

ISSUES & IDEAS



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IN MY OPINION
CARL HIAASEN

Did Mahoney think he'd get away with it?

If there were a political equivalent of the Darwin Awards, this year's winner would be Tim Mahoney, the Democratic congressman from Palm Beach Gardens.

ABC News recently nailed Mahoney for nailing one of his staff members and then paying her more than \$121,000 in hush money.

While Mahoney isn't the first priapic politician to get snagged in his own zipper, the circumstances of his misbehavior indicate that he's afflicted with exceptional stupidity.

It's been only two years since he narrowly won the District 12 seat, a victory made possible when his original opponent, Republican incumbent Mark Foley, abruptly quit the race because of — guess what? — a sex scandal.

Foley had been caught sending "inappropriate" e-mails to young men who'd worked as congressional pages, which is to say he was basically trolling online. Yet even as Foley was being pummeled by those tawdry revelations, his Democratic (and long-married) rival was engaged in secret mischief of his own.

During a 2006 campaign appearance, Mahoney had met a woman named Patricia Allen and they'd begun having an affair. According to Democratic sources, Mahoney soon arranged for Allen to work as a volunteer in his campaign.

It was a sleazy move, but not automatically career-killing. That would come later.

• TURN TO HIAASEN, 5L

IN MY OPINION
LEONARD PITTS JR.

Capital punishment is wrong, unfair

This is a rewrite. In the column originally prepared for this space, I said that Troy Davis was scheduled to die Monday — to be killed, actually, by an executioner for the state of Georgia.

But — stop the presses! — that's no longer accurate. On Monday, Davis, 40, will still be alive. Or at least, he won't be dead because of anything the state did. That's because on Friday, an appeals court granted him a stay.

This is Davis' third stay, his third hairsbreadth escape from execution. If there is any justice, it will be his last. Meaning not that he will be killed, but that he won't, that the state of Georgia will finally come to its senses.

Davis was convicted in the 1989 death of Mark MacPhail, an off-duty Savannah police officer who was trying to break up a parking lot altercation when he was shot. But Davis is connected to the crime by no forensic evidence whatsoever.

He stands condemned solely on the word of nine witnesses, seven of whom have since recanted. Two of the seven say they were intimidated into lying by police. Of the two who have not recanted, one is a man named Sylvester Coles, who is said by some witnesses to be the real shooter.

For many of you this is an old story. I've written about it before as have others. Luminaries like Jimmy Carter and the pope have also spoken out on Davis' behalf. Is it too much to hope somebody will finally listen?

• TURN TO PITTS, 5L

CAMPAIGN 2008

POWER STRUGGLE



McCain, Obama share energy goals, but not strategies

BY ROBERT S. BOYD
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WASHINGTON — At John McCain rallies, supporters chant "Drill, baby, Drill!" and the candidate sings the praises of nuclear power, proposing to build dozens of new nuclear reactors to lessen the need for imported oil.

"We have to stop sending \$700 billion a year to countries that don't like us very much," the Republican said in the final presidential debate.

Democrat Barack Obama warns that the United States "can't drill its way out of" its current dependence on foreign oil and regularly pushes renewable energy sources.

In the same debate, Obama said the nation could create five million jobs by making "highly fuel-efficient cars, wind turbines and solar panels, the kinds of clean-energy approaches that should be the driver of our economy for the next century."

But when you strip away the stump-speech rhetoric, the two candidates share remarkably similar energy policy goals.

Both candidates support a "cap-and-trade" system to limit emissions of carbon dioxide. Cap-and-trade would require polluting companies to buy emissions permits — a pollution

• TURN TO ENERGY, 2L

Diversifying our energy is imminent security concern

BY MODESTO MAIDIQUE
AND GEORGE PHILIPPIDIS
Special to The Miami Herald

For anyone who thinks a \$700 billion bailout is a lot of money for Americans to commit to this economic rescue plan, consider this: In this country, we spend about that much on foreign oil every single year. And what do we have to show for it?

Over the past 30 years, our dependence on foreign oil has perilously increased from 20 percent to 62 percent, giving OPEC enormous leverage over U.S. policy. Cheap gasoline in the United States (half of what Europeans pay) for years has fueled our disregard for energy conservation and efficiency. While other nations not as rich as the United States have been pursuing alternative forms of energy — such as biofuels, solar, wind and nuclear — we have been treating energy as an issue of secondary importance. As developing countries

• TURN TO U.S. SECURITY, 2L

COMING NEXT WEEK: DON'T MISS THE SPECIAL ELECTION PREVIEW IN ISSUES & IDEAS

TO FLEE OR NOT TO FLEE

Critics' dilemma: to walk out on garbage or sit tight?

