

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

1/26/96

Sent to
Mark Purn

'Ideal citizens' go face to face

Forum lets voters share perspectives

By Richard Wolf
USA TODAY

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But unlike President Clinton, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich, the three women emerged with common ground, broadened viewpoints and a deeper appreciation of their differences.

"We've been exposed to people who are in different circumstances and who face a lot harder times," said Donna Oliver, 43, a homemaker and mother of three from Georgia. "I'd like to see this change the way we elect presidents."

That's the ambitious goal behind the National Issues Convention, a \$3.9 million experiment that brought more than 450 randomly selected Americans to Texas to talk over the nation's toughest problems.

Polled for their opinions before they arrived and again as they left Sunday, the cross-section of the USA may provide pollsters with new insight into how opinions can change after intense exposure to all sides of an issue. Results won't be available until later this week.

And if it fails to influence the debate or the 10 men vying for the White House the confab at least showed that voters can move from sound bites to substantive debate.

"This is an example of the way the dialogue could be," said University of Texas professor James Fishkin, the event's organizer, who calls the newly informed delegates "ideal citizens."

But some public opinion experts dispute the validity of Fishkin's experiment, calling it an artificial, elitist forum that skews participants' views.

And although 600 Americans were selected, nearly 25% didn't take the expense-paid trip, leaving too many Westerners and too few elderly.

Proponents and critics alike, however, agree the convention and hundreds of smaller focus groups held across the country this year will help educate participants and uplift the national dialogue.

In this case, four hours of



Oliver, center, of Lithonia, Ga., and Kimberly Stringham talks to the group.

Issue: Public education

USA TODAY/CNN/GALLUP POLL

issues in the 1996 presidential campaign. The percentage who say the candidates' stands on those issues would be a "high priority" in deciding whom to vote for:

Rank	Issue	Percent
1	Quality of public education	87%
2	Violent crime	66%
3	Economy	64%
4	Availability of good jobs	63%
4	Availability of health coverage	63%
4	Cost of health care	63%
7	Federal budget deficit	58%
7	Drug abuse	58%
7	Financial security for retirees	58%
10	Medicare	55%
10	Moral values	55%
12	Poverty	51%
12	Federal taxes	51%
14	Welfare	49%
15	Cost of college	43%
16	Size, role of federal government	41%
17	U.S. role in world affairs	34%

Source: USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup nationwide telephone poll of 1,000 adults conducted Jan. 5-7. Margin of error: +/-3 percentage points.

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All those definitions of modern families left Phyllis Johnston, 80, of Pueblo West, Colo., shaking her head. Married 55 years with two daughters, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, she came away shocked by the stories.

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Wilson: Kansas nurse came away with deeper empathy.



Washington: N.C. motel worker sees neglect in neighborhood.

"Even the people that need these services don't feel that the government should come running to them," said William Kaiser, 41, an insurance agent from Scottsdale, Ariz., with a family of four.

"The more liberal thinking is that government can solve everyone's problems," he said. "But that's not true, and we're finally coming to that realization."

Hearing from the candidates didn't help. Emboldened after hours of discussion, delegates hit politicians with questions about cutting taxes and creating jobs, policing the world and restoring family values.

Most expressed their dissatisfaction with the sound-bite responses.

"A lot of rhetoric," fumed Houston construction worker Mark Dettor, 41. "There wasn't an answer we didn't expect."

While the pollsters and political scientists connected to the convention searched for superlatives to describe its importance, the participants in Group 25 may have found it.

"I think we need to help each other, but I think it needs to be done on a one-to-one basis," said Kansas' Wilson.

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Proponents and critics alike, however, agree the convention and hundreds of smaller focus groups held across the country this year will help educate participants and uplift the national dialogue.

In this case, four hours of live PBS coverage helped expand the audience.

"The polling isn't what's important. It's the focus on substance rather than style," said Republican pollster Frank Luntz. "If I had my way, this is how politics would be run."

Much of the hoopla surrounding the event disappeared when most of the presidential candidates declined offers to appear in person.

Only Sen. Richard Lugar of Indiana and Vice President Gore appeared, three other GOP candidates — publisher Steve Forbes, Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas and former Tennessee Gov. Lamar Alexander — took questions via satellite.

Clinton and Dole were invited but did not attend.

That left the delegates to



Roundtable: National Issues Convention delegates Donna Oliver, center, of Lithonia, Ga., and Kimberly Holmes of West Memphis, Ark., listen as moderator Taylor Willingham talks to the group.



