



Issues of Democracy

O C T O B E R 2 0 0 4



ELECTIONS GUIDE

2004

BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ISSUES OF DEMOCRACY



Editor.....Leslie C. High
Associate Editors.....Rebecca Ford Mitchell
Rosalie Targonski
Alexandra Abboud
Carrie Lee
Reference/Research.....Anita Green
Lorna Dodt
Art Director.....Chloe Ellis
Cover Design.....Min Yao
Photo Editor.....John Wicart

Publisher.....Judith S. Siegel
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Editor, eJournal USA: *Issues of Democracy*
IIP/T/DHR
U.S. Department of State
301 4th St. S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20547
United States of America
E-mail: ejdemos@state.gov

About This Issue

The United States is in the midst of a new election season, and candidates are crisscrossing the country. Campaign signs are sprouting up in front yards and adorning car bumpers. Volunteers are appearing at grocery stores and train stations, offering to help people with last-minute voter registration. Serious, sometimes heated, conversations are taking place with increasing frequency about which candidate will lead the country down a better road.

Most Americans follow a presidential election campaign through the newspaper or on the nightly television news or their favorite radio talk show or Internet Website. Relatively few citizens have the experience of meeting the candidates in person at campaign rallies unless they live in a hotly contested state—one of the so-called battleground states. Those who do—especially in communities with a lot of undecided voters—are likely to have several opportunities to see candidates throughout the campaign season. Those who live in communities that consistently vote for Republicans or Democrats are not likely to see candidates from either party.

The presidential election campaign of 2004 is no exception to these patterns. As the November 2 election day approaches, media coverage is intensifying and the candidates are sharpening their differences on the issues. President George Bush and Senator John Kerry are traveling around the country addressing crowds of potential supporters, particularly in battleground states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio, and New Mexico. The two candidates scheduled three nationally televised debates to bring the issues into clearer focus for voters. What seems to concern Americans most in the 2004 election, according to the polls, are security issues and the state of the domestic economy, especially jobs.

This journal provides a broad look at the elections—the influential forces at work, the positions of the two major parties, and voting procedures in the United States. The first section examines six important factors that affect the election: the need to win enough states to carry the Electoral College, the various ethnic and demographic voting groups, the significance of elections for the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, the evolving regulations governing the financing of campaigns, the role of the media and political advertising, and the impact of third party candidates. Each segment combines background information with commentary by an expert on how they see the subject playing out in the 2004 campaign.

The second section compares the Republican and Democratic party platforms, which state their official positions on a range of policy issues. Two political activists, one from each party, give overviews of their party's positions on several key topics. Then excerpts from both platforms are contrasted in a side-by-side format.

The final section looks at some of the mechanics of U.S. elections, including the Electoral College, polling places, voting machines, and ballots.

Americans are fond of arguing about their electoral system—whether the Electoral College should be scrapped, how to control the amount of money that is spent on campaigns, what kind of voting machines are easiest for citizens to use. Each election cycle brings its own complaints, adjustments, and reforms, and discussions begin on how it should be done the next time. Still, the system has served the country through the peaceful transfer of presidential power for more than 200 years and remains a model of American democracy in action.

—The Editors



Issues of Democracy

U.S. Department of State October 2004 Volume 9 Number 3

<http://usinfo.state.gov/journals/journals.htm>

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Winning the States

The campaign for the presidency focuses more heavily on some states than on others because the U.S. Constitution prescribes the use of an Electoral College instead of a direct popular vote. This article explains how that system works, and the subsequent commentary by Charlie Cook looks at the numbers in this year's election. Cook is the editor and publisher of the Cook Political Report.



On Election Day, when American voters mark their ballots for their favorite presidential candidate, they are, in actuality, voting for a group of state electors. These electors are pledged to vote for that presidential candidate in the Electoral College, the body of representatives that really elects the president and vice president.

Set up in the early days of the republic, the Electoral College currently has 538 members. Each state is represented by electors in equal number to the number of senators and representatives that represent that state in Congress. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, nevertheless has three electoral votes. The candidate who wins the presidency is the one who receives an absolute majority (at least 270) of the electoral votes.

Under this electoral system, it is possible to win the presidency without winning the popular vote. This happened most recently in 2000, but it has also happened three other times in the history of the United States. This

anomaly occurs because nearly all the states use a “winner-take-all” system so that whichever candidate wins the popular vote in that state gets all its electors in the Electoral College. The only exceptions are the states of Maine and Nebraska, where two electors are chosen by statewide popular vote and the remainder by the popular vote within each congressional district.

Consequently, political parties must consider each state to be a separate race, keeping in mind that it is not the national total of votes that counts; it’s how many electoral votes a candidate receives that will determine who goes to the White House. Candidates must run both a national campaign in which their messages are carried by the country’s mass media, but they must also run more targeted state races that address local and regional issues and concerns.

Above left: President George Bush greets supporters at an August 6 campaign stop in Stratham, New Hampshire. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak) Above right: Supporters welcome Senator John Kerry at a September 21 rally in Orlando, Florida. (AP Photo/Peter Cosgrove)

Many states, by virtue of their demographics or economic profile, will predictably favor a certain candidate or party. In recent years, there has been a wide discussion of so-called red and blue states, states that have tended to vote in majority for Republicans (red) or Democrats (blue). The maps illustrating these distinctions show most blue states along the coasts and most red states in the south and center of the country. Those states that are too hard to predict—known as battleground or swing states—tend to be the focus of many of the resources of both campaigns.

