# WE SHOULD ALL HOPE PALIN WILL RUN

Bristol Palin told Fox News her mother has made up her mind about running for president, but Ms. Palin told the New York Times she's still thinking about it.

According to the conventional wisdom, it may be too late for her to run. Ms. Palin's done no fundraising, nor has built a campaign team. Republicans who supported her are drifting to active campaigns, chiefly that of Rep. Michele Bachmann, R-Minn.

The conventional wisdom is more conventional than wise. Candidates start early to build name recognition, need a campaign organization to get supporters to the polls.

Sarah Palin has 3.2 million followers on Facebook -- about 800,000 more than all the declared GOP candidates *combined*. Palinistas tend to be the sort who would crawl over ground glass to vote for her. She has less need of a GOTV operation than any other political figure in modern times.

The Republican National Committee's new rules favor late entrants. There will be more delegates in 2012 than ever before. A higher proportion will come from heavily Republican states. All but a handful will be selected after March 1st.

In the four February contests, 129 delegates are at stake -- 23 fewer than in Texas alone.

Delegates in the early states must be selected by proportional representation, the RNC says. So whoever wins these contests probably will wind up with fewer than half. After March 1, delegates may be selected on a winner take all basis.

The early contests are unlikely to produce a clear frontrunner, but will winnow the field. This is most important for debates. It's stretching the term when 7 or 8 candidates are on stage. Cut the field to three or four, and debates have real meaning.

Debates will matter more in 2012 than ever before -- especially for Sarah Palin. Thanks to nonstop denigration from the news media and Hollywood celebrities, she polls worse against President Obama than any other GOP candidate. A CBS poll June 8 indicated 54 percent of Republicans don't want her to run.

A new documentary opens with a montage of vicious things celebrities have said about Ms. Palin. Viewers at the premier in Pella, Iowa Tuesday (6/28) were shocked.

But efforts to portray Ms. Palin as a shrill, stupid snowbilly backfired on the journalists who sought the release of 24,000 emails from her time as Alaska governor. The emails "brought back the memory of a long-lost Palin: the popular, charismatic competent woman of the people," who

"comes across as practical and not doctrinaire," and who is "far from being a knee-jerk partisan," wrote Molly Ball in Politico.

*Liberals hope their sliming of her will keep Ms. Palin from running. But it may be the most important reason why she should*.

"If Sarah Palin doesn't run for president, the operatives in the media and the Beltway establishment will have learned a foolproof method of destroying any political opponent," wrote Robert Eugene Simmons in the American Thinker last Saturday (6/25).

"They will send squads of lawyers to go into every tiny detail of the (Republican) candidate's personal and professional life...The candidate will be mocked for lack of intelligence, and any microscopic mispronunciation or slip of the tongue will result in a weeklong national news cycle about why that candidate is too stupid to be president. The candidate will not have time to counter the perception."

Within days, when Ms. Bachmann formally announced her candidacy for president, Mr. Simmons was proved right.

The fact that Ms. Bachmann erroneously said actor John Wayne was born in her home town of Waterloo, Iowa made the NBC Evening News. (Mr. Wayne was born in Winterset, but his parents lived in Waterloo before he was born.) Chris Wallace of Fox News asked Ms. Bachmann if she were a flake.

Michael Isikoff of NBC reported Ms. Bachmann's husband, who runs a mental health clinic, received $137,000 in reimbursements for Medicaid patients he has treated. (There is no impropriety, but liberals consider this scandalous because Ms. Bachmann thinks the federal government spends too much money, and supports Medicaid reform.)

The cake-taker was George Stephanopoulos of ABC. First, he told Ms. Bachmann to expect journalists to investigate her 23 foster children. Then he claimed her statement that the Founding Fathers opposed slavery was "just not true."

Ms. Bachmann goofed when she said the virulently anti-slavery John Quincy Adams was a Founder. (That was his father, John Adams.) But we have it from no less an authority than Abraham Lincoln that Ms. Bachmann is right, and Mr. Stephanopoulos historically illiterate, on the larger question:

"The Founding Fathers, said Lincoln, opposed slavery," wrote the historian James McPherson. "They adopted a Declaration of Independence that pronounced all men created equal. They enacted the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 that banned slavery in the vast Northwest Territory." They banned the African slave trade.

