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POLITICS

Briefly Political

compiled by Q-Notes staff

National political and elections update

John Edwards bows out

NEW ORLEANS, La. — Former Sen. John Edwards (D-NC) announced Jan. 30 that he was ending his bid for the presidency. After Edwards made his announcement, he worked with the local Habitat for Humanity chapter in their continued effort to rebuild from the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

"I've spoken to both Senator Clinton and Senator Obama. They have both pledged to me and more importantly through me to America, that they will make ending poverty central to their campaign for the presidency," Edwards said in his last campaign speech. "And more importantly, they have pledged to me, that as President of the United States they will make ending poverty and economic inequality central to their presidency. This is the cause of my life and I now have their commitment to engage in this cause."

Eric Stern, a former Edwards campaign LGBT advisor now supporting Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL), said in an email to friends and supporters, "Through John's bold vision and ideas, we have reminded Democrats of the work we must do to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable health care, education and a living wage. John's tireless advocacy on behalf of working class Americans has changed the course of this election. While I will do everything I can to help elect a Democratic president, it is imperative that our nominee carry on John's battle to ensure that the American dream is available to everyone."

Only a few days after Edwards' departure from the campaign trail, 37 of the 59 LGBT leaders, activists and community members who announced their support of Edwards in October, publicly endorsed Obama. The announcement was made in an article exclusively published online by *The Advocate* on Feb. 1

Clinton addresses gay teen suicide

In a video posted on YouTube in late January, presidential candidate Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY) addressed the high rate of suicide among LGBT teenagers.

Emily Dawkins, Clinton's director of youth outreach, posed a supporter's question, "Considering the extraordinarily high incidence of depression and suicide among gay teenagers, what action will you, as president, take to encourage a more accepting and healthy educational experience for LGBT teens?"

Stating that the suicide rate was a serious problem and one that she had "done a lot of work on ... in New York," Clinton said she would do everything she could to "send a clear message that we value you. We value you as a person, you as a total person. And we want you to feel accepted and respected in your community."

At the end of her statement, Clinton called

for more education, awareness and health and social services in schools.

Activists challenge candidates

CHICAGO, Ill. — Three days before the "Super Tuesday" Feb. 5 primary, LGBT activist members of the Gay Liberation Network took to the streets to challenge presidential candidates' positions on LGBT issues.

The Gay Liberation Network, Chicago's LGBT "direct action organization," organized a march around the city's "Loop" demanding that each presidential candidate stand up for legal equality for all LGBT people. The march was held in commemoration of Marriage Equality Day 2008.

The activists said that all the Republican candidates have "repudiated support for gay legal equality." They added that most of the support given by Democratic candidates is "public relations rhetoric."

"Each candidate knows the difference between civil unions and equal marriage rights (Obama is a former constitutional law professor!)," the group said in a press release. "But they play ignorant and refuse to endorse equal marriage rights, never straying from carefully scripted, poll-tested responses."

The organization said the candidates also "prefer that we 'shut up' about their failure to truly support equality."

Obama receives Kennedy family endorsements

Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL) received two key endorsements from the Kennedy family at the end of January. First, Caroline Kennedy, the only daughter of President John F. Kennedy, endorsed Obama in a Jan. 27 *New York Times* op-ed entitled "A President Like My Father."

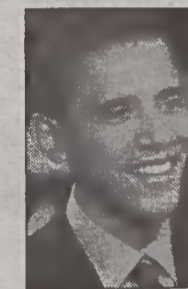
The second Kennedy endorsement came from Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-MA). On Jan. 28, the Massachusetts senator appeared with his niece Caroline, son Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI) and Obama at a rally on the campus of American University in Washington, D.C.

"Every time I've been asked over the past year who I would support in the Democratic primary, I've always said the same thing," said Sen. Kennedy. "I said I'll support a candidate who inspires me, who inspires all of us...who can lift our vision and renew our belief that our country's best days are still to come. I've found that candidate."

Sen. Kennedy said Sens. Clinton and Edwards are his friends and colleagues and he affirmed his respect for both.

Caroline Kennedy wrote in *The New York Times*, "I've been deeply moved by the people who've told me they wished they could feel inspired and hopeful about America the way people did when my father was president. This sense is even more profound today. That is why I am supporting a presidential candidate in the Democratic primaries, Barack Obama."

However, not all of the Kennedy clan is throwing their support behind Obama. Former Maryland Lt. Gov. Katherine Kennedy Townsend, the oldest of Sen. Robert Kennedy's children, and two of her siblings have tipped their hats toward Clinton. ▀



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