■ The Miami Herald's critics share their worst review experiences — and their reaction to the assault on their aesthetic sensibilities.

BY GLENN GARVIN
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Earlier this month, Chicago Sun-Times film critic Roger Ebert ripped into a movie called *Tru Loved* like he was carving a Halloween jack-o'-lantern, labeling it "on about the same level as a not especially good high school play. . . . It fails at fundamentals we take

for granted when we go to the movies. By lacking them, it illustrates what the minimum requirements are for a competent film."

Tru Loved, a low-budget, starless film about a gay teenager moving from San Francisco to a conservative suburb, is not exactly an Oscar contender. So there was no real news in a veteran film critic

dumping on a cheap-jack indie flick . . . not until the 16th paragraph, anyway, when Ebert disclosed that he'd only watched the first eight minutes of *Tru Loved*. He confessed to lifting his summary of the plot from the website IMDB.com, and that some of the actors he criticized didn't even appear in the part of the movie he saw. No matter, he wrote: "The handwriting was on the wall. The returns were in. The case was

closed. You know I'm right."

And most readers apparently thought he was. In the hundreds of comments posted on Ebert's blog, a few complained — "The review reminds me of too many times when I tried in school to write a book review after having only read the first chapter" — but the vast majority saw no problem in

• TURN TO FIGHT-OR-FLIGHT, 3L

CAMPAIGN 2008 | ENERGY POLICY

Plans differ on government influence

*ENERGY, FROM 1L

quota. Companies looking to exceed their quota could buy additional capacity from other companies that don't use all of their emissions capacity.

Both candidates would encourage drilling for domestic oil and gas on land and offshore — an issue of particular interest to Florida, with its sandy beaches and tourist-based economy. Both support greater use of coal. Both say they would promote the development of renewable energies such as wind, solar and geothermal power.

There are differences, however, in how the two men would begin the difficult transition to a more environmentally friendly energy future.

McCain wants to start building 45 new nuclear power plants right away. Obama says nuclear power should wait until safety and waste-storage issues are resolved. McCain has been criticized for supporting the creation of a nuclear-waste repository in the Yucca Flat region outside of Las Vegas, despite saying in an interview months earlier that he did not feel comfortable with the idea of nuclear waste being trucked through his own state of Arizona.

Obama has proposed a windfall-profits tax on the largest oil companies to pay for energy rebates of up to \$1,000. McCain opposes tax increases, but he favors tax incentives and "market forces" to get private industry to produce cleaner alternatives to fossil fuels.

McCain has proposed a project to achieve energy independence by 2025. Obama has a shorter timetable: "Our goal should be that, in 10 years' time, we are free of dependence on Middle Eastern oil," he said.

