

# National Presidential Race

November 16, 2007

This is Holland Redfield; today our editorial department is heading North into the thick of presidential politics.

With Rudy Guliani & Mitt Romney in a virtual dead heat in national polls on the Republican side and Hillary Clinton in the lead with Barak Obama closing in; so many times we get consumed by local politics and fail to realize the importance of the national presidential race and how it directly & indirectly impacts the Virgin Islands.

There is no question that this is compounded by the fact that we don't have a vote in that national race. Many of us in the Virgin islands feel like we are treated as second class citizens and that we are at a sizable disadvantage compared with state-side voters.

We support the right of the citizens of the Territories to vote for the president but our present situation makes it incumbent upon us to use whatever leverage we have to move the Virgin Islands agenda forward. With there being no incumbent candidate, we have a lot more political clout than we think, the primary is critical.

Our leverage in this 2008 presidential race lies in our delegate votes and the ability of the Territories to influence the selection of the standard bearers who will represent the Democratic & Republican parties.

Clearly both party's races for the presidency are going to be tight and close; the campaign is still in the early stages and political fortunes can change over night.

It is essential that our local parties become engaged with each of the presidential candidates to discuss frankly the specific needs of the Virgin Islands such as: the Return of Gasoline Excise Tax, our Inclusion in the SSI Social Security program, a Greater Share of MediCare/MediCaid Funding and securing Voting Rights within CariCom to name several. Our support should be based on a commitment from those candidates to work on these important issues if elected. Let's not let these candidates take us for granted, let's make them work for our delegate votes, that's what good politics is all about.

For the Territories to get involved in floor fights at the convention and not be unified beforehand puts us at a substantial disadvantage.

Anybody running for the presidency from either party wants solid commitments early; not being there before the die is cast is not helping a candidate and is a serious political miscalculation.

Whoever sits in the White House will directly impact the Virgin Islands because much of the federal funding coming into the Territory is discretionary; the Executive Branch has a great deal to do with the distribution of these resources.

The Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, The Northern Marianas and Puerto Rico are similarly situated politically. Now is the time to reach out to the other Territories so that we can go to the conventions and support one candidate and be in lockstep with each other.

The real power is in delivering those delegate votes to one candidate.

Let's not sit back and be marginalized; the territories have serious issues to deal with; a president that is in our corner, one who understands our unique problems, can really make a difference.