

Kerry wins Maine, criticizes president

The front-runner focuses on attacking Bush and his motives for the Iraq war

By Jeff Zeleny and Rick Pearson
Chicago Tribune (KRT)

RICHMOND, Va. — Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts, who won the Maine caucuses Sunday to bolster his Democratic front-runner status, accused President Bush of "telling the American people stories" when first explaining why the U.S. should go to war with Iraq.

The Democratic presidential race seemed to pause, at least for an hour, as candidates and party leaders watched Bush submit to a rare, televised interview from the Oval Office. The hourlong broadcast Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press," Bush's first since taking office, was yet another sign that Republicans are poised to fully engage in the 2004 campaign.

"Now, the president is giving us a new reason for sending people to war," said Kerry, whose own candidacy has been complicated by his support for the Iraq war resolution in Congress. "The problem is not just that he is changing his story now. It is that he appears he was telling the American people stories in 2002."

Retired Gen. Wesley Clark also criticized Bush, telling CNN, "To me, the problem is less about the intelligence community and more about how the president made his decision to take us into this war in Iraq. We still don't know why we went to war in Iraq."

Meanwhile, Maine became the 12th state to weigh in on the presidential race. With 40 percent of precincts reporting, Kerry was on the verge of claiming his 10th victory.

Kerry had 46 percent, Former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean 26 percent and Rep. Dennis Kucinich of Ohio 13 percent. Sen. John Edwards of North Carolina and Clark, who had focused on other states, had 9 percent and 4 percent.

Dean was the only candidate to campaign in Maine as Democrats prepared to vote. Prior to a campaign

swing across the state on Sunday, Dean said in a television interview that despite his winless record so far, he was remaining in the race because "I don't think Democrats are ready to choose just yet."

"I think it's a mistake to choose somebody that most people in this country don't know," Dean said from Bangor, Maine, in an interview on CBS' "Face the Nation."

"To me, that with 15 percent of the delegates selected, that is not exactly a mandate to choose anybody for president."

Edwards and Clark, campaigning aggressively for Tuesday's Virginia and Tennessee primaries, also pledged to stay in the race through at least the March 2 "Super Tuesday" primaries in California, New York and a string of other states.

"I view this very much as a long-term process," Edwards told Fox News, "and we're in this for the long term."

On CNN, Clark said: "We've got a lot of support across this county. We do expect to go on."

Still, campaign strategists concede that Kerry's drive to the nomination will be difficult to block. He collected another endorsement Sunday, from Gov. Mark Warner of Virginia, and started to practically ignore his rivals as he campaigned.

Arriving at a late-afternoon rally in Chesapeake, Va., Kerry aimed his criticism solely at the Bush administration, leaving the impression that the nomination is all but certain.

Never before in the 2004 campaign have Democrats felt as though their criticisms of Bush were being heard as loudly as in recent days.

A Newsweek poll indicated that 48 percent of Americans approve of the president's performance, his lowest mark in three years. Of those responding to the survey, 50 percent said they did not want to see Bush win re-election, compared to 45 percent who do.

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Judaic Studies lecture featuring a discussion by author Renee Levine Melammed entitled "Defying the Spanish Inquisition: The Crypto-Jewish Women of Castile." Alumni Lounge, Gerlinger Hall, 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

CORRECTION

In "University student files for Eugene mayor position" (ODE, Feb. 6), the headline should have stated that a University student filed for a Eugene City Council position. In the same story, Adam Walsh was misidentified in the summary.

In "CPC seeks to add Dads' Gates to historic register" (ODE, Feb. 6), the headline and caption should have stated that a University student is seeking to add Dad's Gates to the historic register. The Campus Planning Committee is only supporting the proposal.

In "Getting down to business" (ODE, Feb. 6), Lacy Edwards' name was incorrectly spelled.

The Emerald regrets the errors.

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