IT'S YOUR MONEY

Even Ed McMahon would pass on this one. Opponents of a health care bill are offering a free trip to the capital as an incentive to generate letters to Congress. The “America Speaks Sweepstakes” had been popping up on various Internet sites. “Complete the form below to send a free fax to Congress and be automatically entered in the America Speaks Sweepstakes,” the offer reads. It’s paid for by Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, which leads a coalition that includes the AFL-CIO, and the National Governors Association, and is opposed to the bill. It’s not the first time a group has tried to encourage participation. A National Resources Defense Council newspaper once offered Rolling Stones concert tickets to encourage messages to Congress and the White House.

A SATIRICAL HISTORY

EMPIRE RISING

PART I

BY DAVID HORSEY

In the days of the consul Bilious Clintonius, the Roman Republic was at peace and awash in wealth from the Valley of Siliconia. But not all were content.

The Bacchanalian revels of Clintonius appalled the high priests. Many senators were suspicious of his scheming wife, Hillaria, and disdainful of his chosen successor, Gorian the Stiff. As the time approached for the Senate to choose a new consul, the foes of Clintonius searched for a man to oppose Gorian and recapture power for the wealthy families of Rome...
SUNDAY, JULY 6, 2003
SECTION F

Web users understand that those “Page cannot be displayed” messages can be as frustrating as, well, trying to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. But blog bounders can unearth a canister of comic relief with a visit to google.com. Once at that site, in the “search” space, enter “weapons of mass destruction.” Then, click on “I feel lucky.” Then, look closely; the seemingly familiar message actually reads: “These Weapons of Mass Destruction cannot be displayed.” It’s a fun send-up of Internet annoyances and the ongoing search for deadly weapons. But in this case, there are suggestions that the user “Click the Regime Change button, or try later.” “On the Security Council tab, click Consensus” and “Click the Bomb button if you are Donald Rumsfeld.”

The nation’s richest people paid a lower proportion of their income in federal taxes in 2000 than in 1992. New figures from the Internal Revenue Service show that the adjusted gross income of the country’s top 400 taxpayers totaled almost $70 billion in 2000, for an average of $173.9 million. The richest 400 in 1992 accumulated an average of $151 million. Over the nine-year period, the minimum adjusted gross income to get on the top 400 list rose from $24.4 million to $86.8 million. In 2000, the 400 paid 22.3 percent of their income to federal income taxes, down from 26.4 percent in 1992. The richest 400 made 1.09 percent of U.S. income in 2000, more than double the percentage in 1992.

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By David Horsey

Last week’s history told how Dubbia the Incoherent, son of Bushius the Elder, became consul of the Roman Republic.

Glad to see the departure of the old consul, Bilious Clintonius, the rich families of Rome raised up the verbally challenged Dubbia to be their candidate. A split vote in the Senate and a curious ruling by the Supreme Soothsayers gave Dubbia victory over Gorian the Stiff. As the economy faltered, Dubbia’s position seemed tenuous. But, after a quick, successful war with the terrorist Talibanians, the new consul began to gain respect.

Now, Dubbia and his advisers have turned their gaze to another enemy — the wicked king of the Saddamites and a risky war that might make or break Dubbia’s political career...

A SATIRICAL HISTORY

EMPIRE RISING

PART II

BY DAVID HORSEY

The attack began. With the Saddamites having been unceremoniously crushed, the Islamic republics invaded the capital city of Bagdad and took the oil-rich provinces. Saddam was captured and brought back to the seat of power to be hanged.

Recalling in memory, Dubbia began to think about the solution. Yes, the government was deep in debt, the economy was still weak and those Saddamites.aspx were never to be trusted. But Dubbia was not a man to be outdone. He began to plan his project.

Meanwhile, the king shipped out of town and took a job as a Rand McNally salesperson.

IT’S STILL THEIR MONEY

The nation’s richest people paid a lower proportion of their income in federal taxes in 2000 than in 1992. New figures from the Internal Revenue Service show that the adjusted gross income of the country’s top 400 taxpayers totaled almost $70 billion in 2000, for an average of $173.9 million. The richest 400 in 1992 accumulated an average of $151 million. Over the nine-year period, the minimum adjusted gross income to get on the top 400 list rose from $24.4 million to $86.8 million. In 2000, the 400 paid 22.3 percent of their income to federal income taxes, down from 26.4 percent in 1992. The richest 400 made 1.09 percent of U.S. income in 2000, more than double the percentage in 1992.

