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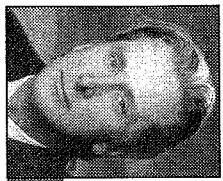
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by Michael Levine

# Lieberman's Presidential Bid Is Already Over

**As an active member of the Southern California Jewish community and a celebrity media consultant who has authored 12 books on communications, it pains me to point out an unpleasant truth.**

Despite the recent Gallup Poll showing Sen. Joseph Lieberman leading the field of Democrats who have declared their 2004 presidential candidacy, Lieberman isn't going to win the Democratic nomination. His campaign is over before it began.

Before Al Gore picked Lieberman as his vice presidential running mate in the 2000 election, Lieberman's reputation in the U.S. Senate was as a conservative, sometimes more popular among the Senate Republican leadership than that of his own party.

Lieberman was not beloved by the teachers' unions, which disliked his Senate votes in favor of Republican bills instituting school vouchers.

During the Monica Lewinsky scandal, Lieberman accused President Clinton of "ob-

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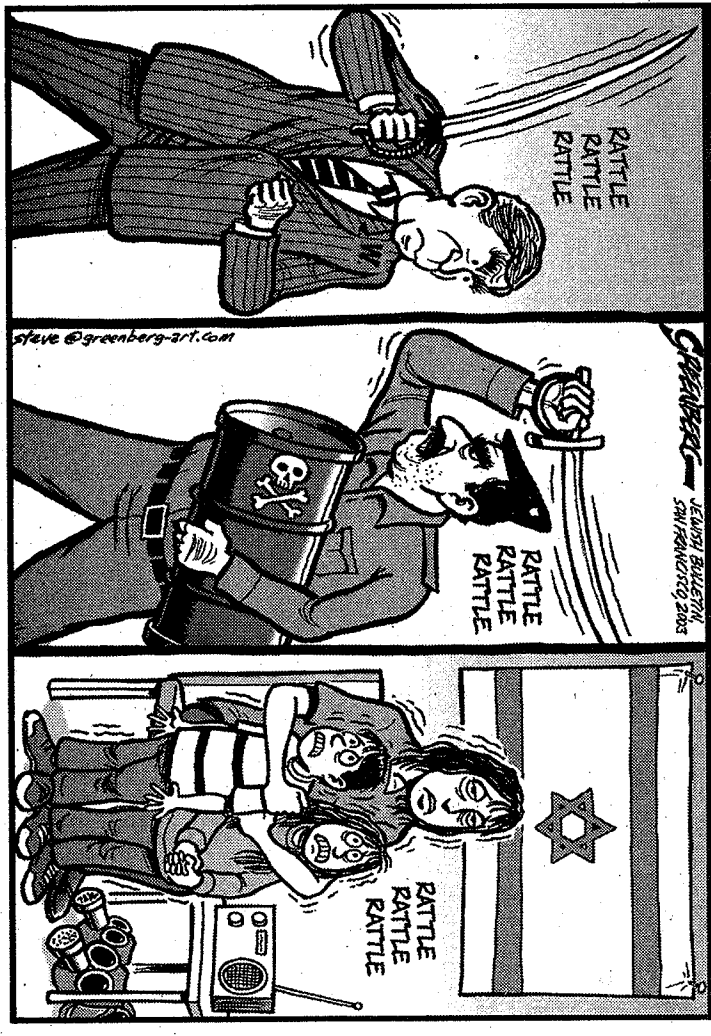
Lieberman is too religious. This is another way of saying that he's too Jewish. It's a bit of a puzzle, this Jewish discomfort with PDJ (Public Displays of Judaism), Jews who value the sepa-

Jewish president. It would be a shame if American Jews, for truly flimsy reasons, were not. See page 27 for more on Lieberman.

struction of justice ... he has lied under oath," saying he'd be hard pressed to vote against any congressional censure short of removal from office.

Lieberman attacked the Democratic Party's sugar daddies in Hollywood for putting too much sex and violence into the media. He

## Greenberg's View



## Already Over

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even supported Republicans exploring privatization of Social Security, the third-rail of Democratic Party politics since it was institutionalized by Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Then the Connecticut senator showed his core principles meant little the instant

he joined the Gore campaign. Lieberman abandoned almost every position out of step with the left wing of his party, reversing himself on school vouchers, denouncing his own flirtations with Social Security privatization and joining fellow Democrats gloating over Clinton's complete exoneration. He even attempted, unsuccessfully, cuddling up to Hollywood.

After the campaign, Lieberman re-

turned only to opposing media violence. In Hollywood, Lieberman is only a little more popular than Jerry Falwell.

But even if Lieberman could run far enough to the left in 2004 to make the Democratic primary voters forget his ideological flip-flops, a Lieberman presidential candidacy has more toxic problems.

To begin with, Lieberman is a terrible public speaker. His voice is gravelly, his presentation academic and timid. Not to

put too fine a point on it, but Lieberman's speeches sound like he's kretching all the time.

Far worse — and it pains me to say this more than anything else — the complications that would ensue were a religious Jew elected president of the United States would be daunting, both for a Jewish president and world Jewry.

Islamic terrorists would vex U.S. relations with friendly Islamic countries by targeting Israeli, Jewish and U.S.-friendly Arab communities worldwide, knowing they could hold a Jewish American president's foreign policy hostage to their threats. The consequences of this vulnerability could weaken the United States in the war against terror, in trade negotiations, in energy dependence on oil producers and in the United Nations.

Should the United States experience another tragedy like Sept. 11 or a worse terrorist attack from a weapon of mass destruction during a Jewish presidency, the scapegoating from anti-Semites on both far left and far right would cripple the American presidency. Support for Israel, solid since 1948, could come into serious question. For the first time in half a century, anti-Semitism might become an acceptable part of political discourse in the mainstream media. If that seems far out, consider the anti-Catholic sentiments in the mainstream media following the priesthood's sexual scandals.

Recall that during John F. Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign, Kennedy, a Roman Catholic, was forced by persistent questions to declare that his first allegiance was not to the Vatican. Is there any doubt that Lieberman would have to swear that he would never place the survival of Israel ahead of the interests of the United States?

All of these would be problems even if Lieberman didn't have to face off in November 2004 against a sitting president. Lieberman would be running against President George W. Bush, who, despite late-night jokes, has shown himself to be a savvy politician and an effective public speaker.

President Bush defied conventional wisdom by leading his party to control of both houses of Congress during the 2002 off-year elections. He has remained faithful to his core constituency, without allowing them to manipulate him into losing the center, with examples including Bush chiding Jerry Falwell in blaming gays for the Sept. 11 attacks and quietly encouraging Trent Lott to abandon his position as Senate majority leader after Lott's racially clumsy remarks.

It's possible that, despite a high approval rating, Bush isn't unbeatable in 2004. Certainly, his father managed to squander his popularity following Gulf War I with his backing away from, "Read my lips, no new taxes!"

Should Bush lose his edge because of a weak economy or a bad patch of road in Gulf War II, whoever steps up to take his place had better have more original ideas and a more exciting presentation of them than Lieberman.

Otherwise, as Republican Bill Simon learned in the 2002 California governor's race against Democrat Gray Davis, just because most of the people think the incumbent did a lousy job, it isn't enough to convince them you can do any better. ■

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