

# commentary

from other pens...

## Democrats scramble for a new approach

By Will Lester Associated Press Writer

WASHINGTON — Democrats are scrambling to come up with a new approach to politics after terrorist attacks took many of their most promising issues off the table — at least for now.

The Democrats had a bad week recruiting candidates for the Senate, but they're not yet convinced they'll have a bad year. The dramatically different political landscape, they say, may well shift again by next fall.

"If people tell you, 'Let me tell you how it's going to be ....,' they're either lying or they're dumb," said Democratic strategist Dane Strother. Some Republicans agree that the future direction of politics is extremely unpredictable.

"I don't think anybody has the answer to what politics is going to look like a week from now, a month from now, six months from now," said Trent Duffy, spokesman for the Republican National Committee.

Democratic National Committee Chairman Terry McAuliffe acknowledged he has gotten calls from some in his party concerned about how Democrats will fight for domestic political issues in the current climate. He believes he has an approach.

"There is not an inch of room between us and President Bush on fighting terrorism around the world," McAuliffe said. "He and his team have done a great job through this crisis."

But the party has to work for domestic issues important to Democrats, McAuliffe said, citing such concerns as unemployment benefits for laid-off airline workers.

The attacks made issues involving the military, international affairs and domestic security the priorities for now, over issues like health care, tax cuts, education and the future of Social Security. The struggling economy remains a top issue.

While some organizations won't resume raising money until mid-October or later, the Democratic National Committee is planning West Coast events next week, McAuliffe said. He has resumed campaigning for Democrats running for governor in Virginia and New Jersey.

But in the last week, Democrats considering a run for Republican-held Senate seats in Kansas, Oregon and Virginia decided this was not the time to run. A Republican senator from Tennessee decided this was not the time to drop out.

Former Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, a Democrat, cited the attacks in his decision not to challenge GOP Sen. Pat Roberts in Kansas. Retired Lt. Gen. Claudia Kennedy decided not to run as a Democrat against Virginia Republican Sen. John Warner, saying she didn't feel comfortable raising campaign money at this time. Tennessee Republican Sen. Fred Thompson said he would stay in his job because of the attacks.

