

OPINION

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Romney is better

In your endorsement of Sen. McCain you characterize him as being tough, charming, etc., and hope those skills would bode well for him in dealing with foreign officials. Yet you fail to mention his penchant for directing vile invectives at anyone who he thinks fails to "get the picture" and one of those favorites expletives is the F-word. Yes, I'm sure using such vulgarities in front of a recalcitrant foreign dignitary will go a long way in advancing U.S. foreign relations and policies.

Now let's take a look at your endorsement of his ability to craft "reform." McCain-Feingold was indeed a bold attempt at campaign finance reform, but, like our term-limits proposition, it appeared better on paper than in practice. McCain-Feingold did a lot to hamper corporations and people of means from influencing elections, but did little to apply the same rules to unions and of course help give rise to many of the now notorious "527s" — thank you Sen. McCain. I, for one, am still waiting for McCain to apologize for unexpected consequences. In my opinion, if McCain was such a straight-talker, he would at least acknowledge this, but instead he loves how this bill has effectively abrogated many U.S. citizens' freedom of speech rights.

And, in light of the growing home mortgage debacle, I preferred to throw my lot in with Romney, rather than go with a former member of the notorious "Keating 5" and the 1980s savings and loan crash that caused so many Americans and investors to lose all of or much of their life savings.

Romney also has a strong track record of being able to reach across the aisle and work with people of divergent philosophy and thoughts. He got a lot done in Massachusetts including passing with the Massachusetts state Legislature a health care reform package, something our governor and Legislature have to date been unsuccessful in accomplishing.

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Republicans: *Pick McCain*

PUNDITS — and we mean Republican ones — are asking “who can save the GOP?” Following an unpopular president and the Democratic victory in the House and Senate in 2006, the next Republican candidate's road to the White House will not be smooth. In the days before presidential primaries, picking the flag bearer was done by party leaders from within smoke-filled convention halls. Today, the task is put to the people, in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and soon in about two dozen states — including California — on Super Duper Tuesday, part of the messy but quite democratic process of running for president.

As do we, many people seem to like the straight-talking war hero from Arizona, **Sen. John McCain**. He's tough, charming, honest and experienced in foreign affairs — a traditional strength of Republican nominees — and is the only candidate to support President Bush's troop surge in Iraq, which shows strong signs of working. His victory in South Carolina all but ended Mike Huckabee's campaign. McCain may not have shaken Mitt Romney, winner in Michigan, whose shifting stands leave Republican voters and us sometimes scratching our heads, but McCain has demonstrated resilience for a man whose campaign was left for dead in the late summer.

While he wasn't the one many Republicans believed would be heading for the White House when the campaign started, he's shown himself to be the best man for the top of the Republican ticket. He's our clear choice for the Republican presidential primary in our state on Feb. 5.

As Michael Gerson, our new columnist and former George W. Bush speechwriter, wrote in the latest issue of Newsweek, the Republican Party is somewhat a victim of its own successes. Big Republican issues

of welfare reform, reducing taxes and fighting crime have been won. Republicans must adapt to newer issues such as a troubled economy, global warming and energy, health care and education. McCain is capable of addressing these issues as no one else around him is.

As a candidate and a man, McCain embodies what's good about America. He graduated from the U.S. Naval Academy and fought for his country in Vietnam as a Navy pilot; he spent 1967-1973 as a prisoner of war.

He has resisted adjusting his positions by shifting in political winds. He's stood for a balanced immigration plan (one supported by President Bush) and believes in working toward limiting greenhouse emissions.

Will his support for more troops in Iraq — at the time, a risky position — help him or hurt him? That's not entirely clear in a war that has lost the support of most Americans. But he honestly told it like it was even when that meant criticizing the president and Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld for a short-sighted war strategy.

He is a man of character, and it shows.

On the campaign trail, he appears loose, real, authentic. Evan Thomas of Newsweek writes that in “the shadow of Bush” McCain “gives off the aura of a man who has nothing left to lose.” Even neo-conservative commentator William Kristol writes that McCain comes off as “courageous and principled” as compared to Romney, who appears managed and “modern,” and Rudy Giuliani, who shot himself in the foot with a failed strategy of not participating in early primaries.

McCain is a different kind of Republican. Some may find him not conservative enough; some too much so. Labels are not what leadership is about. He's the candidate who possesses the right mixture of experience and chutzpah to lead his party up from the ashes.