IS WANT THE FAST FOOD WE WANT? 100% CORRECT. DO THE SADDAMITES REALLY HAVE LOTS AND LOTS AND LOTS OF WEAPONS? WILL THEY GUESS what we are thinking? WHO KNOWS? IS IT AN INTELLIGENCE THE ONLY WAY TO FIND OUT? TRY ANOTHER!...
BUMPER POLL
With the Republican and Democratic presidential tickets filled out, the bumper crop of political polls will intensify. Prognosticators will take the pulse of likely voters from coast to coast, right up to the only poll that counts, the one on Nov. 2. Already, one emerging polls firm has released its decidedly non-scientific yet nonetheless telling poll. RainierPolls.com, among other things, political humor stickers. According to the company’s sales, George Bush and John Kerry are neck and neck at 50 percent each. More interesting is the pro/anti ratio. Forty-nine percent of the stickers sold are anti-Bush, and only 15 percent anti-Kerry. Meanwhile, 35 percent of the bumper stickers are pro-Bush and just 1 percent pro-Kerry.

THEY SAID IT
“It seems I’m a uniter, not a divider.”
– Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., on being used in campaign ads for both Bush and Kerry. McCain has also been mentioned as a vice presidential prospect for both Bush and Kerry.

“I would say, in my judgment, that lives have been saved, terrorists have been disrupted, and our country is safer.”
– Rep. Porter Goss, R-Fla., on the success of the USA Patriot Act. President Bush is said to be considering Goss, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, as the next director of the CIA.

A SATIRICAL HISTORY
EMPIRE RISING
PART III
BY DAVID HORSEY
We return now to the fabled days of the Roman Republic…

Dubbia the Incoherent, Consul of Rome, sent his legions east and claimed a great victory over the Saddamites. But that moment of triumph was followed by a year of struggle against vicious rebels who continued to attack the Roman occupiers. At home, critics charged that Dubbia’s counselors lusted for empire and had trumped up excuses to justify the war. And now, there was a rival – Senator Kerriolanus – ready to challenge Dubbia for the right to rule in Rome.

In that troubled hour, Dubbia sought solace in his religion. From one deity in particular he looked for aid and wisdom – a former consul so beloved by the people that they made him a god: Gipperius…

P-I editorial cartoonist David Horsey is a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize. The first two installments of this satirical history can be found in his latest book, “From Hanging Chad to Baghdad.”

INSIDE
MARK TRANK: A day after a hot new discussion designed with one goal: Get voters to take action to make every mail claim. The solution is “e-receivers” were a cash, not paper.

SWING STATE: States remain toss-ups up to Election Day in November; Washington isn’t sure. But John Kerry’s point of view shouldn’t be.

F-SECTION
FOCUS
SUNDAY, JULY 11, 2004
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Mark Trank: A day after a hot new discussion designed with one goal: Get voters to take action to make every mail claim. The solution is “e-receivers” were a cash, not paper.

Swing State: States remain toss-ups up to Election Day in November; Washington isn’t sure. But John Kerry’s point of view shouldn’t be.
INVOLVEMENT IN IRAN

Last July, Canadian journalist Zahra Kazemi died after being detained while taking photos during protests in Tehran against Iran’s ruling establishment. Her death occurred 17 days after she was released. Authorities at first said she had suffered a stroke, but later concluded a prison beating had led to a brain hemorrhage. A low-level intelligence agent has been charged. With preparations under way for the trial to open yesterday, Iranian authorities said no Canadian observers would be allowed. Canada recalled its ambassador in protest. Iranian reformers charge a coverup to protect higher-ranking hard-liners. Moderate President Mohammad Khatami apparently agrees, saying the agent is innocent and hoping the court “with accuracy and courage” will name the wrongdoer.

HE SAID IT

“We are stretched pretty far now and I don’t think we could do it.”
– Sen. Pat Roberts, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, talking to The Associated Press about military action against North Korea or Iran.

“Well, you could do it, but I don’t think that will be desirable.”
– Sen. Roberts, adding to his thoughts.

