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# Hopes for the Obama Presidency

*Marshal the Power of Government*

**By Katrina vanden Heuvel**

President Barack Obama will need to act swiftly and invest political capital -- along with trillions of dollars -- in a sustained recovery program. While many caution our new president to tread carefully, the reality is that half-steps will not lay the groundwork for a new economy that is more just and fair. Only by effectively marshaling the power of government can Mr. Obama improve the actual conditions of peoples' lives -- and consign antigovernment evangelists to the dustbin of history.

Fortunately, Mr. Obama has a mandate for change. People support reconstruction of America's crumbling physical infrastructure, and of our society. Here are a few steps I hope Mr. Obama will take: Reverse our deepening economic inequality by using this country's still immense wealth to assure that all Americans have the health care, housing and education they need; re-engage the world with wisdom and humility about the limits of military power; cut billions from wasteful defense budgets that empty our treasury without making us more secure; tackle the deep corruption in a financial system that consistently favors corporations over workers; respond with urgency to the climate crisis with an Apollo-like project to make America a clean-energy innovator; restore our tattered Constitution; protect a worker's right to organize; define a new spirit of sacrifice and service; clean up our elections; and reaffirm his campaign-trail commitment to end not just the war in Iraq but also "end the mindset that took us into" that war. Do not endanger the promise of this administration by escalating militarily in Afghanistan, further draining resources that are vital for rebuilding here at home.

That's a bold agenda millions can believe in. In fact, it's what millions voted for.

**Ms. vanden Heuvel is editor and publisher of The Nation.**

*Let's Show Each Other Some Respect*

**By Glenn Harlan Reynolds**

I agree with Barack Obama on some issues and disagree on others, but my hopes for the Obama presidency have mostly to do with tone. By reaching out to conservative columnists, and by going out of his way to say that he thinks George W. Bush is "a good man," Mr. Obama has made some efforts to transcend the nastiness that has emanated from much of the Democratic Party over the past eight years, where open hatred of Mr. Bush and Republicans has been a major source of social bonding. That is a wise move on his part, as it makes it less likely that Republicans will return the favor. Venomous hatred by the opposition seriously harmed the Clinton and Bush administrations, and Mr. Obama will have a much more successful presidency if he can avoid similar problems. Whether this approach succeeds or not, however, will depend on whether his followers go along; in this, it is an early test of President Obama's ability to lead.

I will make one policy proposal. Some of my fellow libertarians hope that the Obama administration will put an end to the drug war. I hope so too, but I'm not too optimistic. Instead, I propose a smaller step toward freedom -- eliminating the federally mandated drinking age of 21. This mandate was a creature of Elizabeth Dole (who is no longer in the Senate to complain at its abolition), and it has unnecessarily limited the freedom of legal adults, old enough to fight for their country, to drink adult beverages.

What's more, as the 130 college presidents of the Amethyst Initiative have noted, rather than promoting safety, it has largely created furtive and less-safe drinking on campus. As a former professor of constitutional law, President Obama knows that the Constitution gives the federal government no legitimate role in setting drinking ages. Returning this decision to the states would be a step for freedom, a step toward honoring the Constitution, and a step away from nannyism. It would also be a particularly fitting act for this administration. Barack Obama received enormous support from voters aged 18-21. Who better to treat people that age as full adults again?

**Mr. Reynolds is a blogger and law professor at the University of Tennessee.**

### *Tax Cuts and Fiscal Discipline*

**By Sarah Palin**

Especially evident in these trying economic times is America's need for affordable, abundant and secure energy. This means American energy resources developed through American ingenuity and produced by American workers. I applaud President Obama's focus on alternative and renewable energy, and here in Alaska we've joined the effort: I have asked Alaskans to focus on obtaining 50% of our electric generation from renewables by 2025. In the meantime, we must not abandon oil and gas exploration and development. In fact, Americans should demand the cooperation of the major oil producers so that Alaska's vast supply of clean natural gas can be brought to market. Alaska stands ready to positively contribute to the nation's markets and energy needs.

Another step on the path to economic recovery is to let Americans keep more of their income. Mr. Obama and Congress could make this happen with permanent tax cuts and by adhering to a path of fiscal discipline. When congressional appropriation trains run too hastily, they accumulate excess baggage, spending more taxpayer money. Leaving more money in American pockets through tax cuts and fiscal discipline stimulates the business-investment and job-creation climate -- the climate for economic recovery.

Finally, we are extremely proud of our men and women in uniform. Mr. Obama and Congress must continue to guarantee a strong national defense by modernizing and equipping our armed forces; by treating active-duty military and veterans fairly; and by supporting the families of our service members. America will face difficult challenges in the years ahead. As Mr. Obama takes the helm, our prayers are with him as he seeks direction for our great nation.

**Mrs. Palin is governor of Alaska.**

### *Black America Could Have Done Better*

**By Shelby Steele**

When one's candidate loses in American politics, it is only good manners to offer best wishes to the winner. And I wish Barack Obama well as the new president of the United States. I hope he gets to govern in a quiet world. And I am proud that America could elect a black president, though I've known this was possible at least since 1996, when Colin Powell might well have beaten a then weak Bill Clinton. So I feel earnest goodwill toward this new administration, but I'm afraid my actual "hopes" for it run to the negative.

I hope this administration does not succeed in dumping vast amounts of printing-press money into the economy, so that taxes must later be raised to withering levels. I hope it fails to universalize health care or to sustain race-based affirmative action. I hope school choice happens in inner cities despite Mr. Obama's animus toward it.

Barack Obama's victory was an ideological defeat for modern conservatism and a devastating blow to the Republican Party. It wasn't just a case of one centrist candidate slipping past another centrist candidate at the finish line. This