

# OPINION

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## There is No Shame in Bush's Game

### Major corporations win and average Americans lose

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

As we approach the end of George W. Bush's presidential term, a close look at his record will reveal that major corporations have been the primary beneficiaries of his policies. On the other hand, average Americans are being left

behind to scramble for jobs, healthcare and quality education.

The Bush administration has repeatedly championed causes that primarily benefit corporate America. His immigration plan to permit illegal immigrants to work in America was designed to provide corporations with a steady supply of cheap labor. Last year, on the advice and prodding of corporate leaders, Bush pushed a \$383 billion corporate tax cut through Congress - reducing taxes on corporate dividends and stock sales.

The Cato institute, a conserva-

tive think tank that usually supports Republican policies, complains that the Bush administration has spent more than \$90 billion a year on grants, subsidies, and loan guarantees and other forms of corporate welfare. Perhaps the biggest corporate boon of all has come from the invasion of Iraq. There, war contractors and energy companies have made tens of billions of dollars in profits in less than 18 months.

Halliburton, the energy company where Vice President Cheney served as chairman immediately prior to taking office, has made the

most profits from the Iraq invasion. Currently there is a bill pending that would provide \$31 billion in tax breaks and subsidies to energy companies. There is obviously no shame in their game.

When it comes to average Americans, I cannot think of one major Bush policy that has primarily benefited them. Indeed within the first three years of the Bush administration our Federal budget went from a \$250 billion surplus to a half a trillion-dollar deficit, nearly three million people lost their jobs, and the No Child Left Behind Act was

passed but not fully funded for success.

Even when Americans citizens have a chance to do something about our healthcare crisis by importing cheaper drugs from other countries, the Bush administration has sided with the pharmaceutical companies, ordering the Justice Department to sue any state that tries to sell its citizens cheaper prescription drugs purchased in Canada.

With these facts in hand, Americans must go to the polls in November and side with the candidates



Judge Greg Mathis

that have sided with us. Otherwise, we deserve what we get.

Judge Greg Mathis is chairman of the Rainbow PUSH-Excel Board and a national board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

## Voting Denied 'Déjà Vu'

BY MARC H. MORIAL

We haven't yet reached the final lap of the presidential campaign. But one can say with a gloomy confidence that America is on course to endure another scarring controversy over whether some Americans are in danger of being wrongly denied their right to vote. The stunning aftermath of the 2000 election proved that voting concerns cannot be taken lightly.

A Harvard study found some 1.9 million Americans' ballots were discarded as spoiled, and other reports suggested non-whites cast half of those votes. Congress has enacted legislation and established a new federal agency, the Election Assistance Commission, to fix the flaws and ensure this year's voting goes smoothly.

But at this most critical time in the nation's history, November's election could, as the saying goes, be déjà vu all over again. Certainly, the news about the voting-process in the state of Florida, where four years ago the most



widespread and egregious voting breakdowns occurred, casts serious doubt that its system has been cured of the potential for wholesale violations of voters' rights.

Recent disclosures

*No American election for any office, especially the highest one in the land, can afford the suspicion of electoral skulduggery.*

have called into question the technological capability of the new touch-screen machines installed in Miami-Dade County. Election officials there knew a year ago the machines had malfunctioned, but didn't publicly acknowledge the problems until two months ago - after they were forced to do so by pressure from a citizens' group, the Miami-Dade Election Reform Coa-

lition. These machines are the way that more than half the Florida electorate will have to vote this November.

An even more serious matter is the state's process of purging its lists of convicted felons. Florida doesn't allow those convicted of a felony to vote without them petitioning to restore that right. In 2000, thousands of Floridians were turned away from the polls because they had been misidentified as being on the state's list of convicted felons; many of them were African Americans, who as a group overwhelmingly vote Democratic.

This year, Florida officials hired a private company to develop its felons list, but refused to make the document, which totaled some 47,000 names, available to the media until a judge ordered its release. Then, it didn't take journalists and others long to discover several egregious errors. One was that the names of 2,100 Floridians who had been granted clemency, and thus were eligible to vote, were on the banned-voter list. Another was that just 61 of the entire list were Hispanic. Thus,

the list would have led to the wrongful disenfranchisement of many black voters-who as a group overwhelmingly vote Democratic-while allowing a significant number of Hispanics convicted of a felony to vote.

Florida election officials blamed a "methodological flaw" for the glitch. Perhaps. But many critics subscribed to the view implicitly expressed by "New York Times"

columnist Paul Krugman: "It escaped nobody's attention that in Florida, Hispanic voters tend to support Republicans."

No American election for any office, especially the highest one in the land, can afford the suspicion of electoral skulduggery. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was right last month to ask the Justice Department to investigate whether Florida's process of purging its

voter rolls violated provisions of the Voting Rights Act.

Black America, and America, struggled mightily to expand the fundamental right of citizenship-access to the ballot. Everything possible must be done to prevent this November from being compared to November 2000.

Marc H. Morial is president and CEO of The National Urban League.



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