

Editorial:

Rock the Vote 2008, Already?

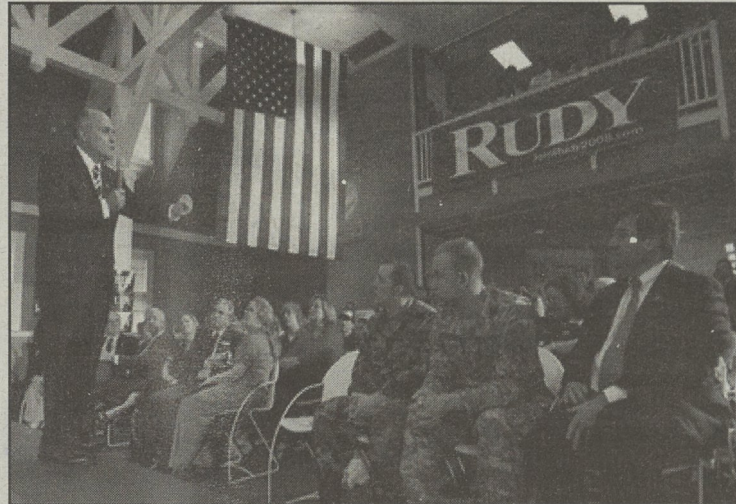
By Jordan Martin
Staff Writer

Recently, the field of political candidates vying for their respective political parties' nominations has been crowded. And not just crowded, but overburdened. It seems that the American political scene has taken a turn more akin to European politics, with numerous minor factions of the Democratic and Republican parties battling for power. However, as the election draws nearer, there is a thinning of the herd as a definite hierarchy forms among the candidates.

Within the Republican Party the major contenders are former Mayor of New York City Rudy Giuliani, former Massachusetts governor

Mitt Romney, and Senator John McCain.

Giuliani is a major contender in the race for the White House. His strong leadership skills were exhibited in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 tragedy that brought New York City and the United States to its knees. Giuliani became one of the faces of solidarity at a time when many people were reaching for political guidance as well as emotional sustenance. Because of this, Giuliani holds a special place in many voters' minds. However, some conservatives have recently raised questions about Giuliani's family life. Giuliani's tumultuous relationship with his wife and strained relationships with his children put question marks in place of Giuliani's seemingly



Presidential hopeful, Rudy Giuliani, exercises his agenda in front of a crowd during a recent event during the candidate's excruciating road trip.

ironclad credentials. Many conservatives who hold family values in high esteem wonder at Giuliani's two divorces and estranged son.

Mitt Romney also holds strong credentials. He has the type of family life that many in the Republican Party hold in high regard. He held one term as Governor of Massachusetts, as and was CEO of a large corporation. This experience might make him quite appealing in the eyes of those looking for a conservative candidate experienced in matters of both politics and business. However, the one question many keep asking about Romney is in regards to his religious faith. Romney is a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Many in the Republican Party feel uneasy at the idea of a candidate with this religious background. Especially those to the religious Christian right of the Republican Party may feel threatened by a candidate who does not share their faith.

Finally, Senator John McCain is the third major contender for the Republican nomination. His background in the military makes him appealing to those in the party who favor a candidate who has seen combat. For, not only has McCain seen combat, but he spent over five years as a prisoner-of-war during the United States' altercation with Vietnam. His experience as a Senator and a former presidential candidate gives him the political experience he needs to attract the attention of those in the Republican Party

looking for a candidate who already knows the ropes. The major problem many in the party find with McCain is his position on the Iraqi conflict. His staunch opposition to the pulling out of troops from Iraq is a polarizing position to hold, as opposition to the Iraq situation grows, even among the most avidly conservative of the Republican Party.

Among the Democratic Party's major contenders for the nomination are Senators Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama.

Clinton is a strong contender. Her political experience is deep, with a position as former First Lady as well as the office she currently holds, that of Senator of New York. Supporters of her husband, former President Bill Clinton, might also support her, giving her a potentially powerful advantage over her lesser-known rivals. Her fundraising connections are extensive, with powerful donors willing to contribute extensive sums to her campaign. Clinton's main problem with some voters was her voting position on the Iraq War. Clinton voted in favor of the war, making some question the authenticity of her opposition to the war.

Barack Obama is a face also seen frequently on the campaign trail. Obama's war-chest is not quite as deep as Clinton's, but he is rapidly closing the funds gap between them. Obama has demonstrated his widespread appeal by raising portions of his campaign fund from Internet donors. Obama's popular stand on the Iraq war gives him leverage with many who are disillusioned with the process of the Iraq War.

However, Obama's mixed heritage cause some to question whether he can truly identify with the American black population. Others have questioned Obama's experience level. Obama has served as a senator in the Illinois State Senate, but has served in the United States Senate for only three years.

Either way, the campaign is likely to intensify as primaries creep up only nine months away.

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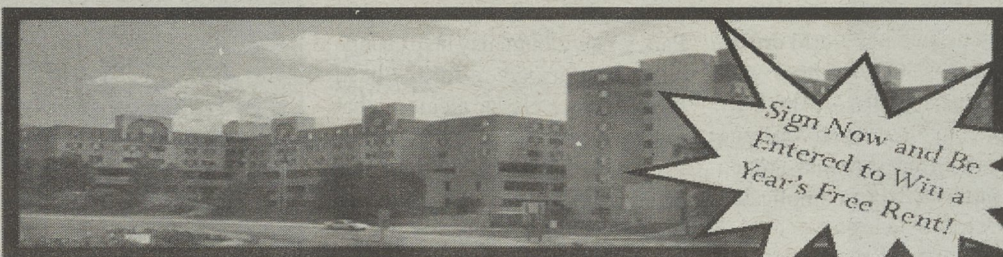
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