

Clinton Hits Some Bumps In Presidential Road

United States Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, who's been riding a wave of very favorable polls while steadily building a huge war chest, ran into some unfriendly and negative reactions last week connected with her possible run for U.S. president in 2008.

The junior senator from New York was making a speech to a liberal Democratic group and



getting a favorable reception until she declared that she would not support setting a timetable for withdrawing troops from Iraq, a statement in agreement with President George W. Bush's position.

Then last Thursday, in a story out of Washington in the *New York Daily News*, the former First Lady easily topped the list in a Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll when the question, "Which of four possible 2008 presidential candidates frightens you the most?" was asked.

Of the respondents, 36 percent answered Senator Clinton, 17 percent named former Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Vice President Al Gore was picked by 15 percent. Senator John McCain (R-Arizona) got 11 percent of the votes—the most favorable response of the four

choices.

Independent voters also had Senator Clinton at the top of their list, as did Democratic Party members. No reasons were given for the responses.

The discomfort with a President Hillary Clinton struck us as odd, compared to many other polls, but this may be because the Fox poll was a national survey while most other polls cover New York State residents.

As for her position on not setting a deadline on withdrawing from Iraq, it seems to us that politically it was a good position to take.

Those who expressed their dislike for the no-deadline stance came from the liberal wing of Democratic voters, so the senator's position should resonate much better with the centrist and conservative wings of the party.

Tactically, it would, of course, not be wise to set a date for withdrawing because the insurgents would then be able to use the information to plot the most harmful response to the Iraqi government that is just getting settled into office. Finally, Clinton's position appears to be taking into account the fact that the United States' participation in that war is winding down, so the troops over there can possibly be seeing an end to the hostility.

By last Sunday, Clinton had recaptured the high ground as a poll of registered voters in New York City chose her as the one who would make the best president among New Yorkers seeking the nomination or who is being talked about as a

nominee.

The senator took 43 percent of the survey's votes to 29 percent for Giuliani, 14 percent for Mayor Michael Bloomberg and 4 percent for Governor George Pataki.

ANDY HEVESI'S 1st BILL PASSES: Assemblymember Andrew Hevesi waited some time to get his first bill passed in the Assembly. The bill, which gives domestic violence victims longer and stronger orders of protection, was worth the wait.

"These bills send a message to perpetrators of domestic violence that we will not tolerate repeat domestic violence offenses in New York. The state has now increased penalties for repeat offenders who commit the worst domestic violence crimes to ensure that no New Yorker has to live being harassed, threatened or abused," Hevesi (D-Forest Hills) declared.

Hevesi's maiden successful legislation increases the maximum penalty for violating an order of protection from the existing maximum Class E felony to a new maximum Class D felony and carries with it a penalty of up to seven years in jail. The bill provides that repeat offenders who commit the most egregious domestic violence offenses, including stalking their victims, threatening a victim with a weapon or physically abusing a victim will have their penalties increased to the new maximum.

A second Hevesi bill which was passed closes a loophole in the existing law by adding aggravated criminal contempt to the list of predicate offenses that raises misdemeanor-level criminal contempt to a felony.

Companion legislation authored by Assemblymember Amy Paulin (D-Westchester), increases the duration of final orders of protection issued by Criminal Courts. In the case of felony offenses, the maximum length of a protective order will increase from five to eight years.

In the case of misdemeanor offenses, the

maximum duration will increase from three to five years, while other offenses will carry a maximum length of two years, up from one year.

Hevesi, the son of state Comptroller Alan Hevesi, was elected to the Assembly on May 10, 2005, succeeding Michael Cohen. His 28th Assembly District is the same one his father represented for 25 years.

JUSTICE BLACKBURNE BOUNCED: Queens Supreme Court Justice Laura Blackburne has done many controversial things in her years as a public official and then a judge, but always managed to escape any serious consequences.

But the 68-year-old jurist's luck finally ran out last week when the Court of Appeals, the state's highest court, ruled she had gone too far when she helped a robbery suspect to evade arrest in 2004, for which the high court kicked her off the bench.

One might have thought that the tribunal would have given her just a slap on the wrist and let her complete the two years remaining until her retirement, but the court said in its 5-2 ruling that her "dangerous actions exceeded all measure of acceptable judicial conduct" and lowered the boom on her.

Blackburne, who was a Supreme Court Justice for about six years and a Civil Court Judge since 1996, had been suspended last year without pay after the state commission on judicial conduct reviewed the same case that brought her downfall.

A former Democratic Party district leader from St. Albans, Blackburne reportedly has a daughter who is a judge in Washington, D.C. and was recently nominated to the D.C. Court of Appeals.

Junior National Leadership Conference

Assemblymember Michael Gianaris stands with Brandon Solis, a sixth grader at Most Precious Blood School in Astoria. Brandon will be representing New York at the 2006 Junior National Leadership Conference in Washington D.C. this summer, an exciting but expensive opportunity. Brandon is raising funds to pay for his trip and, at the suggestion of Anna Kril from SHAREing and CAREing, contacted Assemblyman Gianaris for help. Brandon visited the Assemblyman's office and came away with a check as well as some good advice on leadership.



Legislature OKs Property Tax Relief Plan

A property tax relief plan has been approved by the state legislature that will be worth an average of \$250 to every homeowner whose taxes go directly to support schools.

In New York City, where the income tax provides the money to support schools, the new tax relief benefit would come in the form of an income tax credit for homeowners and renters.

The income tax credit for married couples would rise to \$230 from the present \$125 and for individuals to \$115 from \$62.50. Seniors would receive a larger benefit, an average of \$365.

Governor George Pataki, who blocked a similar plan when it was proposed as part of the budget, reportedly will sign the new plan into law. The governor had proposed his own plan, which would have given school property tax relief only to homeowners outside New York City and only in school districts that agreed to cap spending increases at 4 percent a year.

Under the legislature's original plan, rebate checks would have been sent to homeowners before the November elections. The new plan will come as an income tax credit, but homeowners can apply to receive a check in the fall as an advance on the tax credit.—**John Toscano**