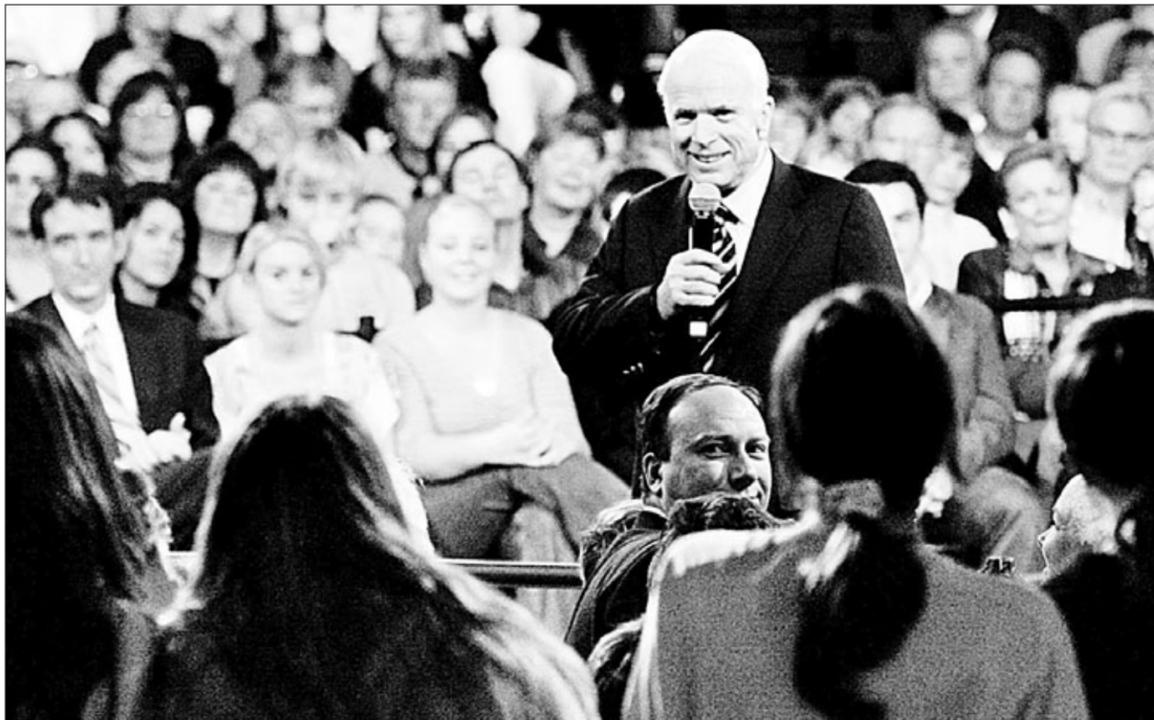
INVESTING IN COAL

While both McCain and Obama say they support expanded use of "clean coal," as yet there is no coal-burning plant that's equipped to capture and bury carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas. The cost of such a plant is high, and experts say it could be two decades before the technology is widely used.

McCain said he'd devote \$2 billion a year for 10 years to develop commercial carbon capture and storage systems. "The federal government needs to make a commitment to advancing clean-coal technologies," his energy plan says.

"Coal will play a critical role in our energy future," the plan says. "While it is imperative that we advance clean-coal technologies, we cannot stop our use of coal prior to the technology becoming market-viable."

Obama also wants greater use of coal. His plan calls for federal investment in "low-emissions coal plants."



JIM MONE/AP

TRUSTS BUSINESSES TO DEVELOP RESOURCES: On renewable energy sources, John McCain favors a free-market approach, relying on incentives to stimulate private enterprise rather than government subsidies.



SCOTT OLSON/AFP-GETTY IMAGES

SUPPORTS DIRECT GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS: Barack Obama has proposed government investments and federal standards for the development of renewable energy sources.

Obama wants to provide incentives so that private companies don't have to bear all of the risks and costs of new carbon-capture and storage technologies. He said he would instruct the Department of Energy to enter public-private partnerships to develop five new, commercial-scale, coal-fired power plants with carbon-capture and storage technologies.

Obama's running mate, Joe Biden, has been criticized for telling an Ohio voter that the United States should no longer have coal-fired power plants.

NUCLEAR POWER ISSUES

McCain is bullish on

nuclear power. He says it's the best way to solve the problem of climate change. He's called for building 45 new nuclear power plants "right away" and proposed an eventual goal of 100 plants.

He insists that nuclear power is safe. "We've sailed Navy ships around the world for 60 years with nuclear power plants on them," he said at the last debate. "We can store and reprocess spent nuclear fuel . . . no problem."

Obama puts less emphasis on nuclear power but has promised that, "We'll find safer ways to use nuclear power and store nuclear

waste."

He doesn't set a numeric goal for new nuclear plants or call for starting to build more immediately.

"It is unlikely that we can meet our aggressive climate goals if we eliminate nuclear power as an option," his energy plan says. "However, before an expansion of nuclear power is considered, key issues must be addressed, including: security of nuclear fuel and waste, waste storage, and proliferation."

RENEWABLE TACKS

Although both McCain and Obama pledge to support renewable sources of energy

— wind, solar, biofuels and geothermal power — they disagree on how to do it.

Obama proposes government investments and federal standards for the development of renewable energy. McCain favors a more free-market approach, relying on incentives to stimulate private enterprise rather than government subsidies.

Both senators voted for last month's financial rescue bill that included a section extending tax credits for renewables. McCain has opposed such measures in the past.

"I'm a little wary — I have to give you straight talk — about government subsi-

dies," McCain said at a roundtable discussion in North Bend, Wash., in May. "When government jumps in and distorts the market, then there's unintended consequences, as well as intended."

"I won't support subsidizing every alternative or tariff that restricts healthy competition," he declared in a South Carolina speech in December. "I'll encourage the development of infrastructure and market growth necessary for these products to compete and let consumers choose the winners."

Obama supports direct government contracts, as well as tax incentives for solar, wind, biofuels and geothermal projects. He says he would double federal science and research funds for renewables. His goal is two billion gallons of cellulosic ethanol, a renewable biofuel, yearly by 2013. (Americans currently burn about 140 billion gallons of gasoline a year.)

