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McCain vows change in Washington on final night

BY DAVID ESPO AND ROBERT FURLOW
The Associated Press

ST. PAUL — John McCain, a POW turned political rebel, vowed Thursday night to vanquish the “constant partisan rancor” that grips Washington as he launched his fall campaign for the White House. “Change is coming,” he promised the Republican National Convention and a prime time television audience.

To repeated cheers from his delegates, McCain criticized fellow Republicans as well as Democratic rival Barack Obama as he reached out to independents and disaffected Democrats.

“We were elected to change Washington, and we let Washington change us,” he said of the Republicans who controlled Congress for most of the past 15 years.

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More than 40 million see Palin's speech

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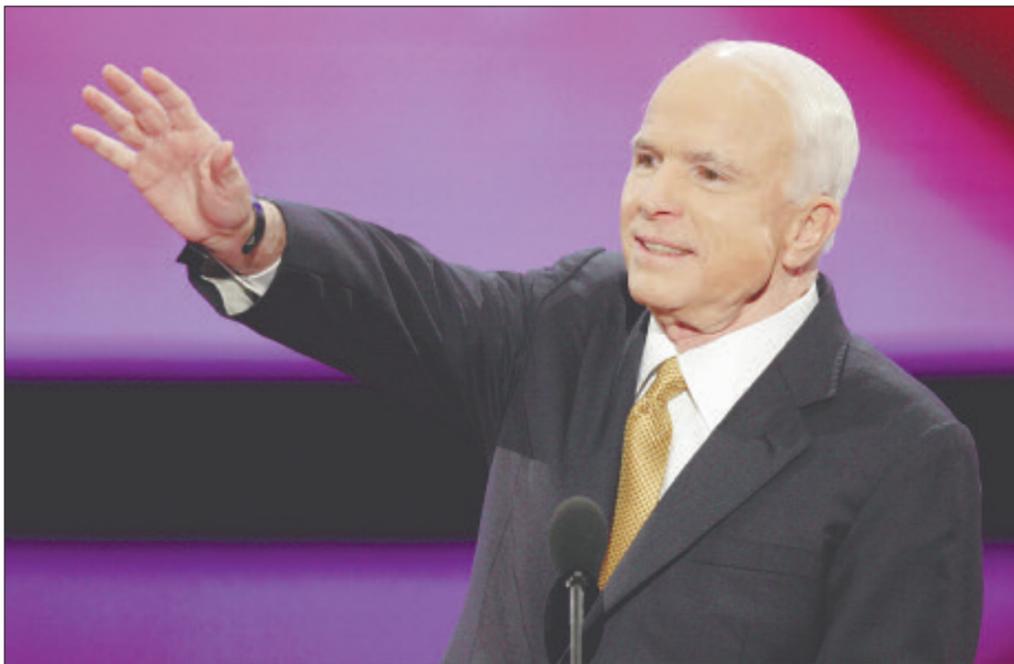
raise them. I will cut government spending. He will increase it.”

Before McCain's speech, the climax of the final night of the party convention, delegates awarded the vice presidential nomination to Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin, the first female ticketmate in Republican history.

“She stands up for what's right and she doesn't let anyone tell her to sit down,” McCain said of the woman who has faced intense scrutiny in the week since she was picked.

“And let me offer an advance warning to the old, big-spend-

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RON EDMONDS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Republican presidential candidate John McCain waves during his acceptance of the party nomination at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minn. on Thursday.

GOP faithful see McCain's speech as sincere, patriotic

The convention's end signals the beginning of a fall presidential campaign

BY PATSY R. BRUMFIELD
Daily Journal

A sincere speech from a true patriot is Tupeloan John Oxford's assessment of Republican presidential nominee Sen. John McCain's acceptance speech at the national convention.

Oxford and others throughout America watched McCain speak Thursday night, frequently in-

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SUSAN WALSH/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Texas delegation shows their support for Republican presidential candidate John McCain and his running mate, Sarah Palin, during the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minn. on Thursday.

Public Works privatization examined by council

Some say it's premature for the council to seek proposals from outside companies.

BY EMILY LE COZ
Daily Journal

TUPELO — After a surprise vote this week, the City Council seems poised to privatize the Public Works Department, but officials and employees say it's unnecessary and are upset by the hasty manner in which it's all happening.

On Tuesday, the council voted 6-3 to seek requests for proposals — RFPs — from private companies that could take over the city's Public Works Department. The motion was made by Ward 2 Councilman Thomas Bonds, who said he wants to learn more about the possibilities of privatization and thinks it could save taxpayers money.