Battleground states, where the candidates are currently running within a few percentage points of each other, can change from election to election or even during a single election season. The general agreement among experts is that in 2004 there are 10 battleground states: Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. Together, these 10 states represent 116 of the 270 electoral votes needed to win.

Campaign strategists must calculate how much time and money a candidate needs to spend in any given state in order to have the best chance of winning. In 2004, President George Bush and Senator John Kerry have made numerous visits to battleground states like Pennsylvania and Ohio during the campaign. In addition to the presidential candidates themselves, their vice presidential running mates, family members, and other surrogates such as popular local politicians have made speeches on behalf of the campaigns in the various states. In a close race, voter turnout is decisive, so both campaigns organize get-out-the-vote efforts to identify supporters and either get them to the polls on Election Day or encourage them to vote earlier by mailing in absentee ballots. Both parties also have active voter registration programs aimed especially at communities likely to favor their candidates.



Influence of the Electoral College

Commentary by Charlie Cook

If the United States had one big national election, with the popular vote winner elected president, the candidates would focus all of their campaign activities on the major cities, not mounting a truly national campaign, with smaller states completely ignored.

The Electoral College system was set up to create 51 (50 states plus the District of Columbia) separate contests, with the battleground states in this election as diverse as New Hampshire in the Northeast, New Mexico and Nevada in the Southwest and Florida in the Southeast (all three states with substantial Hispanic populations), and industrial states like Pennsylvania and Ohio, as well as more diverse states with large agricultural populations like Iowa, Minnesota, and Wisconsin.

This system also forces candidates to engage in more “retail” campaigning, making appearances in fairly small cities and towns, something that would absolutely not be the case if it were one national election. This system takes the campaign out of being a purely television affair and forces an interaction with voters in smaller settings.

Above: Vice President Dick Cheney speaks at a September 20 rally in Grove City, Ohio. (AP Photo/Jay Laprete)

Current State of Play

There are currently 24 states, totaling 208 electoral votes, in the likely and solid columns for President George Bush. They are: Alabama (9), Alaska (3), Arizona (10), Arkansas (6), Georgia (15), Idaho (4), Indiana (11), Kansas (6), Kentucky (8), Louisiana (9), Mississippi (6), Missouri (11), Montana (3), Nebraska (5), North Carolina (15), North Dakota (3), Oklahoma (7), South Carolina (8), South Dakota (3), Tennessee (11), Texas (34), Virginia (13), Utah (5), and Wyoming (3).

There are 13 states either likely or certainly going to Senator John Kerry, with a total of 179 electoral votes. They are: California (55), Connecticut (7), the District of Columbia (3), Delaware (3), Hawaii (4), Illinois (21), Maryland (10), Massachusetts (12), New Jersey (15), New York (31), Rhode Island (4), Vermont (3), and Washington (11).

There are currently three states that lean toward Kerry and have a total of 28 electoral votes: Maine (4), Michigan (17), and Oregon (7).

Of the 50 states and the District of Columbia voting on November 2, there are currently 11 states, with 123 electoral votes, that are too close to call. They are: Colorado (9), Florida (27), Iowa (7), Minnesota (10), Nevada (5), New Hampshire (4), New Mexico (5), Ohio (20), Pennsylvania (21), West Virginia (5), and Wisconsin (10). A candidate must have a total of 270 votes to win the Electoral College and, thus, the election.

Going into the first debate, major polls showed Bush to be between three and eight points (most likely six points) ahead of Kerry nationwide, and an average of four points ahead in the closest states. Bush was ahead by very narrow margins in seven or eight of the states that are too close to call.

Following the first and second debates, new polls had the candidates in a statistical “dead heat,” that is, neither had a clear lead over the other.

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

The Split Electorate

With American voters almost evenly divided between the two major candidates for president, the campaigns and the media focus on undecided voters who could swing the election either way. This article outlines the make-up of the electorate; John Zogby's commentary looks at the voting behavior of certain groups of people. Zogby is president and chief executive officer of Zogby International, a public opinion polling firm.



With a voting age population of more than 200 million, the United States has a diverse electorate. In recent years, the media have divided the country into “red” and “blue” states to show voting preferences on national issues: red for Republican and blue for Democrat. But this is an oversimplification of America’s political landscape. It does not, for example, show how close political races within those states can be. Although the winning candidate generally receives all of a state’s electoral votes, nearly half of the voters in any red or blue state may have voted for the opponent. In the 2000 election, there were 14 states in which fewer than five percentage points separated the winning and losing candidates. A small shift in votes in a state where voters are almost evenly divided, then, can swing an election.

Political campaigns focus their efforts on two groups of voters: those who already support them—the party’s “base”—and those who can be persuaded to support them, the “swing voters.”

Both parties conduct polls to identify which voters might be won over to their side of the ballot. Throughout the campaign, pollsters seek out information on voters’ lifestyles, their attitudes on issues, and their preferences for president. The campaigns use this information to plan strategies for reaching undecided and independent voters; the media use the data to present a picture of how the race for the White House is going and to predict the winner.

Experts agree that the strongest influence on voter behavior is party identification. Currently, American voters identify themselves in roughly equal numbers as Republicans, Democrats, or independents unaffiliated with either of the major parties. Although studies suggest that independents actually tend to vote consistently for

Above left: President Bush answers voters’ questions at an “Ask President Bush” session in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on August 11. (AP Photo/Pablo Martinez Monsivais) Above right: Senator Kerry greets supporters at a rally in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on October 11. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

one party's candidates over the other, still, a number of these voters will realign themselves when they feel there are serious problems in the country or in their community that are not being adequately addressed. It is this portion of the unpredictable electorate, about 10 percent of all voters, that candidates target most heavily, tailoring their campaign messages to what pollsters have determined are most likely to be persuasive.

