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PERSPECTIVE: Crystal Balls

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Beginning in January 1975, New York Times columnist Bill Safire offered his readers a multiple-choice test to elicit their political predictions for the year ahead. With nods to Safire and my psychic friend Dionne Warwick, I present my own prognostication quiz to Gay City News readers, but with a progressive, LGBT twist.

My completely subjective answers are at the end of the column.

1. The 2008 Democratic ticket will be:

- a) Clinton-Obama, because the New York senator will have no choice but to award the #2 spot to her Illinois colleague given that he came so close to winning.
- b) Obama-Biden, because the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Biden will help Obama sway any voters who doubt his foreign policy gravitas.
- c) Obama-Bloomberg, because Obama will choose the New York City mayor in a master stroke to preempt the billionaire's independent candidacy and to position the ticket as centrist.

2. The 2008 Republican ticket will be:

- a) McCain-Huckabee, because the former Arkansas governor and Baptist preacher will bring far-right evangelical support to McCain, whom the far-right otherwise mistrusts.
- b) Romney-Huckabee, because even though those two guys hate each other, it's the Mormon ex-Massachusetts governor's only prayer for fundamentalist Christian support.
- c) McCain-Bloomberg, because the Arizona senator will choose the billionaire in a master stroke to preempt his independent candidacy and to position the ticket as centrist.

3. The most likely outcome in 2008 will be:

- a) Despite Governor Eliot Spitzer's unpopularity, Democrats will win back the New York State Senate because the state will go blue all the way in a presidential election year.
- b) The referendum to ban marriage equality will win in Florida, but the Democratic presidential nominee will win Florida despite Machiavellian GOP motivations behind the referendum.
- c) Increased African-American turnout for an Obama ticket will help Obama carry at least one solidly red Republican state.

4. The Employment Non-Discrimination Act in 2008 will:

- a) Pass the Senate but be vetoed by President George W. Bush, which the Human Rights Campaign will then ignore in fundraising appeals that tout ENDA's "Congressional passage."
- b) Pass the Senate and be signed by Bush, because even though White House officials talked about a veto last year, the president himself was curiously silent.
- c) Not pass the Senate because some progressive senators won't want to deal with the LGBT community's own split over a transgender-exclusionary version of ENDA that passed the House.

5. The next big LGBT victory will be:

- a) The Connecticut Supreme Court, saying civil unions are not equality, mandates marriage equality and fuels momentum in blue states that have civil union or domestic partnership laws.
- b) The Republican presidential nominee will declare, during a debate this fall, that he would strongly consider letting gays serve openly in the military if experts recommended it.
- c) Congress reverses itself and takes a second pass at agreeing on a hate crimes bill that advances to the president's desk and includes protection for the transgender community.

6. In national LGBT politics:

- a) A major Hollywood star will come out of the closet, which will have a significantly beneficial effect on public opinion about LGBT issues.
- b) An openly LGBT candidate running for public office will give a prime-time speech at the Democratic National Convention.
- c) News will emerge about behind-the-scenes differences that took place at the Human Rights Campaign over ENDA, keeping the story alive through 2008.

7. In the 2008 elections for the U.S. House and Senate:

- a) In an overwhelmingly Democratic year, Democrats will pick up 15 to 20 seats in the House and 4 to 5 seats in the Senate.
- b) Because the Democrats still aren't great at exploiting voter discontent, they will pick up about 10 seats in the House and 2 or 3 seats in the Senate.
- c) With the winning Democrat having few coattails, Democrats will pick up about 5 seats in the House and only one seat in the Senate.

8. The LGBT hero of 2008 will be:

- a) Barney Frank, for acknowledging the pain he brought to the transgender community over ENDA, and promising to support only a trans-inclusive bill in 2009.
- b) Jared Polis, a Democrat from Boulder, Colorado, who becomes the first member of Congress to win his first race as openly gay man rather than waiting to come out on the job.
- c) Maria Shriver, who, though quite straight, convinces California voters to let stand a state Supreme Court decision in favor of marriage equality.

9. The most likely international LGBT development will be:

- a) Though Vladimir Putin retains significant power as he moves from president to prime minister in Russia, his anointed successor as president, Dmitri Medvedev, allows far more LGBT freedom.
- b) With Ban Kee Moon being the least courageous secretary general in a generation, the United Nations continues to look the other way on LGBT human rights abuses.
- c) Newly reported anti-LGBT persecution in Iran will force Bush to speak out proactively on LGBT civil rights for the first time during his presidency.

10. The most interesting LGBT-related question asked during the fall presidential debates will be:

- a) Do you believe homosexuality is a choice?
- b) Once it became clear Larry Craig would not resign from the Senate, should the Senate have removed him from office?
- c) Without telling us you support civil unions, which we understand, can you give us examples of how marriages between two people of the same sex would hurt the institution of marriage?

My completely subjective answers are: 1) a; 2) a; 3) a; 4) a; 5) a; 6) c; 7) a; 8) b; 9) b; 10) c.

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