For a wealth of voters, try a presidential lottery

By THOMAS KOLSKY

Over the past 40 years, with only a few exceptions, participation in the national elections has been declining. In 1996 only 49 percent of those eligible to vote did so. Nowadays, as Americans are preoccupied with work, game shows, sports, reality television and relational problems, it is doubtful whether even the most strenuous campaign efforts by Gov. George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore could induce more Americans to vote this November.

Once again, only about half of the electorate is expected to come to the polls. What can be done to turn this unfortunate situation around?

Until now, lectures, guilt management and scare tactics have failed to produce results. What is needed is a real incentive — a reward mechanism — to stimulate greater voter turnout. Only the prospect of tangible gains might attract a large number of Americans to the voting booth. This could be accomplished by means of the establishment of a national presidential election lottery, modeled after the now-existing state lotteries.

On Election Day, as they line up to enter the polling booth, voters would be given the opportunity to purchase presidential election lottery tickets. The lottery drawing would take place on election night, immediately after the closing of the polling places in California, with the results to be announced immediately following the pronouncement of the presidential winner.

Experience has shown that the prospect of winning millions of dollars has never failed to excite popular imagination. The lure of money would bring out the voters in droves. In fact, even most of those who had never previously participated in the electoral game would instantly become enthusiastic voters.

There would be no more apathy. Indeed, the newly energized citizens would surely buy multiple lottery tickets, as they often do in state lotteries. With hundreds of millions — if not several billions — of dollars in the presidential election lottery coffers, it might be possible to create hundreds of $1 million prizes.

It is not farfetched to imagine that the potential multibillion-dollar earnings from the lottery might possibly suffice to pay for the public financing of elections and thus easily resolve the controversial campaign finance issue once and for all.

How exciting it would be if, on election night, America would have a new (or re-elected) president and hundreds of new millionaires.

As the revitalized nation celebrates the promise and riches of democracy, the president-elect and the fortunate lottery winners could meet for a photo opportunity and a joint television appearance to show the entire world the rich rewards of democracy.

Learning to associate elections with the prospect of self-enrichment, the American people would instantly become frequent and enthusiastic voters. In presidential elections up to now, the people often have been asked to take a chance on choosing the lesser of two evils (candidates). Why not allow them the opportunity to gamble on the prospect of winning some real money as they exercise their democratic right?

Let us face it. There is no need to reinvent our political system or to tinker foolishly with reform at the edges.

The presidential election lottery is clearly an idea whose time has come. It is the answer to apathy. Now is the time to try it.

Thomas Kolsky teaches history and political science at Montgomery County Community College in Whitpain Township.

THE REPORTER, September 29, 2000
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE'S
2000 - 2001 Lively Arts Series

THE CULTURAL AFFAIRS OFFICE IN COOPERATION WITH
THE SOCIAL SCIENCES DIVISION

PRESENTS

FOCUS ON POLITICS:
THE 2000 ELECTIONS

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER 2000 INTERVIEW/TALK SHOW
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CENTRAL CAMPUS

HOSTED BY TOM KOLSKY

PROGRAM

PART I - OCTOBER 11
HUMOR AND POLITICS
Video Presentation and Lecture by Tom Kolsky

PART II - OCTOBER 18
THE ISSUES OF THE 2000 ELECTIONS
GUEST PANEL
DR. LEE BENDER
Economist
Chairman of the Business and Computer Science Division, MCCC

MR. ALBERT MILLS
Political Scientist
Adjunct Instructor of Political Science, MCCC

MR. GEORGE PHILLIPS
Political Scientist
Former Professor of Political Science, now retired, MCCC

MR. BERWOOD YOST
Political Scientist and Opinion Researcher
Instructor of Political Science and Director
Center for Opinion Research, Millersville University

PART III - OCTOBER 25
THE CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN
GUEST PANEL
MR. FRANK BARTLE, ESQ.
Chairman of the Montgomery County Republican Committee

MR. MARCEL GROEN, ESQ.
Chairman of the Montgomery County Democratic Committee

PART IV - NOVEMBER 1
THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN
GUEST PANEL
MR. FRANK BARTLE, ESQ.