There are, in fact, some regional voter characteristics: the residents of Pacific coast states and the northeastern states tend to be more liberal on social and economic issues, while those in the South tend to be more conservative; swing states tend to be those with a balance of both rural and large urban areas. But because of the mobility of Americans (each year nearly one-fifth of the U.S. population moves), the influx of immigrants who become voters, and the influence of the national media, voting patterns change from election to election.

For example, following World War II, Florida was a resolutely conservative Republican state, only three times awarding its electoral votes to a Democratic presidential candidate. But in the past decade, thousands of retirees from northern cities have moved there, and its African-American and non-Cuban Hispanic populations have doubled. These groups traditionally support Democratic candidates, and, as the 2000 election showed, Florida is now an important swing state.

Looking beyond regional voting history, pollsters find more accurate indicators of how a citizen will cast his or her vote by looking at age, gender, education level, income, ethnicity, and other demographic characteristics that affect political opinions. Persons who identify themselves as evangelical Christians, for example, are more likely to vote Republican; college educated women are more likely to be liberal on social issues; affluent males are more likely to be economically conservative.



Voting Blocs to Watch

Commentary by John Zogby

This election—like many before it—will be decided by a handful of groups. Expect Hispanics, African-Americans, Catholics, young voters, and rural and suburban voters all to influence the race for the White House. Add the fact that these groups impact heavily only in battleground states, and you glimpse which groups hold the keys to power in 2004.

Three groups favor Democrat John Kerry over Republican George W. Bush by lopsided margins: African-Americans, Hispanics, and young voters. Among those groups, the real race isn't about winning them over, but about getting them to the polls—high voter turnout is the key for a Democratic win; if there is low turnout among these groups, the Republicans will be in office for four more years.

The race promises a political street fight in 20 swing states. There, suburban voters are the real battleground: among suburbanites, Bush leads Kerry.

Hispanics will be the most closely watched demographic this election. Bush heavily courted Hispanics during his term. He did this for good reason: in 2000, Hispanics passed African-Americans as the largest minority group in the United States. Hispanics represented just 7 percent of the 2000 vote, a number expected to increase in this election.

Above: Senator John Edwards (second from left), the Democratic vice presidential candidate, talks with a McAdenville, North Carolina, family during an August 22 neighborhood visit. (AP Photo/Chuck Burton)

The African-American vote is critical for Democrats. African-Americans supported Democrat Al Gore by a nine to one margin in 2000, and they will support Kerry by a similar margin. High African-American turnout can sway the race Kerry's way in Florida, Michigan, Missouri, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Virginia.

White Evangelical Christians are a key constituency that favors the Republican Party. A number of Bush administration initiatives reflecting conservative social and cultural values elicit strong support from this group. Some Republican strategists have claimed that the nearly four million white Evangelicals who did not vote in the 2000 election cost Bush the popular vote. Whether or not that number is accurate, Republicans want to maximize the turnout of Evangelicals at the polls in 2004.

Catholic voters have become one of the top swing groups—largely because they are a bellwether that votes the way the nation votes. In 2000, Gore won among Catholics by two points. Since then, Bush has courted Catholics—a group that matters in nearly every swing state. Despite being Catholic himself, Kerry currently trails Bush. Only in swing states Arkansas, North Carolina, Oregon, Tennessee, Virginia, Washington, and West Virginia do Catholics not comprise at least one-quarter of voters.

Rural voters—key to former President Bill Clinton's victories—will be a critical group. Kerry is trying to reach rural voters through economic messages, and many rural voters live in areas hard-hit by the recession.

Young voters may also prove important in this election. They have been heavily targeted by nonpartisan groups like Rock the Vote and partisans like filmmaker Michael Moore. In 2000, Gore edged out Bush by 48 to 46 percent, and at the time of this writing, Kerry appeared to have a solid lead over Bush.

None of this means that a late surge by one candidate, or the emergence of an unexpected trend, can't shift the race; however, as it stands today, expect strategy in both camps to focus on these constituencies in the remaining days before November 2.

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Congressional Elections

Every two years, Americans elect the entire House of Representatives and one-third of the Senate. The two major political parties each seek to gain the majority of seats in both houses of Congress so that they can more easily advance their legislative agendas. Our article takes a look at the process and is then followed by analysis from political expert Thomas E. Mann, who assesses prospects for Republicans and Democrats in this year's congressional elections. Mann is W. Averell Harriman chair and senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C.

Because each of the three branches of the American government—executive, legislative, and judicial—is an equal force in the U.S. system of checks and balances, whether the Republicans or Democrats control the houses of Congress is of vital importance.

Although the president sets the political agenda for the country, Congress has an enormous influence on whether or not an administration can accomplish its goals. The houses of Congress alone have the power to pass legislation; approve or deny appointments of cabinet department executives, ambassadors, and judges; provide oversight of—and investigate—government agencies; ratify treaties; regulate commerce; control taxation and spending policies; declare war; and approve funding for the military.

The terms under which the debate on any issue takes place are controlled by the majority party in each house of Congress, because the majority party controls the leadership and membership of the various congressional committees.

Since the November 1994 midterm elections (the midpoint in a president's four-year term of office), the Republican Party has controlled the House of Representatives. The same is true for the Senate, except for a five-month period in 2001 when Republican

Senator James Jeffords of Vermont left the Republican Party to become an unaffiliated independent, thus removing formal control from the Republicans. For Democrat Bill Clinton, president from 1993 to 2001, it meant continually adapting his legislative proposals to gain the support of the opposition party controlling Congress; for Republican President George Bush, it has meant a somewhat freer hand to implement his agenda.

