

www.caglecartoons.com Mike Keefe THE DENVER POST 03/29/07

from other pens...

## If everyone else fails its Gore-Gingrich

What, then, it may turn out to be an Al Gore-Newt Gingrich knock down, drag out? There is some thinking in both the Republican and Democratic parties that the current crop of candidates fall into the "surely-we-can-do-better-than-that" category.

Of course it's not too difficult to understand just why that comment is surfacing. Rudy Giuliani, the front runner for the GOP nomination, viewed as the most capable, is also viewed as the most vulnerable, thanks to a probable "F" he would get on the "family values" test.

Democrats, on the other hand, have a similar situation with Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton, their front-runner. Her husband's baggage would be awfully tough to carry back into the White House. Although it is SHE seeking the presidency, it was HE who created a situation that led to his impeachment. Yes, the House impeached the sitting president, but the Senate didn't go along. Still, First Lady Hillary certainly had to have had some clue as to husband Bill's intern program. Questions will run wild should Bill's Hillary win the nomination.

Sen. John McCain, we thought, was a shoo-in. Right now the polls aren't projecting that. He went from leader of the pack to a rather dismal showing of late. But that could turn around.

The Democrats have a young, rising star in Sen. Barack Obama. But his youth and inexperience cause many Democrats to worry. Can he handle it?

If questions continue to persist, and one-by-one the current crop falters, waiting in the wings are two veterans of the political stage, former Vice President Al "global luke-warming" Gore, and former Speaker of the House Newt "compassionately deficient" Gingrich. Make no bones about it, they both want the office. Badly.

With California moving its primary up to Feb. 5, 2008 and several other big states following suit, the field of candidates for president in both parties could be trimmed to two, maybe three at most after those results are in. California used to hold its primary in June. What are we going to do between Feb. 5, 2008 and the party conventions in the summer of 2008? Just maybe the party conventions will eventually become a thing of the past.

The Feb. 5 primary nationwide could involve up to 23 states, but not Kansas. The \$2 million price tag is apparently more than the Republican-controlled Kansas Legislature wants to spend, although it could have worked in Republican Sen. Sam Brownback's favor as he seeks the presidency. What were they thinking? Or were they?

Rep. Kay Wolf, Prairie Village Republican said, "I think we can utilize that \$2 million in a much better fashion." Never do they say what "better fashion" they are talking about. Two million dollars is nothing when you look at the overall budget.

So, there you have it. The latest on a campaign that really shouldn't have started much before Labor Day 2007.

—Tom Dreiling, *The Norton Telegram*

A TIMETABLE FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL!



## Iraq is a war we can only give away

Just as the Democrats try to set a timetable for cutting and running from Iraq comes news that Sunnis leaders have begun to band together to help Americans and their government end the violence.

About time someone came to their senses. Meantime, back home in the U.S. of A., the new Democrat majority seems bent on pulling out of Iraq, no matter what is happening. A timetable can only be a scheduled defeat, though.

And unlike in Vietnam, America is not losing this war. We can only give it away.

We do need to get out of Iraq. Even President Bush admits that.

But after a quick and decisive victory on the battlefield, the administration seems to have lost its way. Commanders have changed. Strategy switched. That era is over.

With the president's "surge" of troops, violence is down, cooperation is up and better days might just be in sight. Can we believe that?

A prominent Sunni sheik told reporters this week he's building an alliance with the Ameri-



steve haynes

• along the sappa

cans and the government to end the violence in his providence of Anbar, a hotbed of sectarian battles.

If his movement gathers steam, it just might work. Surely the people of Iraq are tired of bombings, beheadings and rape.

War is reprehensible, something to be avoided. As a nation we should avoid them, limit them, end them.

But what happens if we just pull out of Iraq on a timetable?

Who wins then?

Not America.

Not the Shiite majority. Not the Sunni minority.

If what we have seen is a civil war, will it end

before every last Iraqi is dead or wounded, once American troops are gone?

Will al Qaida wind up running the Middle East? Or will peace prevail?

I don't have a crystal ball. I know that unlike the "big media" reporters, soldiers I talk to who've been there tell a far different story of what's happening in Iraq and what will happen.

They don't think we're losing the war. They don't think things are that bad. Other editors, I've talked to, say the same thing about veterans they've interviewed.

Television only shows bombings, victims and violence, some of it by terrorists, some by American troops. The truth may lie somewhere in between. In the meantime, American losses are, in military terms, low, the picture is far from clear, but improving, and on American soil, there's been no terrorist action for more than five years.

Withdraw? Yes. But only as Iraqi's take charge and the situation returns to normal. It's hard to set a timetable for that.

## House passes expansion of gambling bill

Wednesday marked "drop dead" day, the legislative deadline for bills from non-exempt committees to receive a vote from the second house, be sent to a conference committee or die on the calendar.

The deadline puts pressure on both chambers to reach consensus on priority issues, sometimes at the cost of lesser issues.

For the first time in four years, the House heard debate on expansion of gaming in Senate Bill 66, the Lottery reauthorization amended to add casino gambling.

After 12 hours of debate on Friday night, the House passed an amended lottery bill expanding gaming by way of state-owned destination casinos in four areas as well as slots at pari-mutuel facilities. The measure passed with bipartisan support but was still considered controversial.

The bill did not receive hearings nor does the policy change allow for a statewide vote on the issue. Revenues of up to \$200 million annually are expected from the expansion, 2 percent of which has been designated for rehabilitation of problem gamblers.