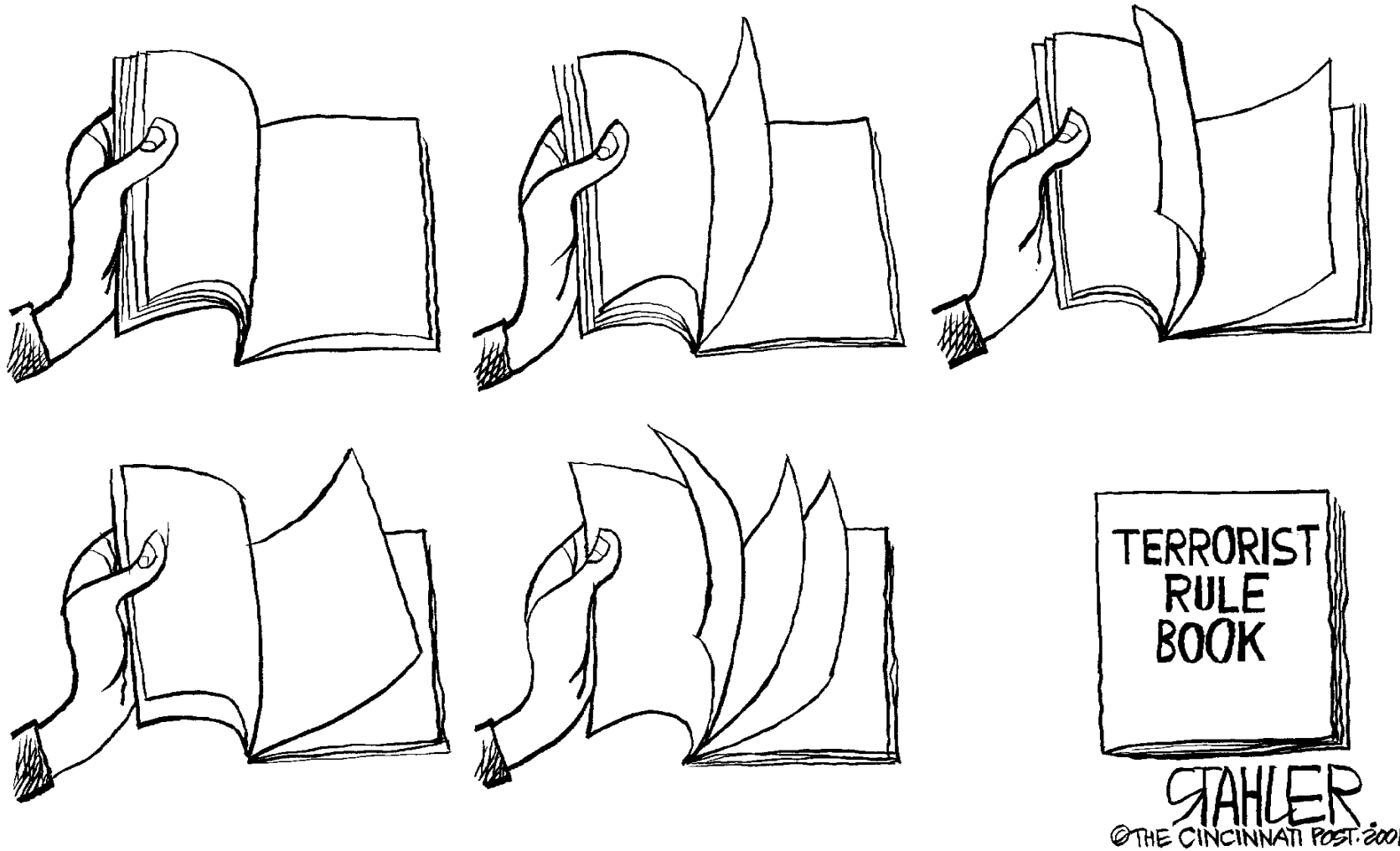
Another Democrat considering a Senate race was Oregon Gov. John Kitzhaber, who decided not to run against GOP Sen. Gordon Smith. Kitzhaber said he dropped out for family reasons — especially his desire to spend more time with his 4-year-old son.

Political observers acknowledge that recruiting challengers for the House may also be tough for both parties.

In Florida, former Vietnam ambassador Pete Peterson said he wouldn't run for governor as a Democrat against Republican incumbent Jeb Bush because of the attacks. Some Republicans have also decided the time isn't right for a new political challenge, such as Rep. J.D. Haworth of Arizona, who decided not to run for governor.

"The attacks injected so much uncertainty into the political atmosphere as to tip some folks inclined to go the other way," said Jim Jordan, executive director of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. "People in politics hate to feel that they're not in control of their own fates."

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



## It's important to remain politically unified

President Bush has inspired the nation with his resolve and rhetoric to fight a war against terrorism. He seems to have a sensible strategy. Now comes the difficult part: execution.

The war ahead is unlike any the United States has ever waged or even prepared for — a combination of spycraft, domestic police work and security, commando operations, precision air strikes and drying up of the enemy's resources, not Gulf War-style mass tank attacks across open land.

Unprecedented poll numbers show that the public overwhelmingly supports Bush and also backs his policy, even if the war is long and involves U.S. casualties.

If there are dangers ahead, they lie in impatience; discouragement at setbacks or a return to partisan or ideological wrangling that could sap the nation's strength. So far, congressional leaders, particularly formerly hostile Democrats, have been totally supportive of the president's policy. There obviously are differences — over how far to curtail civil liberties, especially — but they're being expressed in a new tone, without normal finger pointing or blame-casting.

It was reassuring to note that after Bush delivered his speech, he bestowed hugs and pats on the cheek to such formerly fierce adversaries as Rep. Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) and Sens. Thomas Daschle (D-S.D.) and Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.).

