

from our viewpoint...

## Good news hidden in the trash pile

Older Americans trying to make ends meet with their Social Security checks had a little bit of good news a few weeks ago that was, unfortunately, overshadowed by Britney Spears' nasty doings, separations and divorces of Hollywood role models (that's an insult), rap singers who break the law almost out of habit but never seem to get any time in the clinker, notables with their newborn babies who apparently, somewhere along the line, forgot the "m" word, as in "marriage," and sadly the litany goes on.

But in between all of those reports that deserve back-burner status, but for some reason we are told it is news (sure!!), was a real story. The Social Security Administration announced that the benefit increase for 2007 will be 3.3 percent. That's good news for the 53 million people who receive Social Security or Supplemental Security Income. The increases are automatic each year, based on the rise in the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Consumer Price Index for Urban Wage Earners and Clerical Workers.

The 3.3 percent Cost-of-Living Adjustment, better known as a COLA, begins with benefits that nearly 49 million Social Security beneficiaries receive in January 2007. Increased payments to more than 7 million Supplemental Security Income beneficiaries begin on Dec. 29.

Millions of retired Americans are trying to get by on Social Security alone. That can sometimes pose a problem when you consider Social Security checks vary from \$500 a month (maybe a little less) to around \$1,500 (maybe a little higher). So, any kind of an increase is appreciated.

How long can those depending on Social Security expect to receive checks? They are in no danger. The new baby boomers should be pretty safe, too. But the kids of the baby boomers might see changes when their time to retire comes along.

If the government would keep its hands out of the Social Security cookie jar, there would be no need for concern. But because Social Security seems to underwrite more stuff than you could ever imagine, it is easy to understand the concern for future beneficiaries.

But like they say, something is better than nothing. In 2007 that something will be a 3.3 percent increase.

—Tom Dreiling

## where to write

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**U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran**, 2202 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. (202) 225-2715; Fax (202) 225-5124 e-mail address — jerry.moran@mail.house.gov

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## It's not a quagmire, it's a muddle

Among the many things for which I am thankful is the fact that I am not George W. Bush.

Think about it — in the sixth year of his presidency, he is besieged on all sides, not only by his foes, but by his friends and supporters as well.

On the one side are those demanding that the president adopt some kind of face-saving solution that will allow him to withdraw from Iraq without admitting the United States has lost yet another war — the solution once recommended by former Vermont Sen. George Aiken, who advised that we declare victory in Vietnam and get out.

Among those advocating this kind of sleight of hand are members of George Herbert Walker Bush's administration, perhaps even former Secretary of State James Baker. Baker co-chairs the widely touted Iraq Study Group, which has leaked its recommendations for coping with the war by calling for negotiations with Syria and Iran.

On the other side are the hawks who want not only to remain in Iraq, but have advanced the rather peculiar idea that the ultimate aim in any conflict is to win it. They insist that anything less than total victory over the insurgency would result in unthinkable consequences for the United States, the Middle East and the West.

In the middle are the great masses of American people who told exit pollsters they weren't against the war, only against how it was being conducted.

Then there is the Congress of the United States, fated to fall into the hands of the liberal-



michael  
reagan

● making sense

controlled Democratic Party whose leadership is deeply enamored of the idea of cutting and running—a concept they disguise by calling the pullout of the U.S. from Iraq “redeployment.”

To complicate matters, however, powerful Democrats such as Hillary Clinton more or less support the idea of remaining in Iraq until the Iraqi forces can handle the insurgency on their own.

The president's dilemma arises from his conviction that a pullout before Iraq has been enabled to fight their war on the insurgency would lead to a conflagration that would engulf the entire Middle East, disrupt the supply of the oil that keeps our economic engine running, create a national base for the Jihad that would enable the radical Islamic movement (probably armed with nukes to bring the Jihad to our shores) and eventually drive the West out of the entire area.

Yet the pressure on the president to find a solution that will allow us to leave Iraq, even if it's with our tail between our legs, is growing more and more intense.

Added to the dilemma is the president's knowledge that negotiations with Syria and Iraq can have only one result—withdrawal disguised as recognition that Iraq is a regional

problem meant to be solved by regional interests — in this case, Iran.

