

Imagine a Clinton-Fiorina debate

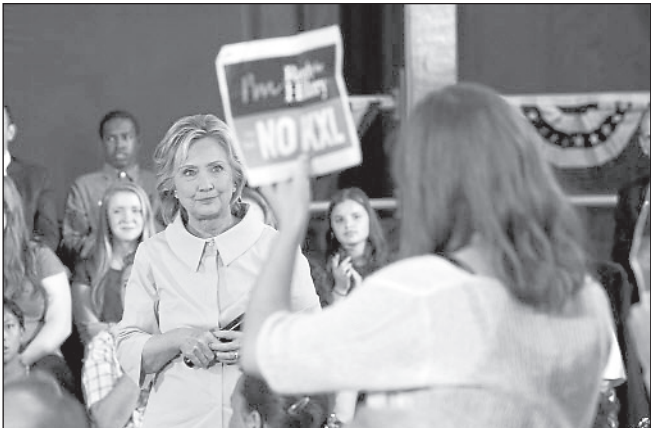
BY ANN MCFEATTERS
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

Before we compare and contrast Hillary Clinton and Carly Fiorina (obviously, because they are the only two women running to be president), let's discuss the Keystone XL pipeline.

On the same day Vice President Joe Biden, a Catholic, got to meet Pope Francis, Clinton, a Methodist, decided to reverse her position that she had no position on the pipeline and announce her opposition, saying the pipeline is a distraction.

A distraction?!
Hillary. Hillary. Hillary. We want to love you, but you make it so difficult.

There are many solid reasons to support the pipeline and many solid reasons to oppose it. (President Barack Obama has not yet announced whether he'll reject or approve it; it's under State Department review because it's international in scope.) But Clinton's logic that we can't build a pipeline because we have aging, decrepit pipelines that need fixing is just goofy. Trans-Canada, the Canadian firm that wants the northern segment of the pipeline built, is not going to rebuild U.S. infrastructure instead. Also, the oil shales in



Demonstrators interrupt Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton during a campaign stop in Portland, Maine, recently.

western Canada will be developed; the problem is to find the most environmentally sound solution.

While the nation waits with bated breath for Biden to decide whether he will run against Clinton for the Democratic nomination, let's get back to Clinton and Fiorina.

Fiorina's popularity is soaring among Republicans, while Clinton's popularity is plummeting among Democrats.

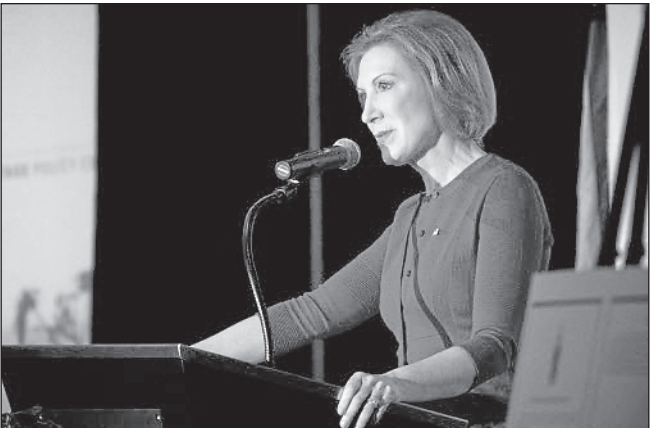
Fiorina, 61, has never held public office, although she ran for the Senate from California and lost. Clinton, 67, served as a senator from New York for eight years. Fiorina was fired as CEO

of Hewlett-Packard, after cutting 30,000 jobs, and never headed another corporation. Clinton was secretary of state, ran for president in 2008 and at one time was possibly the best-known woman in the world.

Fiorina wrote a short, rather boring book about the problems the country faces. Clinton wrote a long, boring book about being secretary of state, explaining mainly that she traveled almost a million miles.

Fiorina never misses a chance to skewer Clinton, to the delight of fellow Republicans, although she insists it's not personal.

"If you want to stump a Democrat, ask them about



Republican presidential candidate Carly Fiorina speaks at a Maine Heritage Policy Center luncheon in South Portland recently.

Hillary Clinton's accomplishments as secretary of state," Fiorina said in the last GOP debate. Clinton basically ignores Fiorina.

Fiorina came from the back of the pack to the top tier of GOP candidates because she is a good debater. Clinton has not yet faced a debate in 2015.

Fiorina's personal story is compelling and new to us — she battled breast cancer and lost her stepdaughter to drug addiction. Clinton's story is compelling, but we know it well, having lived it with her for 24 years.

Fiorina delighted us when she got the last laugh after Donald Trump tried to joke about her perfectly ac-

ceptable appearance. Clinton jokes about Trump with Jimmy Fallon but attended one of Trump's weddings.