In attendance: Vice President Gore speaks to a delegate.

talk, mostly in groups of about 15. By Sunday morning, many emerged with new insights.

► Oliver, the conservative from Lithonia, Ga., opposes abortion but thought again about unwanted pregnancies after hearing blood-curdling stories of child abuse. "This is a reality that I had never seen or heard."

► Kimberly Holmes, 25, the liberal from West Memphis, Ark., was convinced of the need to raise the minimum wage after watching a struggling parent in tears over tough times. "I'm more in the middle class, and now I'm getting to understand the opinion of the lower-income class."

► Kathryn Wilson, 56, a registered nurse and a moderate from Manhattan, Kan., was left with deeper empathy for those less fortunate than herself. "I really feel sorry for people on an individual basis."

The weekend was full of policy experts, but also stories of real-life economic and social experiences.

► Mindy Bunch, 20, of Turlock, Calif., spoke about the difficulties she faces as a single mother raising her 8-month-old daughter amid drugs and violence. "I feel sorry for my daughter," she said. "There's a lot of sick people out there."

► Michael Winters, 52, a Lansing, Mich., truck driver, related the hardship of raising his 13-year-old grandson, the product of a broken home, and called for a return to traditional family values. "It's a messed-up world."

► Karen Stringham, 38, of nearby Fowler, Mich., a Dairy Queen worker whose husband is unemployed, appealed for better job opportunities or government aid to help lift her three children from poverty. "I would like to just be able to say that I'm taking care of my own."

► Valerie Washington, 29, a motel housekeeper and the only African-American in her smaller group, lamented that her happy four-member household in Rocky Mount, N.C., is inundated with neighborhood children lacking parental supervision. "It makes me feel sorry for them."

No. 1 issue: Public education

A USA TODAY/CNN/Gallup Poll shows that voters identify the quality of public education, violent crime, the economy and health-care coverage as the top-priority issues in the 1996 presidential campaign. The percentage who say the candidates' stands on those issues would be a "high priority" in deciding whom to vote for:

Rank	Issue	Percent
1	Quality of public education	67%
2	Violent crime	66%
3	Economy	64%
4	Availability of good jobs	63%
4	Availability of health coverage	63%
6	Cost of health care	63%
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All those definitions of modern families left Phyllis Johnston, 80, of Pueblo West, Colo., shaking her head. Married 55 years with two daughters, five grandchildren and four great-grandchildren, she came away shocked by the stories.

But while she and most other happily married participants sympathized with their counterparts, there were few calls for more government involvement.

"I think it's terrible the way that government has stepped in," Johnston said.



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"Even the people that need these services don't feel that the government should come running to them," said William Kaiser, 41, an insurance agent from Scottsdale, Ariz., with a family of four.

"The more liberal thinking is that government can solve everyone's problems," he said. "But that's not true, and we're finally coming to that realization."

Hearing from the candidates didn't help. Emboldened after hours of discussion, delegates hit politicians with questions about cutting taxes and creating jobs, policing the world and restoring family values.

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"If you have it good, turn around and try to help somebody else," said Arkansas' Holmes.

"More than government intervention," added Georgia's Oliver, "we need people intervention."

► The budget battle, 1A, 6A
► Dole and Forbes, 5A

Gore: Flat tax doesn't add up for most

The debate over the flat tax was played out in front of the nearly 500 delegates to the National Issues Convention in Austin, Texas.

On Sunday, Vice President Gore told the convention the flat tax won't fly because it lowers taxes for the rich and raises them for working people.

"People will react positively to that [flat tax] until they get out a pencil and paper. When they figure exactly what the effect on their own family will be, then the attitude changes," Gore said.

Replacing the current federal tax code with a 17% flat

tax is the centerpiece of the campaign of Republican Steve Forbes, who spoke by satellite on Saturday.

"The first essential step is to get rid of this corrupting, complex, incomprehensible tax code that is plaguing America today," Forbes said.

"A typical American fam-

ily today pays eight times as much of tax to the government as they did 40 years ago," he said. "The cure is very simple."

"When you talk about junking the tax code," he added, "the political class in Washington is going to fight it tooth and nail."

Monitor's endorsement

Experience and judgment make Dole our choice

Senator Bob Dole describes the quality he offers the nation as adult leadership.

