

MUSHARRAF BANNED FROM POLITICS FOR LIFE AS VIOLENCE FLAIRS IN PAKISTAN AHEAD OF ELECTIONS

Although he has been under house arrest since shortly after his return to Pakistan while facing trial on charges of arranging the assassination of Benazir Bhutto, former Pakistani Army Chief and President Pervez Musharraf was given a lifetime ban from holding political office by the Peshawar High Court:

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Monday banned former military ruler Pervez Musharraf from politics for life.

The ruling came in response to an appeal filed by the former army strongman over the rejection of his nomination papers for the National Assembly seat in Chitral.

A four-member larger bench, headed by PHC Chief Justice Dost Mohammad Khan and comprising of Justice Malik Manzoor, Justice Syed Afsar Shah and Justice Ikramullah ruled that since Musharraf had abrogated the Constitution twice, he could not be allowed to contest elections for either the National Assembly or the Senate.

Isn't that interesting? In Pakistan, violating the country's constitution as President gets a lifetime ban from politics, while in the US the same offense allows the perpetrator to open a Presidential Lie Bury.

Meanwhile, as the May 11 elections draw nearer, violence is escalating. Today's New York Times reports on a suicide bomber who killed nine in

Peshawar in an attack that seemed aimed at creating an overall climate of fear rather than attacking a particular target:

An attacker riding a motorcycle detonated his explosives near the suspected target, a police patrol car, on busy University Road during the morning rush hour, killing a police constable and several bystanders, said Faisal Kamran, a senior police official.

/snip/

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, although the Taliban have carried out a relentless series of attacks against secular political parties around the country in recent weeks as part of a drive to influence the elections.

Officials in Peshawar said the attack on Monday was different in that it did not appear to target a specific party but aimed instead to foster a broader climate of fear during the campaign season.

Sadly, two of the people who died were Afghan trade officials who most likely were not targeted but merely were victims of the senseless attack.

As stated above, most violence ahead of the election has been aimed at political parties and candidates. It has become so widespread that Human Rights Watch issued a statement yesterday, calling for more protection of candidates and political parties:

Pakistan's interim government should take all necessary steps to ensure the safety of candidates and political party activists at risk of attack from the Taliban and other militant groups, Human Rights Watch said today. Nationwide parliamentary elections in Pakistan are

scheduled for May 11, 2013.

Since April 21, when election campaigning formally began, the Taliban and other armed groups have carried out more than 20 attacks on political parties, killing 46 people and wounding over 190. Earlier in April, another 24 people were killed and over 100 injured in election-related attacks.

That violence is continuing:

An independent election candidate and two of his relatives from Balochistan's Jhal Magsi area were killed by unknown assailants on Tuesday night prompting the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to postpone the elections in PB-32.

According to the police and relatives of the deceased, Abdul Fateh Magsi was kidnapped on Tuesday (sic) night and his bullet-riddled body was found on Tuesday morning.

Presumably, Magsi was kidnapped on Monday evening and his body found this morning.

There is a long article in today's Washington Post handicapping the elections. I'm pretty sure that this passage is delivered without a clue to the level of hypocrisy it drips:

On May 11, Pakistanis will choose the next prime minister in an election hailed as a landmark of democratic progress for a country ruled by the military for nearly half its 65-year history. Yet decades of tradition dictate why democracy has remained more of a concept than a reality.

Even as Pakistan prepares to witness its first democratic transition of power, elite political families, powerful landholders and pervasive patronage and

corruption undermine the prospects of a truly representational democracy, political analysts say.

Coming on the heels of Sandra Day O'Connor finally admitting the US Supreme Court should not have decided the 2000 Presidential Election and as the Post and other pundits continue to hype the Hillary Clinton vs. JEB! Bush 2016 contest, what more proof do we need that the US is completely free of corruption and elite political families?

JOHN KERRY FINALLY MEETS A CLOSE ELECTION HE WANTS TO RECOUNT

The other day, Hugo Chavez' successor Nicolás Maduro beat opposition leader Henrique Capriles Radonski by 2% of the vote. In the days since, opposition figures have sown violence, claiming vote fraud.

