

In 2004, voters will be less focused on personality and cultural differences and more on substantive issues.

In less than a year, Democratic politicians will be slogging through the snow and ice of New Hampshire searching for votes. This quadrennial exercise in grassroots democracy and media expectations, formally known as the New Hampshire primary, is great fun for political junkies like me. It also means that it's not too early to start thinking about presidential politics.

The following is some unsolicited advice to Democrats: emphasize party unity.

The major obstacle to presenting a unified approach is the primary process itself. Democrats will be tempted to bash their opponents without considering how the attacks might weaken the eventual nominee. However, if each candidate can restrain from negative personal attacks (while still contrasting their policy differences and experience from their opponents), then the party will have a much easier job of convincing the public that they are unified.

Given the international crises of the last year and a half (Sept. 11, Afghanistan, Iraq and North Korea), it does not take a political expert to predict the broad themes of Bush's re-election campaign: security, trust and experience.

Bush will use his leadership on the war on terrorism and Iraq to contrast him with the inexperienced (and thus risky) Democrats.

In order to neutralize the effectiveness of this contrast, a group could be

KARL
TRAUTMAN
Guest columnist



formed that would communicate to the public the vast and varied experience of potential members of a new Democratic administration. These potential members could be the defeated presidential candidates. In particular, the group could conceptualize what a hypothetical presidential cabinet might look like for a new Democratic president. For example:

- Joseph Lieberman: The former vice-presidential candidate to Al Gore

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would be a great commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission. He could use his moral authority to continue his campaign of trying to nudge Hollywood to de-emphasize sex and violence in the marketing of their products.

- Gary Hart: The former presidential candidate would be a superb secretary of defense. He is widely respected on a bipartisan basis for his defense policy views. Moreover, he has been ahead of his time in anticipating national security needs; he even predicted the probability of a

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