

# Could there be a Clinton-Clinton ticket?



SINCE Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., announced her presidential candidacy last month, one of the more in-

triguing questions being raised is whether her husband, former President Bill Clinton, can become her running mate if she garners the Democratic Party's nomination.

Such a "two-for-the-price-of-one" possibility would seem natural. Sen. Clinton is intelligent and extremely capable. Placed in charge of the monumental task of health care reform during her husband's presidency, Mrs. Clinton set out to redefine the role of first lady and gained some invaluable experience in the process.

As junior senator from New York, she's established her credibility on the Senate Armed Services Committee and looked out for New Yorkers in the painful days following the 2001 terrorist attacks. She was easily re-elected to the Senate last November, indicating that New York's voters have embraced her message for affordable health care, deficit reduction and bringing the right end to the Iraq war.

Given a running mate with Mr. Clinton's extensive executive experience, the couple would constitute one of the most effective administrations

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## COMMENTARY

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WILLIAM C.  
KASHATUS

this nation has ever had.

On the surface, though, a "Clinton-Clinton" ticket appears to be prohibited by the federal Constitution.

The presidential term limit embedded into the Constitution bars a two-term president like Bill Clinton from returning to the White House, even as vice president. That point is reinforced by the 12th Amendment that says "no person constitutionally ineligible for the office of president shall be eligible for that of vice President."

It makes sense. Why elect a vice president who can't succeed the president in case of death or incapacity?

On the other hand, the 22nd Amendment, added in 1951, states that "no person shall be elected to the office of president more than twice." The implication here is that the Constitution bars Bill Clinton from being "elected" president a third time, not from "serving" as president.

If this is the case, not only could Mr. Clinton serve as president again, but he can also run as vice president. The only thing he would not be able to do is run for re-election as a successor to his wife.

Interestingly, Bill Clinton suggested a revision of the 22nd Amendment before he left the presidency in 2001.

"Since people are living much longer," he said, "the 22nd Amendment should probably be modified to say that a president cannot serve two 'consecutive' terms instead of two terms for a 'lifetime.'"

Could he have been anticipating a "Clinton-Clinton" ticket? Either way, the Clintons also have some political baggage left over from their years together in the White House.

Many voters still remember the Whitewater land deal, the questionable commodity trading done by the first lady, and the sex scandal that marred the final years of her husband's presidency.

Considering these factors, Sen. Clinton might be wise to limit her husband's role in the White House to "first gentleman."

If she manages to win the Democratic Party's nomination, she would do better to select Sen. Barack Obama of Illinois, who can offer a fresh face and geographical balance to the ticket, as well as deliver the African American vote.

Then the Democrats would get "three-for-the-price-of-one."

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**William Kashatus** teaches at Luzerne County Community College in Nanticoke. He can be contacted at [Bkashatus@luzerne.edu](mailto:Bkashatus@luzerne.edu).

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