

CORY WILSON

Mitt's it

Governor Mitt Romney is going to be the 45th President of the United States come January.

The polls are trending Mitt's way, and the pundits, even the liberal ones, are now more serious about the possibility of a Romney presidency. But the reason I say Mitt's "it" is more fundamental. Now that the election has come into focus for the vast majority of Americans, those fundamentals suggest a solid Romney victory.

First, it's the economy, and we're not stupid (someone has said that recently, I think). People have, since the early days of the Republic, and maybe since democracy began, voted their pocketbooks. And the old pock-

etbook is pretty threadbare, and has been for Obama's whole term. The economic stats are, with very few exceptions, pretty grim. And they are not improving for most Americans. That suggests a vote for change.

I guess it is possible that Obama could "blame Bush" all the way to a second term. But he has offered only weak promises of more of the same, higher spending, and trickle-down government (someone said that recently, too). After four years, Obama has not offered a compelling reason to hope for improvement, rather than more excuses.

Second is the "vision thing," as the first President Bush called

it. (Maybe Obama blames him too; he was W.'s father after all.) The lack of vision is related to Obama's failure to offer anything new to get our economy going. More broadly: what is the vision for a second term? As the campaign has entered the home stretch, Obama's rhetoric has gotten smaller. The magic oratory has lost its magic. Romney's has become more optimistic, more can-do.

This contrast was on full display during the debate Monday night. The pundits say that Obama won on foreign policy points, but even if he did, he still managed to look petty and small. The smirk came back, and

See **WILSON**, page A8

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Page A8, Madison County Journal, October 25, 2012

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Continued from page A4

the likeability stayed gone. Obama's glare was just creepy. I can't see that look staring down the Russians, much less the mul-lahs.

As he invoked women around the world to pander for the votes of women around the Midwest, the Obama message appeared clearly out of gas. Maybe gas is too expensive even for a billion dollar campaign. And how many "roads and bridges" can we build and "teachers, teachers, teachers" can we hire, anyway?

Team Obama is acting more like the losing side too. Obama, eager to attack Romney in one debate exchange, went over-board: "You mentioned the Navy, for example, and that we have fewer ships than we did in 1916. Well, Governor, we also have fewer horses and bayonets, because the nature of our military's changed." Snippy and sarcastic, Obama may have torpedoed himself: "We have these things called aircraft carriers, where planes land on them. We

have these ships that go under-water, nuclear submarines. And so the question is not a game of Battleship, where we're counting ships"

This shipyard son of Pascagoula winced. Sailing the Navy under the bus to land a cheap shot on Romney may not play well in Newport News, either. Cross Virginia off the swing state list.

Incumbents who are winning are not this crass. Yet Obama was swinging wildly and relying on a rehash of talking points that were stale two debates ago.

President Past Tense, meet

the future.

Governor Romney, by contrast, looked like an incumbent Commander-in-Chief during the debate. He was strong on Israel and in his critique of Obama's Arab "Apology Tour." But more than what Romney said, it was how he said it. When Romney gave his closing statement, it was all but a return of Ronald Reagan, down to the perfect hair: he was hopeful, strong, optimistic, credible.

Of course, there are two weeks left, and it is not over until it is over. Obama can still engineer a win if Ohio doesn't

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