FOCUS

A great many Romans feared Dubbia and his war. Their fervor could prove stirring enough to elect Dubbia and his cohorts from power if they had a charismatic leader. Unfortunately, they only had Kerrielius…

Kerrielius prefers Grold to Latten

Kerrielius opted to give a speech in the Forum to deflect the rumors. When he rose to speak, the crowd went wild. But for him…

... and furthermore, if I may be allowed to speak on both sides of the issue at once in a perfectly serious tone of voice, so long they seem never to come to an end…

A SATIRICAL HISTORY

EMPIRE RISING

PART IV

BY DAVID HORSEY

As the time approached for the Senate to elect a new consul to rule the Roman Republic, the incumbent, Dubbia the Incoherent, had a big problem. His trumped-up war against the Saddamites was dragging on and on. Rather than “mission accomplished,” it was becoming mission impossible.

In Rome, Dubbia was confronted by adversaries on all sides – even among once-loyal advisers who now were telling the world the consul had made idiotic and dangerous mistakes. In desperation, Dubbia sought guidance from the gods.

While his trial struggled, Dubbia moved to neutralize his other big problem: the unpopular war. His solution: Give the problem to someone else.

Rome does hereby declare that you are now severer king of the Saddamites.

Dubbia was feeling confident again, now of victory in the coming election. But then…

Relax, Dubbie. Even though your populace favor rich aristocrats, there’s a group of pamphlets you can win with a little studying:

A coup d’etat later, Dubbia is a nobody.
Once again, Election Day was fast approaching in the Roman Republic. Who would the Senate choose as consul? Would they pick Senator Kerriolanus or would they re-elect Bushius the Younger (better known as Dubbia the Incoherent)?

Kerriolanus blamed Dubbia for the mess in Mesopotamia – the costly war against the Saddamites – and demanded that the consul acknowledge his huge blunders. But Dubbia did not believe in admitting mistakes. That would be a sign of weakness when there was an empire to defend. It would be a hint of fallibility when he knew he spoke for the gods and the gods spoke through him…

\[ \text{Dubbia for Incoherent had faith that strength grew from certainty.} \]
\[ \text{Once his inner circle} \]
\[ \text{told him what to think,} \]
\[ \text{that was all he wanted to know.} \]
\[ \text{In the past,} \]
\[ \text{there had been those who offered him alternative opinions…} \]

So, it was an uncomfortable day when Kerriolanus rose to debate Dubbia in the Senate.

\[ \text{The debate led many to wonder if Kerriolanus} \]
\[ \text{had more grace than the incumbent.} \]
\[ \text{Starting so more confrontations, Dubbia scribbled back to the} \]
\[ \text{friends and} \]
\[ \text{political} \]
\[ \text{friends who most} \]
\[ \text{heard his fanciful version of reality…} \]

\[ \text{Jupiter sends thunderbolts to light the} \]
\[ \text{path of our legions.} \]
\[ \text{Then, Mars} \]
\[ \text{leads them into battle. Apollo melts} \]
\[ \text{the swords of the bad gods and we win!} \]
\[ \text{Freedom on the march!} \]

\[ \text{But Dubbia did not believe in admitting mistakes. That would be a sign of weakness when there was an empire to defend.} \]
\[ \text{It would be a hint of fallibility when he knew he spoke for the gods and the gods spoke through him…} \]

\[ \text{The streets of Rome shone with angry partisans as the Senate gathered to vote.} \]
\[ \text{Cally! I’m annoyed: No one can stop me now!} \]
\[ \text{and the empire rose.} \]

\[ \text{Ah – ah – ah-BOOSH!} \]
\[ \text{I should call that ‘take a hike’ by him!} \]

\[ \text{Ah – ah – ah-BOOSH!} \]
\[ \text{I’m not going to say ‘Bushius’!} \]
\[ \text{Yes! Dubbia wins!} \]
FOCUS
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2007
SECTION C
Inside
Mark Trahant: If the Fed, the Congress or the Bush administration step in and offer a solution to the mortgage crisis, it's not because of that mess. It's the greater danger – deflation – that should be in our public discourse.

Seattle schools: The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling disapproving the Seattle and Louisville school desegregation plans shocked the nation. Yet the principle of colorblindness Chief Justice John Roberts affirmed is not – and has never been – the law.

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SNARK
You'll never believe who has been saying that he's not gay as far back as 1982. Larry Craig. Now, maybe he's not gay (cough) but it does seem odd that his name came up back then, when there was yet another scandal involving politician and underage male pages.

