

OPINION

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Bail Out the Unemployed

Time to give average Americans some support

BY JUDGE GREG MATHIS

The federal government has spent billions of taxpayer dollars bailing out or assisting in the bail outs of some of the country's largest corporations.

Insisting their support was intended to stop a complete collapse of the nation's financial market, the feds dipped into its reserves, despite criticism from experts that the bailouts were only prolonging the inevitable.

Where, then, is the federal government's support of the average American? In these tough economic times, people in this country are greatly in need assistance. It is time for our nation's leaders to stop acting on behalf of corporate interest and work for those individuals who drive our economy.

The unemployment rate in this country is just over 6 percent; the highest it has been since 2003. Since January, more than 605,000 jobs have been cut from the economy. Because the job market is tight, many job seekers find themselves out of work for many months. Unemployment benefits typically last 26 weeks, or six months.

In June, Congress extended the length of time a recipient may collect benefits to 39 weeks. For those who find themselves out of work much longer, losing what may be their only source of income could result in financial disaster.

Considering the number of currently unemployed people in this country, it is not unlikely that this could create a chain reaction that not only affects individuals and families but also the nation's economy.

National lawmakers must work quickly and extend the length of unemployment benefits for out of work Americans. If there is no extension in place by October, 800,000 unemployed people will stop receiving their much-needed benefits.

There is currently a bill in front of Congress that would extend unemployment benefits for up to 46 weeks. States with high unemployment rates, like Michigan and California, will have the power to extend benefits for up to a year.

When large companies like AIG, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac and Bear Stearns started to crumble, the feds stepped in and either facilitated or sponsored their bailouts. The American people are faltering and need the federal government to step in and throw them a life line.

African Americans, in particular, need support. Unemployment has risen dramatically among our women. Since most of our families are run by single women, we need to work to ensure that they - and their children - have some income coming in while they look for work.

Lift your voice and exercise the power you have as a voting citizen. Contact your elected officials and demand they support an extension of unemployment benefits. Tell your family and friends to do the same.

Judge Greg Mathis is vice president of Rainbow PUSH and a board member of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.



'More of the Same' Isn't Change

BY DONALD KAUL

John McCain is running for the presidency because, he says, it's time for a change.

On the face of it, that's bizarre. After all, McCain is a Republican. Republicans have occupied the White House 20 of the past 28 years. During much, if not most, of that time they've also controlled the House and Senate.

So if you believe it's time for a change, it's Republicans you should want to change from. Right?

Apparently not. Mr. McCain says the country is in trouble and has gone so far as to run an ad saying, "we're worse off than we

were four years ago."

Makes your head spin, doesn't it? Somehow a campaign rallying cry of "We've done a lousy job; re-elect us" doesn't seem to make a lot of sense.

Which would be true if McCain were running as a Republican, but he's not. He's running as a "maverick," that is, a candidate who carries no man's (or party's) brand.

And a maverick McCain's been. He's often opposed President George W. Bush.

Except, of course, on the invasion of Iraq, which he promoted before the fact and has supported without fail ever since.

And Bush tax cuts that flow

most copiously to the richest among us.

And energy policy where his "drill here, drill now, drill forever" approach is indistinguishable from the Bush-Cheney philosophy.

And a woman's right to choose, which he denies.

And stem cell research, which he opposes.

Outside of those few trivial issues, he's gone his own way - nearly 10 percent of the time.

Actually, Republicans have a track record as agents of change. Consider the nation when George Bush was elected in 2000:

--We had an annual budget

surplus. --The stock market was at an all-time high.

--Prosperity bloomed, even for the middle class.

--Our elected officials were expected to honor the Constitution.

--We didn't torture people. We had the respect of the world.

The Republicans changed all of that. Perhaps their campaign slogan should be:

"Elect us and you'll have it as good as you had it when Democrats ran the country."

That won't be the slogan, of course. The Republican campaign machine is too slick for that.

The Far Reaching Effects of Wall Street

We need answers and action

BY M. LINDA JARAMILLO

News reports are flooded with information about the economic impact of the collapse of major Wall Street firms.

As I read and listen to commentaries by economic experts, I am struck by the magnitude of the losses that may reach the trillion-dollar mark. It goes way beyond the usual stock market bedlam on Wall Street. For example, this morning I listened to a public radio report about the huge economic impact being felt in places as far away as China as well as on main streets in cities across the U.S.

We have only begun to learn how the collapse of these major giants will affect the average American. Regulations were in place and meant to protect us from a repeat of the crash that our



parents and grandparents experienced during the Great Depression. When many of these regulations were dropped and the market was allowed to reign unchecked, economists' warnings were ignored.

The complexities of Wall Street finances are not something that most of us are familiar with. However, millions of Americans have and will experience first hand the far reaching damage of the sub-prime mortgage collapse that is now extending into prime mortgages.

It hit those who invested in their first home with the promise of affordable housing. While some mortgage companies over-extended themselves as they sought big profits by making loans to unqualified buyers, many borrowers were qualified and simply

doing their best to work out ways to realize the American dream. Some have had their home values drop so dramatically that they no longer even hope to sell them.

This whole situation began with a serious impact on lower income people. It has now extended into the middle class and upper class. Entire housing developments across the country - from California to New York and Florida to Alaska - are empty. Communities are in transition while families of every income bracket are facing job loss and home foreclosures.

Hundreds of thousands of workers are losing their jobs as company after company is impacted by the crisis; unemployment is rising across the economy. Not only are jobs lost, people are losing their investments in hard earned retirement funds and other benefits such as health care. As the economy slows and jobs disappear, the broader and longer

term impacts are still unfolding.

It is a bleak picture indeed and I must admit that thinking about it can thrust us into despair. Rather than giving way to our discouragement, we must rise to the challenge and educate ourselves so that we can ask critical questions. During this major election season, these are questions we should ask candidates running for state and federal public office:

How would you restore stability to the financial system?

What safeguards are needed to prevent the recurrence of crashes like this one?

How would you promote home ownership while maintaining a sound mortgage industry?

Wall Street's business is our business. We need answers and action.

M. Linda Jaramillo is executive minister for Justice and Witness ministries in the United Church of Christ.

Letter to the Editor

In Gratitude

To my family, friends and constituents who, in so many wonderful ways, shared their heartfelt expression of love and concern before and after my husband's pass-

ing on Aug. 26. The outpouring of support during this time has been amazing. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

As most of you know, Ted was my partner and friend in life for over 37 years. Sometimes we do not

realize how many lives one person has touched in their lifetime and Ted touched many. I see that more each day. I appreciate beyond words the prayers, donations to Ted's choice of charitable organizations, cards, flowers, emails, phone calls and to Cafe Today for an abundance of wonderful food served after the service, many

thanks. To my angels who provided transportation, ran errands and provided me a soft shoulder, my utmost gratitude. And to the unsung heroes who cleaned the Senate Chamber after the fire and organized and participated in Ted's memorial service, my deepest thanks. Sen. Jackie Winters

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