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OPINION

McCain's opportunity



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— *Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle is reporting for Florida Weekly on the national primaries until the presidential candidates are chosen this summer. She has a unique perspective on the primaries and the process for choosing a candidate, having traveled the country reporting on primaries and caucuses for the Purple States project. To learn more about Purple States go to www.purplestates.tv.*

Life often presents us with opportunities and I think Sen. John McCain just might have one. As the energy debate rages and Americans feel nauseated at gas stations, politicians have been arguing about how to reduce the pain at the pump. Although both Republicans and Democrats have been quarreling over solutions, it seems like it is mostly Republicans that are demanding we drill in our own backyard.

After listening to both sides for the last week, I found that I was scratching my head in confusion. So I decided to do some research on my own. And here's what I found:

We are the 3rd largest oil producer in the world today.

The U.S. consumes about 25 percent of the world's oil.

60 percent of the oil we consume as a nation, we import. To put it in dollar terms that's about \$330 billion in oil imports. Poof, gone! Just look at how the Saudi's live. No wonder Michael Jackson wants to live there. I would too if it weren't for a little thing called "Freedom".

We haven't built a refinery in this country for over 30 years.

Congress passed the OCS (Outer Continental Shelf) Moratorium in 1981. This moratorium prevents the leasing of coastal waters for drilling.

China, with the cooperation of Cuba, is currently drilling for oil 60 miles off the coast of Florida, kind of ironic, isn't it?

I could go on and on and on. There are so many pieces to the puzzle and plenty of blame to go around. Let's talk specifically about drilling in Alaska. Okay, I know environmentalists are probably gasping at that idea, the "D" word stands for "dirty" to you, but just for kicks check out the info anyway:

In 1995 Bill Clinton vetoed a bill for drilling in ANWR (Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge). Some say this would have added about a million barrels of oil per day to our pipeline. That translates into about 27 million gallons of gas and diesel per day. This fact was according to ANWR.org, a group that supports drilling in ANWR (Alaska's National Wildlife Refuge). I have to note that this group is strongly supported by the Governor of Alaska herself, Sarah Palin and more than 75 percent of Alaskans, including the Eskimos who live in and near ANWR, are on board with the groups' position.

More drilling in ANWR facts:

Alaska was let into the Union 50 years ago specifically because of its natural resources.

Only 8 percent of the refuge would be considered for exploration. The other 92 percent would be left completely undisturbed.

It is estimated that 250,000 to 735,000 jobs would be created.

The development of oil and gas are successfully coexisting with wildlife in Alaska. Yes, we now have the technol-

ogy to do it safely without hurting the caribou.

These are just some of the facts. What I'm trying to say is this: Listen up McCain. If you want to win this election you'd better wake up and smell the gas. No more of this paralysis that seems to have infected our Congress. American's are screaming for a solution that will give them hope. If you don't see that you're blind. If you make this your platform you might have a chance of winning the election. Obama is not going to do it. Americans have even gone so far as to demand drilling by signing petitions. Pay attention!

Many would argue that drilling is a long-term solution and that it won't affect prices today. After all, it would take time to get the ball rolling. Experts say it would be 10-20 years for petroleum to actually go from drilling to your car. I agree with that. But it seems to me that it might send a strong message to the rest of the world in the meantime. Wouldn't oil producing nations such as Saudi Arabia feel like they would need to lower their prices in order to be competitive? The message that we are self-reliant and will soon be in a position to not need oil from terror sponsored nations anymore, combined with more industry that creates jobs within our own country, just might give Americans hope. And it is this hope that McCain could use to win the election.

Ben Stein recently said it the best when he told Glenn Beck, "I think whoever can come up with a forcible explanation to say, look, stop kicking the goose that gives us the golden egg, stop kicking the oil companies. Let's get more oil and let's get the environmentalists out of the way so we can get more oil. That's who's going to reap the benefit." Yes, Senator McCain, he's talking to you. ■

EDITORIAL

The Agony of Bill Clinton

BY RICH LOWRY

Few things are sadder than former greats past their prime. A bloated Elvis Presley in a sequined suit; a diminished Michael Jordan making one last comeback with the Washington Wizards; and, we can add, a gaunt Bill Clinton desperately plugging his wife's doomed presidential campaign — the Big Dog in winter.

With his media enablers gone, with his most faithful constituency (African-Americans) lured away by another, with the prospect of again attaining the commanding heights of American politics lost, with his magic touch in abeyance, Bill Clinton has been whittled down to a long, self-pitying plaint.

For a man blessed with so much talent, fame and riches, Clinton has always had an unparalleled ability to see himself as beset by cosmic unfairness. In his telling, the 2008 Democratic primaries were the fruit of another vast conspiracy against the Clintons, who have struggled against a biased media, cheating unions, unfair rules and malevolent left-wing pressure groups.

There's some truth in this. But, given all the advantages the Clinton machine

brought into the primary season against the tyro senator from Illinois, Bill Clinton is in a poor position to whine, except he doesn't have the willpower or grace to resist it.

The usual audience for Clinton excuse-making isn't listening. Witness the long, scathing profile of the post-presidential Clinton in Vanity Fair by former New York Times White House correspondent Todd Purdum. Purdum writes that it once was "easy enough to retain an enduring affection" for Clinton, despite "his indiscipline" and "his shortcomings." Not anymore.

What changed? Clinton has been campaigning against the great, young liberal hope that he himself represented back in 1992. Now that he's on the wrong side of history, liberals can see all the shortcomings they formerly looked past because Clinton had all the right (in every sense) enemies.

Purdum writes of Bill Clinton's post-presidential money-grubbing, dubious associations, eyebrow-raising connections to women and spectacularly sophisticated self-justification as if they are some kind of departure. Was he not paying attention during Clinton's 12 years as Arkansas gov-

ernor and eight years as president?

African-Americans have bailed on Clinton just like elite journalists. Clinton had a special bond with blacks, which he used as a moral bludgeon. He couched his fight against impeachment as almost a civil-rights struggle, with the Congressional Black Caucus dutifully playing along. Noting Clinton's hardball tactics against Barack Obama, Rep. James Clyburn said, "I think black folks feel strongly that this is a strange way for President Clinton to show his appreciation."

Even as Clinton has tirelessly stumped the country on behalf of his wife, he's given the impression that it's all about him. His temper tantrums at reporters and twisted attempts to make himself always the victim speak to an aggrieved sense of entitlement, that for all his good fortune he's owed even more.

That abiding sense will ensure his post-presidential career continues to be a restless, cringe-making affair. When he comes around to supporting Obama, who can doubt that he'll compare the candidate to himself, in the highest of all possible praise? ■

Rich Lowry is editor of the *National Review*.