion. This week, in the wake of the latest suicide bombings at a pizzeria in Jerusalem and a cafe in Haifa, Bush rather impotently declared, "There's nothing that an administration can do if there's no will for peace."

Au contraire. The administration can begin by saying consistently that Arafat is fundamentally responsible for the violence and that sanctions are on the way.

Among the steps suggested by members of Congress are placing Arafat's security services on the State Department's terrorist list, downgrading the diplomatic status of the Palestinian mission in Washington, and cutting off non-humanitarian aid to the West Bank and Gaza. Such sanctions, subject to presidential waiver, are part of a foreign aid bill passed by the House and headed for Senate hearings in September.

Arafat deserves to be penalized for releasing from jail leaders of the chief terrorist groups claim-



morton kondracke

• commentary

ing credit for suicide bombings, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Rather than rearresting them, Arafat is in the process of negotiating with the terrorists to have them join his government. Arafat himself has sent statements of praise to the families of suicide bombers. Moreover, the Tanzim and Force 17, two security services affiliated with Arafat's Fatah party, have been directly involved in attacks on Israeli targets.

Arafat has agreed on numerous occasions — the latest in connection with the peace agreement negotiated earlier this year by CIA Director George Tenet — to crack down on those responsible for violence.

Yet he hasn't done a thing beyond issue occasional condemnations of especially egregious acts of terrorism. Meantime, media outlets controlled by the Palestinian Authority spew a constant message of violence against Israelis.

The Friday, Aug. 3, sermon given by Sheikh Ibrahim Madhi at the Sheikh Ijlin Mosque in Gaza and broadcast on the Palestinian Authority's television station, for example, declared, "Blessings to whoever saved a bullet to stick it in a Jew's head."

The sermon continued, according to a transcript from the Middle East Media Research Institute, "Whoever can fight the Jews with his weapons should go out to the battle; whoever can fight them with a machine gun, should go out; whoever can fight them with... his hands, should go out. Nothing will deter the Jews except the color of their filthy people's blood."

The fact is that, even when Arafat was ostensibly negotiating peace with Israel, no effort was made to prepare the Palestinian population to ac-

cept less than the elimination of the Jewish state.

When former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Arafat more than 90-percent control of the occupied West Bank, partial governance of Jerusalem and recognition of an independent Palestinian State, Arafat rejected the deal and unleashed a wave of violence against Israel.

In hindsight, there's reason to wonder whether Arafat ever intended to reach a true peace with Israel, or simply to gain as much territory as he could in order to resume his lifelong armed struggle.

The collapse of the peace process has led Barak to call for building a security wall hundreds of miles long to separate Jews and Palestinians, while keeping open an offer to negotiate with some future Palestinian leader.

The more hawkish-minded suggest going beyond that step, declaring all the fruits of the peace process null and void, and calling for the attack and destruction of the Palestinian Authority's infrastructure, even driving Arafat himself back into exile.

Barak's successor as prime minister, Ariel Sharon, has adopted no discernable long-range policy, but instead has offered to resume negotiations if Arafat will bring violence to a halt while attacking targets linked to terrorism.

Sharon evidently hopes there is a finite number of young men in Palestine willing to blow themselves up and that hardships suffered by the Palestinian population will bring its leaders to reason.

But that hope may be a vain one. Terrorism and Israeli reprisals could well lead to all-out war, which U.S. allies in the Arab world might feel it necessary to support or even join, raising the specter of a break with the United States.

The bottom line is, Bush can't afford to conclude there's nothing he can do. At a minimum, he should support legislation to punish Arafat, making it clear that his administration speaks with one voice on who's to blame for Middle East violence.

Morton Kondracke is executive editor of Roll Call, the newspaper of Capitol Hill.

## Drumming until the end

When the phone rang at 10:40 Tuesday night, my stomach fluttered. A late-night phone call has never brought good news.

"Is she comfortable?" I heard my husband ask. "OK. So, she's sleeping? Good. We appreciate your keeping us posted."

He returned the phone to its cradle. "They don't think she's going to last through the night," he said, trying to absorb the meaning of his own words.

Just a few hours earlier, we had been in Room 126 of the Kentfield Rehabilitation Center, where my husband's 84-year-old mother was fighting pulmonary fibrosis. In truth, Rose wasn't so much fighting the disease as refusing to acknowledge it.