The entire House of Representatives, in which the size of a state's delegation is determined by its population, is up for election every two years. Representation in the Senate, on the other hand, is equal for all states—each has two senators, elected for six-year terms; only a third of its members are up for election in any two-year election cycle. The vice president holds the tie-breaking vote in Senate deliberations.

Redistricting is also a factor in congressional elections. Because the House of Representatives is based on state population, congressional districts in each state are usually redrawn according to the population information obtained in the U.S. census conducted every 10 years. The party holding the majority of seats in each state's legislature at that time controls the redistricting process and often uses that power to draw the new district lines in ways that favor its candidates. This is known as gerrymandering.



With control of Congress being so vital to enacting the party platform, the political parties necessarily target House and Senate races much as they do presidential races, concentrating on potential voters in “swing” congressional states or districts where elections are so close they could go to either party. Both parties hope their candidates will have “coattails”—the ability to entice voters who, because they are enthusiastic about a certain candidate, will vote for the same party’s candidates in other races.

Currently, the composition of the Senate is 51 Republicans, 48 Democrats, and one independent who tends to vote with the Democrats; and the Republicans have a 229 to 205 majority over the Democrats, with one independent member, in the 435-member House. Even a small shift in these seats in the 2004 general election will have a large impact on the ability of the next president to carry out his promised action plan for America.

Above: Republican Senator Lisa Murkowski (second from left) and her family greet supporters after winning the Republican nomination for the Senate from Alaska on August 24. (AP Photo/Al Grillo)

This Year’s Contest

Commentary by Thomas E. Mann

Democratic Party prospects for gaining majority control of the Senate and House now rest importantly on the performance of its presidential candidate, Senator John Kerry. The increase in straight-ticket party voting in recent years means that competitive congressional races can tip one way or the other depending on the showing of the candidates at the top of the ticket. A comfortable win by Kerry could well provide the margin of victory in several hotly contested Senate races sufficient to enable the Democrats to win a very narrow majority, while a Bush victory makes it more likely that the Republicans will retain or increase their 51-seat majority. Democrats face much longer odds in regaining control of the House. To overtake the Republicans, they need to pick up just 13 additional seats in a 435-seat chamber. However, the historically small number of genuinely competitive races (about three dozen seats, half of which are now held by Democrats) means they probably need a Kerry landslide to move back into the majority.

Apart from the presidential contest, Republicans have an advantage in the Senate because they are defending fewer seats in more hospitable territory. The competitive terrain



in the Senate is limited to 10 of the 34 states with elections this cycle, only two of which feature seriously threatened incumbents. Minority Leader Tom Daschle of South Dakota is locked in a tight battle with former Republican Congressman John

Thune. And Alaska Senator Lisa Murkowski, appointed by her father, Governor Frank Murkowski, to fill his unexpired term in the Senate, faces a very strong challenge from former Democratic Governor Tony Knowles. Democrats must defend five seats in the South where their incumbents have decided to retire: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Louisiana. The Republican candidate is heavily favored in Georgia; Democrats have strong candidates in the four other races but must compete mostly on unfavorable partisan terrain. Republicans are defending open seats in Illinois, Oklahoma, and Colorado. Democrat Barack Obama, who was the keynote speaker at the Democratic convention, is certain to win in Illinois but the others are too close to call.

In the House, Republican prospects have been buoyed by several successful rounds of redistricting, which have sharply reduced the number of competitive seats and given the Republicans a national advantage of at least a dozen seats. The recent mid-decade partisan gerrymander in Texas orchestrated by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay was drawn to give the Republicans an additional half-dozen seats. Absent a strong national tide, they can be expected to hold or modestly increase their present majority.

If George Bush is reelected, he will likely work again with slender Republican majorities in the Senate and House, enough to control the agenda but not enough to outmuscle filibusters (lengthy speeches aimed at delaying action on legislation) in the Senate or restiveness among Republican moderates in the House. His ambitious agenda for building an ownership society at home and spreading freedom and democracy around the world could face some obstacles on Capitol Hill.



If John Kerry is victorious, he will likely face a House and possibly also a Senate controlled by the Republicans. He would be forced to deal with Republicans in both chambers, which would entail substantial changes in the proposals he is championing in the campaign. But divided party government is more the norm than the

exception in contemporary American politics, and the evidence suggests that such governments are more productive and enact more sustainable policies than might be expected.

The opinions expressed in this article do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. government.

Above left: Republican Senate candidate John Thune answers a question during an August 18 debate in Mitchell, South Dakota. (AP Photo/Doug Dreyer) Above: Democratic Senate candidate Barack Obama waves to the crowd at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield on August 18. (AP photo/Seth Perlman)

Senate Races to Watch

Democratic-held States: Races to Watch

STATE	CANDIDATES	COMMENT
Florida	Betty Castor (D) Mel Martinez (R)	Florida's decisive role in the 2000 presidential elections has brought substantial resources and attention from both national parties
Louisiana	Chris John (D) John Kennedy (D) Arthur Morrell (D) David Vitter (R)	Open-seat contest, with a runoff for the top two finishers if no candidate receives over 50 percent of the vote
North Carolina	Erskine Bowles (D) Richard Burr (R)	Incumbent John Edwards' vice presidential candidacy leaves this seat open
South Dakota	Tom Daschle (D)* John Thune (R)	Senate minority leader Daschle, the only Democratic incumbent whose reelection is uncertain, faces a tough challenge from former Congressman Thune