MR. MARCEL GROEN, ESQ.

PART V - NOVEMBER 8
ASSESSMENT OF THE 2000 ELECTIONS
GUEST PANEL
MR. ALBERT MILLS
MR. GEORGE PHILLIPS
DR. JOSEPH SPEAKMAN
Professor of History, MCCC
AN APRIL 2002
INTERVIEW/TALK SHOW
AT MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE
CENTRAL CAMPUS, BLUE BELL

ISSUES AND INSIGHTS:
FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EAST
THE MIDDLE EAST WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF
A THREE-PART INTERVIEW/TALK SHOW HOSTED

BY TOM KOLSKY
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE
AT MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WHERE?
SCIENCE CENTER, AUDITORIUM 214

WHEN?
12:30-1:30 P.M. ON THREE CONSECUTIVE
WEDNESDAYS,
APRIL 10, APRIL 17, APRIL 24

TOPICS AND DATES:
APRIL 10:
“WELCOME TO THE MIDDLE EAST”
AN INTRODUCTORY LECTURE BY DR. KOLSKY

APRIL 17:
“THE PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI CONFLICT.”
TOM KOLSKY INTERVIEWS DR. THOMAS M. RICKS,
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY FROM VILLA NOVA UNIVERSITY

APRIL 24:
“THE UNITED STATES AND THE MIDDLE EAST.”
TOM KOLSKY INTERVIEWS DR. LAWRENCE DAVIDSON,
PROFESSOR OF HISTORY FROM WEST CHESTER UNIVERSITY

ADMISSION IS FREE and OPEN TO THE PUBLIC.
ISSUES AND INSIGHTS
INTERVIEW/TALK SHOW

"FOCUS ON POLITICS 2002"
HOST: TOM KOLSKY

WHEN?
THREE WEDNESDAYS: OCTOBER 9, 16 AND 23
12:30-1:30 p.m. (downtime)

WHERE?
SCIENCE CENTER AUDITORIUM 214

THE PROGRAM:
(I). OCTOBER 9: COPING WITH NATIONAL TRAUMA

PANELIST:
*****DR. MARTIN GELMAN,
PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND PSYCHOLOGY
*****DR. ANNMARIE DONOHUE,
INSTRUCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY

(II). OCTOBER 16: CONTEMPORARY TRENDS
IN U.S. FOREIGN POLICY

A DIALOGUE WITH
***** DR. RICHARD E. MARSHALL,
EMERITUS PROFESSOR OF HISTORY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE AND FORMER DEAN OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS AT MCCC

(III). OCTOBER 23: OPEN DISCUSSION OF THE DIRECTIONS
OF AMERICAN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES:

***** (A). A BRIEF HUMOROUS INTRODUCTION BY TOM KOLSKY:
"Can We Bring Humor Back after a National Tragedy?

*****AN OPEN EXCHANGE OF VIEWS ON DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES
BEFORE THE 2002 ELECTIONS (A KIND OF TOWN MEETING)

*****EVERYBODY IS INVITED TO THIS COMMUNITY BUILDING PROGRAM

AN APPEAL TO FACULTY COLLEAGUES:
*****BRING YOUR STUDENTS
*****GET PDC CREDITS
*****SHARE YOUR INSIGHTS (ALSO APPLIES TO NON-FACULTY)
Interview: talking war with Dr. Kolsky

By John Titlow

Dr. Thomas Kolsky is a Professor of Political Science and History at Montgomery County Community College, where he has taught since 1971. With a PhD from George Washington University in Middle Eastern History, he is an expert on the region. Dr. Kolsky regularly organizes and hosts panel discussions on political and international issues at the college.