The fibrosis had eaten away at her lungs to such a degree that doctors who treated her pneumonia last November were at a loss to explain why she was still alive. Yet, short of breath but otherwise healthy, she had returned a few weeks later to her apartment at the Redwoods retirement community, cooking for herself, shopping at the Safeway across the street and always looking as polished as a lady on her way to tea.

Such independence had come late in life, after she lost her husband four years ago. During nearly 60 years of marriage, Rose had never learned to drive or balance a checkbook. She had never opened a door for herself or slipped her arms through a coat without his gallant assistance. Alone and devastated after his death, she barely left her townhouse. No matter how many times my husband and I called or visited, it was never enough. We were all she had, and so she held on tightly, alternately defiant and apologetic about her dependence on us.

A year later, at our urging, she moved into the Redwoods, bristling at the idea that she belonged in a place with so many old people. "I'm not one to join clubs or participate in the activities," she said when we pointed out the array of offerings on the lobby bulletin board.

Within two months, she had joined the drumming group.

Drumming? Rose? And she was taking an opera appreciation class and attending the Friday night wine-and-cheese



joan ryan

• commentary

socials. Most importantly, she had made a best friend, a wonderful woman who told everyone Rose was the sister she'd never had.

But even her best friend wasn't allowed to visit her at the rehab center. No one but family. "I look awful," Rose said every day when we arrived. "Don't look awful?" She seemed to think of herself as a guest of the hospital rather than a patient. She wore colorful blouses with matching sweaters or vests even in bed, as if she might at any moment be asked out to lunch.

"I wish I had something to offer you," she always apologized, "a cold drink or something."

The doctors had told us she had no more than a few months left — perhaps just a few weeks. They had told her, too, but she never let on. Even on that last afternoon, she talked of returning to the Redwoods and wanted to make sure we had contacted the hairdresser for an appointment. We delivered



from our readers

• to the editor

Editor's Note: Two readers need to contact The Daily News to verify their letters, Harry L. Rippey, who wrote about the schools, and Dawn Chillington, who wrote about her daughter and a woman from St. Francis. Please call Sheila Smith or Tom Betz at 899-2338.

The Daily News requires that letters be signed and that writes include their address and phone number for verification purposes. These writers did not include a phone number or address, and the letters are on hold until they call.

the outfits she had requested, read her the new get-well cards, then kissed her on the head, telling her we'd be back tomorrow.

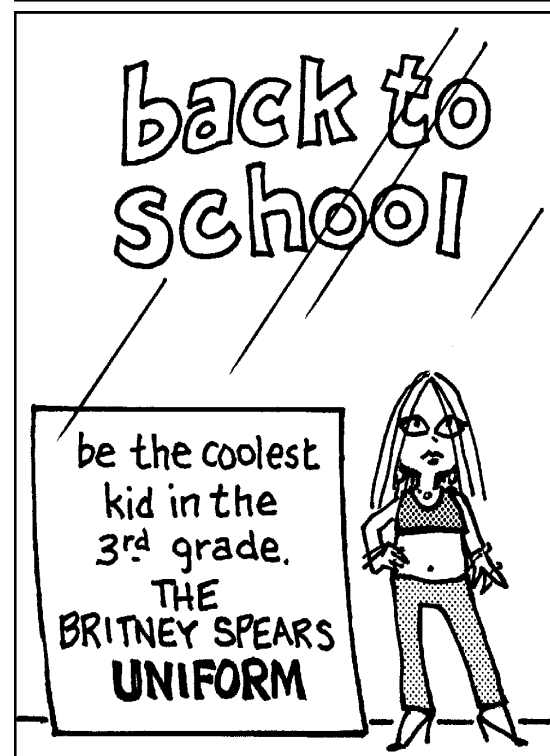
At 12:35 a.m., the phone rang again. "Mrs. Tompkins expired five minutes ago," the nurse said. "I am so sorry."

Rose had died in her sleep, which was the only way her lungs could have gotten away with quitting on her.

I will miss her, but I don't think I will mourn her much. She got to live until the age of 84 without ever having become an old lady.

Joan Ryan is a columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. Send comments to her e-mail at joanryan@sfgate.com.

## berry's world



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Evan Barnum, Systems Admin. ([support@nwkansas.com](mailto:support@nwkansas.com))

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