It's a witty response, on one level, to the who say Dole is too old to be president. Stand him between the punctious twins of the Baby Boom generation - a petulant Newt Gingrich and an impulsive Bill Clinton - the 72-year-old senator looks like a wise old man. He looks like a wise old man as Ward Cleaver, a model father who dispenses wisdom in few words.

But the phrase also speaks to why the Monitor, after long reflection, has decided to endorse in the Republican primary a man whose views we have often criticized. Bob Dole would provide a measured purpose and the sound judgment Republicans will need if they want to remain the majority party in November and beyond.

These are volatile times for Republicans. Fifteen months ago, they sent to Congress a new majority, poised to remake the federal government: slash its budget and cut its functions. Now, many of their big bills are stalled, public opinion has turned, and angry and impatient voters could choose to turn out of office in the fall many of those they put in two years earlier.

The paradox is that the principles of a smaller, less intrusive government and a balanced budget - principles that Dole has fought for during his 35 years in Congress - are now mainstream, if not universally accepted. Yet just when Republicans are in a position to turn these principles into law and policy, they could blow the chance. They will if they are lured to presidential candidates offering panaceas wrapped in sound bites.

Pat Buchanan wants to scrap free

Editorial

trade and build a fence on the Mexican border. His response to job insecurity is jingoism. His response to urban despair is to force pregnant teenagers to have their babies.

Steve Forbes is pushing a flat tax that will heighten class warfare and fatten the deficit. He lacks the qualification to be president.

Lamar Alexander glibly preaches personal responsibility and peddles think-tank notions. He's slippery on the real issues in hopes that both conservatives and moderates will think he is one of them.

Forbes, Buchanan and Alexander are doing just what they criticize career politicians for: making tooth-fairy promises. Yet by raising false expectations while proclaiming themselves holier-than-thou outsiders, they will contribute to the public's mistrust of politicians.

Bob Dole does not overpromise. Four decades in public office have taught him the value of credibility and the importance of compromise.

Gingrich and the purveyors of the Contract With America in the House lost sight of that. They equated compromise with weakness. So they tried to rush radical versions of their ideas through Congress and past an unsuspecting public. Then they reacted with wonder when Clinton ambushed them with charges of extremism.

Dole knows when to push and when to settle. He showed that when he called an end to the second government shutdown. That action halted the free-fall in the public's anger to



Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole

ward Congress.

Dole is a true mainstream conservative, temperamentally and philosophically. Wounded in war, he believes in the prestige of the presidency and the power of the president to set foreign policy. And so he took the risky but principled position to back sending troops to Bosnia.

Reared in the Depression, he distrusts the radical right's jihad against Washington. He believes that effective change is disciplined and incremental.

The Republican Party has plenty of theorists and futurists spinning bold

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ideas in eloquent language. What it needs is a strategist at the top who can turn words into actions. It needs a pragmatist like Dole to get things done.

We have chosen to endorse Dole despite serious reservations. Dole, like all of those in the race, made the calculation that no one could win the nomination by alienating the purists. And so he tailored his views to the right. He may know the math, but as a consequence he has disenfranchised party moderates. Those who advocate a balanced budget but not at the expense of environmental protection and fair welfare reform may have only Clinton to turn to.

Dole has made awkward forays into the camp of the red-meat conservatives. He has attacked the United Nations to mollify the isolationists and has taken on Hollywood to pacify the Christian Coalition. To the gun lobby, he promised to repeal the ban on assault weapons.

Dole has never sounded good pandering in public. Doing so only points up his most striking weakness as a

presidential candidate. Despite thousands of votes in Congress, 35 years on Capitol Hill and three presidential runs, he cannot state in plain, passionate terms what he stands for and how he would lead the nation.

He speaks in terms of legislation, not vision. He has facts at his command but no spark in his speech. This is not a disqualifying failing, in our mind. We believe he would be an effective president - one who could lead the nation in crises and through problems.

The editorial board at the Monitor is in an unusual position to evaluate the candidates. We follow the campaigns more closely than most people do. All of the major candidates have been in for at least one lengthy, face-to-face meeting with us.

That has not made our task any easier. Like many of you, we long held out hope that Candidate X would enter the race - someone with Alexander's affability, Phil Gramm's clarity, Richard Lugar's wisdom.

We ended up supporting a candidate with none of those strong points but with other attributes: a strength of character, a long record of integrity, the skills needed in public office, a willingness to take difficult stands.

