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by Marty Davis

What, Me Worry?

Election, economy, weather provide many reasons to fret

I awoke this morning to a groggy awareness of newly discovered self-identity. After much pondering of incessant daily demands by Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn to label, position and box myself up in a tidy fashion, I have finally found my identity. Yes, thanks to electronic nagging, I know now who I am, what I am.

I am a worrier.

That's me. That's my life. What I do. I worry.

I worry about the national economy. I worry about trickle-down theory gone very wrong. I worry about local small business. I worry about my neighborhood and the newest "For Lease" sign on what, until very recently, was a gay-owned business. I worry about saving jobs and saving homes. While I do celebrate the arrival of fall, with cooler weather and rain, I worry about home heating costs and fuel availability. I myself will never be cold, yet I worry about others who will. While I know I will never miss a meal or know hunger, I worry about those who do.

I worry very little about the rich becoming less rich. I worry far more about the poor becoming poorer yet.

I worry about the mounting pressures that small-business owners face. We are at the bottom of an economic infrastructure that appears to be crumbling and falling apart from the top down. It is not an exaggeration to say that much of the burden of keeping this country together falls upon the tired shoulders of the small-business owners. Small business provides the jobs that are the foundation of a teetering economy. It is not a cliché to implore you to shop local, buy local; it is now an imperative.

I worry about the government and the people leading us. I am seriously worried about the upcoming election. I worry that someone might actually vote for Mike Erickson. I worry that Gordon Smith will slime his way back into his Senate seat. I worry because the past two weeks have seen John McCain and Sarah Palin turn our presidential election into theater of the absurd. While McCain can't articulate an economic policy, senseless Americans rush to duplicate Palin's eyewear.

I worry because while I have no confidence in the current president and his administration, neither can I find confidence or comfort with those competing to take the place of the Prince of Ineptness. The notion of supporting the Republican candidate is unthinkable, yet at the same time I have, so far, yet to be convinced of Barack Obama's ability to lead our country.

There are many others in our community who have the confidence in Obama that I lack. And, in an effort to convince myself, if no one else, I've turned to activist and leader Terry Bean for words of advice. A staunch Obama supporter, he readily rose to advocate his support. In an effort to convince me of the viability of Obama, he writes:

"I hope by the time you finish reading this, you will share my belief that this election is not only important, but by far the most crucial the LGBT community has ever faced. My involvement in the struggle for LGBT justice for the past 36 years has taught me much about politics, often the hard way. We have been through a lot of political battles, way too many of them lost. It is only during the past few years that we have begun to win a few, and now it is clear to me that we have the opportunity to win the big battles—an inclusive Employment Non-Discrimination Act and Hate Crimes Act, repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act and 'don't ask, don't tell.' We have an LGBT-friendly Congress that promises to be even friendlier after the elections, and we have a presidential candidate who has pledged his support for all of these efforts.

"When I think about the possibilities, my mind goes back to when we

founded the Human Rights Campaign and dreamed of a day when our nation would pass sweeping federal civil rights legislation aimed at protecting our community. Thirty years later, it is now within our grasp. It can happen; you and I can make it happen, and it will happen with Barack Obama in the White House.

"I say this with confidence because I have closely watched and listened to Obama and have had the privilege to speak directly with him about our issues on several occasions. Each time I have been impressed by his breadth of knowledge and personal commitment to our issues. As a minority, he understands the pain of oppression; as a constitutional law professor, he understands our nation's mandate of equal protection; and as an American, he understands that none of us are free until all of us are free.

"In the words of Obama: 'While we have come a long way since the Stonewall riots in 1969, we still have a lot of work to do. Too often, the issue

of LGBT rights is exploited by those seeking to divide us. But at its core, this issue is about who we are as Americans. It's about whether this nation is going to live up to its founding promise of equality by treating all its citizens with dignity and respect.'

"Obama represents authentic change for our community and for the country. It is change we desperately need and why we must do all that we can to

get him elected. To further understand the stakes, all you have to do is look at the past eight wasted years. Instead of leadership, we got a president who sabotaged every effort to advance our rights, a president who scapegoated us and used our community to distract the nation from his own incompetence.

"If we elect McCain/Palin this fall, the waste will only continue. Just visit my Web site LGBTforObama.com and compare their stances on the issues we care about to Obama's. The difference between these candidates is as clear as it is profound. With Obama we can get nearly everything we have been working for over the past three decades; with McCain we likely get none of it. Moreover, we would get a Supreme Court that will not only give us nothing, but might well take back what we have already won.

"And it is not just LGBT issues that we must care about come November. There is so much more. If McCain and Palin are allowed to fill the next few vacancies to the Supreme Court, Roe v. Wade will be no more. The liberal justices are aging (the oldest is 88), and some are ill. Just one more Alito or Scalia and the right to choose will be gone. We cannot let this happen. For the future and sake of our community and our country (not to mention the war, health care and the survival of the planet), Obama must win.

"To help everyone more easily get involved, I have created the Web site LGBTforObama.com, where you can find the latest information and tools you need to become a campaign pro and skilled fund-raiser. On it you will find up-to-date information, videos, facts and commentaries on McCain and Obama relevant to the LGBT community. My hope is that it will be a helpful resource as together we convince our family, friends, neighbors and co-workers to fund-raise for, contribute to, work for and vote for Obama this fall.

"Please visit LGBTforObama.com often, learn the facts, then give all you can to the Obama campaign both financially and otherwise. Together, we can make a difference."

I read Bean's words. I respect his opinion. I will vote for Obama. But any presidential candidate, no matter how much he promises, cannot solve a nation's problems on his own. While the leadership abilities of the person at the top are vital, it's equally important to remember that it's all of us at the bottom who ultimately shoulder the burden of supporting this nation.

Now that worries me. 10

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—Terry Bean

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