Obama would set a federal standard requiring that 10 percent of the nation's electricity come from renewable sources by 2012 and 25 percent by 2025.

DRILLING MOMENTUM

Both candidates support drilling new wells to produce more oil and gas on U.S. land and offshore, but McCain is much more enthusiastic about drilling than Obama.

McCain argues that trillions of dollars' worth of U.S. oil reserves are going unused. "We can offshore-drill now. We've got to do it now," McCain declared in the last debate.

"We will reduce the cost of a barrel of oil because we show the world that we have a supply of our own. It's doable. The technology is there, and we have to drill now," McCain said.

Obama would allow limited offshore drilling, but only as part of a larger energy package. "We can't simply drill our way out of the problem," he said.

Obama agrees with McCain that the nation needs to increase domestic oil and gas production. Obama said oil companies have access to 68 million acres, including 40 million offshore, that they're not using.

"Use them or lose them," Obama said in the last debate.

Both candidates oppose drilling for oil in Alaska's Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Irritating many conservatives, McCain disagrees with his running mate, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, and the Republican platform adopted at the national convention last month, both of which support drilling in ANWR.

Obama said drilling in the Arctic would irreversibly damage the wildlife refuge without creating enough oil to have a noticeable impact of U.S. energy security.

THE FUTURE OF U.S. ENERGY

Diversifying our energy is imminent security concern

*U.S. SECURITY, FROM 1L

consume more of the world's oil production and new oil discoveries flatten, the United States is facing a dangerous situation with regard to its energy security.

The only way to secure America's future is by aggressively increasing the nation's fuel efficiency while investing in domestic fuel and energy sources as soon as possible. It is a matter of national security and should be treated as such — nothing less than a new Manhattan project. We are the world's leader in research and ingenuity, but we lack a long-term vision and, so far, the political will to implement energy diversification regardless of the price of oil.

THOSE LEADING WAY

Brazil is a prime example of the opposite: A country

with a fraction of our resources has achieved fuel diversity and even self-sufficiency. Since the 1970s, it has instituted a long-term policy of ethanol and flexible-fuel vehicle production, allowing its citizens to choose their fuel among ethanol, gasoline and natural gas. It was not easy, but government and the private sector worked together despite economic and political challenges.

Similarly, large European countries like Germany and Spain are on their way to making biofuels, solar and wind energy a major component of their energy portfolios. The United Kingdom is tapping ocean energy, while over half of France's electricity comes from nuclear energy. A combination of tax incentives and greenhouse-gas emission mandates have led to widespread adoption

of renewables in Europe.

A PLACE TO START

The United States is by far the world's largest importer and consumer of oil. Our transportation sector burns 10 million barrels of gasoline a day, an amount almost equal to all of the oil we import. Our goal should not be to simply replace oil with another single fuel, but rather to introduce a variety of alternatives to oil. We have a number of options at our disposal. First and foremost, we should start with biofuels, such as ethanol and biodiesel. The most significant domestic source of these fuels is abundant, inedible and inexpensive biomass — plant material such as wood waste, corn stover, wheat straw, sugar cane bagasse and yard waste. Although great technical progress has been achieved to date, a long-

term policy that makes biofuels a top national priority will attract private investment to accelerate their commercialization in the next five years.

At the same time, U.S. energy policy should boost investment in automotive technologies that enhance fuel economy, regardless of the fuel used, and reduce emissions of climate-changing gases. More than 70 percent of Americans drive under 25 miles a day, which can be readily accommodated with newly developed plug-in rechargeable batteries, while longer distances can be powered by biofuels. Such a combination of new technologies could drop our gasoline use by as much as 75 percent within 10 years, significantly freeing the United States from its oil dependence once and for all.

The government should

not dictate which biofuels and automotive technologies should make it to the commercial arena — this should be left to market forces. However, since energy security is of national importance, the government should mandate that all new vehicles be made fuel-flexible, no longer limiting us to the use of only oil products. Financial incentives should be provided directly to U.S. consumers to switch to flex-fuel and plug-in hybrid vehicles. It is criminal to send billions of dollars every year to rogue oil-producing nations, when we can spend a fraction of that amount to help American consumers change their habits and stop this monumental hemorrhage of national wealth.

THE ROAD AHEAD

The road to energy independence will be fraught

with difficulties. It will take vision, execution and patience. But above all, it will take political will to turn the United States into an economy that is fueled by a diverse array of energy sources and is no longer hostage to oil. Fuel and energy diversity — biofuels from biomass, solar, wind, nuclear and others — will lead to price competition benefiting the U.S. consumer and help usher the country into an era of long-term energy and national security.

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