Other states where a Democratic seat is up for election: South Carolina, Georgia, Washington, California, Wisconsin, Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Indiana, Maryland, Nevada, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Vermont

Republican-held States: Races to Watch

STATE	CANDIDATES	COMMENT
Alaska	Tony Knowles (D) Lisa Murkowski (R)*	Murkowski, appointed to the Senate by her father, seeks election against former Governor Knowles
Colorado	Ken Salazar (D) Pete Coors (R)	State Attorney General Salazar and brewery magnate Coors overcame tough primaries to be their parties' candidates
Illinois	Barack Obama (D) Alan Keyes (R)	This historic match is the first Senate race between two African-American candidates in U.S. history
Oklahoma	Brad Carson (D) Tom Coburn (R)	Congressman Carson and former Congressman Coburn are both experienced lawmakers

Other states where a Republican seat is up for election: Kentucky, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Arizona, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, New Hampshire, Ohio, Utah

* Incumbent up for reelection

Financing the Campaigns

The United States has enacted laws to regulate the money spent on federal election campaigns, yet concerns remain. This article gives an overview of campaign finance; then attorney Jan Baran discusses changes made by the 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. Baran is a partner in Wiley, Rein & Feingold LLP in Washington, D.C., and head of the firm's Election Law and Government Ethics Practice.



The high cost of political campaigns in the United States is a widely discussed issue. Efforts to control those costs by limiting how much money a donor can contribute and the ways in which candidates and parties can spend it have met with varying degrees of success.

In 1971, the government created a fund that offers presidential candidates public financing for their campaigns—public money provided by citizens through voluntary contributions from their income taxes. A candidate who accepts public funds must agree to a spending cap, and he is prohibited from raising or spending any private funds once he accepts his party's nomination. Both President Bush and Senator Kerry, like every major presidential candidate since these funds first became available in 1976, have opted to use this system. In the 2004 general election, then, each will be limited to spending about \$76 million.



The Democratic and Republican parties, however, can each spend another \$16 million in coordination with their candidate and unlimited amounts on uncoordinated activities. And nonprofit interest groups can also engage in the process by running advertisements on particular issues that directly refer to the positions of individual candidates. So even with the spending caps, the 2004 presidential race is expected to be the most expensive in history. This year, experts estimate that the candidates, parties, and interest groups will spend about a billion dollars on advertising alone.

At the heart of the campaign finance debate are two key issues: first, the concern that large contributions buy wealthy individuals and organizations access to candidates—access that the average citizen doesn't have—and,

Above: Images from television advertisements for President Bush (left) and Senator Kerry. (AP Photos/Bush-Cheney 2004; Kerry-Edwards 2004)

through access, influence on policy; and second, the belief that contributions toward a particular political ideology are a form of free speech that is protected by the U.S. Constitution.

A 1974 attempt at reforming the influence of money in American politics resulted in the creation of the Federal Election Commission (FEC), an independent, nonpartisan government agency. Its charge is to oversee the rules and regulations of the U.S. election process,

including the use of election funds and the disclosure of names of large financial contributors. The same law that created the FEC also limited the amount any individual could give and made contributions to candidates from either labor unions or corporations illegal.

The result was that many labor unions, corporations, and wealthy individuals redirected their contributions to the political parties. These donations, which were by law not to be used for the candidates themselves but for noncampaign purposes such as voter registration and issue support, are known as “soft money.” There were no limits on what an individual or group could give in soft money.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), also known by the names of its Senate sponsors, McCain-Feingold. It made illegal the solicitation and use of all soft money for federal campaigns and outlawed the broadcast of advocacy issue ads by outside groups within the last few weeks of a federal election.

Interest groups responded by spending their soft dollars through partisan 527 committees and 501c groups—the names come from the section of the tax code that describes them—which took over many of the activities previously handled by political parties, especially the broadcasting of advocacy issue ads.

The courts recently ordered the FEC to more vigorously uphold the provisions of McCain-Feingold, and reformers in Congress have promised to introduce new legislation to make outside political groups more accountable; but none of these changes will be in place in time to affect this year’s election.

BCRA in Practice

Commentary by Jan Baran

The 2004 presidential election is the first conducted under the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), which is popularly referred to as “McCain-Feingold.” BCRA changed the rules on campaign financing in several major ways. First and foremost, it barred large donations and corporate or union donations to national political parties. These funds were often called “soft money.” In the 2000 campaign, the Republican and Democratic party committees collectively raised and spent almost \$500 million in soft money.

The second major provision in BCRA raised the limits on the amount that could be contributed by individuals to candidates and political parties. This source of funds is called “hard money.” Some of the limits were doubled from those first established in 1974. For example, BCRA increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000 the amount that any individual may donate to a candidate for president, senator, or representative. This limit applies “per election,” which means that primary and general elections are treated separately and a donor, therefore, could give as much as \$4,000 to one candidate in one election year.

The ban on soft money and the increased limits on hard money have profoundly affected the way money has functioned in the 2004 campaigns. Candidates discovered that they were able to raise significantly more than in the past. For example, both President Bush and Senator Kerry have broken fundraising records. In 2000, then Governor Bush raised approximately \$100 million during his primary campaign, a previously unheard of sum. Under BCRA and the higher limit, the Bush-Cheney committee through August 2004 raised an astounding \$260 million. Also impressive is the performance of Senator Kerry who raised over \$230 million. However, during the general election campaign, the two nominees will receive and spend only money provided by the U.S. Treasury under the public financing system and will raise no additional private monies. This year both candidates received \$74.62 million.