His colleagues who voted down the measure, however, said there are other ways to get information about privatization without seeking RFPs. Companies that respond to RFPs typically do so with the understanding that the city wants to contract with whichever company submits the best offer.

And that has many of the Public Works Department's 73 employees upset.

“We've got people with families and in this bad economy with people losing jobs left and right, we at least felt secure here, but not anymore,” said longtime employee Susan Dempsey. “All of a sudden this comes out of left field by a councilman aiming himself at the Public Works Department for whatever reason.”

However, Bonds said it's been discussed — at least privately — among council members for several years and that employees likely would get hired by the private firm. He also said other municipalities in the state have privatized their Public Works departments with excellent results, although he could not recall those cities' names at the council meeting.

Are there others?

But Ken McCool, a spokesman with the Mississippi Chapter of the American Public Works Department, said he's unaware of any city here with a wholly privatized department.

“We do have a world of waterworks and wastewater that were privatized in the '80s,” he said. “And now it seems they're going back, because a lot of it can be run cheaper under city control.”

Tupelo was among those cities that turned over portions of its work to private companies: ESG Operations handles the city's wastewater treatment, and Waste Management does trash collection and recycling. Previously, Tupelo Water & Light handled wastewater treatment, and the Public Works Department handled sanitation. But the privately run businesses have done a good job, city officials have said.

ESG, based in Duluth, Ga., also does Public Works management. The Tupelo council learned about one of ESG's success stories at a Mississippi Municipal League meeting in Tunica two years ago and has since been interested in the concept, said ESG President Clay Sykes.

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What's Public Works?

The Tupelo's Public Works Department has responsibility for maintaining city buildings, equipment, vehicles, streets, ditches, drainage, bridges, traffic signs, street markings, right of way mowing and maintenance of most other city property.

Oxford lines up its own debate events

With tickets virtually unavailable for the debate, the community will host its own viewing on the Square.

BY ERROL CASTENS
Daily Journal Oxford Bureau

OXFORD — Admission to the first official Presidential Debate of the 2008 campaign, to be held Sept. 26 at the University of Mississippi's Gertrude C. Ford Center for the Performing Arts, will be the hottest ticket in town — ever.

Only a few locals, including about 150 Ole Miss students chosen by lottery, will join campaign staffers, Commission on Presidential Debates members and other VIPs in the Ford Center. Even Ole Miss Chancellor Robert Khayat and a group of major supporters will watch by TV.

Andy Mullins, executive assistant to the chancellor, noted that audience members have sometimes disrupted debates for the main audience — the tens of millions of peo-

ple who watch by television. As a result, he said, “The Commission ... really would prefer not to have anybody in there.”

Warm-up event

Oxford and Lafayette County schoolchildren are having election-related events throughout the early fall. Among them: presentations by local elected officials and Bramlett Elementary School's “Parade of Presidents,” in which students will portray former U.S. presidents and First Ladies.

Oxford will have its own community debate events. Area residents will have consecutive convocations on the night preceding the Presidential Debate and again for the debate itself. On Sept. 25, a patriotic observance will be held downtown from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

“We're calling the event ‘Celebrate America: Debate '08,’” said committee member Hugh Stump. “We're setting up on the Square to celebrate

our community spirit ... the debate and our democratic process.”

Choirs from Oxford and Lafayette High Schools will sing patriotic songs, and Rising Star Fife and Drum Corps will present the colors. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and members of the Barksdale Boys & Girls Club will hand out small American flags, followed by a balloon release.

That Thursday's offerings also will include political stump speeches. Candidates expected include U.S. Sen. Thad Cochran and fellow Sen. Roger Wicker, with challengers former state Rep. Erik Fleming and former Gov. Ronnie Musgrove, and U.S. Rep. Travis Childers and his opponent, Southaven Mayor Greg Davis.

If scheduling permits, Oxford's homegrown “Thacker Mountain Radio” variety show may be a part of the festivities.

Debate night

On Sept. 26, Oxford residents will join fellow Americans in watching

the debate on television.

Giant video monitors will be set up on the courthouse lawn so Oxonians can view it together. Downtown Council member merchants will extend retail hours Thursday and Friday.

Planners hope joining together as a community to celebrate government by the people will help regenerate the excitement that elections used to foster in Lafayette County.

“Bring a lawn chair,” Stump urged, “and step back in time to when locals gathered at the courthouse to hear election results.”

Contact **Errol Castens** at (662) 281-1069 or errol.castens@djournal.com.



Andy Mullins from Ole Miss takes questions at Lafayette County & Oxford Public Library about the presidential debate and Oxford.

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Online Xtra Most-used words from John McCain's speech
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