Yesterday, Secretary of State Kerry encouraged a recount.

Mr. Kerry, in comments to a House committee, said, "We think there ought to be a recount." He added that he had not yet evaluated whether Washington would recognize Mr. Maduro's victory.

This, in spite of a leaked recording of a close Capriles advisor admitting that this result was a political triumph but an electoral defeat.

This, in spite of the fact that when Bush beat Kerry with precisely the same percentage of the vote in 2004 amid reports of (limited) electoral

oddities, Kerry chose not to demand a recount.

On November 2, 2004, George W. Bush beat John Kerry 50.7 percent to 48.3 percent. Venezuela's foreign minister immediately (either that night or the day after) recognized the results: "we will hope that in this second mandate we can improve our relations."

Fast forward nine years, and Nicolás Maduro beats Henrique Capriles with 50.7% of the vote and the US refuses to recognize the result. "Look, we're just not there yet," said a State Department spokesman (who now works for—wait for it— John Kerry). "Obviously, we have nearly half the country that had a different view. And so we'll continue to consult, but we're not there yet."

Most interesting of all is something James Clapper just said in a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing. In response to a question from Richard Blumenthal about whether there had been fraud in the election, Clapper said (my rough transcription):

There may have been some, but it's unclear whether it was of sufficient magnitude to merit recount. Right now it doesn't appear to be.

In other words, even the intelligence says, whatever fraud there was, it wasn't enough to affect the outcome.

At this point, the Administration's hesitation at recognizing Maduro and Kerry's support for a recount do nothing but stoke violence.

Which I can only assume is the point.

SHORTER RICK SNYDER: BLACK PEOPLE CAN BE CUSTOMERS, NOT CITIZENS

As Rick Snyder was announcing the takeover of Detroit's government, paving the way for an Emergency Manager for the city, his staff tweeted out this:

"Citizens of #Detroit are the customers of the city, not just the citizens. We need to figure out how to provide them great service."

It might be a nice sentiment (if many public services under Rick Snyder, especially education and services helping the poor, hadn't already been cut to make way for tax cuts for businesses, and if the entire point of an EM weren't to make further huge cuts to services).

Except that if and when Detroit officially gets an EM (there is an appeal process that will roll out over the next couple of weeks), the people of Detroit will, temporarily at least, lose their ability to elect representatives to run their city. Down the road, after Detroit has continued to disintegrate for 18 months (EMs have never turned around a city), elected representatives will be able to get rid of the EM. But until then, local democracy in Detroit will be dead.

And so at precisely the moment when Snyder moved to locally disenfranchise 40% of Michigan's African Americans – leaving half of Michigan's African Americans locally disenfranchised – he relabeled those African Americans (and Latinos, and remarkably few whites) "customers."

Black people, Rick Snyder seems to be saying, can be customers, but they can't be citizens.

We have spent the week talking about whether or

not we still need a Voting Rights Act. Given the cynical new ways politicians are using to disenfranchise people of color, I say it's time to expand it, not end it.

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS, ARREST WARRANT FOR PRIME MINISTER THREATEN UPCOMING PAKISTAN ELECTIONS

For the first time in its 65 year history, Pakistan is poised to see an elected government fully complete its term in March. With chaos erupting on several fronts, though, the path toward electing a new government appears to be full of obstacles.

Last week saw sectarian bombings kill 96 Shi'ites in Quetta on Thursday alone, and tens of thousands of protesters filled the streets, refusing to bury the dead until Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf came to Quetta and agreed to fire the entire provincial government, as it was suspected of being involved in sectarian violence.

Ashraf finds himself at the center of a controversy, as well. The Pakistan Supreme Court issued a warrant for his arrest today in a long-simmering scandal dating back to when Ashraf was minister of water and power before he became Prime Minister. From Dawn:

The prime minister has been accused of receiving kickbacks and commission in the RPPs [Rental Power Projects] case as minister for water and power.