Below the surface, though, there is naturally concern about whether Bush can pull off the daunting task of wiping out terrorism. Some people are fidgeting for action. Others want not only to correct past errors but also to find officials to blame and fire.

Americans need to remember when the going gets rough that it took five months to put forces in place for the Gulf War, four years to defeat Japan and Germany in World War II, and 45 years to bring down the Soviet Union.

We undoubtedly do not have many years to defeat the worldwide terrorist network and the states



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that sponsor it, because they are likely to possess chemical and biological weapons and the means to deliver them.

Ideological division could come from the right or left. So far, there seems to be near universal dismissal of the left-wing slander that America somehow deserved its Sept. 11 punishment because of "hegemonic" foreign policy.

Typified by writer Susan Sontag's accusations in last week's New Yorker magazine, part of the leftists' argument is that our country has been starving Iraqi children and arrogantly bombing Iraqi targets. In fact, it is Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein who has been starving his population by spending government revenue on his military and on monuments to, and palaces for, himself. The bombing has been done to protect planes patrolling United Nations-imposed no-fly zones.

Some analysts would like to adopt the line that U.S. support for Israel justifies terrorism. But terrorist kingpin Osama bin Laden himself has made it clear that his No. 1 aim is to drive the United States out of Saudi Arabia, and No. 2 is the destruction of Israel.

There is no yielding to either demand without allowing reactionary radicalism and terror to rule the Middle East and much of the world, not the liberal democracy that most of the world's people crave. Bush has made it abundantly clear that Islam and the Arab world is not the enemy, and he has demonstrated this by visiting repeatedly with American Muslims.

Yet hate crimes continue to occur. Bush could drop his past objection to hate-crimes legislation

to deal with the situation. And ordinary citizens, with churches and synagogues in the lead, should offer physical protection to mosques and Arab-American communities.

Right-wing divisiveness appeared briefly in the Rev. Jerry Falwell's accusation that liberals made the country deserving of a terrorist assault — a statement for which he's apologized.

However, now some conservatives, led by Weekly Standard Editor Bill Kristol, are elevating strategy disagreements within the Bush administration into questions of loyalty to the president and willingness to fight. Specifically, Kristol accused Secretary of State Colin Powell of undercutting Bush's war policy against the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the name of holding together a broad international coalition.

A group of conservatives also wrote in the Weekly Standard that it would "constitute early and perhaps decisive surrender" not to target Hussein immediately, along with bin Laden and his al Qaeda network, a policy favored at the Pentagon.

Bush's strategy — tilting toward Powell — seems to be the formation of a broad coalition to isolate and defeat al Qaeda first, and the Taliban in the process, and then move on to Iraq and other states still sponsoring terrorism.

It would be a monumental error not to try to depose Hussein eventually, but targeting him first would dissolve the coalition that's given Bush his early successes: worldwide support and basing rights in countries ringing Afghanistan.

I have a theory that recent books and movies reminding Americans of the achievements of the World War II "greatest generation" helped inspire the rallying of this generation after the bombings.

Certainly, several times Bush tried to evoke Winston Churchill in his defiant speech to Congress. The task ahead is to maintain determination and unity in the trying days to come.

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

## How I would explain terrorism to grandkids

Secretary of State Colin Powell spoke to the essence of the Sept. 11 terrorist attack on Sept. 11. "This was not," he said, "just an assault on the United States. It was an assault on civilization."

One of my daughters has three young children. They live in St. Louis. When Jessica called that day to find out whether I had been in my office, not far from the World Trade Center, when it was blown up, she asked, "How can I explain this horror to the kids? How can I explain how people can do this?"

I told her what I would say to my grandchildren: "Everywhere in the world, there are some people so on fire with a belief, a total reason for being, that they can kill others who do not share that belief for the overwhelming purpose of advancing their particular religious or political commands."