The women met when Fiorina was commencement speaker at Chelsea Clinton's graduation from Stanford and later discussed issues. Hillary Clinton asked for Fiorina's support in her 2008 bid; Fiorina refused.

Fiorina wants Planned Parenthood defunded (many Republicans on Capitol Hill favor shutting down the government over the issue). Clinton supports Planned Parenthood and accuses Republicans, correctly, of misrepresenting the group's position on abortion made in a politically skewed video.

In a recent interview with People magazine, Fiorina said: "I think there are many, many Democrats who find it impossible to admire a woman that they politically disagree with. So when you have Democrats saying my candidacy is offensive to women, that's about politics. That's not about an admiration of a fellow woman. That's not about kinship. And I think that's too bad."

Campaigning is a tough, tough business. And this year we have two smart, wealthy, controversial women with polar-opposite views competing with gusto. Both women have shown stamina, a sense of humor and dogged determination on the most difficult trail in America.

We'd like to see a debate between these women with nobody else on the stage. We won't, but it would be rollicking, riveting and informative television. For certain, there'd be a more interesting take on Keystone than we've heard so far, with Fiorina for it and Clinton opposed.

Ann McFeatters is a columnist for Tribune News Service. Readers may send her email at amcfeatters@nationalpress.com.

Ferguson report challenges the nation to change, not ignore

BY BRIAN GILMORE
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

The recently released Ferguson Commission report lays down a challenge to a nation torn apart by revelations of police abuse.

Missouri Gov. Jay Nixon created the commission last year in response to the fatal police shooting of Michael Brown, though the authors of the report note that they were not charged with investigating his death.

Through "open community meetings across the region" and after talking with researchers, scholars, clergy, legislators and civic leaders, the commission has produced a report that is comprehensive and potentially transformative.

"We are not even suggesting that institutions or existing systems intend to be racist," the commission states. "We are pointing out ... that the data suggests, time and again, that our institutions and existing systems are not equal, and that this has racial repercussions."

There are 189 policy recommendations in a portion the report describes as a "call to action." There are a few that especially stand out.

First, and most importantly, the commission calls for comprehensive police reform. This includes more and better training for officers and the creation of a



Police watch from an armored car as protesters gathered after a shooting incident in St. Louis, Missouri, Aug. 19, 2015.

database on the use of force — all with the goal of decreasing violent confrontations.

Second, the commission takes mass incarceration head-on and presses for criminal justice reform. It urges an immediate change in sentencing laws and the elimination of incarceration altogether for some minor offenses. It pushes the police and prosecutors to change processes that include disregard of the fundamental rights of those accused of crimes. And it calls for the creation of community justice systems designed to address problems in a different way.

Third, the commission

asks for a special effort to do more for the youth. It suggests better education and nutrition for young people, improved health outcomes, the reform of school disciplinary policies and practices, and more investment in early childhood education.

These recommendations are crucially important. An unarmed black person is twice as likely to be killed by a police officer as a white individual. The United States contains 25 percent of the world's prisoners, even though the country only makes up 5 percent of the world's population. The unemployment rate for black youth is 20.7 percent,

according to the latest numbers. Young people of color face daily challenges.

There have been other significant reports in the past that have documented racial injustice and proposed constructive responses, but they have been largely ignored. Let's not make the mistake of dismissing the Ferguson Commission report, which provides a blueprint for reform across the nation.

Brian Gilmore is a poet and public interest law professor; his latest book is "We Didn't Know Any Gangsters." He wrote this for Progressive Media Project. It is distributed by Tribune News Service.

Said

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the Baldacci name, and Joe and his brother and sister-in-law, Gov. John and Karen Baldacci, are widely respected in the district, but the organizational strength and financial backing of Emily Cain's campaign will push her over the finish line in the primary.

At the state level, the outcome of House races could have the biggest impact on the day-to-day lives of Maine families. More than a dozen Democratic lawmakers are termed out so the fight to maintain the majority and serve as the backstop to the Gov. Paul LePage agenda will be intense.

Gov. LePage will be pulling out the stops to put a Republican in the speaker's office.

If every legislative candidate seeking a ticket to Augusta is asked by voters to take a pledge on the impeachment of Gov. LePage, I predict voter turnout will break records.

He's not running in 2016, but will Paul LePage be on the ballot, Mike?

Mike: If the 2016 Democratic platform is "impeach LePage," we'll see another Republican sweep. In 1998, the GOP overreached in the Monica Lewinsky scandal, angering voters, and I can only hope Maine Democrats ignore that lesson. Unfortunately, I don't believe your party is that foolish, so most of the debate will be caught up in referenda on things other than Paul LePage.

We'll have tax reform,

welfare reform, ranked choice voting, marijuana, another bear question, and potentially more on the ballot in 2016. Since we won't get to hash these out again in the Bangor Daily News, how will the votes go?