In the case, nine RPPs firms were accused of receiving more than Rs22 billion [1 R = .01 US \$] as a mobilisation advance from the government to commission the projects but most of them did not set up their plants and a few of them installed them but with inordinate delay.

From the Reuters article on today's developments in Pakistan, we have a description of how the election process is supposed to proceed:

The government and opposition are poised to start negotiating the formation of a caretaker administration to oversee the run-up to the polls as soon as parliament is dissolved, which is due to happen in March. An election date has yet to be announced.

The New York Times article on developments informs us that the elections are required to take place within 60 days of the end of the term for the parliament. Complicating the process immensely though, is the sudden appearance of cleric Tahir ul Qadri, who has returned to Pakistan from Canada to lead massive protests demanding that the government resign immediately, instead of in March. The Times explains that some see the hand of the military behind Qadri:

The court order came as an enigmatic preacher turned politician, Muhammad Tahir ul Qadri, addressed thousands of supporters outside Parliament and repeated calls for the government's ouster. In earlier speeches, he said that a caretaker administration led by technocrats should take its place.

The confluence of the two events stoked growing speculation that Pakistan's powerful military was quietly supporting moves that would delay general elections

that are due to take place this spring, most likely through the imposition of a military-backed caretaker administration.

The AP has more on what Qadri had to say at today's rally:

The dramatic entry into Pakistani politics of Tahir-ul-Qadri, a preacher who until recently lived in Canada, has sparked concern from some that he is seeking to derail elections at the behest of the powerful army. Polls are expected this spring.

Qadri has denied that and insisted his vague demands for election reform are simply meant to root out corruption in the political system. He pledged several weeks ago to lead a "million-man march" on Islamabad to press his demands.

During a 40-minute speech delivered behind bullet-proof glass in the early morning, Qadri told his supporters that the government's mandate was finished.

"I give you time until tomorrow to dissolve national and all four provincial assemblies otherwise the nation will dissolve them on their own," he said. He vowed to address his followers later in the morning in front of the parliament building.

Much more of the speech comes from Pakistan Today, although the two stories differ on how much time Qadri gave for the government to dissolve. While the AP story above says Qadri gave them until tomorrow, the Pakistan Today article states that the deadline expired this morning:

He said that the populace was in "Chains of poverty with no money to treat a sick child and no protection of life and

liberty". He said that 99 percent of the citizens of Pakistan are "have nots" whereas the 'one percent haves' had rendered the "government and law enforcing agencies paralyzed and dysfunctional." He said that "the government does not accept the rulings of SC, does not enact laws to eradicate terrorism, grants no health insurance, ignores education, human development and the last five years saw no economic growth".

He said that the Parliament is "no more democratic and priorities of the parliamentarians are looting and corruption even though there is no gas, water and electricity in the country".

He Quoted Article 281 of the constitution and people representative act 1976 which state that the electoral process should be free and fair.

He said that "democratic mechanisms do not exist in the political parties of the country... criminality exists here. Power vests in lying and dishonesty. The law of the land is 'three M's': money, might and manipulation. 70 percent of the parliamentarians' do not pay taxes"

He said that the only saviors of the country are the army and the judiciary, adding, that Pakistan's democracy is full of Tauqeer Sadiq's ; president's appointee as OGRA chairman who fled the country after looting Rs 84 billion."

Gosh, I wonder where Qadri could have gotten the theme of the 1% controlling the government at the expense of the 99%? At any rate, Qadri's claim that the military and judiciary are functional while the government is not has been seen as further evidence of him being somehow aligned with the military.

Qadri did point out in his speech that he favors

religious tolerance. Again from the Pakistan Today story:

Underscoring his Braelvi leanings, he said that “we are brethren of all religions and ideologies. Chrisitans, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians enjoy the same rights as Muslims in Pakistan. They are Pakistani citizens and their rights were guaranteed to them by M.A Jinnah but his promises have been annulled by rulers”.

Stay tuned for further developments.

