

# OPINION

## EDITORIAL

### Boasting in Baghdad

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad took his campaign to become the world's most annoying leader to Baghdad, and the Iranian president did not disappoint.

According to a Washington Post account of the visit, "... the Iranian leader signaled that his country now rivals the United States, the chief financial and military backer of Iraq's government, in terms of influence."

He was especially angry that U.S. officials have accused Iran of training and arming insurgent fighters, and made a veiled threat: "You can tell Mr. Bush that making accusations about others will increase the Americans' problems in the region."

He added several times that not only do the Iraqis dislike us, but everybody in the region hates us. Our presence, he said, is a "humiliation."

Ahmadinejad's fulminations aside, it's good that Iraq and Iran are talking because relations between the two are complex and important to regional stability. Iran is overwhelmingly Shiite, and Shiites are the largest sectarian group in Iraq.

While Shiite politicians, such as Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, welcomed Ahmadinejad, Sunni tribal groups protested his visit. But the Iranian leader came armed with a \$1 billion low-interest loan and a series of economic agreements.

Ahmadinejad rebuked the idea of Iranian-armed insurgents; the way Iran is structured, he may not know what another wing of his government, such as the largely autonomous Revolutionary Guard, is up to. Still, Iraqi leaders said they would convey their objections to Iranian meddling in their country to Ahmadinejad.

One of the lessons the United States and the Bush administration learned in Iraq was that a little humility is always in order. The belligerent Ahmadinejad might want to learn the same.

For example, he might ponder, as he taunts the United States, that his nation fought Iraq for eight years and never achieved more than a bloody stalemate. In 1991, the U.S. military defeated the Iraqi army in just more than four days and in 2003 conquered the whole country in six weeks.



THE CONGRESSIONAL MEDDLE OF DISHONOR

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Bush, not Tauscher, bad for America

Mike Gomez, in trying mightily to place the blame on Rep. Ellen Tauscher for the cynically named "Protect America Act" not being reauthorized yet, completely misses the point.

The Democrats have been ready to extend this act since day one, but Bush has threatened to veto it unless they leave in protection for the giant teleComs giving them immunity from lawsuits for breaking the law.

Bush, as usual, is the one willing to leave our country and your family in "grave danger" in order to protect his buddies in the telecom business instead of the American people.

These giant corporations all have huge legal departments, and are perfectly capable of defending themselves if they've done nothing wrong by spying on American citizens.

President Bush is the one who needs to "prioritize critical tasks." Nero is still fiddling while radical Islamists plot and plan. It's unconscionable and a total failure on Bush's part to uphold his oath to protect and defend this country. Put the blame where it belongs, and it's not on Rep. Tauscher.

I cannot think of another president who would put corporate liability before the safety of our citizens as Bush is doing, and not for the first time.

And just so you can sleep easier, any investigations, etc. undertaken while the act was in force are allowed to continue for a year after

the expiration date.

**Lorene Murray**  
Fairfield

### NorthBay provides excellent care

I recently had gallbladder surgery at NorthBay Medical Center.

I cannot thank the staff enough for the wonderful care and compassion they had. From the surgeon, doctors, techs and all other staff. Several of the RNs, etc. were working double shifts and still had a great bedside manner and were so sweet and pleasant.

Thanks again to all the staff at NorthBay.

**Marge Fulbright**  
Fairfield

## COMMENTARY

### Learning the lessons of the panda

I just returned from three self-designed whirlwind weekend jaunts: the "Stateline Nevada Community Chest Victory Tour" (theirs, not mine), the "Four Idiots' Snowmobile Donner Summit-Reno Fun Train Boondoggle" and "You're in the Cage Now" tours of San Diego Wild Animal Park and Zoo.

Despite a nasty virus in San Diego that made me cough with such vigor NASA wanted my launch codes, I trudged on doing my best Sam Elliot voice and Walter Brennan shoe-shuffling slide.

In Tahoe, front row reserved seats became Mystery Alaska tundra. They swore their undying love, they lied and then played hide the peanut with a courtesy credit. No teamwork.

On the Reno train, we sang with strolling troubadours, grooved to a smooth piano tinkling club car Caruso and loosed our caboose in the dance car. It was sobering to see one man struggle down a swaying rail car en route to the restroom. No one lent a hand. He had multiple sclerosis. His wife was long drunk and distanced herself from their shared reality. No teamwork.

In San Diego, after unapologetic branding and a cattle call loading and landing, we limped back to the car rental agency after a prior one-hour wait. The rental and Madame P were competing in volume and wild, threatening spasms as to what was more dangerous, the car or her if I did not pull over, let her out and shoot the quivering beast. Thank

you, Team Fox car rental.



Kevin Ryan

Returning from Tahoe, a surefire head-on collision did not occur as everyone did the right thing. On Donner Summit, we were one adrenaline-pumping, blizzard-braving bunch, tying our rumps to 500 cc's of gas

powered, icicle-enema-in-every-orifice machines, boxing with God and ogling a winter wonderland.

The final weekend at the zoo, the human camaraderie was best. The affectionate tease, the slightly slower pace and the gratitude told me that although I was an idiot to travel when ill, I was their idiot. They loved the adventures and were watching over me. All of it, teamwork.

