



Everything Alabama

PRESS-REGISTER

Political analysts play to crowds

Duo says young voters to pack Obama at polls

Sunday, June 29, 2008

By DAVID FERRARA
Staff Reporter

POINT CLEAR – A pair of renowned political analysts told a crowd of business leaders and lawmakers here Saturday that the presidency is Barack Obama's to lose and that, come November, Democrats would likely have a firm grasp on control of national politics.

Though a majority of the roughly 400 people inside the Grand Hotel ballroom for the Business Council of Alabama's annual governmental affairs conference seemed to support the anticipated Republican nominee, Arizona Sen. John McCain, the analysts told them that Obama, an Illinois senator and the presumptive Democratic nominee, had overwhelming support among voters who may go to the polls for the first time.

“You keep saying that Americans are not going to vote for someone with so little experience,” said pollster and consultant Frank Luntz, who is sometimes seen on cable news shows. “You are so wrong.”

Luntz and Larry Sabato, a political professor at the University of Virginia who also appears on cable news networks, both said Obama would lure college-aged voters to the polling places.

“I think they’re going to vote,” Luntz said, “and I think they’re going to vote in record numbers.”

Sabato agreed.

“They will speak and say and pledge more than they will deliver,” he said. But “for the first time ever, they’re going to come close their percentage of the population.”

Luntz told the crowd that he had a Republican background, but “I love what (Obama) is saying because I feel it.”

Sabato was just as blunt.

McCain needs to “roll the dice” in order to have a shot at the presidency, Sabato said, by steering away from the Iraq war and exploiting Obama’s inexperience.

Sabato expects more voters to say they would vote for Obama than actually would, “but he will have to try very hard to lose,” Sabato said. “Now, the Democrats are good at trying hard to lose.”

Some well-known Mobile and Baldwin county political figures — such as state Sen. Trip Pittman, R-Montrose, state Rep. Randy Davis, R-Daphne, state school board member Randy McKinney, and two-year college Chancellor Bradley Byrne — were among those

attending around the conference, which started with a breakfast with Gov. Bob Riley.

Luntz, who had the crowd rising, applauding and laughing, took several jabs at national political figures.

Of McCain’s possible running mate, Luntz said, “there’s just one prerequisite: They need to know CPR.”

Luntz later took questions from the crowd toward the end of his speech. Pittman rose and asked whether the analysts were concerned about “meat and potatoes” or “governance,” rather than polling number.

Luntz didn’t miss a beat.

“You talked about meat and potatoes,” he told Pittman, who wore a beige button-down shirt with a busy design. “Looking at that shirt, obviously that’s a focal point of yours.”

Luntz’s wit buried another question from state Rep. Jack Williams, R-Birmingham, who was dressed for the humid day.

“The first thing I say is that representatives shouldn’t wear shorts,” Luntz said.

© 2008 Press-Register. All rights reserved.