TRAILING CRIST BADLY IN POPULARITY, SCOTT DOES SUDDEN REVERSAL ON EARLY VOTING IN FLORIDA

Yesterday, just a few hours before Charlie Crist was set to deliver what would be damning testimony in a US Senate hearing on the 2012 voting debacle in Florida, Rick Scott appeared on CNN and suddenly reversed himself on the issue of early voting.

Recall that the Florida legislature passed a horrible bill shortly after Scott narrowly won the 2010 election, cutting early voting days from 14 to 8, restricting registration efforts and purging voter lists so dramatically that the Department of Justice intervened on several issues in the law. Scott stood firm in supporting it. Just a few days before the election, as ridiculously long lines were reported in early voting, AP had this report:

Florida Democrats say they've filed a federal lawsuit asking for the state's early voting period to be extended.

Republican Gov. Rick Scott has stood firm against giving Florida residents more time to vote before Tuesday.

On Saturday, some Floridians waited for hours on the last day of early voting. State officials say nearly 4 million early and absentee votes have been cast.

Scott and state officials have insisted there were no reasons to keep polls open beyond the eight days authorized in state law. The GOP-controlled Florida Legislature last year cut the number of early-voting days from a maximum of 14 days to eight. That reduction was upheld by federal courts.

As can be seen in the video above, Scott avoided mentioning his role in passing and signing the bill that created this year's fiasco until called out by Soledad O'Brien. He tried to sound like a reasonable person proposing reasonable changes that will improve the situation, completely ignoring his role as an extremist who was instrumental in attempting to suppress the votes of hundreds of thousands of minorities in Florida.

Also yesterday, a Quinnipiac University poll provided some context for why Scott would find it necessary to reverse himself. His approval rating is strongly negative, while Charlie Crist, who recently joined the Democratic Party, retains an overall favorable rating, as does Alex Sink, who narrowly lost to Scott in 2010 but has already faded from voter recognition. From the poll:

Florida voters disapprove 45 – 36 percent of the job Gov. Rick Scott is doing, continuing his almost two-year run of negative scores, and, as he enters the second half of his term,

voters say 52 – 30 percent that he does not deserve a second four-year term, according to a Quinnipiac University poll released today.

/snip/

“Gov. Rick Scott’s ratings with voters are just plain awful. The numbers cannot be sugar-coated,” said Peter A. Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute. “When voters in a politician’s own party want him to be challenged in a primary by another candidate, it’s difficult to see it as anything but outright rejection.

/snip/

Crist, elected governor in 2006 as a Republican, has a 47 – 33 percent favorability rating from all voters, including 65 – 10 percent among Democrats and 48 – 33 percent among independents, with a negative 28 – 56 percent among Republicans.

By comparison, Scott is viewed favorably by 31 percent and unfavorably by 43 percent of all Florida voters. His ratings by party are 55 – 18 percent among Republicans, with negatives of 16 – 60 percent among Democrats and 25 – 48 percent among independent voters.

Ms. Sink is viewed favorably by 27 percent, and unfavorably by 14 percent, with 57 percent who haven’t heard enough about her to form an opinion.

Marc Caputo, in the Miami Herald, reports on Crist’s appearance later Wednesday in the Senate:

In a prelude to a long and bitter campaign, former Gov. Charlie Crist pointedly criticized Gov. Rick Scott during a U.S. Senate hearing Wednesday over an elections law that led to voting

troubles and helped turn Florida into a “late-night TV joke.”

/snip/

Crist suggested that Scott was the one to blame because he signed the election law in 2011 and, this year, the governor refused to extend in-person early voting hours despite lines that stretched for hours and discouraged many South Floridians from voting.

Crist contrasted that record with his own as governor in 2008, when he extended early voting hours.

“As Gov. Scott refused to take action to ease the lines, in some cases, those lines extended to six and seven hours,” Crist testified.

“The outcome of these decisions was quite obvious,” Crist said. “Florida, which four years earlier was a model for efficiency, became once again a late-night TV joke.”

