

August 6, 2007 Monday 12:16 AM GMT

## Analysis: Husband's record in White House complicates Hillary Clinton's presidential run

**BYLINE:** By RON FOURNIER, Associated Press Writer

**SECTION:** INTERNATIONAL NEWS

**LENGTH:** 720 words

**DATELINE:** CHICAGO

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton is running for president on her husband's White House record, and it is a strategy that cuts both ways.

The New York senator and her husband, former President Bill Clinton, constantly remind voters of the U.S. economic prosperity in the 1990s and his record on the environment, college aid and family medical leave. Press releases from the campaign often include sentences that start , "Under the Clinton administration ..."

"Yesterday's news was pretty good," Bill Clinton said last month in Iowa while campaigning with his wife.

But yesterday's news is not always easy to explain today.

A San Francisco blogger made that painfully clear to Sen. Clinton during the Yearly Kos Convention of liberal bloggers this weekend, when he asked whether she would support or repeal four major pieces of legislation enacted during the Clinton administration the Defense of Marriage Act, the Telecommunications Act, the North American Free Trade Agreement and welfare reform.

All four laws are unpopular with liberal voters who historically dominate Democratic primaries and caucuses. The political landscape for Democrats has changed since the 1990s on issues such as gay rights, trade and welfare reform due in part to the rise of the influential and polarizing liberal blogosphere. That means candidates like Clinton must shift, too, or defend their refusal to do so.

The San Francisco man had put Clinton on the spot.

So she hedged and dodged in a complicated set of answers to explain herself.

The Defense of Marriage Act, which denied federal recognition of same-sex marriages and gave states the right to refuse to recognize same-sex marriages, "served a very important purpose," she told the blogger. The law staved off Republican efforts to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban gay marriage, Clinton said, an argument that seems to consign her husband's support of the law to the "necessary evil" category.

It also assumes the voters will buy the assumption that Republicans had the political might to change the Constitution, a Herculean task.

Clinton said she would favor repeal of a provision of the act that theoretically could endanger the federal benefits of gay couples.

The Telecommunications Act is unpopular with Democratic bloggers and other liberals who believe the law has led to rampant media consolidation. The topic received widespread discussion at the Kos convention, which wrapped up Sunday, in light of Rupert Murdoch's purchase of The Wall Street Journal.

Murdoch's massive global media and entertainment empire includes Fox broadcast network, which is vilified by liberal bloggers.

Clinton dodged the issue

"You'd have to ask Al Gore," she told the blogger, referring to the former vice president who spearheaded the Clinton administration's telecommunications policies. "Al was very involved in designing and pushing that through."

It was not lost on Clinton's crowd that Gore has not ruled out a presidential run in 2008. She had just passed the buck to a potential rival.

It is rare to hear Clinton, one of the field's most polished candidates, admit ignorance on a policy issue. But doing so came in handy as she fobbed off the question on Gore.

"He's an expert," she said. "I'm not."

The North American Free Trade Agreement lowered economic barriers between the United States, Canada and Mexico, but many voters believe it has cost the U.S. more jobs than it has produced. It is a constant source of tension for Clinton on the campaign trail.

While she won't commit to repealing NAFTA as some other Democrats do, Clinton puts some distance between herself and her husband by saying one of the cornerstone's of his presidency "did not realize the benefits it ... promised."

His decision to sign the 1996 welfare reform law angered many of his advisers, including some from his wife's political circle. But he felt enormous political pressure to sign the Republican-backed legislation or be branded a liberal in the run-up to his re-election campaign.

The New York senator did not disavow the welfare legislation, but she did not exactly embrace it, either.

"The positives," she told the blogger, "far outweigh the negatives."

She hopes the same can be said about the strategy to run on her husband's record.

EDITORS: Ron Fournier has covered politics for The Associated Press for nearly 20 years.

**LOAD-DATE:** August 6, 2007

**LANGUAGE:** ENGLISH

**PUBLICATION-TYPE:** Newswire

Copyright 2007 Associated Press  
All Rights Reserved