

POLITICS*Helen Dewar*

Keep the Faith, Republican Urges Democrat Lieberman

Democratic vice presidential nominee Joseph I. Lieberman has drawn support from a curious source—a Republican Senate candidate—in his disagreement with the Anti-Defamation League over Lieberman's emphasis on religious faith in the campaign.

The boost came from Rep. **Bill McCollum** (R-Fla.), who seems to be reaching out nearly everywhere—to Jewish, Democratic, moderate, female, gay and conservative religious voters—in his race to succeed retiring Sen. **Connie Mack** (R-Fla.).

"Joe Lieberman is a man of faith and I respect that," McCollum wrote Wednesday to the ADL, which had just questioned Lieberman's evocation of religion in campaign speeches. "If he chooses in his campaign for the vice presidency to raise issues of faith, then I see no reason why he should be criticized," McCollum added.

Earlier in the week, McCollum traveled around the state vowing to fight for House passage of hate-crimes legislation, which the Orlando Sentinel interpreted as an effort to "soften his image as a hard-nosed conservative."

The Senate-passed legislation would expand hate-crime protections to include violence based on gender, sexual orientation and disabilities, along with race, religion and other previously protected areas. "Some things are just wrong and this is one of them," McCollum declared in a statement describing himself as a longtime supporter of the legislation.

But his Democratic rival, state Insurance Commissioner **Bill Nelson**, called him a "wolf in sheep's clothing" who has never fought to strengthen hate-crime laws. Rep. **John Conyers Jr.** (Mich.), ranking Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, said McCollum, as chairman of its crime subcommittee, helped block the bill and backed off a promise two months ago to stop doing so. McCollum and the House Republican leadership are the "single greatest obstacle" to the bill's passage, Conyers said.

GOP Convention Chauffeurs Unpaid

At least 26 drivers who ferried GOP lawmakers around Philadelphia during last month's Republican National Convention have yet to be paid, owing to a dispute between House Majority Whip **Tom DeLay's** political action committee and its contractor.

The impasse, first reported Friday in the Philadelphia Inquirer, came after the executive director of DeLay's Americans for a Republican Majority (ARMPAC) became convinced the Arlington-based SDI Special Services Group had shortchanged the number of chauffeurs it was supposed to provide during the GOP gathering. DeLay (R-Tex.), who is legendary for taking care of his colleagues, had promised rides for House members 24 hours a day.

ARMPAC executive director **Jim Ellis** said in an interview Friday he had provided SDI president **Francis Perry** with a \$202,600 advance to provide 125 drivers at a total cost of no more than \$290,000.

"Now it's becoming painfully obvious he hasn't paid these drivers. We kept up our part of the bargain, and it appears they're not being compensated for the services they provided," said Ellis, who stopped a payment to SDI of \$50,000 right after the convention ended. "We are going to all our legal lengths to make sure they're paid their money."

Neither Perry nor his lawyer could be reached for comment Friday.

Staff writer Juliet Eilperin contributed to this report.

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