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**OPINION****The evil twins**

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— *Editor's note: Tanya Amador-Daigle is reporting for Florida Weekly on the presidential election. 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](http://www.purplestates.tv).*

With the presidential election only a month and a half away, I've shifted my research into high gear. I'm done with lipstick and pigs and have moved on to the issues again. The political project I'm involved in, Purple States, just kicked off the second season and this week we are talking about the economy. My, my, my, passions are running high on the Web site. There's lots of blame going around and even a little name-calling. Who can blame them? Americans are fed up.

I'm taking a closer look at the policies of each candidate and really analyzing what their intentions are. Of course, as I've said before, campaign rhetoric doesn't always equal White House policy. So, the research I'm doing now to educate myself on John McCain and Barack Obama could literally be worthless by next year.

One thing that really has me biting my lip is the Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac bailout. Just the name sounds funny to me. Like two creepy puppets that look like Raggedy Ann and Andy, only scarier. And it is scary indeed. The entire situation is frightening. From what I can discern, the firms are too fargone NOT to bail them out. A necessary evil, as they say.

What makes me angry is the blatant corporate cronyism. Why aren't these guys under investigation? Shouldn't Fannie Mae be held responsible if it intentionally fudged financial reports so that senior executives could get bonuses? Shouldn't it be illegal for Fannie/Freddie to hire the lobbyists who go to Congress to fight reform bills that are supposed to regulate them?

I've heard a lot of people complain that the taxpayers will get stuck with that bill. But that's only part of it. What about accountability? Is anyone else mad about the fact that these senior executives may get a nice severance package, a retirement package and deferred compensation, leaving shareholders and taxpayers to suffer?

To his credit, Senator McCain has co-sponsored legislation to reform the evil twins. He has said, "Americans should be outraged by the latest sweetheart deal in Washington..." and adding that, as president, he doesn't want to "stick Main Street Americans with Wall Street's bill." More importantly, his goals are to get rid of the lobbyists, shrink Fannie and Freddie and then privatize them so that taxpayers will never again have to bear the burden of their mistakes and corruption.

I have to say that I don't put too much faith in McCain's puffing up at lobbyists. After all, he, as well as Obama, cannot deny that their circle of advisers includes former lobbyists and directors from both mortgage giants. It might be a little convenient that McCain called for a ban on lobbyists only a few months ago.

One thing that gave me some hope was that Senator Obama has sought clarification that those expelled senior executives would not receive any sort of "windfall" as part of the takeover. And why should they, given their actions?

At the same time, I'm not sure I agree with Obama when he says that Fannie/Freddie should remain the public/private hybrid that it is, but with tighter government regulations. Maybe total privatization is a better approach. I think the free market does a better job than government when it comes to economics.

One thing that Obama has said that has me puzzled is this: whatever path the government pursues, it should protect affordable housing. I'm not quite sure what he means. Is he eluding to the fact that these two mortgage giants made it possible for everyone to get a mortgage? Even people who had no business getting one because they couldn't afford it? Is that what he's saying? I certainly hope not because we all know how that turned out.

OK, let's give Obama the benefit of the doubt. Surely he means... Oh, who am I kidding, I don't know what he means... somebody please tell me! Go ahead. I'll wait. ■

**GUEST OPINION****Democrats: the new national security party**

BY ROGER E. HERNANDEZ

John McCain's choice of Sarah Palin was welcomed by parts of the Republican base suspicious of Maverick John's conservative credentials. Evangelicals. Social conservatives. Gun owners. Drill-here-nows.

But neo-conservatives and the pragmatist foreign-policy types inherited from the Bush the Elder days have nothing they can say to convince anybody that they actually think Palin is ready to be a heartbeat away from the most powerful job on the planet.

McCain would be the oldest person elected to the presidency and has had health problems, and it is in no way unreasonable to speculate that Palin might have to become president.

Yet nothing in her background shows that she is prepared to stand up to the likes of Ahmadinejad and Chavez and Putin, or that she can run two wars, or that she understands a Great Power's conduct of foreign policy.

One-term governor of Alaska? Former mayor of Wasilla, whose signature accomplishment was, as the National Journal put it, to "help fuel the city's rapid growth by funding infrastructure improvements that

attracted big-box stores"?

McCain practically gave away the issue of defense and national security, which, whether in reality or perception, is his greatest strength and the most serious obstacle Obama has to overcome.

Obama's choice of Biden was the best possible. Few know more about foreign policy, defense and national security. Biden shores up Obama's weakness.

Obama also seemed reassuring in his acceptance speech:

"We are the party of Roosevelt. We are the party of Kennedy. So don't tell me that Democrats won't defend this country. Don't tell me that Democrats won't keep us safe. The Bush-McCain foreign policy has squandered the legacy that generations of Americans — Democrats and Republicans — have built, and we are here to restore that legacy."

That showed that Obama doesn't intend to let Republicans paint him as a wussy Dem, the classic attack that deservedly targeted Dukakis and Mondale, and that continued with the slimy swiftboating of war hero John Kerry in 2004.

It also showed that Obama understands the profound damage the uni-

lateralist Bush foreign policy wreaked upon American interests in the world. But he failed to offer a hint of how he would fix it. With Obama's limited experience in geopolitics, you wish he had said more.

Still, it's a great opportunity for Democrats. Obama has Biden. Obama also has the ability to speak in a tone of voice that is powerful and convincing. When he said Democrats can protect this country no less than Republicans, it sounded like he believed it. But how to do it?

He must use that voice to outline a foreign policy that combines the smarts so sorely missing in the past eight years with a strength of purpose that reassures voters that Barack Obama is no Jimmy Carter.

That, plus an all-out attack on McCain's blunders and his choice of a running mate, might just make the Democratic ticket the safer choice on national security. Incredible as that sounds. ■

— *This was syndicated columnist Roger Hernandez' last column. He died unexpectedly of complications following surgery last week. He was 53.*