

Say No to McBama and Incumbents

Written by Kathleen McCarthy
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The two major contenders for the 2008 election are experience (McCain) versus inexperience (Obama). Obama's inexperience is disturbing in that he appears to have disregarded the elected seats he occupied to continue climbing the political ladder. Once elected, he effected little, if any, change. Obama's political career is one of meteoric trajectory from an obscure Illinois legislator to a short-lived U.S. Senator (only two years into his six-year term before he hit the presidential campaign trail) to the Democratic nominee for president with a very good chance of winning the highest office in the land - all with nothing backing his eligibility except good communication skills and nearly three-quarters of a billion dollars.

I believe that Obama's handlers read the country's need for change very well. He adopted the two slogans of "Hope" and "Change" and he was instantly electable, which explains the Democratic leadership's attraction to him. By staying on this message during a time of collapsing confidence in the Bush administration, Obama transformed his candidacy into a symbol of hope and change that Americans are desperately seeking.

Sadly, Obama is just that - a symbol, and nothing more, at least according to his record. He has contributed precious little to the political landscape, and accomplished virtually nothing in the eight years of his watch. This is evidenced by only three of his bills passing in the Illinois Senate, where he declined to cast a decisive vote 130 times, instead declaring "present" as a means of avoiding accountability for legislation that may prove detrimental to his future candidacies. In the U.S. Senate, Obama has only passed one bill. What part of this feeble participation suggests any ability to lead? His record more accurately reflects a self-serving political agenda that similarly characterizes the deficient Congress we

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are currently saddled with, and certainly reflects the antithesis of change, let alone hope.

On the other hand, McCain's experience in Congress for 22 years makes him a major contributor to the ethically anemic legislature that has brought us to this terrible place in history. Ironically, he was investigated during the S&L bailout in the '80s and exonerated by his peers. However, his close ties to the primary culprits of that fiasco, while not criminal, are also an indictment of his character by way of his associations.

That is not to say that experience automatically equals leadership. McCain has passed numerous bills during his tenure, claiming himself a maverick of reform. He cites his sponsorship of the McCain-Feingold campaign-finance-reform bill to his detriment. That bill did absolutely nothing to reform campaign finance, evidenced by the unprecedented and obscene \$1 billion for this 2008 election. In fact, this bill further impeded third-party candidates from running and seriously undermined the First Amendment relative to activism.

The same can be said of Obama's past affiliations. While not criminal, they too cast a shadow over his competence as leader of the free world. More importantly, his deliberate deception about several of these associations completely undercuts his credibility.

And while there is no question that McCain showed exemplary courage during his captivity, he demonstrated an equal amount of recklessness in his crashing airplanes five different times during his naval service.

Most important is *not* how these two candidates are different, but how they are *alike*. This was demonstrated clearly in their rush to Congress to exert their considerable influence to pass the \$700-billion bailout, with no due diligence. Obama's largest contributors are Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and Goldman Sachs. Warren Buffet is one of his financial advisors, who bought equities in the institutions receiving bailouts. The ties cannot be ignored and still claim Obama as an agent of change.

Obama's choice of Joe Biden as his VP is further evidence of a fundamental sameness. Biden has been in Congress for 30-plus years. There are few senators that have that kind of ongoing longevity as a lawmaker, or culpability for the self-serving, corrupt entity that Congress has become. If Obama really meant business with regard to change, the last person he would

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choose would be Biden, who embodies an entrenched legislature incapable of change.

Palin's inexperience in governance makes McCain's selection of her as VP also highly suspect. For a self-proclaimed maverick herself, she has stepped in line to a beat that is as far from reform as Biden is close to the status quo. It is wholesale hypocrisy at its zenith.

Both candidates make promises they simply can't or won't keep. They had better opportunities to advance the causes they claim are most important to them, such as health-care reform, while they were in the Senate, but did nothing. No president can implement the lofty programming each is promising without Congress, so to claim otherwise is disingenuous. And even if either candidate could, once elected, influence Congress to pass such legislation, it is unfindable at this juncture. So at the end of the day, all this campaign talk is cheap deception.

So why do we Americans abdicate our political instincts, knowing that our vote has real power and thus can wield enough influence during elections to exact the kind of change we demand? Instead we redraw the line a little further back each time, giving up our collective political will to the smoothest talker. Have we devolved so far into apathy and civic impotence that we deliver up our vote unchallenged to the candidates' repetitive sound bites? And when did it become acceptable to tolerate outright lies and deliberate deception from our presidents and presidential candidates? Overlooking such deception from the country's highest office has cost us world respect, and obviously our civic self-respect. Lies invariably indicate innate cowardice. Accepting such conduct absolves our leaders from moral accountability. Their arrogance is infused with disrespect/disdain toward voters for accepting the transgressions in the first place.

And why do we allow our political debates to be controlled by the two major parties that couldn't care less about Americans, but whose single-minded agenda is to elect one of two parties' (Republican or Democrat) candidates. Do not think for a minute that these two parties represent different ideologies. If that were true, the Republicans would have denounced the Bush Administration years ago, and the Democrats would have withdrawn support from the Barney Franks of the world.

