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Columns – September 28, 2004

Another View:

Why I will vote for John Kerry for President

By JOHN EISENHOWER

Guest Commentary

THE Presidential election to be held this coming Nov. 2 will be one of extraordinary importance to the future of our nation. The outcome will determine whether this country will continue on the same path it has followed for the last 3½ years or whether it will return to a set of core domestic and foreign policy values that have been at the heart of what has made this country great.

Now more than ever, we voters will have to make cool judgments, unencumbered by habits of the past. Experts tell us that we tend to vote as our parents did or as we "always have." We remained loyal to party labels. We cannot afford that luxury in the election of 2004. There are times when we must break with the past, and I believe this is one of them.

As son of a Republican President, Dwight D. Eisenhower, it is automatically expected by many that I am a Republican. For 50 years, through the election of 2000, I was. With the current administration's decision to invade Iraq unilaterally, however, I changed my voter registration to independent, and barring some utterly unforeseen development, I intend to vote for the Democratic Presidential candidate, Sen. John Kerry.

The fact is that today's "Republican" Party is one with which I am totally unfamiliar. To me, the word "Republican" has always been synonymous with the word "responsibility," which has meant limiting our governmental obligations to those we can afford in human and financial terms. Today's whopping budget deficit of some \$440 billion does not meet that criterion.

Responsibility used to be observed in foreign affairs. That has meant respect for others. America, though recognized as the leader of the community of nations, has always acted as a part of it, not as a maverick separate from that

community and at times insulting towards it. Leadership involves setting a direction and building consensus, not viewing other countries as practically devoid of significance. Recent developments indicate that the current Republican Party leadership has confused confident leadership with hubris and arrogance.

In the Middle East crisis of 1991, President George H.W. Bush marshaled world opinion through the United Nations before employing military force to free Kuwait from Saddam Hussein. Through negotiation he arranged for the action to be financed by all the industrialized nations, not just the United States. When Kuwait had been freed, President George H. W. Bush stayed within t