

COMMENTARY

With enemies like these...

By Don Rose

In the deadly game of politics your enemies often do you more good than your friends. No one understands this better than Barack Obama.

A week or two ago Obama appeared to be drowning in the oil-soiled waters of Gulf of Mexico. Today he is the beneficiary of unintended largesse from a string of gaffe-prone Republican candidates and office-holders who, one way or another, appear to be siding with BP against him. Poor, beleaguered BP.

With Obama's stock apparently on the upswing, one cannot overlook the contributions of the best enemy of them all, BP's tone-deaf CEO Tony "Wayward" Hayward, who is the gift that keeps on gaffing. I expect we'll soon see little booklets collecting all of Hayward's reverse public-relations gestures, much like those that gathered George W. Bush's multiplicity of verbal mishaps every year.

Last week marked what some of the White House gang like to call an inflection point—a turnaround in the president's long slide in popularity. Starting with a universally disdained speech from the Oval Office, he moved quickly to demonstrate command and control over the political flack from his handling of the gulf tragedy by forcing BP to cough up a minimum of \$20 billion to begin compensating victims of the oil spill.

Please note here the perfect pitch of Obama's language—which some fools questioned. Before meeting with BP bigwigs he said he would "instruct" the oil company to come up with the cash. He did not say "order," because he could not legally issue such an order; he did not say "request" because that would appear to make the president a supplicant before the corporation.

Needless to say, BP's executives followed his instructions and tried to seem glad to be doing so. Plus they agreed to withhold further dividends for the year, possibly the ultimate act of corporate contrition.

Is there any question now that Obama is in charge?

Is there any serious question in the public mind that this is a good and great thing he has done?

Well, there may not be any question from

the public at large, but look at the fire he has drawn from the wing-nut right—especially from the damn fool congressman who first apologized to the BPsters for Obama's "shakedown," then was ordered by his party leaders to recant the apology.

Even those conservatives in congress who may philosophically believe Obama acted improperly recognize he is on the right side of public opinion—by an overwhelming majority. But this will not shut up the Rand Pauls and Sharron Angles or the prattling talk hosts who seem to be the real movers of the Republican Party.

Another stroke of genius on the part of the resurgent White House was to name Ken Feinberg as administrator of the BP funds. Feinberg was universally applauded for his work in administering compensation to victims of the 9/11 attack. This suggests not only would there be fairness and equity, but that Obama put the gulf tragedy on a par with 9/11.

Further good news for Obama also came in a little-noticed poll showing the highest level of support for his health-care package since last September, well before it even became law.

A small majority of 45 percent to 42 percent now favors the law, apparently because several of its immediate benefits seem to have penetrated the public consciousness according to a new AP-GfK poll. Among the selling points, according to the Associated Press, were coverage for young adults up to age 26 on their parents' insurance plans, rebates for Medicare patients with high prescription drug costs, tax credits to small businesses for employee insurance programs and federal funds to train more doctors and nurses.

The poll results appear to be the first tangible dividends of the administration's new, high-powered campaign to sell the health-care law. There is every good chance that support will continue to grow as more and more word gets out.

That, coupled with the possibility of better numbers for the president as a result of his BP triumph, the November elections may not be a total catastrophe for the Democrats. If they ever plug that damned leak, that is.

Rose is a renowned political analyst and columnist for the Chicago Observer, CDOBS.Com-Don

CASL co-sponsors 5K race scheduled July 8



CHICAGO-- Sponsors of the annual 5K Run have a new partner, the nonprofit Chinese American Service League. The event will begin at 8 a.m. July 10 and continue throughout the day, culminating with a festival.

Runners may register online at <http://www.chinatown5K.com/run/or> contact Stephanie Chan at (312) 791-0418. Entry fee for adults registering on or before June 27 is \$30, \$12 for

the Youth Run. Fees increase to \$35 and \$15 afterward. "If you register using the Charity ID "CASL," \$5 will be donated to our social service agency," Chan said.

Chan said that volunteers were needed to help register last-minute runners and pass out refreshments and water. The 31-year-old social service agency is hoping to raise \$5,000 through this event.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Durbin co-sponsors HELP bill in Senate

Illinois Sen. Richard Durbin joined Sens. Al Franken (D-MN) and Herb Kohl (D-WI) Wednesday as co-sponsor of the HELP (Humane Enforcement and Legal Protections) Separated Children Act (S.3522). When enacted, the Act will keep youngsters safe, informed and accounted for during Immigrations and Custom Enforcement (ICE) raids.

Each day, 1,100 immigrants are deported—many with families and young children. According to the U.S. Customs and Immigration Service (ICE), 108,434 parents of U.S. citizen children were deported from 1998 to 2007—even before the Obama administration threw the already record pace of deportations into overdrive.

As more and more immigrants face separation from their families, we have a moral obligation to stand up for the most vulnerable members of those families: the children. Family separation devastates our communities and

Submitted by Joshua Hoyt, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights.

Warning: Photo radar in Illinois work zones begins July 1



SPRINGFIELD-- Illinois will begin using photo radar in freeway work zones July 1. One mile per hour over the speed limit and the machine will get drivers a \$375 ticket for the first offense. The second offense will cost \$1,000 and comes with a 90-day suspension.

A diver will also receive demerit points against his or her license, which permits insurance

companies to raise their rates.

This is the harshest penalty structure ever set for a governmental unit involving photo speed enforcement. The state already has two camera vans issuing tickets continuously in work zones with speed limits as low as 45 MPH.

Pictures of both the driver's face and license plate are taken.

Angelina Jolie stops in Ecuador to meet with Colombian refugees

SHUSHUFINDI, Ecuador-- Refugees who fled the violence in Colombia received a visit from Angelina Jolie Thursday, as did Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa. The actress was there in her role as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

Jolie and Correa met for half-an-hour in Shushufindi, a city in the Amazon jungle near the border with Colombia that houses thousands of refugees from the neighboring country.

"We spoke about the refugees," Correa later told reporters after his meeting with Jolie. He said the UNHCR could count on Ecuador's assistance in coping with the influx of refugees.

During her two-day visit to Ecuador--her second since 2002--she also met with refugee families in Lago Agrio and Barranca Barmeja, Correa's office said.

More than 50,000 refugees are registered in Ecuador, though unidentified sources unofficially estimates put the number at more than 170,000.