Those worried about Dole's electability might think of the issue this way. If Republicans want voters to end divided government and give them the White House and Congress, they can't put up a candidate who is inexperienced like Forbes, scary like Buchanan, or evasive like Alexander. They need to nominate someone who is experienced and tested, trustworthy and pragmatic.

That someone is Bob Dole.

Disappearing jobs are

WJC
BRYAN
Editorial
Staff

PHOTOCOPY
WJC HANDWRITING

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20500

DATE: 2-20
96 FEB 26 AM 11:36

TO: Leon
Harold
Evelyn

George

cc. Evelyn

FROM: Staff Secretary

Any comment?

Todd

Todd-

- Leon thinks we should hold off on invites until we see the whole picture, -
- i.e., know how many requests we can accommodate, how many requests we have. — Jen P.

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

96 FEB 20 P1:36

February 19, 1996

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: MACK McLARTY

SUBJECT: OLYMPICS -- GUEST SUGGESTION

Marsha Scott has visited with me and, I believe with you, about her father Clyde accompanying you to the opening of the Olympics in Atlanta. I really think this is something you should consider, and I recommend Clyde "Smackover" Scott be one of your guests when you travel to Atlanta.

As you know, Clyde was an All-American and an Olympic medal winner. Given Marsha's unfailing loyalty to you over the years and Clyde's distinction and example athletically, personally, and professionally, I recommend we try to work this out in the near term.

Let me know what you think. Thanks.



from O O A L

96 MAR 29 P6:53

EDITORIAL

BY MORTIMER B. ZUCKERMAN
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

THE SILLY HILLARY PILLORY

Hillary Rodham Clinton: Is she saint or sinner, or one part each? She certainly has become a national obsession. A woman with strong opinions, unafraid to take a leading role, Mrs. Clinton naturally invites both criticism and applause. One minute she is the author catapulted to the top of best-seller lists by her admirers; the next, her enemies are assaulting her with headlines suffused with smoke from the Whitewater saga.

It was not quite the same with Eleanor Roosevelt, historically the only comparable first lady, who attracted even more bile and smear from her husband's critics. But much of that was underground. It is Mrs. Clinton's misfortune to be on the national stage at a time when the media are relentlessly cynical, when the very complexities and distant history of Whitewater make it difficult to grasp and afford endless opportunities for nudge-and-wink journalism. What is fundamental, though, is that a large proportion of the public does not believe what the Clintons say. If they say X and somebody else says Y, many perceive that it is the other guy telling the truth and the Clintons who are lying or covering up. People do not seem to discount the political or personal motivations of those making the allegations, and little allowance is made for human forgetfulness. To a large segment of the public, it is the fault of Mrs. Clinton or the president every time.

But there is compelling evidence to the contrary. In December, it was a document prepared over two years at a cost of \$3.6 million by Jay Stephens, an independent, tough-minded former Republican U.S. attorney and no friend of the Clintons, for the Resolution Trust Corp. This report may well have been written in invisible ink for all the attention it has had. Yet it vindicated the Clintons in their involvement in the Whitewater land transaction, describing them as essentially passive investors who lost more than \$40,000 on the deal, with little working knowledge of what went on. Now comes a follow-up report prepared for the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. after the new billing records discovered in the White House in early January 1996 cast

doubt on the initial report. The FDIC's investigators examined 49 boxes of records, interviewed dozens of people and interrogated Hillary Clinton as well. The results are now in. Taking into account these new facts, including the new billing records, the report essentially exonerates Mrs. Clinton's work on that part of the Whitewater deal known as Castle Grande to which this document referred.

Does that stop the chatter? Hardly. A book by James B. Stewart—written before the FDIC report—gets attention simply because it swims once again through Whitewater and suggests that when the project got into difficulties, Mrs. Clinton got much more heavily involved. So? Since when did it become a sin for people to protect an investment or to try to minimize a loss?

In this vitriolic and partisan atmosphere, it is important to put on the record for the fair-minded just what the authoritative FDIC report says. What of Mrs. Clinton's role in the option agreement for a portion of the land? The report concludes ... "a trier of fact is highly unlikely to conclude that Mrs. Clinton either knew of any wrongful purpose connected with the option (if there was one) or had the intent to aid in the

commission of that hypothetical wrong." And again: "... while Mrs. Clinton drafted the May 1, 1986, option, nothing proves she did so knowing it to be wrong. The circumstances of the work point strongly toward innocent explanations, and the theories that tie this option to wrongdoing or to the straw-man arrangements are strained at best."

