

Remembering Arlen Specter and George McGovern

BY JOSH BALLARD
STAFF WRITER

The recent passing of Senators Arlen Specter and George McGovern allows us a unique opportunity to reflect on some of the men who defined the modern Democrat.

Arlen Specter was born in Wichita, Kansas on Feb. 12, 1930. Before becoming a senator he served on the Warren Commission, investigating the assassination of John F. Kennedy.

It was after this that he sought political office. Having been a Democrat up to that point, Specter surprised many when he switched to the Republican Party and was elected to the Senate in 1980. As a socially liberal senator, Specter found it increasingly difficult to find common ground with his Republican counterparts. As such, Specter changed party affiliation back to Democrat in 2009.

Specter was also diagnosed with an advanced form of Hodgkin's lymphoma, a type of cancer, in 2005. He continued working during chemotherapy. However, he died from complications of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma at age 82 on Oct. 14 of this year.

"Arlen Specter was always a fighter. From his days stamping out corruption as a prosecutor in Philadelphia to his three decades of service in the Senate, Arlen was fiercely independent — never putting party or ideology ahead of the people he was chosen to serve," said President Barack Obama in a White House press release. "He brought that same toughness and

determination to his personal struggles, using his own story to inspire others."

Another equally inspirational story of political action can be found in Senator George McGovern.

McGovern was born in Avon, South Dakota on July 19, 1922. In 1956, McGovern was elected as a Democrat to the House of Representatives and was later elected to the Senate in 1962.

McGovern was a staunch opponent of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, going so far as to introduce an amendment that sought to end the war through legislative means. It was defeated in both 1970 and 1971. McGovern also made three unsuccessful runs for the presidency in 1968, 1972 and 1984.

"Senator McGovern is remembered as the loser in the Nixon landslide of 1972," said Associate Vice President for Communications and Marketing Ty Buckner in an email interview. "But what some people forget is that he was a decorated U.S. hero who was willing to stand against the Vietnam War. And he spent many years after that election as a mighty public servant."

Buckner continued, "He never lost the strength of his convictions. We need more people like him in public office, regardless of their political affiliation."

McGovern passed away on Oct. 21 of this year at age 90.

Both senators were recognized as men who stood their ground when it came to their convictions. Whether it was Specter in regards to stem cell research funding or McGovern in his fight against hunger, these men never backed down.



George McGovern (left) and Arlen Specter (right) were known nationwide for their stern beliefs and firm convictions.

Their actions as Democrats reflected the definition McGovern put forth in his final book "What It Means to Be a Democrat."

"We are the party that believes we can't let the strong kick aside the weak," he wrote.

It is with this passion that they will be remembered and, perhaps, they will inspire others — no matter the party — to hold fast to their own convictions.

Economic despair plagues Greece

BY THOMAS DEANE
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Lately, news of Greece has been nothing but tales of woe, misery and economic despair. The economic downfall of the country has garnered worldwide attention as many are left to wonder how a once prosperous nation could fall on such hard times.

The most recent news from these Mediterranean islands is no less disturbing for both residents and observers alike. Plagued with colossal debt, many Greek citizens have found themselves unable to afford burials for family and loved ones.

Tensions have now reached a boiling point as protests and riots run rampant throughout the country. The inability to provide proper burial services proves to be a critical matter in these protests.

Greek citizen Vanna Mendaleni formerly ran a funeral parlor in Greece, but had no choice but to close it down due to policies instituted by the Greek government, plunging citizens into the depths of grave destitution.

"After three years of non-stop taxes and wage cuts it's got to the point where nothing has been left standing," said Mendaleni in an interview with The Guardian.

"It's so bad families can no longer afford to even bury their dead. Bodies lie unclaimed at public hospitals so that the local municipality can bury them."

The large majority of Greeks are Greek Orthodox church, and thus, believe death separates the soul from the body. A key component of a Greek Orthodox funeral is to greet the family with the phrase, "Memory Eternal" and to provide an open-casket service in which mourners celebrate the life of the deceased.

Daniel Diaz, assistant director of the study abroad program and international student advisor, sees this lack of funding for funerals as a cause for major religious-based strife.