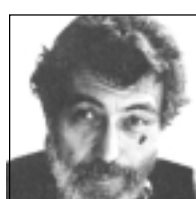
We have had such zealots in this country, I would add. Just before the Civil War, John Brown, who would free all the slaves, would also murder anyone, guilty or innocent of involvement in slavery, whom he felt stood in his way. And there is the murderous fringe of the pro-life movement, who betray their own stated belief that all life is sacred by urging the killing — and sometimes they actually assassinate — doctors who perform abortions.

And I would tell my grandchildren of the young Palestinians, the suicide bombers, who blow themselves up as they murder Israelis, many of them as young as they are, in the name of Palestinian independence. On the day of the terrorist slaughter of Americans, Palestinians of all ages were dancing in the streets — rejoicing in the killing of Americans because this country is an ally of Israel.

I would especially tell my grandchildren to avoid losing their respect for all life by abandoning their own humanity when they became part of a "greater" goal that teaches them to regard other people as disposable.

There is something else to be learned from the terrorist attacks on America on Sept. 11. A television reporter — with bodies on stretchers behind him — said on that day, "America will never be the same."

But there is another way to consider the long-range effects of that day of horror. Now that we



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know "national security" is more than a catch phrase, will America again be so captured by fear as to cast a net of suspicion over many of its own citizens? As The New York Times said in an editorial the day after the terrorist war on the city, "The temptation will be great in the days ahead to write Draconian new laws that give law-enforcement agencies — or even military forces — a right to undermine the civil liberties that shape the character of the United States."

And a Washington Post poll of Sept. 12 reveals: "two in three were willing to 'surrender some of the liberties we have in this country' to crack down on terrorism." Later, a CBS-New York Times poll said even more of us would yield our rights.

In too many American schools, our history is only fragmentarily taught. How many Americans know of the "Red Scare" of 1919 and the 1920s, when large numbers of alleged radicals, subversives and "Bolsheviks" were rounded up in 33 cities. Without any meaningful chance to defend themselves, some were summarily deported.

And while the phrase "McCarthyism" is still heard, I wonder how many Americans who did not live through Joe McCarthy's reign of blacklisting understand the fear he instilled in many people who, like myself, were as anti-Communist as he was, but who also knew that criticism of his methods could categorize us as "subversives" by the legion of McCarthyites around the country.

Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas used to remind us that the guarantees of the Bill of Rights are "not self-executing." We have to make them work. And in one of our last conversations, Justice William Brennan said, "The framers knew that liberty is a fragile thing, and so should we."

Meanwhile, Arab-Americans are being reviled on our streets by fellow Americans because of the

terror attacks. They are now experiencing the fragility of their own liberty — not by actions of their government, but from stereotyping by other citizens. The Sept. 10 N.Y. Daily News reported, "Two veiled women pushing baby strollers" in an Arab-American neighborhood were surrounded by "angry youths who hurled epithets at them." I'm sure those youths consider themselves patriots.

As Justice Anthony Kennedy has said, "The Constitution needs renewal and understanding each generation, or it's not going to last." This is a crucial responsibility of all of us in a time of national danger.

Nat Hentoff is a nationally renowned authority on the First Amendment and the Bill of Rights.

### berry's world



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(USPS No. 222-460. ISSN 0893-0562)

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Published daily except Saturday and Sunday and the day observed for New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day, at 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

Periodicals postage paid at Goodland, Kan. 67735; entered at the Goodland, Kan., Post Office under the Act of Congress of March 8, 1878.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Goodland Daily News, 1205 Main St., Goodland, Kan. 67735.

TELEPHONE: (785) 899-2338. Editorial e-mail: [daily@nwkansas.com](mailto:daily@nwkansas.com). Advertising questions can be sent to: [gdnadv@nwkansas.com](mailto:gdnadv@nwkansas.com)

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SUBSCRIPTIONS: In Sherman County and adjacent counties: three months, \$22; six months, \$38; 12 months, \$72. By mail in Kansas, Colorado: three months, \$ 28; six months, \$50; 12 months, \$95. (All tax included.) Out of area, weekly mailing of five issues: three months, \$25; six months, \$40; 12 months, \$75.

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