Question: Across the globe, public opinion is overwhelmingly against the US invasion of Iraq. But in the United States, polls show a majority in support of the war. How might this be explained?

Thomas Kolsky: Opinions tend to fluctuate. Around the world many recent American hegemony as well as the mannerisms and language of President Bush. Among many there is a love-hate relationship toward the United States. Many around the globe perceive us too arrogant and self-righteous. The style of the reaction of our leaders to 9-11, including the adoption of Bush Doctrine, with its emphasis preemption, turned initial world sympathy to increasing suspicion of our motives in international relations.

The negative reaction around the globe to our attack on Iraq reflects this suspicion. Our public tends to view world affairs as a kind of athletic contest that must be won. We support our team. What is puzzling is that Congress has been virtually absent in the rather modest national debate about both the preemption policy and the war with Iraq.

Q: At first, it was predicted to be a short war, based on a few assumptions, which have turned out to be false. Now that the war is expected to last much longer, can Americans more realistically expect a draft one day?

TK: The draft would be much fairer than the current system. With a professional (volunteer) military, the children of our elites are deprived of the privilege of serving our country. The draft was abolished to quiet political dissent. If we find ourselves in continuous warfare, we might have to re-introduce the draft.

Q: Liberals say it's "blood for oil". Conservatives insist we are acting in the interest of "Iraqi Freedom." What is your take on the United States' intentions in going to war with Iraq?

TK: It seems to me that the war against Iraq represents an implementation of the Bush Doctrine. Iraq probably does not have nuclear weapons. It does have one of the most unattractive political leaders of our time. That combination makes it the weakest link in the so-called "Axis of Evil" and the best test of the doctrine. Oil is also a consideration, although a partial one.

Q: In what ways might this war affect the lives of the average college student?

TK: The war will affect us in that it will generate much resentment against us around the world. It will make it more difficult for our college students to travel around the world as they had been accustomed.

Q: Does fighting this war make us more or less safe from terrorist attacks?

TK: The war will not make us more secure, unless we adopt a more comprehensive policy to fight the roots of terrorism. This will require multilateralism. We cannot fight terrorism alone.

Q: Is this war legal?

TK: We can always hire lawyers who create legal fig leaves. Our administration is relying on U.N. Resolution 1441 and the Congressional vote last fall.

Q: How might this war affect the outcome of the 2004 presidential election?

TK: Much depends how the war ends. If we face prolonged popular resistance in Iraq and major turmoil in the Middle East as well as an economic downturn, Bush's position would be precarious in 2004.

Q: As an expert on the Middle East, what do you see as some possible long-term effects of the US invasion of Iraq? What, if any, impact will it have on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict?

TK: I think the war against Iraq will force us to take a more energetic position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We must put a lid on that festering wound or we might face disaster of Biblical proportions in the Middle East. A creative resolution of the conflict would have a positive, calming effect on the whole area. The big question is whether we have the political will to be creative.
Middle East series focuses on Iraq war, Israeli occupation

By John Titlow

A series of talk show-style discussions titled “War and Peace in the Middle East” was organized and hosted by Montco political science and history professor Thomas Kolsky for three consecutive Wednesdays last month in the Science Center auditorium.

Accompanied by a thick, extensive packet of news articles, maps, timelines and government documents assembled by Kolsky, the Issues and Insights program provided those in attendance with a wealth of information on the region’s history and current crises: as well as an opportunity to voice their opinions and engage in open debate.

“I don’t represent anybody except myself and my thoughts,” said Kolsky, who has been organizing political presentations and public debates at the college since 1986. He said he hoped to “provide a forum for the expression of all kinds of views, even views unacceptable to the majority.”

The series began on April 9 when Yael Mester, Israel’s Vice Consul in Philadelphia, appeared as a guest speaker representing “The Israeli Perspective” on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

Mester, who graduated from the University of Tel Aviv, said that Israel is ready to make concessions to the Palestinians, as long as it can be guaranteed peace. He voiced his support for the U.S. -led war to oust Saddam Hussein, but saw no direct connection between Israel and the conflict with Iraq.

