

Wisconsin.primary

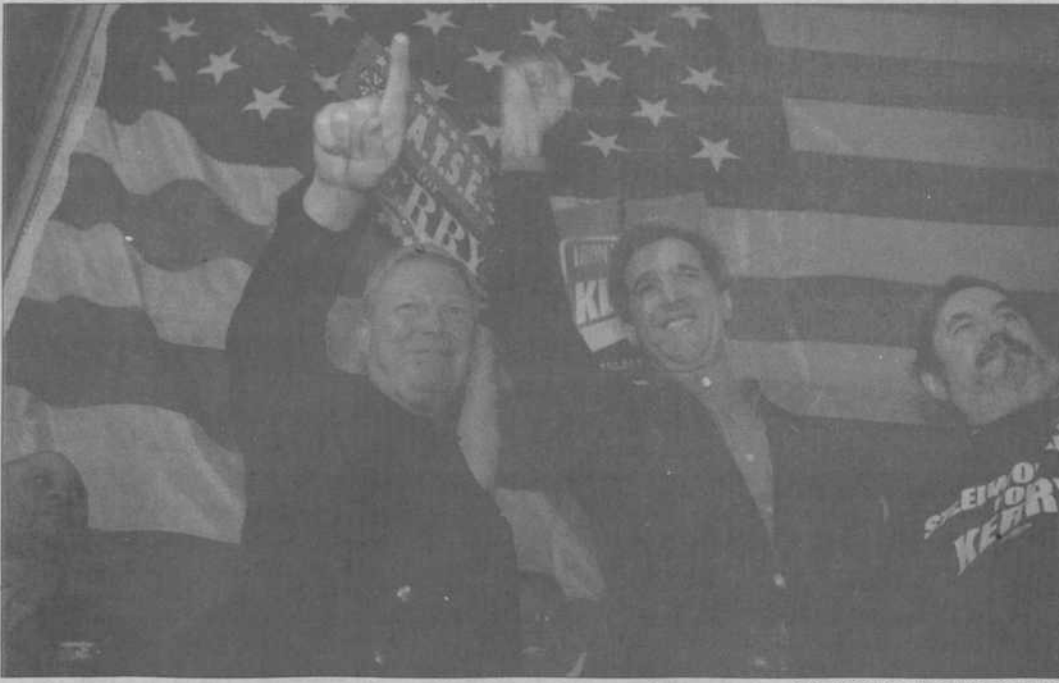


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS

Sen. John Kerry, right, waves to supporters with U.S. Rep. Dick Gephardt, D-MO, during an event where Kerry received an endorsement from labor unions in Milwaukee, Wis., Tuesday.

Kerry wins close race in Wisconsin primary

BY RON FOURNIER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

John Kerry squeezed out victory in Wisconsin, barely holding off hard-charging rival John Edwards who established himself as the front-runner's sole rival as the Democratic presidential race thunders toward a 10-state showdown March 2.

Howard Dean trailed far behind, winless in 17 contests, his candidacy doomed less than a month after he stood atop the Democratic field. The fallen front-runner retreated to Vermont, where he will consider several options, including endorsing one of his rivals, advisers said.

Close race or not, Kerry said, "A win is a win."

Edwards, his dream of a head-to-head matchup now a reality, declared, "We'll go full-throttle to the next group of states."

He pledged to campaign in each of the 10 states holding primaries or caucuses March 2, including California, New York and Ohio, and awarding 1,151 delegates, more than half the total needed to claim the nomination.

The North Carolina lawmaker's breakout was fueled by the highest Republican turnout of the primary season and voters who made their decision in the last week. His deepest support was in the GOP suburbs of Milwaukee.

"That's been happening in other primaries, too," Edwards told The Associated Press in an interview. "Republicans who would consider voting Democratic and independents are the people we have to win over to win the general election. That's why I'm the best candidate to take on George Bush."

Kerry held a wide lead in pre-

election polls, but the surveys did not fully reflect voter sentiments after a statewide debate Sunday, Edwards' criticism of Kerry's free-trade policies and two newspaper endorsements for Edwards. Nor did the polls take into account 11th-hour attacks on Kerry from President Bush's re-election team.

"We underwent a lot of Republican attacks the last week. Notwithstanding those attacks, we showed we can fight back," Kerry told the AP.

"We're winning in every state across the country," he said. "We're going to win the nomination."

Kerry won 15 of the 17 elections to date — seven by nearly half the vote — on the East and West coasts, in the Midwest, the Great Plains and the Southwest. He remains the undisputed front-runner, flush with money and momentum.