Cynthia: If by "tax reform" you mean the governor's bid to end the income tax and rupture state finances, the measure will be wisely rejected by voters. And since Maine voters haven't yet figured out we shouldn't bait black bears with donuts, it seems unlikely they'll figure out how ranked choice voting works. Unless of course they're stoned.

I'm going to miss our bear arguments, Mike, and it's fitting this is how the story ends.

But I have to ask — even if I'm writing a column for a competing newspaper and you're continuing to write for the BDN — can't we be friends?

Mike: Cynthia, if we've done anything with this column, I hope we've proved that people can disagree vehemently while still being civil, laughing, and, yes, being friends. Best of luck with your next adventure.

Republican Michael Cianchette is former chief counsel to Gov. Paul LePage, a Navy reservist who served in Afghanistan and in-house counsel to a number of businesses in southern Maine. Democrat Cynthia Dill is a civil rights lawyer with the Portland firm Troubh Heisler and a former state senator. Follow her on Twitter at @dillesquire.

Steed

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Also, if it is an option, your doctor can be a good starting point for finding help. Before I found the doctor I am with now, I was fortunate to lean a lot on the counseling services provided by UMaine [where she was enrolled at the time]. They would meet with me any time day or night.

"When I was growing up, I didn't know any of these services. Counselors were offered as a last resort. If you were having a bad day, you would be told to suck it up. There is still a lot of work to be done when it comes to letting people know that it is important to pursue help before things reach a crisis point.

"Teenage and college years can be a pretty complicated time for students, and especially difficult for their parents to understand or comprehend. It is important to make sure your kids are being communicative with you.

Make sure they're not shutting people out. Make sure that you are talking with your kids and reaching out beyond just making sure they're finishing their homework. And be open to helping them find support if they need it. Counseling is not only for points of crisis. It should not be seen as weakness.

"And for those who might need help, don't let it pile up. Don't let it crush you. Often there is a support system that can be difficult to see when you're dealing with all of this. I've definitely been in this position. The biggest thing, I think, can be finding someone to talk to. If you stop talking, it can be hard to remember your reasons for being here.

"Sometimes, to make it another a day, we need to realize we can't go it alone."

Alex Steed has written about and engaged in politics since he was a teenager. He's an owner-partner of a Portland-based content production company and lives with his family, dogs and garden in Cornish.

Fraud

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Failed fraud prevention

According to the Government Accountability Office, improper payments made by a range of federal programs cost the federal government \$124.7 billion in fiscal year 2014, a \$19 billion increase over the previous fiscal year. Sen. Ron Johnson, R-Wisconsin, in March called inaccurate death records a "root cause" of such improper payments.

The improper payments originated from 124 programs run by 22 agencies. Medicare and Medicaid, run by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Treasury's Earned Income Tax Credit accounted for \$80.9 billion — more than 60 percent of the entire amount.

But the consequences of missing death information stretch beyond the federal

government. Missing records "could also hinder state and local government and private industry — banks, insurance companies and others — from identifying identity theft and other types of fraud," the Social Security Administration's inspector general said.

In fact, the inspector general found 66,920 of the 6.5 million Social Security numbers belonging to the alleged supercentenarians had been used to commit identity theft and claim \$3.1 billion in wages between 2006 and 2011. A schemer had used one of these numbers 613 times.

In one case, a man opened bank accounts using several Social Security numbers, including two that belonged to people who were born in 1886 and 1893, respectively.

Because the numbers were still active in Social Security records, their use raised no red flags.

Costly mistake, costly fix

In April, U.S. Sen. Thom-

as Carper of Delaware, the ranking Democrat on the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, introduced a bill to require the Social Security Administration to improve its death records so they could be used more reliably to prevent fraud and identity theft. The bill passed the committee this summer and awaits action in the full Senate.

Despite calls from the inspector general and Senate to improve Social Security death records, Brune said in testimony to the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that updating these records could be costly and time consuming.

The agency has yet to determine the cost of updating the records and the feasibility of doing so.

"We are exploring options to improve the quality of extremely old death records but do not have an estimate [of the cost]," Jarrett, the Social Security spokesman, said in an email.

Because of the age of the records, it is a significant hurdle for the agency to verify the death information, especially as the information on these records may be outdated. Many of these people and their families may have moved from the addresses they used to apply for a Social Security number a long time ago, Jarrett said.

"If we were to presume death for the 6.5 million individuals, we would likely be creating errors for some living individuals," he said.

Already, the inspector general has turned up thousands of cases of potential identity theft involving these very records. Until policymakers settle on a method to verify that these number holders have died, their records "remain a significant void" within the death master file and a hurdle to the "goal of improving SSA's and other federal agencies' payment accuracy," O'Carroll Jr. said.