Writing in the Gainesville Sun, Lloyd Dunkelberger brings us a prominent Democrat’s reaction to Scott’s sudden reversal:

Scott’s comments stunned Democrats, who had been harshly critical of Scott and the Republicans for the shortened early voting period as well as other provisions in the 2011 election law that they said were designed to suppress Democratic voters at the polls.

“It’s bordering on an alternative reality,” said former state Sen. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach, who wrote Scott urging him to extend the early voting hours after witnessing lines of voters waiting six to seven hours in Miami-Dade County. “He and his colleagues in the Legislature created precisely what happened.

“It was done purposely and willfully and now to pretend like they were surprised by it is utterly ridiculous.”

Given the polling on Scott’s popularity, it would appear that many Florida voters join Gelber in blaming Scott for the voting fiasco last month.

THE GRAY LADY FALLS OFF THE BALANCE BEAM

Granted, it pertains to my right-wing governor, so it’s personal. But this NYT profile of Rick Snyder is a remarkable example of the perverse journalistic fetish for “balance” gone so badly awry it amounts to disinformation.



Let’s start with this summarized claim.

Republicans and business leaders here widely praise Mr. Snyder, crediting him with balancing the state’s once-troubled budget, dumping a state business tax and presiding over an employment rebound in a state that not long ago had the highest jobless rate in the nation. [my emphasis]

You’d think a newspaper might want to point out that MI’s unemployment actually turned around in

August 2009—well before Snyder’s election in 2010 and not coincidentally the month after GM came out of bankruptcy. Unemployment dropped 3.3% before Snyder took over, dropped a further 2.6% after he did. But more significantly, unemployment in MI has started to creep up again—it’s up .7% since its recent low in April, to 9%.

Setting that record straight is critical to the rest of the article, since it repeatedly gushes about Rick Snyder refusing to deny Obama credit for MI’s turnaround.

Just before the Republican primary in Michigan in February, Mr. Snyder was asked in an interview whether Mr. Obama ought to be given credit for the state’s economic improvements. “I don’t worry about blame or credit,” he said. “It’s more about solving the problem.”

Nowhere in the article does “reporter” Monica Davey consider the possibility that Obama—and, in fact, Jennifer Granholm—have more to do with the turnaround than Snyder. Yet even many Republicans in this state would grant that the successful bailout of Chrysler and GM had a lot to do with the turnaround (though Republicans almost universally ignore the energy jobs Obama focused on MI).

So maybe Snyder refuses to deny Obama credit because such a claim would not be credible? It’s not a possibility the NYT article—which is supposed to be a celebration of a lack of ideology—even considers.

Which brings me to the other area where NYT’s idea of what constitutes balance is completely whacked: its treatment of the right to organize.

As part of its case that this far right Republican is non-ideological, the NYT points to Snyder’s preference not to have a right-to-work law pushed through the legislature (though concedes that Snyder has stopped short of issuing a veto threat).

Mr. Snyder, a Republican business executive who took office last year after a wave of G.O.P. statehouse victories, has told his Republican-dominated Legislature that a right-to-work measure is not on his agenda. The issue, he says, is too divisive.

[snip]

And while he has said he prefers that no right-to-work legislation arrives on his desk, he has not said he would veto it.

The NYT doesn't consider how in two adjoining states—WI and OH—threatening the right to organize mobilized labor against governors in really profound ways. Snyder's preference not to face the dilemma of vetoing or approving a right to work law probably has as much to do with the political calculation that it would be very difficult to win another statewide election in MI if he antagonized labor. NYT doesn't consider that; rather, it just labels Snyder's preference as proof of his lack of ideology.

With that in mind, consider how NYT deals with November's referenda, which it doesn't get to until the 23rd paragraph.

Labor leaders have pushed for a ballot question in November to seal collective bargaining rights in the State Constitution, threatening divisions over the very issue that Mr. Snyder had hoped to avoid. Another group is challenging efforts for a new bridge to Canada, a controversial proposal that Mr. Snyder advanced on his own after legislators did not. And another group wants to undo a law granting broad powers to shore up financially troubled cities, a measure that underpins a consent deal the Snyder administration reached for state oversight of struggling Detroit.