Cooperation between U.S., Arab governments has aided war on terror, FBI head says

BY CURT ANDERSON
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Terrorist attacks in Arab and Muslim countries have led those governments to vastly improve their cooperation with U.S. authorities in the war on terror, particularly in cutting off financing, FBI Director Robert Mueller said Tuesday.

Bombings tied to al-Qaida or its sympathizers in Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Indonesia, Turkey and elsewhere have proven to governments around the world that terrorism is not merely a U.S. problem, Mueller told foreign journalists.

"I think countries around the world recognize that numbers of women and children were killed in those senseless acts and don't want to see that happen anywhere in the world," Mueller said.

Although he declined to name specific countries, Mueller said Arab and Muslim countries have made significant strides in helping the United States identify and shut down sources of financing for al-Qaida, Hamas, Hezbollah and other groups.

"You take the money away

from terrorists, they cannot operate," Mueller said during an appearance at the State Department's Foreign Press Center. "We are seeing substantial increased assistance in addressing the financing of terrorism throughout the Middle East."

FBI officials have cited several examples of this cooperation in recent months, including:

— Establishment of a joint U.S.-Saudi task force focused on investigating and eliminating sources of terror financing in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere around the world.

— Joint investigations of terror financing networks with local officials in Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia.

— Action taken by both the United States and Saudi Arabia to block accounts in Bosnia and Somalia of the Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation and Wa'el Hamza Julaidan, described by the FBI as an associate of Osama bin Laden who provided financial support to al-Qaida.

— Four occasions in which the FBI got information from unnamed foreign governments about financing of a pending terror at-

tack and could provide that government with tracking information leading to the arrests of suspected terrorists.

Mueller said that despite the international gains made against al-Qaida and removal of its base in Afghanistan, the group remains a dangerous network with affiliates or sympathizers in many parts of the world. And it remains dedicated to attacking Americans at home and abroad, he said.

"There are groups in many countries — cells — who follow the preachings of al-Qaida and (bin Laden)," Mueller said. "Yes, it is more difficult for them to operate, but there are a number of them who do operate."

"They are a fragmented operation around the world about which all of us must be concerned," he added.

Mueller also sought to assure Arabs and Muslims that the war on terror was not aimed at them for ethnic or religious reasons. He said that "99.9 percent" of Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans are patriotic and oppose terrorists, and that the FBI is committed to investigating instances of hate crime or civil rights violations targeting them.

Commission promises \$2.3 billion for new voting-booth improvements

BY H. JOSEF HEBERT
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — States can expect by mid-May to get a long-awaited \$2.3 billion in federal help to buy new voting-booth equipment and make other election improvements, the head of an electoral reform commission promised.

Millions of voters again will be using the much-maligned punch

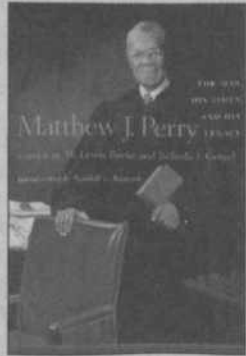
cards in this fall's presidential balloting. Many of the improvements, including plans for statewide computerized voter registration data, aren't expected to be in place before 2006.

Members of the new Election Assistance Commission assured state officials at a conference Monday that they will expedite the distribution of \$2.3 billion in federal funds for election improvements. About \$650 million already

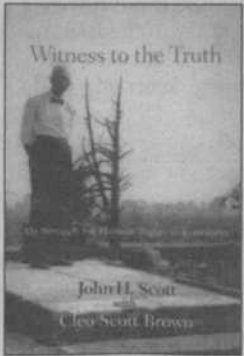
has been provided. DeForest B. Soaries, the commission's chairman, said the various state plans for using the money will soon be published in the Federal Register with funds to be disbursed 45 days after that.

In an interview, Soaries said it is important that the states be given "an absolute commitment from the federal government" that the funds will be provided by a certain date.

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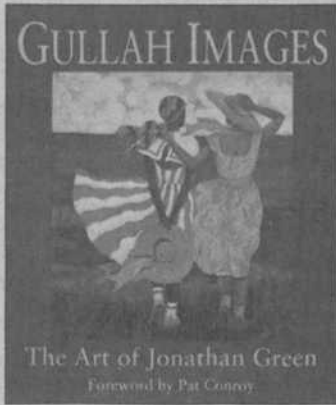
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