

March 2000

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Evidently, Character IS the Issue

Yesterday, voters in North Dakota, Virginia, and Washington State made their thoughts known in the latest round of the presidential preference primaries. It was a good day for Vice President Al Gore and an even better day for Governor George Bush according to media reports.

And, perhaps, thanks to Sen. John McCain's angry outburst directed at the Christian Coalition and the Religious Right, Christian voters flocked to the polls and caucuses. Exit polls in Virginia, indicated that evangelicals gave the nod to Bush over McCain by a margin of 83 percent to 10 percent. Lesson: Don't unnecessarily alienate large voter blocks - especially if they are Christians!

Once again, however, it appears the media is ignoring the underlying story. With 98% of precincts reporting as I write, it appears that the election in our state was an absolute Republican romp - even allowing for likely crossover voters. Republican candidates received 64 percent of all votes to 36 percent for Democrat candidates. That may not be news in Utah or Arizona - but believe me, here in Washington State it is!

Results of primaries and caucuses so far this year, indicate a conservative trend among likely voters in the fall general election. According to Ralph Reed, political consultant and former National Executive Director of the Christian Coalition, Al Gore and the Democrats are beginning to experience the fallout for acting as apologists for President Bill Clinton during the shameful impeachment proceedings.

In a feature article in *Rising Tide*, Reed says that "congressional Democrats who surrounded the president during impeachment have since seen their own approval rating plunge and their leads in their districts evaporate." He points out that the Gallup organization found that even the previous perception of Vice President Gore as a man of personal rectitude and honor had been irrevocably damaged by his full-throated support of Clinton. A June 1999 Gallup survey found that only 36 percent of the American people thought Gore had the proper moral character to be president.

Reed says that political pundits are calling this phenomenon "Clinton fatigue." But he warns conservatives it is not enough to condemn misconduct. He says that the "American people want leaders who will elevate what is honorable, not simply condemn the dishonorable. To do otherwise is to make character less about strength than it is weakness, more about failure than success."

There it is again, the CHARACTER issue.

Historian David Barton, has a copy of a school book—first published in December of 1800—that was popular for many years and was even a favorite of Abraham Lincoln. The textbook taught students that they must always examine the private life and character of a leader.

Paraphrasing an illustration in the textbook, Barton says, “In his public capacity, Benedict Arnold was a General of the American Army, an early war hero in the American Revolution, and a leader in the momentous battle of Saratoga in 1777. However, during the same time that Benedict Arnold was publicly presenting himself as an American patriot, he was privately embezzling supplies destined for the starving, dying troops at Valley Forge, pocketing the profits made from their illegal sales, and betraying West Point to the enemy; he was a traitor to his nation. Consider then: was his public life or his private life a more accurate indicator of true character? Obviously, his private life.”

The lesson concludes: *It is not, then, in the glare of public, but in the shade of private life, that we are to look for the man. Private life, is always real life. Behind the curtain, where the eyes of the million are not upon him....There he will always be sure to act himself: consequently, if he act greatly [in private], he must be great indeed. Hence it has been justly said, that, “Our private deeds, if noble, are noblest of our lives.”...It is the private virtues that lay the foundation of all human excellence.*

Something to think about as we consider the many candidates who seek our support.

Gambling Bill

May I switch gears for a moment to update you on a bill we have been closely monitoring during this legislative session. A House bill known as “An act relating to charitable fundraising” (HB2358) was passed in the Senate last night (2/29) and is now on the Governor’s desk waiting his approval.

It has been our opinion that opening charities to professional dealers and their “gaming” devises is a further expansion of gambling in our state and we have presented documentation and testimony before committees of both Houses which support that position. While disappointed that we have not prevailed in this matter, we do wish to thank each of you who have responded to our e-mail alerts. Your phone calls to the legislative hotline delayed action on this measure for several weeks and most certainly changed some minds.

The following are legislators who stood with us on this issue:

Representatives Anderson, Benson, Bush, Cairnes, Carrell, Crouse, Dunn, Edwards, Ericksen, Esser, Hurst, Koster, Lantz, McDonald, Pennington, Schindler, Stensen, Talcott, Van Luven, Wensman, and Speaker Ballard. **Senators** Eide, Fairley, Franklin, Hargrove, Haugen, Johnson, Long, McDonald, Morton, Oke, Rasmussen, Rossi, Sheahan, Stevens, Swecker, Winsley, and Wojahn.

And, thank you too, for your many expressions of support. They are too numerous to count.

Rick Forcier

Executive Director