Mester got a mixed reaction from the crowd, but faced plenty of challenges from students and other visitors displeased with Israeli policies toward the Palestinians in the occupied territories. One woman drew a controversial comparison between Israeli Defense Forces bulldozing Palestinian homes and Nazi treatment of Jews in Europe during the 1930s.

“If you want the terrorism to stop, why don’t you stop killing innocent people?” demanded one student.

Another student cited a number of atrocities carried out by the Israeli army and condemned the country’s record of violating U.N. Security Council resolutions and Geneva Conventions.

Others were less at odds with the guest speaker’s position: A man in the audience expressed his outrage over what he called “anti-Israel sentiment” which he perceived to be on the rise in the United States.

The same man sat in the audience the following week, as Dr. Kolsky showed a video of an episode of PBS’s Frontline program from February 20, which detailed the origins of the Bush doctrine and its emphasis on “pre-emptive” war. Visibly irritated, the man, describing himself as “someone from the community” who supports the war, railed against Dr. Kolsky as “biased” in his presentation of information, a charge refuted by others in the audience.

The episode of Frontline, titled “War Behind Closed Doors” told the story of a leaked document written by Paul Wolfowitz during the first Bush administration, proposing a “pre-emptive” strategy.

Continued from page 1

Continued on page 4

I do prefer humor,” said Kolsky, presenting a series of ten cartoons to the audience. “Some of these cartoons make more sense to me than some of the policies I hear about.”

The political humorist and published author went on to provide some of his personal insights into the region’s turmoil and encouraged people to inform themselves about the Middle East by reading books and international press. He then opened the floor up to members of the audience for an hour-long debate.

Dr. Kolsky, who has organized panel discussions and public debates at the college for more than fifteen years, plans to host similar events in the fall, but expresses doubt about the future of his Issues and Insights series.

“A few of my colleagues think that my activities have more impact on the outside community than on the campus,” said Kolsky, who plans to focus more on writing and drawing political cartoons.

On Sept. 26, 2001, Dr. Kolsky organized a panel discussion at MCCC reflecting on the Sept. 11 attack on America. On the one-year anniversary of the attack, he hosted a seven-member panel discussion on the impact of 9-11, which nearly filled the large auditorium of the Science Center.

Continued on page 4
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTS:

"ISSUES AND INSIGHTS:
FOCUS ON POLITICS,
FALL 2003"

A Three-part Interview/Talk Show
Hosted by Tom Kolsky

"Issues and Insights" this fall focuses on a number of highly relevant political topics that are designed to shed light on matters of interest to the college community and the general public. This program will be presented on three consecutive

**Wednesdays, October 15, 22, and 29.**

WHERE?
SCIENCE CENTER, AUDITORIUM 214

WHEN?

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 15**
12:30-1:30 P.M.
"THE MARRIAGE OF CARTOONS AND POLITICS WITH PULITZER PRIZE WINNING CARTOONIST TONY AUTH"

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 22**
12:30-1:30 P.M.
"POLITICAL DISSENT IN TIMES OF CRISIS WITH ACLU'S ANGUS LOVE"

**WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 29**
7:00-8:00 P.M.
"REFLECTIONS ON GEORGE ORWELL AT 100 WITH MARK AMDAHL, STEPHEN BLUMM, AND CHARLIE REILLY"
Smart Bombs, Foolish Choices

Tom Kolsky's humorous take on world politics
(PDC credits for faculty)

Wednesday, November 5th
12:15 - 1:30
in the Library's upstairs lounge

Refreshments!
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTS:

"ISSUES AND INSIGHTS:
INTERVIEW TALK SHOW"
SPRING 2004"

A Three-part Interview/Talk Show
Hosted by Tom Kolsky

Tom Kolsky, the creator and organizer of "Issues and Insights," is professor of History and Political Science at Montgomery County Community College.