Now, first of all, this is the only reference in

the article to Snyder's Emergency Manager law, one of the most radical things he has done in office. That's particularly stunning given that the NYT celebrates Snyder's veto of some of the Republican efforts at voter disenfranchisement. With the EM law effectively invalidating elections for Mayor, city council, and school board around the state, Snyder's law has partially disenfranchised half of MI's African Americans. And yet the NYT would spin Snyder as a hero of protecting voters' rights?

In addition, the article dishonestly suggests that Snyder's approach to all laws on the right to organize—whether it be a right to work law or constitutional protection for the right to organize—is inaction. That's utterly false. Snyder's administration invented all sorts of ridiculous excuses (such as you can't explain right to organize in 100 words) why the right to organize referendum shouldn't be on the ballot on November. Snyder has already done what he can to veto the right to organize, as if his EM law doesn't already constitute such a veto!

Rick Snyder gave businesses in this state tax cuts; to pay for them, he's cutting public employment. Those very ideological choices may be one of the reasons why unemployment has started to creep up.

In any case, Snyder's policies have not varied that much from the Republican governors the NYT struggles to differentiate him from. He has just accomplished those policies—gutting unions, disenfranchising people of color, and giving the rich more—via different means.

Update: After I was done with this post, I regretted not reminding people of the fact that no Emergency Manager—either with or without Snyder's enhanced powers—has succeeded in turning devastated cities around. Eclectablog, which has written so much on the EM law, hits some of that here.

Meanwhile, back here at Ground Zero, the citizens of Michigan are dealing with a

law that not only disenfranchises them, it arms an unelected dictator with only the tools of cutting and destruction to fix problems that require construction and building. It gives these dictators tools to put the costs of balancing the books on groups that were largely not responsible for them. While they break contracts, shift public monies to the private sector through privatization, and sell off public assets, the Governor and his accomplices in the legislature take away needed resources from the municipalities and schools that need them most and hands the tax money over to corporations. Their philosophy is that this will raise the tide in Michigan and all of the boats with it. What they fail to acknowledge, and what the NYT piece makes no mention of, is that the Republicans in our state, with the cooperation of Governor Snyder, have used the tools of destruction given to Emergency Managers to smash holes in the boats of our most desperate cities and schools.

THE DEMOCRATS HAD ALREADY CONCEDED THE WAR ON WOMEN

Curiously, in his chronology of the talking point, “the War on Women,” Dave Weigel doesn’t mention the actual terrorist attack on a Planned Parenthood clinic a few weeks back. Nor does Marc Ambinder in his thoughtful piece on the outrage mobilized by the term. And these men commenting on the Democratic Party’s effort to mobilize its tribes by raising outrage over the GOP’s treatment of women are right, up to a

point. In DC, that metaphor, “War on Women,” has been cognitively divorced from what happens when a man conducts a terrorist attack (one not treated as a terrorist attack, mind you) on a clinic designed to help women access the same life choices men get by default.

In their review of the outraged response to Hillary Rosen’s suggestion that Ann Romney had never worked a day in her life, neither Weigel nor Ambinder nor just about anyone else noted the unspoken implication of Mitt Romney’s defense of his wife that raising their five children (with help, mind you) was a full time job. Mitt effectively admitted that he wasn’t doing the child-rearing—still a common gender assumption among men of Mitt’s age, but nevertheless stunning in the way no one noticed that Mitt admitted his role as father involves outsourcing all the child-rearing to the mother. The true scandal of the Hillary Rosen poutrage, IMO, is that no one considered the flip side of Ann’s full-time job as mother: Mitt’s abdication of child-rearing as a father. Sure. When his boys were little, he was a busy man and all that—he had people to fire and jobs to outsource. But he was able to focus so closely on those things because Ann did the parenting work for the two of them.

Meanwhile, the Democrats are still going to use GOP attacks on women as a political stunt. DNC Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz tweeted or re-tweeted 7 comments about women’s issues yesterday, in addition to the seemingly mandatory condemnation of Rosen.

