

idea of putting a Jew a heartbeat away from the presidency. It's so Jackie Robinson! They'd be reminded that theirs is the party of civil rights and breaking down ethnic barriers. The press would love it too. There would be so much to write and talk about: the place of religion in society (a circulation builder), the ins and outs of orthodox Jewry, his wife, Hadassah, herself a dynamic personality. There would be endless ruminations on whether America is ready for a Jewish vice-president. I suspect we'd find it is. Remember, while Catholics and Protestants do not form cohesive voting blocks any more, highly religious people do. If you attend services weekly, whether Catholic, Protestant or Jewish, you are more likely to vote Republican. Lieberman would appeal to the highly religious of all faiths, and help the Democrats shake off their secularist tinge.

Second, the vice-president has to be effective in the televised debate. Can you imagine how difficult it would be for the Republican vice-presidential candidate to launch a vicious attack on the Democratic ticket with Joe Lieberman standing at the other podium? The man exudes civility and makes anybody who goes on the attack look like a rabid dog by comparison. How would the Republican raise the issue of the Clinton sleaze? Lieberman was one of the chief Demo-

cratic critics of Clinton sleaze. By joining the Gore ticket he'd be a step toward putting the party beyond all that. Of course, Lieberman wouldn't be much good at attacking the Republican ticket. But with Al Gore at the top of the ticket, the Democrats don't need another hatchet man.

Third, if a Gore/Lieberman ticket were elected, the vice-president would raise the tone of the White House. These days, administrations seem to be staffed by more and more ruthless political players. Once Democratic operatives decided they were going to be as hardball as Lee Atwater, they adopted bare-knuckle tactics with the fervor of converts. The Clinton scandals were all magnified because the Clintonistas lied so blatantly and ruthlessly assaulted their accusers. The counterattack was often more revolting than the crime. Lieberman would at least serve as a hall monitor for all those thrusting 27-year-olds who now seem to run White Houses.

Gore doesn't have a lot of great choices when it comes to vice-presidential picks. There aren't a lot of Democratic governors anymore, or even a lot of promising Democratic senators. But there is one outstanding pick—the guy in the yarmulke.

---

DAVID BROOKS is a senior editor at The Weekly Standard.



### ED RENDELL

At one of his final news conferences as mayor of Philadelphia, Ed Rendell was asked if he might like to be vice president of the United States.

A few seconds passed. His eyes glistened. Maybe he was thinking back to a time when the idea would have been ludicrous—that point in the mid-1980s when he had lost successive campaigns for governor and mayor and his once promising political career appeared to have collapsed. But a lot had changed since then. Philadelphia had recovered and so had Rendell.

After two terms as the hugely popular mayor of a city that at one time couldn't pay its bills, Rendell's career possibilities seemed limitless: governor, cabinet secretary, and beyond. And why not? Al Gore himself had given Rendell the ultimate tribute, dubbing him, "America's Mayor." "Do I want to be vice president?" Rendell asked softly in a City Hall reception room decorated with formal portraits of mayors past. Damn right he does.

The Rendell story sells. A gutsy, plain-spoken mayor in the New Democratic mold takes office in the early 1990s. Philadelphia is near bankruptcy. Its bonds have sunk to junk status. Even more worrisome, the city's self-image is suffering and its national profile isn't much better. It wasn't so long ago that police dropped a bomb on an anarchic cult called MOVE, incinerating a rowhouse neighborhood under the watch of former mayor W. Wilson Goode. Rendell wastes no time. He gets down on his hands and knees and scours a toilet in dingy City Hall.

He announces that the city is broke. Determined to cut spending, he wrings wage concessions from a municipal workforce that, he says, hasn't had "a bad day for 30 years." He balances the budget; ratchets down an oppressive wage tax; promotes Philadelphia tirelessly, luring hotels and restaurants and reinventing the city as a tourist destination, a center of culture and arts and sports and entertainment. The mayor's optimism proves infectious. Philadelphians begin to believe.

Through it all, Rendell has the time of his life. He opens a municipal swimming pool by stripping down to his trunks and leaping in—hairy back and all. When he leaves office in January 2000, his approval rating is through the roof. He moves to his next assignment, general chairman of the Democratic National Committee, where he becomes one of his party's chief fund-raisers and spokesmen.

"Here's a guy who said it's the cities' responsibility to right their ship rather than expect the rest of America to pull them along," said Randall Miller, a history professor at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia. "He was America's Mayor, and he didn't have the hard edge that Giuliani had in doing that. He could sell the idea of the city. He could sell Philadelphia and he could do it with enormous good cheer."