"Issues and Insights" this spring will focus on three subjects of current public interest: a commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the landmark Brown v. Board of Education (1954) Supreme Court decision, a discussion of Mel Gibson's controversial film "The Passion of the Christ," and an examination of the state of health care in America today.

Wednesdays, APRIL 14, 21 AND 28
WHERE?
SCIENCE CENTER AUDITORIUM 214

WHEN?

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14
12:30-2:00 P.M.
A COMMEMORATION OF THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF
"BROWN v. BOARD OF EDUCATION (1954)"

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21
7:00-8:30 p.m.
MEL GIBSON'S "THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST"

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 28
12:30-2:00 p.m.
"HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA: CURRENT STRENGTHS,
WEAKNESSES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE"
A light-hearted panel discussion on the cultural and political impact of Mel Gibson’s film, “The Passion of the Christ” held in the Science Center auditorium on April 21 focused heavily on the film’s violent nature and the debate over possible anti-Semitism, which most panelists agreed was present in the film.

“I found the portrayal of the Jewish leaders to be deeply troubling,” said Rabbi David Ackerman, one of the five panelists and spiritual leader of Tiferet Bet Israel in Blue Bell.

Most of the other panelists, all Christian scholars, acknowledged that anti-Semitic messages could be seen in the film, but disagreed about their intent and severity. Rev. Truman Brooks, Senior Pastor at the United Methodist Church in Lansdale, said interpretation of the scenes deemed anti-Semitic by leaders in the Jewish community depend on the viewer’s pre-existing attitudes toward Judaism, saying that the film was unlikely to inspire anti-Semitism in those who do not already harbor it.

“I saw this film with Christian eyes,” said Dr. Paul Aspan, an Associate Professor of Theology at St. Joseph’s University. “But I was troubled by the line in the film, ‘Let his blood be on us and on our children,’” spoken by Jewish characters. While biblically accurate, the controversial line was removed from the film’s English subtitles, but the Aramaic audio of the quotation remained.

The primary dissenters in the anti-Semitism discussion were Aspan, who seemed skeptical about the presence of anti-Semitism in the film, and Rev. Borniekaren Mullen-Holtz, a pastor at the United Methodist Church in Montgomeryville and a professor at MCCC. Mullen-Holtz said that if anti-Semitism did exist in the film, it was not deliberate. However, she said that she was concerned about the reaction to the film in the Muslim world.

“It depends on your definition of anti-Semitism,” added Dr. Thomas Kolsky, host and creator of the Issues and Insights series, of which this panel discussion was a part.

Continued from page 1

Michael Cesario, a member of the adjunct faculty at MCCC agreed with most of the other panelists that the violence and human suffering in the film was excessive and difficult to watch. All members stressed the importance of understanding that the film is just one interpretation of Christian scripture.

“[The film] is the gospel according to Mel Gibson,” said Cesario.

After discussing the questions asked by Dr. Kolsky, the panel then took a series of questions from the audience. The remainder of the discussion focused on the anti-Semitism issue, with one audience member recounting childhood memories of anti-Jewish riots that followed Passion plays in Poland. Another audience member, Dr. Sheldon Weintrub said he was mostly concerned with how the film would affect younger, more impressionable viewers and their attitudes toward Jews.

“I went to see what Christ did for me,” said one audience member. “I’d read it before, but I wanted to see it. This movie will never die.”

Another member of the audience criticized what they saw as the panel’s anti-Islam bias.

“At the end of the day, I think it’s a good thing that he made the movie,” said Aspan, who along with Rev. Mullen-Holtz strongly encouraged discussion and debate about the film.

Continued on page 2

MCCC Advantage
May 2004
HOST AND MODERATOR:
Dr. Kolsky is Professor of History and Political Science at Montgomery County Community College. He has taught at Montgomery County Community College since 1971. A political humorist, caricaturist and lover of classical music, he enjoys creating and sharing humor of all kinds.