Craig felt certain that as a single man (he's now married), he would be the target of rumors anyway. An ABC News report on YouTube from July 2, 1982, includes an interview with a former page who said he knew about 15 or 20 "congressional employees" who were involved in having sexual contact with teenage boys and supplying them with drugs. – D. Parvaz

HITTING THE MARK
Sanity prevailed on Thursday and Texas Gov. Rick Perry agreed to commute Kenneth Foster's death sentence to life in prison. Foster, who was spared just six hours before he was to die, was a former gang member who was sentenced to death in 1996 for being an accessory to a 1996 murder, when he was 19. He was the lookout when the getaway car cut off feet from where his friend shot and killed 25-year-old Michael LaHood during a botched hold-up. Foster was shot and convicted at the same time as the triggerman Maurice Brown, who is alive today and is serving a life sentence for the same murder.

A SATIRICAL HISTORY
EMPIRE RISING
PART VI
BY DAVID HORSEY
Four years ago, I began what I called a historical satire – an allegory in cartoon form set in the days of the Roman Republic with obvious parallels to current American politics.

That initial round of cartoons, which later provided the opening sequence in my book, "From Hanging Chad to Baghdad," introduced Dubbia the Incoherent, son of the venerable Roman leader, Bushius the Elder. In a disputed election decided by an erroneous reading of entrails, Dubbia defeated Gistan the Stiff to become consul of Rome. Manipulated by his small coterie of advisors – Dichelismenus Maximus, Rove the Spinner and Rummi, master of the legions – Dubbia proceeded to take Rome into an ill-conceived war against the Saddamites in Mesopotamia.

A year later, I returned to the story. In that second series, the war had gone from quick victory to quagmire and Dubbia feared he would not be chosen consul for a second term. However, a campaign of character assassination against his opponent, Kerriolaenus, and another questionable vote in the Senate ultimately won the day for Dubbia.

When last we saw him, Dubbia was convinced the gods favored him.

"I'm anointed!" Dubbia said to himself in the cartoon's final frame. "No one can stop me now!"

Today, the story picks up again and will be concluded next Sunday. Along with series two, this third sequence forms a chapter of my latest book, "Draw Quick, Shoot Straight," which will be released next month. The entire series can be found at seattlepi.com.

Time has passed and, just as political reality has shifted in the actual world, so have things changed in my fantasy of Rome. Fate has taken a hand and Dubbia faces a quandary that will ultimately bring him face to face with the gods.

So, let's get back to the tale, the next-to-last installment of Empire Rising...
HITTING THE MARK
It’s easy to be overwhelmed by the challenges of salmon recovery in the region. That’s why it’s worth taking into account what has been done. King County’s roads division has been busy replacing fish-impassable culverts. Last year the county opened five miles of stream habitat and a total of 70 miles of habitat has been restored in less than a decade. The county says fish aren’t the only beneficiaries. New culverts allow wood debris to pass through, reducing stream blockages during storms, and the program improves road safety because it reduces the potential for collapsed structures from the old metal culverts. – Mark Trahant

SNARK
Obama for Laden is back in the news – and he looks different. “It does look oddly like he is wearing a false beard,” Richard Clarke, a former White House counterterrorism official, told ABC News. Clarke and other experts say the beard could be a clue as to where bin Laden is hiding, but should a disguise even matter? I remember saying on 9/11 that I hoped we could arrest and bring to trial whoever was responsible. I’d like to see the rule of law be the ultimate application of justice. Instead, we launched a war with only tangential ties to the terrorist action. And we haven’t been able to fall in line with those responsible. – Mark Trahant

Inside
Mark Trahant: We will go to war. We will want to vote in a commander-in-chief and, by extension, the next president. This is when democracy is about. Everyone must feel a part of the process. But the current system is rigged with few choices.

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A SATIRICAL HISTORY
EMPIRE RISING
PART VII
BY DAVID HORSEY
Today, my fanciful chronicle of the Roman Republic reaches its climax. The tale began as Dubbia the Incoherent rose to power, not on his own talents, but through the familiarity of his father’s name and the guile of his cohort of handlers—most particularly, Rove the Spinner and Dickchenius Maximus.

Succeeding Bilious Clintonius, Dubbia won election as consul. He sent his legions to war in Mesopotamia. He won a second election and stood at the pinnacle of power in Rome.

And then it began to unravel. The war went badly. A natural disaster struck. The people turned on Dubbia and, one by one, his closest allies fell from grace.

Now, with his influence withering and his friends all gone, Dubbia must put his fate in the hands of those who control the fate of all mortals: the gods . . .