It's a story with a few holes. The city continued to hemorrhage population under Rendell. Thousands of middle-class families left for the suburbs, unwilling to enroll their children in a foundering public school system that never got the mayor's full attention. After eight years of America's Mayor, Philadelphia's thriving core was ringed by abandoned cars, vacant lots, and crumbling houses. Still, for a public fed up with Washington insiders, with government paralyzed by infighting, Rendell could be packaged as a fresh-faced antidote.

"Al Gore needs someone who is not Washington," said David L. Cohen, Rendell's close friend, former campaign manager, and chief of staff. "Al Gore is quintessential Washington, and I don't think he wants to choose another senator or congressman. It would be better for him to have someone from outside of Washington, and that means you look at governors and mayors. And if you look at successful governors or mayors, Ed Rendell has to be at the top of your list."

Don't discount geography. Pennsylvania is a vital swing state in the general election, its cache of 23 electoral votes coveted by both Gore and George W. Bush. California will probably go Democrat; Texas, Republican. But Pennsylvania is in play. If there is any doubt about the state's importance, look how seriously the Bush camp is considering Pennsylvania's GOP gov-

ernor, Tom Ridge. Rendell is a behemoth in the populous eastern part of the state. He won re-election in 1995 with 77 percent of the vote. As a bonus, Rendell is well-known in parts of New Jersey (15 electoral votes) and in Delaware (3), where he has appeared often on TV.

"The battleground states are going to be states in the Northeast and Midwest that have traditional big-city constituencies," said Thomas Leonard, a Philadelphia attorney and fund-raiser for the Democratic Party. "A lot of ethnics; a lot of city-oriented voters." He added: "Rendell therefore becomes attractive as a successful big-city mayor who gets along with organized labor but was tough enough to stand up to them and turn a city around financially."

As a campaigner, Rendell would nicely complement Gore. Where Gore is stiff, Rendell is natural. Where Gore looks scripted, Rendell is spontaneous. The ex-mayor avoids jargon and has a gift for connecting with his audience. A lawyer by training, a politician by instinct, Rendell's speeches are an amalgam of logic and passion. He isn't afraid to cry in public, especially when the subject turns to parent and child. Rendell was 14 when his own father, a middleman in New York's garment district, died of a heart attack.

None of this is to say Gore-Rendell is the dream ticket. Though his administration was largely free of scandal, Rendell can expect renewed attention to his private life should he be nominated for the vice presidency. Rendell, who is married to a federal judge, can be flirtatious with women. He has been dogged by rumors of extra-marital affairs. Is the country ready for that after Bill Clinton? Cohen sees a difference. First, he said he doesn't believe Rendell has been unfaithful. The best efforts of enterprising reporters have come up empty, and Clinton's troubles are of a different magnitude.

Then there's religion. Rendell is Jewish. Gore has a chance to shatter the religion barrier by picking Rendell. But is the country ready for a Jewish vice president? Ancient prejudice may be the one obstacle this most nimble of politicians can't surmount.

PETER NICHOLAS is a reporter at the Philadelphia Inquirer.

**Gore**  
2000

Five other possible candidates the *Monthly* holds in high regard:

**BRUCE BABBITT**

**Barney Frank**

erry Cisner

... and a suggestion that intrigued some of our friends—and us:

**Tom Brokaw**

# Memo of the Month

You are cordially invited to attend a special scientific lecture presented by:

## **Rezulin: "A New Millennium in Type 2 Diabetes Therapy"**

Presented By:

**Samsuel Engel, MD**  
Associate Clinical Professor of Endocrinology & Metabolism  
Albert Einstein College of Medicine—Bronx, NY

**Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 1999**

**At The Club Bar & Grille** – Madison Square Garden, 7<sup>th</sup> Ave between 31<sup>st</sup>-33<sup>rd</sup> St.

4:15 p.m. – Welcome & Introduction/Opening Remarks

4:30 p.m. – Lecture by Sam Engel, MD

5:30 p.m. – Q & A Session – Closing Remarks

6:00 p.m. – BASKETBALL GAME!!!!

New York Knicks vs. Toronto Raptors

Please RSVP by April 10, 1999 to:  
Danielle Ficoni at (212) 473-5350

Sorry, but space is limited – please RSVP ASAP to reserve your spot!

NOTE: Upon arrival, please proceed to the South Concierge Box where you will be ushered to the Club Bar & Grille for the lecture and dinner. After the lecture you will be ushered to your seats for the game. Enjoy!