CO-SPONSOR:
The League of Women Voters of Montgomery County
Mrs. May Belle Ball, President
The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization founded in 1920 as a "mighty political experiment" aimed to help newly enfranchised women exercise their responsibilities as voters. Though non-partisan, the League does take political positions. Recently, it supports campaign finance reform, gun control, and electoral reform. The league puts out Voters Guides that give biographical information about the candidates and brief statements of the candidates' positions on the issues.

PANELISTS:
Leland Bowie, a historian with wide teaching experience, who spent twenty years in the Middle East, including nine months in post-Sadam Iraq, received his B.S. from Cornell College; M.A. from Harvard; and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He is currently an adjunct instructor at Montgomery County Community College.

Jeff Prushankin, a historian and author of the forthcoming book, A Crisis in Command, received his B.A. from Ohio University; M.A. from Villanova University and Ph.D. from the University of Arkansas. His specialty is military and Civil War history. He is currently an adjunct instructor at Montgomery County Community College.

Benn Prybutok, Director of Criminal Justice Studies and Fire Science at Montgomery County Community College, received B.A. and M. A. degrees from Temple University and did advanced work at Columbia University. Currently he is studying law. He teaches political science courses as well as a course on terrorism.

Don Rich, a political scientist and economist, who received his B.A. and M.A. from Johns Hopkins University, is currently an adjunct instructor of political science and economics at the Montgomery County Community College. His expertise is in international relations and economics.
ISSUES AND INSIGHTS
FOCUS ON POLITICS: 2004 ELECTIONS

------ "FOREIGN POLICY" ------

FORUMS ON THE 2004 ELECTIONS
AT MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

HOSTED BY TOM KOLSKY

Wednesday, Oct 27, 2004
12:30-1:30pm
Science Center Auditorium 213

PANEL:

DEMOCRATIC PARTY
Marcel Groen
CHAIRMAN OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE
REPRESENTING ALYSON SCHWARTZ

REPUBLICAN PARTY
Carl Fogliani
MELISSA BROWN'S CAMPAIGN MANAGER

LIBERTARIAN PARTY CANDIDATE
Chuck Moulton

CONSTITUTION PARTY CANDIDATE
John McDermott
Cultural Affairs and Social Sciences Division
Present
2006
ISSUES AND INSIGHTS
APRIL 5
Science Center, 213
12:30-2:00

HAPPY BIRTHDAY
BEN
300th CELEBRATION

PANELISTS:
JANE ADAMS, MICHAEL MINI, KENNETH MONT, SAMUEL WHYTE
MODERATOR:
THOMAS KOLSKY

DISCUSSION WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A
CAKE-CUTTING CEREMONY, REFRESHMENTS AND SINGING.

Montgomery County
Community College
MONTGOMERY COUNTY COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESENTS:

ISSUES AND INSIGHTS, FALL 2006
FOCUS ON 2006 ELECTIONS:
“AMERICA CONFRONTS THE WAR AND IMMIGRATION”
Creator and host: TOM KOLSKY

I

“VIETNAM AND IRAQ: COMPARISONS AND LESSONS”
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11, 2006
12:30-2:00 P.M.
SCIENCE CENTER 214

PARTICIPANTS:
LELAND BOWIE
Historian and former advisor to the Baghdad municipal government

JESSE HODGES
Vietnam War special forces officer and historian of the war

BENN PRYBUTOK
Criminal justice and terrorism specialist

II

“THE IMMIGRATION QUESTION IN 2006”
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2006
7:00-8:00 P.M.
SCIENCE CENTER 213

PARTICIPANTS:
WENDY CASTOR HESS
Immigration lawyer listed in “Best lawyers in America”

DICK POLMAN
Philadelphia Inquirer political analyst and University of Pennsylvania lecturer