

National News

Cheney's Halliburton Stock Options Soar

An analysis released by the office of Sen. Frank Lautenberg Oct. 11 found that Vice President Dick Cheney's Halliburton stock options have risen 3,281% in the last year. Senator Lautenberg (D-N.J.) asserted that Cheney's options—worth \$241,498 a year ago, are now valued at more than \$8 million. Cheney, former CEO of the oil and gas firm, Halliburton, has pledged to give the proceeds to charity, reported the internet news service Raw Story, Oct. 11.

Senator Lautenberg commented on Cheney's windfall: "Halliburton has already raked in more than \$10 billion from the Bush-Cheney Administration for work in Iraq, and they were awarded some of the first Katrina contracts."

Lautenberg said in a statement: "It is unseemly for the Vice President to continue to benefit from this company at the same time his Administration funnels billions of dollars to it. The Vice President should sever his financial ties to Halliburton once and for all. Cheney continues to hold 433,333 Halliburton stock options."

In 2003, Dick Cheney told "Meet the Press," "Since I left Halliburton to become George Bush's Vice President, I've severed all my ties with the company, gotten rid of all my financial interests. I have no financial interest in Halliburton."

Senate Urges Increase In Heating Subsidy

Sen. John Kerry (D-Mass.) unsuccessfully tried to attach an amendment to the the Defense Appropriations Bill that called for increasing funding to help the poor pay heating bills, from \$2 billion to \$5.1 billion. Although a slight bipartisan majority of 50 votes supported the increase, it was short the two-thirds of the Senate needed to increase the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

The White House meanwhile is moving

to cut LIHEAP by \$298 million. The program is run by the Department of Health and Human Services, which released a statement Oct. 10 saying that it was keeping the door open to all funding options, but funding can increase only if Congress approves it through an appropriations bill.

"We have never had prices so high and increase so quickly," said Mark Wolfe, executive director of the National Energy Assistance Directors Association. He expects more than a million additional applicants for the LIHEAP program, a 20% increase over last year.

Amtrak Board Votes To Privatize N.E. Corridor

The Amtrak board of directors, which was appointed by President Bush, secretly voted Sept. 22 to set up a private consortium to take over running Amtrak's northeast railway corridor. The corridor, which runs between Boston and Washington, D.C., is the most capital-intensive electrified rail corridor in the United States. If approved by Congress, the Sept. 22 secret vote would lead *de facto* to Bush and Transportation Secretary Mineta's plan to bankrupt Amtrak, because it is this corridor that generates revenues for Amtrak.

"The Bush Administration wants to hold a fire sale on Amtrak and sell its best asset, the Northeast Corridor," said Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.). "Selling the [corridor] is the first step in President Bush's plan to destroy Amtrak and intercity rail service in America."

The *New York Times* reported Oct. 13 that the Senate may take up its version of the appropriations bill next week, which includes Amtrak funding.

Candidates Refusing To Run As Republicans

The *Washington Post* reported Oct. 10 that many potentially strong candidates have refused to run for Senate next year as Republi-

cans. The GOP's favored Senate candidate to run against Sen. Robert Byrd in West Virginia was Rep. Shelley Moore Capito, the daughter of popular Republican Governor Arch Moore, but she turned them down. In North Dakota, the *Post* reported, popular Gov. John Hoeven declined to run against Sen. Kent Conrad, even after the ever-persuasive White House Deputy Chief of Staff Karl Rove went there to try to change Hoeven's mind.

Others who refused to run include Florida House Speaker Allan Bense and former Rep. Joe Scarborough, who turned down a call to edge out former Secretary of State Katherine Harris, and run in her place against Sen. Bill Nelson. And in Vermont, former Gov. Jim Douglas has refused to run for the seat being vacated by Independent Sen. Jim Jeffords.

As noted, races are often won or lost a year in advance, by a choice of the right candidate.

DDT Declaration Circulating in U.S.

A declaration titled "Kill Malarial Mosquitoes NOW!" is now circulating, which calls for bringing back DDT and mandates that two-thirds of the anti-malaria funds spent by the United States, be used for DDT. When sprayed in small amounts on the inside walls of houses, DDT dramatically cuts the incidence of malaria. In Africa, malaria kills one child every 30 seconds, and sickens more than 500 million per year.

At present, DDT plays no part in the U.S. program to combat malaria, including the \$1.2 billion program for malaria control announced by President Bush in July 2005. U.S. and European aid agencies in Africa and Asia have refused to fund anti-malaria programs that use DDT, although their alternatives have been an abysmal failure.

The declaration, which is sponsored by the Congress for Racial Equality, states: "Over 500 million human beings suffer from malaria in Africa and around the world annually. This is more people than live in the United States, Canada, and Mexico, combined."