Political party committees, which also operate under higher hard money limits, similarly have raised more money this cycle. In fact, some of the committees have

raised more hard money than the combined hard and soft money that they raised in 2000. Nonetheless, they are barred from accepting soft money. Where did that soft money go? Many observers argue that money from wealthy individuals, corporations, and unions now are donated to so-called 527 organizations. These are groups named after a provision of the tax code that provides tax-exempt status to political organizations. A 527 organization can avoid hard money limits, and therefore need not comply with federal campaign finance legal restrictions, if it does not make contributions to candidates and limits its activities to “issue advertising” or to nonfederal races. Thus far in the 2004 election cycle, 527 organizations have raised approximately \$300 million. The largest contributors to these groups tend to be individuals. Two people have by themselves given over \$27 million to 527s in order to finance ads critical of President Bush. Information about 527s is available on the Internet at various sites, including www.opensecrets.org.

Some 527 committees have dramatically influenced the presidential race. For example, a group called Swiftboat Veterans for Truth sponsored television ads attacking Senator Kerry for his Vietnam antiwar activities and questioned the basis for some military honors that he earned while in service. The ads were controversial and controverted by the Kerry campaign. Nonetheless, the ads sparked a weeks-long debate about the senator’s Vietnam record and diverted attention from other campaign issues.

The rise of 527 organizations has prompted both Senators John McCain and Russ Feingold to call for more reforms. They have introduced legislation that would in effect ban soft money from 527s. They also have introduced legislation to change the composition of the FEC and to give it greater enforcement powers. Even as the 2004 election is yet to be decided, it appears that future reforms are likely and that the 2008 election will be governed by an even different set of campaign finance rules.

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The Mass Media

As in the past, Americans are receiving information about political campaigns through media coverage of the candidates and through television and radio advertising. Meanwhile, the Internet has begun to play an influential role. This article looks at the impact of the media on voters; it is followed by analytic commentary from Montague Kern, associate professor in the Department of Journalism and Media Studies at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey.



It would be hard to overestimate the importance of mass media in the U.S. electoral process. National television networks reach 99 percent of all American homes, making contact across the entire socioeconomic spectrum. Cable news stations, radio and television talk shows, newspapers, news magazines, and Internet sites all provide voters with information about the candidates. The content and emphasis of their coverage are among the most powerful factors in determining how voters perceive the candidates and the issues.

Studies have shown that broadcast media devote most of their coverage to the competition between the candidates rather than providing an explanation of issues and the candidates' stances on them. Eager to attract viewers, broadcasters focus on dramatic moments that highlight candidates' mistakes, attacks on opponents, and suggestions of scandal or problems.

Even when the media do provide campaign coverage, the candidates may not get much direct airtime. In an academic study of major-network coverage of the 2000 elections, it was found that the news reporters talked for 74 percent of the time; only 12 percent of the time did viewers hear the actual candidates' voices and, when they did, the sound bite averaged only 7.8 seconds.

As a way of communicating more directly with voters, candidates buy television and radio advertising time. In the 2000 presidential election, the two major-party candidates spent \$285 million with about 60 percent of it going to advertising. The high cost of reaching voters requires the campaigns to concentrate their ad buys in areas where they believe they have a chance of affecting undecided voters' opinions—resulting in the residents of some media regions being bombarded with political ads and others having little exposure to them.

The 2004 election is the first in which the Internet has played a significant role as a medium for campaigning and for raising money. Former presidential hopeful Howard Dean, governor of the small state of Vermont, used his Website to form a network of thousands of enthusiastic volunteers. Before dropping out of the race, Dean raised more money than his opponents in the Democratic primaries and received favorable media coverage for demonstrating the political power of the Internet.

The other candidates in the race followed Dean's lead and made good use of the Internet. President Bush (www.georgewbush.com) and Senator Kerry (www.johnkerry.com) have elaborate Websites, where they promote their agendas and attempt to refute their opponents' campaign messages.

Candidates also try to make news that they hope the media will cover. This might be the announcement of a new plan on an issue of interest to voters or an appearance at a symbolic location. An incumbent president has an advantage here, because what the president does always makes news—whether it is a ceremonial bill signing, a meeting with a foreign head of state, or a visit to an area where a natural disaster has occurred.

Academic studies indicate that most voters tend to seek out and believe information that reinforces beliefs that they already hold. They tune in to broadcasters who present a political viewpoint similar to their own. Two-thirds of the electorate—a figure that coincides with the number of voters who identify with a particular party—says that they have made up their minds before campaigning even begins.

The relatively small percentage of so-called swing voters whose minds are not made up are the ones on whom media coverage and campaign ads have the most effect. Campaign media strategies, however, are not entirely designed with swing voters in mind. It is also important for parties to maintain strong support among their traditional supporters, known as their base, and pursue a national media campaign as well those tailored for regional audiences.

In recent years, a controversy has developed around “exit polling,” the media's practice of asking voters as they

depart a polling place how they voted and then using this information, often based on very small percentages, to predict a winner. While the exit polling results, generally, have proven to be fairly accurate, states on the West Coast, where voting places close hours after those on the East Coast, complain that early predictions influence those who have not yet cast their ballots.

Finally, in 2004 another medium not usually associated with political campaigns entered the fray: motion pictures. A documentary-style, feature-length film released in June criticized the Bush administration's actions in the wake of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. In September, another motion picture meant to counter the claims of the first appeared in U.S. movie theaters. Whether such films will be partisan tools in future election years remains to be seen, but this year, at least, they were clearly part of the media mix.



