

Against All Odds

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The Issues We Face As a Nation-2006:

- 1) This summer over 60% of the country endured a long drought. Some Western States have been without rain for five years.
- 2) Oil Prices have surged to near record highs.
- 3) The Recovery from Katrina is seen as being too slow by a majority of Americans.
- 4) Separately, it was reported that our Reserves and our Emergency Services would be unable to adequately meet more than one National Disaster at a time. Whether we are faced with man made acts of destruction or a continued rise in Natural Disasters, our response may be insufficient to avoid major loss of live.
- 5) Immigration became a major issue. Groups formed on both sides of the issue. The U.S. Census indicated that most of the population growth in this country has been through immigration. Studies show that most immigrants have jobs. In fact, the unemployment rate for immigrants is lower than that of people born in the United States. The jury is still out on whether they pay their fair share of taxes or use more government services than other groups. Despite our other problems, it looks like immigration may be the top political issue of the coming elections.
- 6) Economic Growth has slowed. There have been more mergers and layoffs. Credit borrowing is up and Consumer Confidence is down. Robots are starting to replace people in the work place. More older Americans are leaving the workforce, with fewer qualified replacements. Outsourcing likely will increase.
- 7) Violence in Iraq continues. Americans are divided on whether we should stay or go. The Iraqi government continues to struggle with extremist groups.

- 8) The debate over Global Warming heats up. Both the United Nations and the International Water Institute report that soon there will be a Global Water Shortage. Investments in water-related companies increase.
- 9) Deaths from "Bird Flu" and AIDS continue to rise, with no end in sight. The long term global health consequences of these two issues could become very serious for the world population. In the United States, Obesity is our #1 Health Problem.
- 10) Power Utilities are stretched thin. The nation's electric power grid was reported as being "outdated." Energy Demand continues to grow at a fast pace. A large number of new coal plants are in the works. There have been more mining accidents with 33 deaths so far this year. In June, the MINE Act of 2006 was passed. Controversy still surrounds the accidents.
- 11) Many Americans seek alternative sources of energy both to keep costs down and to conserve the environment. Other positive trends include the rapid growth of organic farming and the development of hybrid vehicles.
- 12) The Bush Administration has come under intense scrutiny for wiretapping American's phones and for presidential "signing exclusions."
- 13) Wall Street now regards the idea that there would be a Great Wealth Transfer when the Depression Era elderly died leaving their children with large inheritances as being inaccurate. The fact is most Baby Boomers have lived "on the edge" for most of their lives and are saddled by substantial debt.
- 14) While there has been a decrease in traditional "street crime," there has been an alarming increase in white collar and Internet Crime.
- 15) Rumor has it that the next Presidential Election will be between Hilary Clinton and Condoleezza Rice. Whether this is true or not, the next General Elections might prove to be the most exciting political race in a long time.

CAN WE TALK?