Republicans and Democrats have quietly merged into one party. They conspire behind the scenes to keep each other in control at the expense of third-party candidates and alternative voices. The leadership of these parties deliberately perpetuates the notions of difference to

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keep Americans opposing each other at the polls, and their eyes off the real ball. This ensures the status quo and so far it has worked like a charm.

Voters need to shake things up in a meaningful way by voting the incumbent senators and representatives out of office. Elect the challengers to the campaigns wherever possible. This will not only send the strongest possible message that we've had enough, but it replaces legislators who ignore us with ones who have a mandate to do something different - implement real "change." *If we reelect the incumbents, we are sending an endorsement of their leadership, and a clear message that we accept the current state of things, including the economy, and do not want anything to change.*

As for the presidential election, there are third-party candidates on the ballot - some liberal, some conservative. Voting for a third-party candidate, such as the Green Party, the Constitution Party, the Libertarian Party, or the Peace & Freedom Party, is in no way a wasted vote. In order for these independent third parties to be on any state's next general election's ballot (2012), they must win 2 to 5 percent of the vote in the previous general election (2008). Therefore, by voting for a third-party candidate, you are helping to ensure that third parties are represented and available for candidacy in the next election. This is critically important and hardly a waste of your vote. In fact, under the current political circumstances, I would say casting a third-party vote would be considered a supremely patriotic act.

Say Yes to Michael Elliott for Auditor

Which brings me to our one and only three-way local race, the Scott County auditor, between Republican Steve Ahrens, Democrat Roxanna Moritz, and independent Michael Elliot.

Jeff Ignatius summed it up best in last week's *Reader*: "Put simply, he's [Elliott has] turned a campaign that was bound to be about personality and party into one about issues and political philosophy."

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Scott County citizens are fortunate that Elliott even got into the race as the independent candidate. His two opponents are quintessential examples of "perpetuating the myth" as viable candidates for a position that requires stewardship, not partisanship.

And if previous outcomes during Moritz's and Ahrens' terms as aldermen on Davenport's city council are any indication, then we can expect the auditor's office to be ruled by partisanship and/or incompetence, should either of them win the race.

Elliott is the only candidate to take voting integrity seriously and *not* to take our current paper-ballot system for granted. Despite his opponents' unified efforts to cast Elliott's stance on protecting voting integrity in Scott County as irrelevant, Elliott has persevered and taken a committed stand on keeping previous auditor Karen Fitzsimmons' legacy for clean, successful elections intact by maintaining a paper-ballot system despite huge pressure from her own Democratic party.

To educate citizens about the threats to freedom without a paper ballot system, Elliott has been hosting free film screenings in libraries of the gripping documentary *Uncounted: The New Math of American Elections*.

Paper ballots are the central topic relative to the current election and its successful tabulation. Numerous counties are struggling with myriad new mandated voting systems, especially computerized ones. Not only are these systems inaccurate and faulty, and they have questionable programming, but there are no reliable remedies for verifying votes or for recounting votes by precinct, county, state, etc. Just examine Ohio, Florida, Pennsylvania, or any other state that has reported voting nightmares in the past two elections.

With the unprecedented vote expected next Tuesday, Elliott's knowledge of, and commitment to, the continued use of paper ballots, including a post-election-audit policy, is monumentally reassuring. He demonstrates a keen sense of respect for the current staff in the auditor's office. His passion for the constitutionally protected right to vote should inspire confidence on the part of Scott County voters that is unmatched by his opponents.

Elliott is a refreshing choice in that as the independent candidate he has no political baggage.

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Moritz and Ahrens are rife with it and owe allegiances that will not serve Scott County citizens. This office is best served by a neutral auditor, certainly not by someone so entrenched in local partisan politics to the degree that defines both Ahrens and Moritz. These two candidates are career politicians or political appointees, whichever pays better. And partisanship is the only thing that distinguishes their careers, evidenced by the various offices they have each run for over the past decade. As their records will attest, both Moritz and Ahrens supported special interests at the expense of taxpayers, from improper use of tax-increment financing for urban sprawl to fast-tracking the boondoggle riverfront casino development deal that never materialized. And Moritz has a history of vindictively firing public employees, evidenced by the ordeal with city attorney Mike Meloy as one example.

Elliott has the background in management at big-box retail stores that is more than sufficient to serve as the steward of an office with fewer than 10 staffers. He is an entrepreneur and small-business owner, so he understands the needs of the customer/voter/taxpayer/resident come first. His passion for constitutional law and the history of the role of government in our lives will bring a perspective to the political dialogue in Scott County that is desperately needed both here and nationwide. His ideas to increase the transparency in Scott County finance reporting may be threatening to the establishment, but it is just another example of how Elliott will be a citizen advocate first rather than a partisan party operative.

We respectfully and enthusiastically encourage Scott County voters to cast their ballots for Michael Elliott on Tuesday, November 4.