I was particularly amused by this DWS tweet:

Bottom line: Choice, affordable
contraception, and Planned Parenthood
are at stake in this election.
<http://j.mp/I6A8c0>

As it happened, a few hours after DWS sent that tweet, I went to a Debbie Stabenow event hosted by a local women’s group. As we were waiting for

the Senator to speak, a top county Democrat was sitting several rows behind me trying to convince some of the women not to support Trevor Thomas. "There is absolutely no way he can win," the guy said (the polling says he's wrong, and I suspect he knows that). In addition to saying a gay man can't win, he also said a pro-choice person can't win in the district (his listeners pointed out that Stabenow herself had won the district; so have at least two other pro-choice candidates). Then he described Steven Pestka, using the line Michigan Democrats used to defend Bart Stupak as he was rolling back access to choice for women across the country.

He's with us on everything else.

But the really appalling comment, uttered by a man at a women's event, was this:

I need to win this year.

If the guy were reasonably intelligent, he might have said, "we need to win the gavel back for Nancy Pelosi." But he couldn't even muster a "we need to win" this year. Nope. It was "I need to win this year," and that's why women have to suck it up and vote for someone who has attacked their autonomy in the past.

Steve Pestka's with us on everything else, this guy said at a women's event. But he's not just anti-choice. When he was in the State House (the experience locals point to to claim he's a better candidate than Trevor) he scored a whopping 0% on votes to support choice. That included a vote for HB 4655, which singled out Planned Parenthood to be defunded, precisely the outrage—at the national level—that Democrats use as the cornerstone of their metaphorical attack on the GOP for its "War on Women."

As the DNC Chair was claiming this election was about "choice, affordable contraception, and Planned Parenthood," at least one local Dem official was telling women they have to vote for a guy who has already voted against all those

things because he needs to win this year.

This metaphorical “War on Women” makes nice DC theater. But Dems conceded even the metaphor some time ago.

OUR TORTURER, OMAR SULEIMAN, WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT-WILL WE HELP HIM?

[youtube]iTk-bxm4sq8[/youtube]

After earlier stating he would not run in the upcoming Egyptian Presidential race, Omar Suleiman announced on Friday he would file to run for President (with the Army’s help gathering the 30,000 signatures he would need to collect in just one day).

Omar Suleiman, one of the most powerful figures of Mubarak’s regime, had said earlier this week that he would not run. But he said he changed his mind after hundreds of people rallied in Cairo to support a bid.

[snip]

Hundreds rallied Friday in Cairo to call for him to run for president.

Suleiman said that helped change his mind.

“I can only meet the call and run in the presidential race, despite the constraints and difficulties I made clear in my former statement,” he said in a statement carried by the official MENA news agency on Friday. He said he faces administrative obstacles, but did

not elaborate.

The AJE piece above describes how the Presidential race has devolved into all sides responding to Islamists—who had a big win in Parliamentary elections—deciding to run. Suleiman’s decision seems to be just another step in that process.

Mr. Suleiman’s decision raises the possibility that, one year after an uprising that was spurred in part by the Mubarak regime’s brutality, torture, and oppression, one of the architects of that repression could become Egypt’s first post-Mubarak president.

Some see his candidacy as a response by Egypt’s military rulers to the Muslim Brotherhood’s recent decision to field a presidential candidate – a decision that broke a year-long promise to stay out of the race. Omar Ashour, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center in Qatar, says Suleiman’s candidacy raises the possibility that the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), which is currently ruling Egypt, may rig the elections to favor the former intelligence chief.

Some observers suggest Suleiman’s move is just be an effort to make Amr Moussa look credible by comparison.

But as Jeff Stein reviews, in many ways he’d be the most palatable candidate to the West, largely because of our long history of cooperating with him on things like torturing Ibn Shaikh al-Libi to generate propaganda with which to start the Iraq War. People predicted Suleiman might succeed Hosni Mubarak long before the Arab Uprising.

