

the Variable Variable

CIRULI ASSOCIATES
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Ins and Outs 2007



Colorado has led the way in the national shift from red to blue. In four years, the state has added a Democratic senator, governor, two congresspersons

and 14 state legislators.

This was mostly a rejection of Republicans, especially President Bush, the war in Iraq and the culture of Washington, and not the adoption of a Democratic agenda since few alternatives were offered. But, Colorado Democrats can claim that their 2006 pick-ups came after two years of control of the state legislature and the performance of the Salazar bothers in Washington.

The change was startling in its velocity. It was only two years ago that Bush's 2004 win launched a round of discussion about a rolling Republican realignment and requisite soul-searching among Democrats. As this new year begins, the President and Republican Party position sinks further, mostly due to the public's frustration with the situation in Iraq. The President, aware of his political crisis only late in September, finally dumped the "stay the course" military strategy along with Donald Rumsfeld the day after the election. Regardless of its military efficacy, the "surge" strategy is a failure politically.

Although a Democratic era may not have started, Republicans face a difficult period of rebuilding and unfavorable conditions in 2008. They must defend 21 senate seats (Democrats only 12), and the party controlling the presidency for two



terms has, since the 1920s, only won a third term once with a new candidate and that was George Bush Sr. in 1988.

Gore vs. Gibson

Few recoveries demonstrate the breadth of the Democratic comeback better than Al Gore becoming a Hollywood star with his global warming film, *An Inconvenient Truth*.

Gore, who tends to speak New Age, might call it a harmonic convergence. His long passion for the environment has intersected with an explosion of concern and new evidence about global warming, and the whole package has been adopted beyond Hollywood. Renewable energy is now the issue *du jour* and mostly owned by Democrats.

Mel Gibson, who was the independent film king of 2004 with his *Passion of the Christ*, drove his career off a Malibu Coast road with a non-kosher drunken driving arrest.

Digging Out vs. Jumping Out

Mayor John Hickenlooper's long honeymoon crashed along with Denver's election computers on November 7. Colorado made national news as voters waited hours to cast ballots. Finger-pointing and high profile investigations followed. But the Mayor's pain did not end with election night, or even the day after, as counting continued for days,

(continued)

IN	OUT
Gore	Gibson
Blue	Red
Shoveling snow	Jumping out of airplanes
LEDs	SUVs
YouTube	Gatekeepers
Surge	Stay the course
Sudoku	Crosswords
Independents	Party base
Red wine	Trans fat
Walls	Illegals
Vote early	Vote Tuesday
Chávez	Castro
Wikipedia	Encyclopedia
Jennifer Hudson	Skinny supermodels
Barney Frank	Ted Haggard
Obama	Rummy
Stocks	Real estate
Queen	Cruise

leaving some state races undecided. Expect early voting to spread to more than half the electorate in many Colorado communities to avoid future snafus.

The Mayor had an amazing three and a half-year run of good luck – including jumping out of an airplane, winning numerous ballot issues and surviving the latest election. But that ended in the Christmas Blizzard of 2006. Days of unrelenting snow, wind and cold shut down Denver's highly touted airport and left much of the city's roads near impassable. Hickenlooper will survive this too, but he now joins the ranks of earthbound politicians.

Chávez vs. Castro

Although the old socialism is long dead and Fidel Castro, its longest surviving practitioner seems about to fade from the scene, Hugo Chávez is reviving – or revving, using his petrol dollars and Venezuelan base – a version of *el caudillo* socialism for the 21st Century.

The failure of a free market economy to take hold during the last decade and narrow the income gap created a political opportunity for the Latin American petrol-autocrat. One of the best aspects of the renewable energy enthusiasm is that Chávez, Putin and Ahmadinejad will have a few less dollars to threaten their neighbors.

Concern for global warming is also motivating many people to switch to more efficient products. LEDs are in and SUVs are out, although, ironically, if gas prices drop, one effect could be a boom in SUV sales.

Obama vs. Rummy

Charisma can have a short shelf life. Donald Rumsfeld was the darling of the media and dominated the policy process after 9/11, but was unceremoniously dumped after the 2006 election.

Senator Barack Obama, after only two years in the Senate, has attracted a celebrity following and is now second – for the moment – only to Hillary Clinton in the race for the Democratic nomination. How long his run lasts will depend on his ability to translate charisma into money and organization during the “silent primary” and the 2008 Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire and Feb. 5 primaries and caucuses. His amazing

success is a product of both his talent and the hunger among voters for something new.

Barney Frank vs. Ted Haggard

Although gay rights activists suffered setbacks in eight states that adopted constitutional bans on gay marriage and in Colorado where proposed domestic partnership was defeated, in fact, the Democratic surge brought a host of gay or gay-friendly politicians to power.

Nancy Pelosi, who represents one of the most gay-oriented congressional districts in the country, is the Speaker of the House, and Barney Frank, Capitol Hill's most visible gay congressman, takes over the House Financial Services Committee. Meanwhile, a couple of anti-gay evangelical preachers were exposed and dethroned for their own gay double lives.

Walls vs. Illegals

Illegal immigration may be the country's most difficult issue with passion running high, the public divided, politicians stymied and millions of working immigrants in limbo.

The firmest consensus is the border must be controlled. But exactly how to do that, at what cost and how to deal with millions already here will be a part of the 2008 election battle.

Independents vs. Party Base

Joe Lieberman, who won re-election as an independent Democrat on the East Coast, and Arnold Schwarzenegger, who won as an independent Republican in California, are the continental bookends for an election that was about wooing voters tired of narrow partisan appeals. While each party's base showed up, it was the independent voters wanting change that swung the election to the Democrats and a few wily Republican survivors.

YouTube vs. Gatekeepers

The mainstream media continued to see more audiences move to the Internet. Every TV, radio station and newspaper now actively supports a website. The innovators in old media are those who operate the interface with new media.

When Virginia's Senator Allen lost his expected re-election due to the “Macaca” faux pas that was captured on video and immediately flashed around the world on

YouTube, a new political medium moved to center stage and the old gatekeepers, who might have ignored it, were pushed further aside. Power to the people.

Queen vs. Cruise

It was a good year for older actresses and tough on some of the super celebrities. Helen Mirren was extraordinary in both Queen Elizabeth I and II. Tom Cruise's *Mission Impossible III* was a slightly better sequel in the franchise, but his bizarre personal behavior on Oprah and other talk shows ended his career with Paramount.

Dream Girls failed to capture a best picture Oscar, but was a star vehicle for Jennifer Hudson. Hudson's success after losing on *American Idol* became a statement for big women as the skinny supermodel look was shunned as unhealthy.

Stock vs. Real Estate

After a slow recovery since the dotcom bust of early 2001, stocks became hot the last quarter of 2006. Real estate, the winner for much of the last decade, finally tapped out and saw declines.

A slower economy looked like a desired soft landing with fuel prices down and inflation tame.

Sudoku vs. Crosswords, etc.

A host of new products and trends will surge in 2007. The newest rage from Japan has numbers replacing letters in a crossword-type puzzle. It may exercise your brain, but does it make you smarter?

Forget the shelf of dusty encyclopedias; Wikipedia is providing the online version with direct access and maintenance by users. Soon to follow, replacing the old adage, “when history is written,” with “when you write history.” Let's hope they get it right.

The good news, red wine is formally declared healthy. The bad news is you must drink several cases a day.

McDonald's struggles to save its tasty french fries as trans fats that have been on the outs with the heart- and health-sensitive, finally hit an oily end.

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