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Delegate Marisa Yeager awaits the closing speeches of the 2008 Democratic National Convention at Denver's Mile High Stadium.

## Delegate to 2008 Democratic National Convention Finds Fun, Fatigue

- Marisa Yeager attends third national convention

By NED RACINE, Editor

(Oct. 1, 2008) You might have seen Marisa Yeager on television, sitting between the Georgia and Ohio delegations, cheering and waving a sign, confetti in her hair and streamers falling around her, during the four-day celebration that seemed to be the Democratic National Convention August 25 to 28.

But although she describes the convention in Denver as "great fun," Yeager found the event much more demanding than any party—more a prelude to the hard work necessary to get a candidate elected.

"It's definitely tiring," she said, describing days that began with a breakfast meeting for the California delegation and continued with meetings and workshops at 8 a.m. "We had to be at the Pepsi Center [the convention's main venue] by 3 p.m. each day. If you wanted to get your seats and good seats, you had to be there early."

When the events in the crowded Pepsi Center ended at 9 p.m., receptions followed, once the delegates were able to leave the Pepsi Center.

"You're stuck there; you can't really leave easily; there was so much security." It took her an hour to get from the hotel shuttle to the Pepsi Center, less than two miles away, in part, she noted, because Denver closed its light-rail station beside the convention center.

For Yeager, Government Relations Administrator, the recent Democratic convention was her third. Her first was the 1996 convention in Chicago, where she served as a volunteer for the Democratic National Committee.

For the 2000 convention in Los Angeles—a convention where Metro assisted in transportation planning—Yeager was a delegate for Vice President Al Gore.

This year Yeager was a delegate for Senator Hillary Clinton. To be a delegate, Yeager had to win what she describes as a “mini-campaign” in the congressional district where she lives, the 44th, which twists and turns from Riverside to San Clemente.

Yeager, who has worked for Metro for 12 years, was one of four representatives from the 44th: two delegates for Senator Clinton and two delegates for Senator Barack Obama.

But although she enjoyed the performances of the Black-Eyed Peas, Sheryl Crow, Dave Matthews and Stevie Wonder, and the chance to catch up with far-flung friends, what most pleased Yeager was the political process underway.

“What amazed me this time was you saw so many new faces,” she said. “People who had never been part of the political campaign process.” She watched Senator Clinton’s supporters going through the process of grief, adjusting themselves to their candidate’s loss and coming to support the other candidate.

This was no surprise to Yeager, “because in a campaign, you always have winners and losers.”

“It’s invigorating to see people who get enthused enough to stop their normal day-to-day [life] and actually participate in a campaign of this magnitude and this history-making opportunity,” said Yeager, who received her master’s degree in Public Policy and Administration from California State University Long Beach.

Even though Yeager interfaces with government every day in her Metro work, her presence at the convention as a private citizen felt very different. “Here we’re representing an organization and its positions. There you’re representing a candidate, but it’s more than the candidate; it’s about the message and the effort.”

Now, after her 14-hour convention days and a one-week vacation to recover, Yeager tackles the less glamorous work of getting a candidate elected. For her, this includes recruiting volunteers for battleground states, Saturday voter registration in Riverside and lunch parties to raise campaign funds.

One of the ways she’ll raise those funds is by selling the shirts, buttons and other convention giveaways she gathered in Denver. No word if she’s keeping the Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa bobblehead doll given to the California delegation.

Will she attend another convention?

Although Yeager was definitely ready to head home when the convention ended, “I could do a couple more, probably.” As a sign of her fascination with politics, the former congressional intern and aide watched the Republican National Convention in Minneapolis the following week.

So it is no surprise that Yeager would encourage each American to attend a political convention.

“It’s definitely something [they] should try in their lifetime, [even] as a guest—go for a day—just so they have another perspective” outside the media’s representation.

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