“An open question is whether he can count on help from his longtime friends in the CIA,” I wrote back in January

2011.

“Ask who they posit as a possible successor,” a State Department expert on the region told me then. “Bet you a beer, the name Omar Suleiman comes up more often than most.”

The Wall Street Journal’s Jerusalem correspondent, Charles Levinson, also saw it coming, I wrote.

In a December 2010 piece, Levinson pronounced Suleiman “the most likely successor ... President Mubarak’s closest aide, charged with handling the country’s most sensitive issues.

“He also has close working relations with the U.S. and a lifetime of experience inside Egypt’s military and intelligence apparatus,” Levinson wrote.

Likewise, the Voice of America said on Jan. 28, 2011, “Suleiman is seen by some analysts as a possible successor to the president.”

“He earned international respect for his role as a mediator in Middle East affairs and for curbing Islamic extremism.”

An editorialist at Pakistan’s “International News” also predicted that “Suleiman will probably scupper his boss’s plans [to install his son], even if the aspiring intelligence guru himself is as young as 75.”

Given the timing, I’m not sure Suleiman—or his backers, possibly including the US—have thought through what they hope to accomplish with his candidacy, or what efforts they plan to use to steal the election.

But since the Muslim Brotherhood won the Parliamentary election, the US seems to have jettisoned even the lofty rhetoric about seeing

democracy in the Middle East (it was rarely backed by action), in favor of the authoritarian partners we know. At that level, Suleiman's decision to run may well reflect as badly on the US as it does on Egypt's Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

VAGINA'S VENGEANCE: REPUBLICANS OFFICIALLY KILLING THEIR PARTY FOR BIRTH CONTROL

Last night, stupid Catholic commentators like Chris Matthews, tried to blame Rick Santorum's loss in MI on his Kennedy comment. Santorum must have lost MI's significant percentage of Republican Catholics, Matthews figured, because he said he had vomited after listening to a John F. Kennedy speech.

That ignored the fact that the tide had already turned against Santorum a week earlier. Both Catholics and women abandoned him after he started embracing medieval mores. (His speech last night feigned feminism, so it's clear he knows what happened.)

But I'm more interested in the timing of Olympia Snowe's decision to retire.

She cited excessive partisanship when she announced her decision yesterday.

I do find it frustrating, however, that an atmosphere of polarization and 'my way or the highway' ideologies has become pervasive in campaigns and in our governing institutions.

[snip]

Unfortunately, I do not realistically expect the partisanship of recent years in the Senate to change over the short term. So at this stage of my tenure in public service, I have concluded that I am not prepared to commit myself to an additional six years in the Senate, which is what a fourth term would entail.

That usually means the other party is being too partisan.

Except this announcement comes just two weeks after Snowe (and Susan Collins) at first broke with their party to announce support for Obama's compromise on birth control. But both women quickly flip-flopped, basically opposing a policy they had once proposed themselves. Snowe has announced her opposition to the Blunt Amendment—which will come up for a vote on Thursday. We'll see whether she follows through on that.

We shall see—but one way to show the men in your party that women have the ability to affect events would be to retire at a time that makes it much less likely Republicans will win a majority in the Senate.

How nice to see Republicans destroy their party by insisting that women lose all control over their bodies.

**FOUR OF SEVEN
DWARVES: CONSISTENT,
COURAGE, RESOLUTE,**

CHEERFUL

"Consistent" (Paul), "Courage" (Santorum?!),
"Resolute" (Willard), "Cheerful" (Newt)

Those are the one word answers the GOP
candidates gave CNN's John King to explain
themselves.

All I could think of where the seven dwarves
remaining. (Bachmann? Crazy. Perry? Dummy. Cain?
Slutty.)

That said, I'm not sure what service men and
women think of Santorum claiming credit,
presumably for his socially restrictive policies
while never serving, is all that courageous. And
Willard? "Resolute"? I guess that's Mormon for
"multiple choice," right?

These people are clearly all too delusional to
have their finger on the nuclear button.