The president knows full well that the only negotiating point is surrender to Iran, whose 1979 constitution declares the aim of the Jihad is world conquest by the Islamic revolution which it leads. To Iran, Iraq is the high ground they seek to take in their war against the West.

Should the president continue to stress his role as commander in chief, he will find himself facing an obstructive Congress that will use every device available to them, perhaps even to the extent of withdrawing money for the military.

Given the facts of the matter, should the president cave in to the peace-at-any-price crowd, the deaths of almost 3,000 American fighting men and women — and the billions of dollars the war has cost — will have been shamefully wasted.

On the other hand, should he stick to his guns, he will find himself the most embattled President since Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln couldn't find generals who could go out and win the War between the States, had to deal with an obstructive Congress and its Committee on the Conduct of the War, and even fought dissent by members of his own cabinet, one of whom referred to Lincoln as “the original ape.”

That's why I'm thankful that I'm not George W. Bush.

Mike Reagan, eldest son of the late President Ronald Reagan, is heard on talk radio stations nationwide. E-mail comments to mereagan@hotmail.com.

## Nancy Pelosi, San Francisco's conservative

San Francisco is a great place to visit but you wouldn't want to vote there.

Since 1987, the City by the Bay has been the home turf of Democrat Nancy Pelosi, the incoming speaker of the House and Red State America's worst left-liberal nightmare.

If you're among the millions who've climbed Coit Tower, dined at Fisherman's Wharf or been shocked by the permanent homeless encampment near Mission and Market, you've seen San Fran Nan's stunningly scenic 8th Congressional District.

On Election Day morning, as voters across the land were delivering a spanking to deserving Republican war-makers and big-spenders in Congress, I happened to be a tourist in Pelosi Land, which is as famed for its human diversity, wealth and dot.com know-how as it is for its laissez-faire social values, hatred of the American military and fondness for neo-Soviet politics and economics.

I was in Precinct 3209, to be exact, which is in the Marina neighborhood near San Francisco Bay. A highly polished, youthful and trendy residential area built on landfill that “liquifies” during earthquakes, the precinct is a 15-minute bike ride from the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge.

Like many of consolidated San Francisco City/County's 739,425 souls, the citizens of Precinct 3209 regularly vote in a homeowner's garage.

On Nov. 7, their polling place was at 3445 Fillmore St., the multimillion-dollar address of lovable retired city asbestos inspector Ray Pons. You could tell it was a voting location because the sidewalk-touching garage door was open wide all day and a portapotty was parked in front.

Inside the narrow garage, where tools, ropes and bike parts hung neatly on pegboards, were six optical-scan voting machines and a table manned by an elections department inspector and several college interns.

The election inspector was a helpful, nice guy named Kenne, 43, who lived in Murrysville as a child. Disabled by a back



bill  
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● newsmakers

problem, married and living in a cheap condo-by-the-freeway now worth \$500,000, Kenne (who didn't want me to use his last name) looked like he might still live in a Pittsburgh suburb — except for those dozen or so piercings in his ears and face.

Precinct 3209, said Kenne, is a conservative oasis in Pelosi's Liberal Land — relatively speaking. It usually votes down tax increases and is pro-business and anti-tenants' rights.

Of course, as he said, “a San Francisco conservative is a middle-of-the-road centrist Democrat.”

Pelosi, who consistently votes in Congress for things like partial-birth abortion and tax increases and against the death penalty, tax

cuts, drilling for oil in the Arctic and increased defense spending, couldn't get elected dogcatcher in most of America. But on Nov. 7 she was re-elected with her usual 80 percent slice of the vote. Her sacrificial/masochistic Republican foe got 10 percent.

Even Gov. Arnold managed only 29.5 percent in San Francisco, which also passed a referendum 59 percent to 41 percent calling for the impeachment of Messrs. Bush and Cheney.

Elections inspector Kenne is no fan of Ms. Pelosi. He identified himself as a socialist and a nationalist who favors price controls, rent control and believes government should seize 30 percent of the stock of all corporations.

Not surprisingly, like many of Pelosi's constituents, Kenne thinks the new speaker — who is ranked more liberal on economic and social issues than 90 percent of her Housemates — is way too conservative.

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