This election must be about addressing the issues

David M. Shribman's Sept. 14 column, "A Wide Open Election," may be factually accurate, but it is not what the voters want or need to hear. Since the nominees of each party have been selected, we continue to hear about strategy and personality and not issues.

Our unemployment rate is now just over 6 percent. Worker productivity continues to rise, but wages are stagnant and the price of food, gasoline and daily essentials are rising. This means that although the average American is working harder, he or she is able to afford less. The economy is not working for many Americans.

The war in Iraq continues, and the war in Afghanistan grinds forward with its deadliest month since its start. The credit crisis continues to grow as Freddie and Fannie, Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and now potentially AIG have crumbled. The majority of voters do not want our government to bail out large companies or provide the individual with a handout, but they do expect a functioning government to proactively address these issues.

It is not liberal bias to say that during the past eight years the administration has failed to do so. It is certainly more important to remind voters of these facts and speak to the issues than to concentrate on the political spectacle.

STEVE KARAS
Forest Hills

Billing our children

When a government running an enormous budget deficit decides to bail out a major financial institution that has acted irresponsibly, it seems to me that we miss an important point if the action is characterized as a bailout by taxpayers.

The taxpayers who will find themselves on the hook for the Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac bailout are our children, because the bailout is being financed by borrowing -- not current
taxes. The current generation of taxpayers will suffer, but not because their taxes have increased to pay this bill. We have passed the buck again.

FRANK GIARRATANI
Regent Square

Their fear platform

Well, it's begun again, the silly season. We have two wars, a failing economy and 60 percent of the American public saying we're going in the wrong direction. So what are we talking about? Lipstick, small-town values (poor Pittsburgh, we have no values?).

Sen. John McCain talks of change, but doesn't he really mean four more years of Bush administration policies and unending wars? Doesn't he really need to say, "We Republicans messed up and only we can fix it. Trust me and Sarah Palin." Do you really believe the Republicans can even begin to fix this mess? I believe they will continue to say, "Be afraid, be very afraid, only we can protect you." Do I need to remind you that George W. Bush was president on Sept. 11, 2001?

Let's get serious. We Americans are a brave bunch. Mr. Bush should have asked us all to make sacrifices. Instead he proceeded to say, in essence, "Just go on about your life and forget the sacrifices of our brave soldiers. We'll privatize as much of the war as possible and lose vast amounts of money in Iraq, but don't you Americans think too much. Go shopping."

We should not be cowed into having our personal liberties taken away in the name of security. We're better than that. Remember FDR's famous words: "We have nothing to fear but fear itself."

MARTHA HART SWEENEY
Upper St. Clair

Vision check

In response to Max Sestil Jr.'s letter, "Bicyclists, Illuminate Yourselves" (Sept. 9), he mentions how as a bus driver he often couldn't see bicyclists. I have to ask what Mr. Sestil's excuse is for the way bus drivers often don't "see" motor vehicles while pushing their way across traffic lanes at will. Perhaps the T drivers who often pass me by at my stop because the front of the car is full while the rear is empty don't see me either.
With the current state of the Port Authority, no employee of that organization should be publicly telling anyone to use common sense.

JEFF YOT
Beechview

A win-win offer


Preservationists are often accused of caring more about buildings than about the community and its needs. I am proud to say that in this case such accusations are false.

Leadership of the Central Northside Neighborhood Council and the Mexican War Streets Society, supported by Councilwoman Tonya Payne and the Northside Leadership Conference, reached out to the Salvation Army to seek a compromise that met all of the Army's goals but left two exterior walls of the Malta intact. The Army was assured that its presence in the neighborhood was not only welcome but fervently desired.

The neighborhood groups offered support for the programs, assistance in developing an in-fill structure, low-cost financing from the Northside Community Development Fund and help packaging federal historic tax credits to cover increased costs if any. The neighborhood groups sought no change or limitation on the Army's programs, including homeless services.

Sadly the Salvation Army declined all efforts at compromise. Despite the favorable vote for historic designation at City Council, the compromise offer remains on the table.

This was not a case of putting buildings before people. It was, and is, about serving the community through programs and preservation. That positive solution, or a negative stalemate, now lies squarely within the hands of the Salvation Army. North Siders remain ready to work for a win-win solution.

MARK T. FATLA
Executive Director
Northside Leadership Conference
North Side
ALS and my vote

The Sept. 10 "Health & Healing" column ("Uphill Fight: Public Funding for ALS Caught in Political Web") questions my vote against "a huge omnibus spending package" that had funding for the ALS Registry Act. No one in Congress has been more supportive of funding for research for ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis) or the National Institutes of Health.

I opposed the omnibus bill because it joined together 35 bills that should have been considered separately under Senate rules to provide an opportunity for amendments and individualized deliberation. As the article noted, it involved a partisan controversy between Sen. Harry Reid, D-Nevada, and Sen. Tom Coburn, R-Okla., who had raised objections to all of the bills.

When there is an opportunity to vote on the National ALS Registry Act separately, I will support it enthusiastically.

SEN. ARLEN SPECTER
Washington, D.C.

No asbestos at site

We appreciate your Aug. 31 article regarding Valley Forge National Historical Park and the issue of private commercial development within it ("Valley Forge Development Decried").

I offer one correction in an otherwise accurate piece. The partnership between the National Park Service and the American Revolution Center was not broken off because of a "delay in removing asbestos from the original site for the new museum." The NPS and the ARC worked closely together to select a site for a museum within the park. The site had been disturbed by limestone quarrying, but no asbestos is present. Rather than reusing an already-disturbed site, the American Revolution Center has chosen instead to build on open space.

MIKE CALDWELL
Superintendent
Valley Forge National Historical Park
King of Prussia, Pa.

Stop whining about mere inconvenience
I was disappointed to read Allegheny County Councilman Matt Drozd's comments concerning our recent wind storm and power outages ("Utilities Struggling to Restore Power," Sept. 16). The weather that moved through our area Sunday evening was a tiny fraction of the catastrophic weather that hammered Texas. That he would whine about minimal power outages and the lack of Duquesne Light phone operators is appalling.

Yes, my neighborhood did have wind damage and loss of power for 24 hours, but we had intact dry homes, drinking water, no flooding, etc. We were not forced to evacuate with no hope of return for several weeks. I found it even more disgusting that he complained about workers sent to help our fellow citizens in Texas. The idea that Councilman Drozd thinks the inconvenience of being without power for a day or two is more important then helping people who have lost everything is very sad.

Let us hope that if we ever, God forbid, live through our own catastrophe, that our neighbors (even those more than two hours away) find it in their hearts to lend a hand. Instead of whining about our electric inconvenience and calling 911 to report power outages, we should be thanking God and our lucky stars for our good fortune.

CINDY WHITING
Pine

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