What of other allegations principally by James McDougal—the Clintons' partner in Whitewater—that Governor Clinton somehow or other solicited \$2,000 a month as a retainer for the Rose Law Firm, not for law services but because the Clintons needed \$2,000? First, says the FDIC report, "the retainer was treated as an advance fee payment for services to be rendered rather than ... a fee for remaining available," and was not a fee to be paid regardless of

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People simply do not believe what the first lady and the president say about Whitewater, despite the evidence.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 73

EDITORIAL

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whether services were rendered. Second, the report points out that the services were rendered and that when the representation was nearing an end, the unused portion of the retainer was returned to McDougal's bank, Madison Guaranty. Third, Madison had refused to pay the Rose Law Firm in full for litigation services rendered in 1981 and 1982, and, based on this prior experience, the Rose Law Firm could hardly be blamed for seeking advance payment before agreeing to represent a McDougal entity once again. Thus, the report says, "the suggestion that the retainer was some sort of gratuity or was handled improperly lacks foundation. . . ." And it adds, "nor is there any suggestion of an improper quid pro quo."

The report points out that there are a number of reasons to disbelieve McDougal's story. First, McDougal may not be a reliable witness. In January 1996, his psychiatrist testified that McDougal's recollections are often undependable. McDougal, in fact, is a manic depressive whose lawyer filed an insanity plea in a 1990 bank fraud case in U.S. District Court. Furthermore, the notion that there was an economic motivation makes "no sense," the report says, since there is no evidence "the Clintons ever received anything like \$2,000 a month from this engagement," and indeed, "every reason to believe that they never received more than a trivial sum of money."

Why? Because Mrs. Clinton, as a partner in the Rose Law Firm, said she was paid approximately 2 percent of the firm's profits after deducting a typical 50 percent from revenues for expenses. This would have meant that Mrs. Clinton's share would have been less than \$20 a month. And as far as the payment of the total fees of \$21,000 to the firm, the report concludes, "It would simply not be persuasive to argue that for \$21,000, McDougal corrupted the Rose Law Firm and convinced half a dozen lawyers, most of whom he did not know, to join him in a scheme to violate the law. . . there remains no substantial evidence that these lawyers [at the Rose Law Firm] knew of or intended to aid and abet McDougal's apparent misconduct."

The report concludes: "The conspiracy theory is hopelessly flawed," and "the only solid evidence tying the Rose Law Firm to the IDC/Castle Grande acquisition is evidence of the innocent activity in participating in the drafting of the purchase agreement."

The FDIC report disposes of other issues that have been raised by the conspiracy theorists—for example, the notion that important records on Castle Grande were destroyed at the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock, Ark., as if to hide something. The report says: "The files were discarded in 1988, long before Whitewater in any form became an issue. The discarding occurred in a seemingly innocent context as part of the general effort to discard unneeded files." According to the report, "there is no evidence that Mrs. Clinton knew anyone might need the files."

So there you have it. The suspicions of an attempted coverup seem to grow in inverse proportion to the evidence from independent third parties (as distinct from a politically motivated Senate committee) that there was nothing to cover up.

What remains? The trial going on in Arkansas and the work of Kenneth Starr, the independent counsel. It is time Starr came forward with his results. The inescapable conclusion for now is that there is no scandal to cover up. Perhaps the Clintons, in their clumsy efforts at spin control, have been their own worst enemies, but allowance must be made for people trying to cope with a perverse press. "Whitewater has been a scandal," writes historian Garry Wills in an upcoming article on the Stewart book in the *New York Review of Books*, "but the clearest, proved wrongdoing has

been by politicians, journalists and professional [well-paid] Clinton critics."

None of the repudiations, of course, seem to make any dent in the hide of Republicans. They believe Whitewater is their key to the White House. This is a misdirection of energy: They should be focusing on the failure of the president to lead in a fight for a balanced budget, on his failure to come up with reform of welfare, on his failure to deal with health care and Medicare. These are real, not phantom issues. Mr. Clinton is being allowed to define himself not so much by what he is for but by what he is against. The Republicans' desire to go after the president and especially his wife for what took place not during the Clinton presidency but while he was governor of Arkansas does little to legitimize their claim to the executive branch next November. Substance, not character assassination, is the qualification for office. The Republicans have the better case to make on the substance. Why don't they make it?

When it comes to the qualifications for office, Republicans have the better case on the substance. Why don't they make it?