The Senate also spent almost 12 hours on the issues, ultimately concurring with the House position and sending it to the Governor for her signature. Kansas is the first state to approve state-owned casinos. Already a challenge to the constitutionality of the bill has been filed. It may be awhile before any new casinos will be built due not only to the lawsuit but counties MUST approve gaming before it can move forward.

Early in the session we provided funding for the out-years of the school finance plan and have worked with the House Appropriations committee to look at responsible proposals to address deferred maintenance.

The House has passed comprehensive tax



jim morrison

• capitol review

relief measures. The franchise tax repeal promotes business expansion, while seniors receive relief through the social security tax exemption, and businesses and workers are assisted by the stabilization of the unemployment insurance rate and other proposals aimed at easing the burden Kansas taxpayers bare.

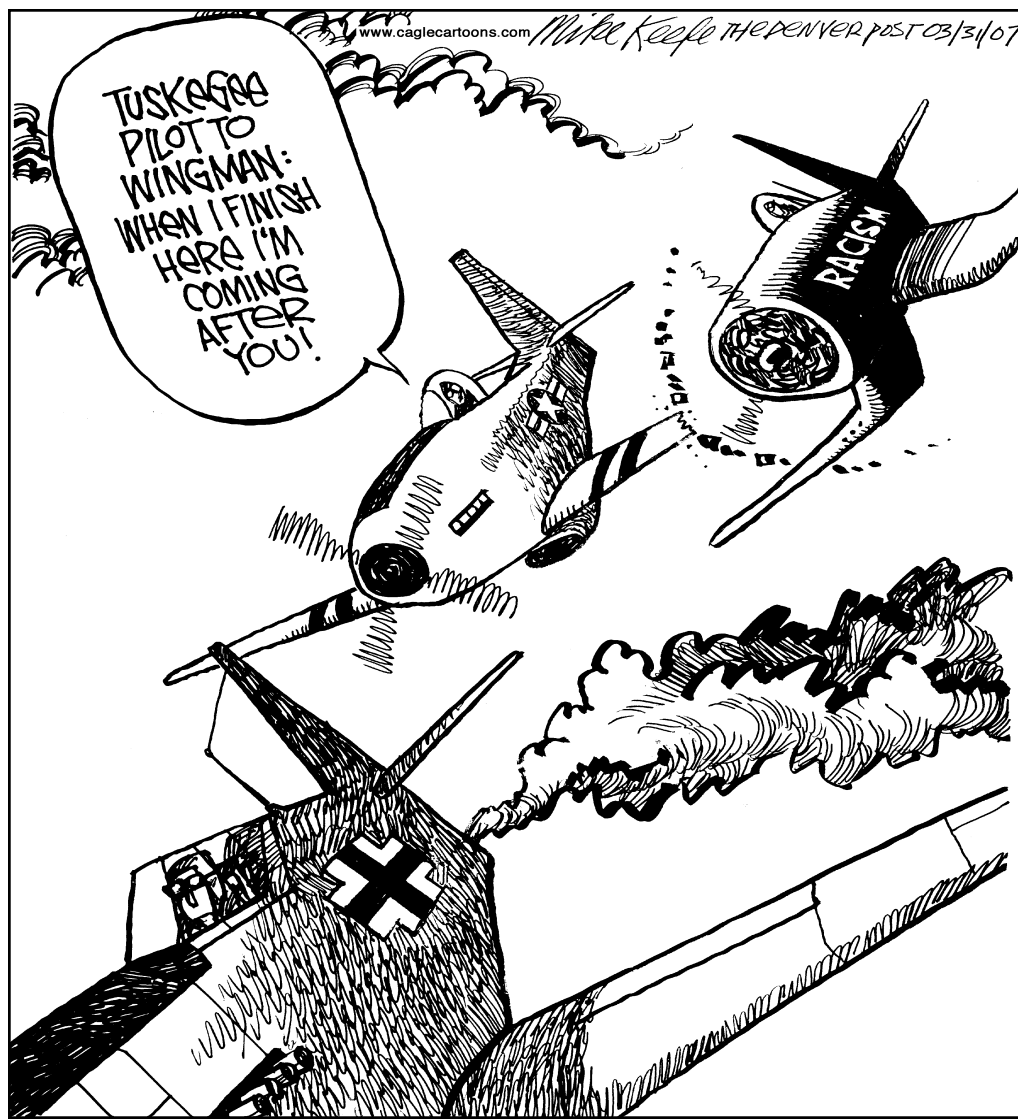
A House proposal for comprehensive health care reform is being studied and tweaked but has run into strong resistance. A gamut of bills aimed at promoting economic development and tourism and controlling crime and public safety have passed the House and Senate, including Alexi's Law — allowing for prosecutors to charge for the life of a mother and her

unborn child in cases involving the intentional murder of a pregnant woman.

With the unexpected revenue the state has enjoyed this year, and the millions more that expanded gaming promises, we will continue to look at spending taxpayer dollars wisely on essential issues and furthering what is in the best interest of all Kansans.

The regular session is due to come to a close on Tuesday, after the House and Senate conference on bills that survived "drop dead" day. However, problems in the Senate Ways and Means Committee and House Appropriations Committee Conference are at impasse. Unless something changes soon and agreements in differences in House and Senate budget issues are not resolved the Tuesday deadline will not be met.

Eventually, likely this week, we will adjourn to return home until the veto/omnibus session scheduled to start Wednesday, April 25, and lasting through the week.



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