Also in San Diego, we learned of male pandas peeing during tree limb handstands just for a three-day-a-year wink from lady love and then after: alone.

Recently, the Vice Mayor, Community Services and City Management asked me to revisit a great joy: team building. The hope is that folks will come together in tight budget times to build a sustainable community arts program better than before. There might be teamwork.

Teamwork lights fires and stokes dying embers among its members. The gleam of growing teams is not burning so brightly from Lady Liberty these past few decades, and I fear the darkness. Emphasis on superstar athletes, addictive technocracy and mass media adoringly

chanting at the shrine of the perpendicular pronoun "I" prevent greatness.

First, fruits of our disinterest in creative team building abound, whether symbolized by a syringe in the butt of some uber athlete or rapidly rotating rehab doors. Teamwork: one of the first things we complain about when it's missing and, for many, the farthest solution from their minds.

Teams thrive on diversity and complementary skills when unified in purpose. Margaret Mead mused, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world."

No singular accomplishment that has indelibly propelled the species forward on this mortal coil occurred in a vacuum. When last did you hear a conductor and only see a symphony? Every one of Michael Jordan's amazing acts of athleticism was not preceded by God giving him the ball.

Teamwork is a bank of withdrawn self-interest, deposited fears and compounded earnings based on the faith and full credit that common people can attain uncommon results.

So the next time a call comes your way for a glorious invitation, a chance to build and thrive on a team, consider the peeing panda and for what, three days and adios?

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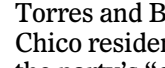
## CALIFORNIA FOCUS

### What's so super about delegates?

Superdelegates. It's a word barely noticed before this year, a special breed of Democrat guaranteed a seat at the party's quadrennial nominating convention because of who

they are or what offices they hold.

Some are U.S. senators like Barbara Boxer and Diane Feinstein. Some are members of Congress. Others are party functionaries like current state Democratic chairman Art



Thomas Elias

Torres and Bob Mulholland, the Chico resident who is nominally the party's "campaign adviser."

There is also Charles Manatt, a former state and national party chairman who heads a law firm best known for its high-powered lobbying in Washington, Sacramento and Los Angeles.

Altogether, California has 66 of the 796 superdelegates, and the longer the presidential nomination contest between Sens. Barack Obama of Illinois and Hillary Clinton of New York goes on, the greater the chance that these people will decide who becomes the Democratic nominee for president and quite possibly the next person with a finger on the nuclear button.

The party's proportional representation rules make it impossible for either candidate to collect a dominating number of delegates in any state, since some kind of split is always mandated. But superdelegates are not bound by popular votes, anyway. They can go wherever they like, perhaps for whoever offers them the most.

For sure, they are getting frequent calls from ex-President Bill Clinton, senators and former presidential nominees. What's promised in those calls is anybody's guess.

The congressional component of the superdelegate bunch is well known and mostly already committed to one candidate or the other. In fact, about two-thirds of the California contingent is already promised, although they can change their votes anytime they like and risk only their reputations for keeping their word.

Things can work out strangely with this system. After more than 50 years of not mattering much, the Democratic National Convention just might actually decide something other than an esoteric platform plan that 99 percent of Americans will quickly forget.

And these few Californians could be the ones who swing it one way or the other. The question: Do they deserve that role? Do you want them deciding the fate of the nation and possibly yourself?

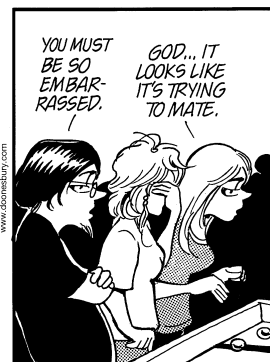
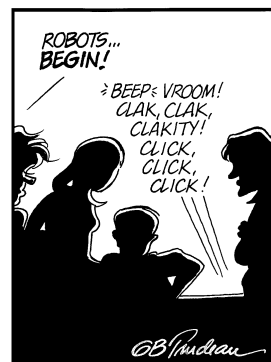
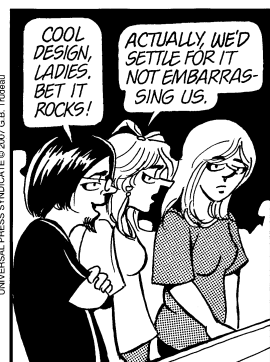
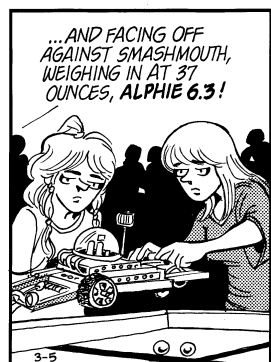
If not, then it's time for rank-and-file Democrats to begin publicly insisting superdelegates vote the way the majority of Californians did in the primary, or the way their congressional districts went.

Could that actually influence anything? For sure, the uproar over strange ballots in Los Angeles County caused the counting of tens of thousands of votes that would otherwise have been discarded.

Maybe the ongoing outcry by MoveOn.org and others can move at least some superdelegates to let others in on their decisions, or even help with them. It already seems to have moved Nancy Pelosi, who called the other day for superdelegates not to veto the people's choice, whoever that may be.

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## DOONESBURY FLASHBACK



BY GARRY TRUDEAU

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