"From a religious point of view, there is a sense of anxiety and fear about properly caring for and handling the death of a family member

or a loved one," said Diaz.

Death affects the living in many ways as well, and funerals can be used to foster closure and offer condolences. According to Diaz, if citizens are incapable of providing funerals for loved ones, it may diminish the very fabric of society.

"It shows to me that the economic and government functions of Greece are breaking down in drastic ways," Diaz said. "You see the protests and the out-lash and my anticipation is that perhaps without the right steps taken things will get worse."

Protests resisting the austerity of Greece have resulted in large-scale clashes with Greek police. Protestors are hoping for a government intervention as well as a movement away from cuts to pensions and wages.

In an interesting turn of events, one of Greece's cash-strapped amateur soccer teams has turned to two local brothels for funding. While that source of finance is completely legal, compromised morality becomes a concern.

Junior Julia Sheehan is amongst those who believe that perhaps the funding could be used somewhere else.

"When you have loved ones unable to provide funeral services for family members, and then you see a brothel funding a soccer team (it) is a bit off-putting to me," Sheehan said. "I would have rather seen the brothel do the right thing and maybe sponsor funerals."

For the time being, funeral homes have begun to offer some support to grieving loved ones. Payment plans for Greek funerals have now become more readily available. While this does not fully mitigate the economic despair; it does offer citizens a chance to have that final opportunity for closure.

In time, the economic troubles in Greece may see resolution. Until then, the country remains locked in a tight battle between citizens and government.

It is in the best interest of global economics and the social structure of Greece that the country expeditiously rights itself and steers back onto the track of economic success.

Third-party candidates

BY JORDAN SMITH
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As the battle between Democrats and Republicans rages and the 2012 election approaches, often overlooked are the other presidential candidates running: the third-party candidates.

In addition to President Obama and Mitt Romney, Gary Johnson, Stewart Alexander and Stephen Rollins are also in the running.

Johnson is the Libertarian nominee, with a platform reportedly rooted in reduced government regulation and a balanced budget.

This policy is evident in his stance on various issues: he is against government-run health care and government regulation of energy development management, but advocates treating marijuana use the same as alcohol and tobacco use. Johnson also wishes to eliminate the Department of Education and instead give those funds to individual states to improve education in America.

Johnson promises to submit a balanced budget to Congress in 2013, with an emphasis on cutting spending and adding a consumption tax.

"Balance the federal budget now, not 15 years from now, not 20 years from now, but now," he said to the International Business Times. "And throw out the entire federal tax system, replace it with a fair tax. ... If that doesn't create tens of millions of jobs in this country, I don't know what does."

Stewart Alexander is the candidate for the Socialist Party as well as the Peace and Freedom Party, with a platform emphasizing a socialist platform and benefits for the working class.

"My platform is committed to the transformation of capitalism through the creation of a democratic socialist society," he told The Modern Left. "To create a better future for working people,

my platform will offer a guide that will establish a new social and economic order in which democracy will allow the 99 percent to shape our own future."

He plans an immediate withdrawal from Afghanistan, where the other party candidates propose withdrawal in months or years.

Universal healthcare and full employment are also paramount in Alexander's policy, the latter to be achieved through increased taxes on the wealthy. Obtained funds would be used to fund education and public projects.

Alexander maintains the pro-choice and pro-affirmative action stances, and he supports equal rights for homosexuals and non-citizens in social issues.

Rollins is an independent candidate, focusing on downsizing the government and domestic independence.

"I decided to enter this race as an Independent to raise more awareness to what is happening with our money as we continue seeing large numbers of unemployment," he told the Digital Journal. "Our tax situation is getting out of hand where we're now the largest corporate tax rate nation in the world and yet nobody seems to come up with the correct answers."

He calls for placing penalties on companies that outsource jobs and wants to stop fuel speculation, increase energy independence, and put less money into foreign countries.

By downsizing the government, he believes he can both slow the debt and cut taxes significantly.

Rollins continued, "If you decrease the tax burden on the everyday worker (then) that everyday worker is gonna have more money and is going to go out to spend money into the local and national economy."

With Election Day on Nov. 6 drawing nearer, better-educated voters are likely to make clearer choices for the country.