Previous page, left: A television advertisement, released September 20, addresses President Bush's stance on terrorism. (AP Photo/Bush-Cheney 2004)
Previous page, right: A television advertisement employs images of Senator Kerry during the Vietnam War to counter claims that he lied about his service record. (AP Photo/Kerry-Edwards 2004) Top: President Bush hands water to hurricane victims in Fort Pierce, Florida, on September 8. (AP Photo/Charles Dharapak) Above: Senator Kerry makes a statement to the press in Erlanger, Kentucky, on September 7. (AP Photo/Gerald Herbert)

Advertising and Polling As News

Commentary by Montague Kern

Political advertising plays a very important role in U.S. elections. Research has confirmed that advertising overpowers news, four to one, as a source of voter information. So-called attack ads play a particularly important role in elections, since they are reported in the news more frequently than positive ads and because they tend to stimulate conflict, which also is considered newsworthy.

During the 2004 Democratic presidential primaries, however, there was reluctance on the part of candidates to attack their opponents personally. Howard Dean was the lone candidate to issue “straight talk” ads. He looked voters in the eye and critiqued the Iraq War, President George W. Bush, and fellow Democratic candidates. Negative advertising has never been popular with the public, but voters pay attention. Ads can set campaign agendas and influence voters, particularly in the absence of prior partisanship, experience, or political knowledge.

Howard Dean challenged traditional media and conducted the first Internet campaign in an effort to reach out directly to voters. At the time, the press and many researchers thought that the emergence of the Internet would primarily benefit liberals like Dean. This has not proven to be the case as the 2004 election has worn on. Conservatives and Republicans clearly are equally, if not more significantly, present in the new medium. Internet “influentials” (a name that emerged following polling concerning their demographic) have forced the press to pay attention, most recently in regard to a news story that aired in mid-September. A major television network had reported on documents concerning President Bush’s National Guard service, documents that cast the president in a negative light. Some individuals who post personal journals—commonly called blogs, a contraction of Web logs—on the Internet immediately challenged the authenticity of the documents. Subsequent investigation revealed them almost certainly to have been forged. The network acknowledged it had failed to sufficiently examine the documents and apologized to the public for its failure to adhere to accepted journalistic standards.

During the primaries, John Kerry’s positive campaign ads were coordinated with a traditional ground campaign of personal appearances that focused exclusively on Iowa,

where the primary season kicks off. The Kerry ads were of good quality, but they received little national press attention. Thus, Kerry emerged from the primaries as an unknown quantity whose persona was to be filled in by news coverage that focused on his failure to attack his opponent in the general election, President Bush, and his lack of a strong showing in public opinion polls.

The news media also picked up on the Bush campaign’s assertion that Kerry is a “flip flopper,” someone who often changes his position. Commentators pointed out that Kerry failed to respond to ads that questioned his record. Although the impact of the ads is still under scrutiny, it is clear that one ad campaign did have a major effect, thanks to its proliferation on the Internet and cable news networks, despite doubts about its veracity. The ad charged that John Kerry did not deserve the medals he received for bravery during service in the Vietnam War. That ad and many others in this year’s campaign were created and funded by independent support groups rather than by the Bush or Kerry campaign organizations. Other examples include an ad made by the Progress for America Voter Fund, which uses visuals to link John Kerry to Osama Bin Laden, and Moveon.org’s “Polygraph,” which attacked George Bush’s veracity during the buildup to the Iraq War.

Another important point concerning media and politics this year is that political campaigns are challenging the results of public opinion polls conducted by news organizations, which fuel daily news coverage. The criticism comes from both the left and the right. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, in articles published in September, campaigns are challenging the way political pollsters develop their samples of voters. Polls target only registered voters, failing to include the views of nonregistered voters and thereby ignoring close to half the U.S. population, which has not registered and, indeed, has not voted in recent presidential elections.

This year, however, there is likely to be a significant increase in voter turnout, thanks to a large effort to register voters. And, it is the voters, rather than political advertising or news coverage, that ultimately decide who will be president of the United States.

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Third Parties

While a third-party candidate has yet to win a U.S. presidential election, a few have had a significant impact on the results. This article looks at the obstacles third parties face, and L. Sandy Maisel's commentary probes the case of one third-party candidate, Ralph Nader. Maisel is the William R. Kenan, Jr., professor of government at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

Although the Republicans and Democrats dominate the American political landscape, third parties have a long and active history of influencing U.S. presidential elections. In the 2000 election, candidates of 12 other parties appeared on some or all state ballots. In the upcoming election, there are again 12 third parties fielding candidates. Some, like the “prohibition parties” (primarily against the sale of alcohol) and various socialist groups, garnered only enough voter support signatures to qualify for the ballot in a few states. Others, however, are on the ballot in more than half of the 50 states: the Green Party, an environmentally concerned group (28); the Constitution Party, a Christian fundamentalist group (38); the Libertarian Party, a group that is fiscally conservative and socially liberal (49); and the Independent/Reform Party candidacy of Ralph Nader, a liberal reform group (37 with qualifications for several additional states undergoing judicial review).

It is extremely difficult for third parties to mount a credible challenge to the Republican and Democratic candidates, however. The Electoral College process and procedures for getting on the ballot, taking part in debates, and receiving government campaign funds all favor the established parties.