Some of the Founders were slave owners. But, said Lincoln, they asserted their hostility to slavery in principle while tolerating it temporarily. George Washington freed his slaves in his will. In his first draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson listed slavery as one of the grievances Americans had against King George III, and later described slavery as a "firebell in the night."

But Lincoln was a Republican, so Mr. Stephanopoulos may regard him as having been too stupid to be president.

Sarah Palin knows this drill well. Journalists are still claiming she screwed up last month when she said Paul Revere warned the British armed Americans were waiting for them in Lexington and Concord, even though historians say Ms. Palin was right.

When you ask people who say Sarah Palin is stupid why they think so, most will say it's because she said you can see Russia from her house in Wasilla. Ms. Palin never said that. The comedienne Tina Fey did. What Ms. Palin said is that "you can see Russia from Alaska."

Of course you can. Here is a sat photo of the Bering Straits. It's 51 miles wide, so the folks in Wales, Alaska (a village on the western tip on the right) can easily see the mountains of Cape Dezhnev on Russia's Chukchi Peninsula (on the left) on a clear day. In the middle of the straits are two islands: Big Diomede in Russia on the left, Little Diomede in Alaska on the rightt. They are little more than two miles apart. Folks on these islands can wave to each other.

Though Ms. Palin never said "you can see Russia from my house," Barack Obama did say he campaigned "in all 57 states;" our country was founded "20 centuries ago;" pronounced Navy Corpsman "corpseman;" and called "Austrian" a foreign language.

Though the verbal miscues -- real and imagined -- of Ms. Palin and Ms. Bachmann make the evening news, Mr. Obama's *far more frequent* flubs don't, not even the appalling one last week, when Mr. Obama told soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division at Fort Drum "a comrade of yours, Jared Monti, was the first person I was able to award the Medal of Honor to who actually came back and wasn't receiving it posthumously."

SFC Monti was killed in Afghanistan in 2006. The president confused him with Staff Sgt. Sal Guinta of the 173rd Airborne Brigade, who did survive.

Many "mainstream" journalists have abandoned all pretense of fairness, but still expect to be treated as if they were honest brokers. Most Republicans oblige them. Ms. Bachmann is learning to her sorrow the folly of that.

Sarah Palin doesn't. She uses social media to bypass news media "gatekeepers," and disses them by saying, "I don't owe the media anything." That's one reason why so many journalists hate her so much. They seethe even more because Ms. Palin uses their obsession with her to make them look ridiculous, as she did during her bus vacation in the Northeast last month.

If one of Ms. Bachmann's foster kids failed to pay a parking ticket, this will be reported as "news." And if no improprieties can be found, journalists like Mr. Isikoff will make much ado about nothing. They'll do this to whoever is the Republican nominee.

But journalists have shot their bolt where Sarah Palin is concerned. They've already said every bad thing they could say about her.

"The accusations against Palin and her children have been flying in for two years and have failed to destroy her," Mr. Simmons said. "All they have left is to repeat the old tired line: 'Palin is an idiot.'"

The documentary, "The Undefeated," strives to put that old tired line to rest. The people in Pella who saw it liked it very much. But most Americans won't see it.

Which is why debates will be so important if Ms. Palin runs. In them, she'll either confirm the caricature of her -- or demolish it.

I have no idea whether Sarah Palin will run for president or not. She doesn't hunger for office the way many politicians do. "You don't have to hold national or statewide office in order to effect positive change and make a difference," she told well-wishers in Pella.

If Sarah Palin does run, her campaign will be nothing like the others we've seen in recent years, said Peter Singleton, a California lawyer who apparently has been building in Iowa a Palin organization our Palin-obsessed media somehow has overlooked.

"Even though Sarah Palin doesn't play by the same rules that seem to govern the rest of the field of Republican candidates, she has developed an extensive ground game in Iowa, wrote Craig Robinson Tuesday in the Iowa Republican. "In many ways, I think Palin is probably more organized in Iowa in terms of grassroots communication than most of the current field."

If Sarah Palin does run, I think her chances are much better than current polls indicate. She draws huge crowds wherever she goes, and she's the best retail politician in America.

Win or lose, a Palin campaign would be full of surprises for the news media, and would be the first to treat journalists with the contempt they so richly deserve. That might be reason enough to encourage her to run. We should all hope she does.

*Jack Kelly is a former Marine and Green Beret and a former deputy assistant secretary of the Air Force in the Reagan administration. He is national security writer for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.*