

# Voting for change?

## Focus on Democrats and Republicans, not Obama and McCain

Commentary by Kenneth Janda,  
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"Change" is today's mantra of both presidential tickets.

Barack Obama mentioned "change" 15 times in accepting the Democratic presidential nomination. Joe Biden used the word 18 times in his vice-presidential acceptance speech.

Their campaign slogan is "Change you can believe in."

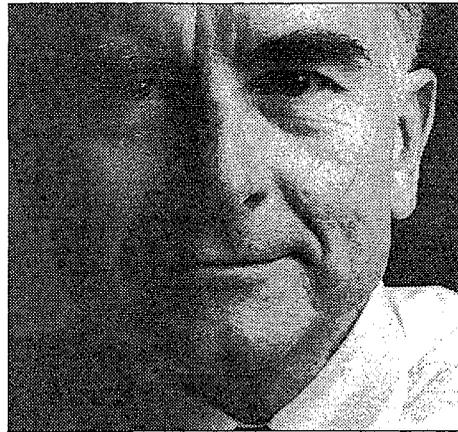
Speaking at the Republican convention, John McCain mentioned "change" 10 times and vowed, "Change is coming." Although his running mate, Sarah Palin, used the word less often, the McCain-Palin ticket embraced McCain's vow in its TV ad, "Change is coming."

Their slogan is, "A leader you can believe in."

If you favor change, which ticket can you believe in? Which ticket leads to change?

The answer: don't focus on the candidates themselves. Look at the parties they represent.

Of course the two persons at the top in the White House shape policy, but so do the cabinet secretaries, undersecretaries, deputy undersecretaries, and others who advise and inform the president. According to a 2006 report to the U.S. House Committee on Government Reform, there are four types of political appointees among more



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than 2,500 political appointees who staff the executive branch:

- Confirmed presidential appointees, who (1) hold high offices specified by law and (2) whose appointments must be confirmed by the Senate — e.g., cabinet officers, members of regulatory commissions. Excluding ambassadors, judges, marshals, and attorneys, about 500 or so.

- Nonconfirmed presidential appointees, who also hold high offices specified by law, but who do not require Senate confirmation — many in the White House Staff of about 500.

- Political Senior Executive Service appointees, who are selected in a noncompetitive manner to fill positions that have been reserved for members of the Senior Executive Service — e.g., staff in the Department of Education and other departments. About 750.

- Schedule C appointees, who hold policy-related positions established at the discretion of the President and the agency heads. There are over 1,500 Schedule C

appointees in the Bush administration.

Voters don't just elect a president and vice-president, they also choose between the competing political parties that will populate government with thousands of appointed officials.

In all administrations, presidential appointments virtually always come from the president's party. Being party loyalists, the appointees' actions reveal the values of their party more than the personal values of the presidential candidates.

McCain and Palin may be mavericks who buck their own party, but how many of the cheering delegates at the Republican Convention buck the party that sent them?

A McCain-Palin administration would be staffed by Republicans.

Most lower level appointees would keep their old jobs. They would reapply in future decisions their Republican beliefs: e.g., tax cuts solve economic problems, vouchers fix education woes, privatization cures the health care problem, and investing in the stock market insures social security. In general, they would favor policies fitting a philosophy of limited government.

Is that change?

Few, if any, current political appointees would keep their jobs in an Obama-Biden administration, which would appoint Democrats. These new appointees would apply in their decisions the Democratic belief that government should do more to combat economic and social problems, e.g., being more aggressive in regulating financial markets.

Whether or not you think that "change" as proposed by the Democratic ticket is in the right direction, they will produce more change in government. You can believe in that.

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