In addition, third parties rarely have the large statewide organizations of the major parties; they have less expertise in running campaigns; they get less media coverage. Since they are not already in power and less well known, they find it harder to raise money and, because extraordinarily large sums are needed to compete in U.S. nationwide

elections, they have to spend more time fundraising than campaigning on their issues. Still, some third-party candidates are successful at the local and state level, and there have been independent party representatives in Congress.

Third parties can, however, produce dramatic results. Their candidates can be “spoilers”—in a close election, they can take away enough votes from a major-party candidate that he loses a state’s popular vote and, hence, its electoral votes and, hence, the presidency. This has happened several times in U.S. history. In 1912, former president Teddy Roosevelt’s third-party candidacy took more than 27 percent and split the Republican vote, allowing Democrat Woodrow Wilson to win the presidency. In more recent times, George Wallace in 1968 and Ross Perot in 1992 took significant percentages of voters from both major parties in the general election. Many people believe that the 2000 Nader campaign took enough votes (2.8 million) away from Democratic candidate Al Gore that he lost the Electoral College election to George W. Bush. For that reason, his repeat candidacy in the 2004 election has been closely watched by both major parties.

The Nader Candidacy

Commentary by L. Sandy Maisel

Context is everything in American politics. Third-party candidates know this best of all and understand that in this election the context has a number of different facets. I am going to focus on the “third-party” candidacy of Ralph Nader. The quotation marks are used to highlight that Nader does not represent any one third party, but rather is on the ballot in those states in which his name appears under varying labels. When Americans talk of third parties today, they really mean “candidates other than those of the Democratic or Republican party.”



Independent presidential candidate Ralph Nader speaks at a February 23 news conference in Washington, D.C.
(AP Photo/Ron Edmonds)

In choosing to focus on the Nader candidacy, I intentionally slight the Green Party candidate, Peter Cobb, under whose party banner Nader ran four years ago. I also slight the other candidates whose names appear on the ballot in one or more states under various labels. I do so because I think their impact will be minimal. While they might raise interesting issues, no one is listening to them and almost no one will vote for them. But I must add a caveat: they are electorally irrelevant nationally to be sure, but in any state that is as close as New Mexico or Florida were in 2000, even a candidate receiving 0.5 percent of the vote, if those votes otherwise would have gone to the losing candidate, could be relevant.

That fact highlights the first facet of the 2004 context. Many people feel that Ralph Nader cost Al Gore the 2000 election, because people who voted for Nader otherwise would have voted for Gore in certain pivotal, tightly contested states. The accuracy of this claim is less relevant than the perception that it is true. Because of that perception Democrats have worked hard to keep Nader (and other third-party candidates) off of the ballot wherever they could. Ballot access is controlled at the state level in American elections, with each state having separate laws. At this writing, Nader's name will appear on the ballot in 32 states; it is on the ballot but under court challenge in four others; it is not on the ballot but Nader is seeking to gain ballot access in court in eight others; and it will definitely not appear on the ballot in seven states. In 2000, Nader appeared on 43 state ballots.

The second facet is closely related. Even in those states where Nader's name appears, former supporters are leery to support him, because they fear the same result that occurred in 2000, that is, by supporting their true favorite, they swung the election to their least favorite. Again, perception is all that is important here.

Not only is the closeness of the 2000 election fresh in many minds, but many pundits also are predicting an extremely close 2004 election. The relevant facet of this context for third parties is that whether President Bush or Senator Kerry wins the presidency will be determined by how they do in the nine or ten states that remain very competitive.

Voters in the states in which the contest is all but over can vote for Ralph Nader without fear of affecting the final result. That is not true in the other states. Nader is on the ballot in at least six of the pivotal states, with a chance to get on in two others. In polls in those states he is garnering about 2 percent of the vote. Generally a third-party candidate's projected vote drops as an election approaches, particularly a close election. But it does appear that in some states—New Hampshire as one example—the Nader vote could be more than the margin between the Bush and Kerry votes.

How then does one evaluate this role? Third parties are at a distinct disadvantage because of the American electoral system. Many voters recognize this—and whether they like it or not, accept it. As a result, particularly in a close election like this one, third-party candidates, even prominent ones like Nader, poll relatively few votes. However, in an extremely close election, as was demonstrated in 2000, even those small vote totals can be determinative. If the margin between the two top candidates widens, third-party candidates like Nader will be electorally irrelevant, but if that margin narrows, they could indeed determine who will be inaugurated as president in January 2005.

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Third-Party Presidential Candidates, 1832-1996

These third-party candidates received above the historical average of 5.6 percent of the popular vote.

Year	Party	Candidate	Popular Vote (percent)	Electoral Vote (number)	Outcome in Next Election
1996	Reform	H. Ross Perot	8.4	0	Did not run; endorsed Republican candidate George W. Bush
1992	Independent	H. Ross Perot	18.9	0	Ran as Reform Party candidate
1980	Independent	John B. Anderson	6.6	0	Did not run
1968	American Independent	George C. Wallace	13.5	46	Won 1.4 percent of the popular vote
1924	Progressive	Robert M. La Follette	16.6	13	Returned to Republican Party
1912	Progressive ("Bull Moose")	Theodore Roosevelt	27.4	88	Returned to Republican Party
1912	Socialist	Eugene V. Debs	6	0	Won 3.2 percent of the popular vote
1892	Populist	James B. Weaver	8.5	22	Endorsed Democratic candidate
1860	Constitutional Union	John Bell	12.6	39	Party dissolved
1860	Southern Democrats	John C. Breckinridge	18.1	72	Party dissolved
1856	American ("Know-Nothing")	Millard Fillmore	21.5	8	Party dissolved
1848	Free Soil	Martin Van Buren	10.1	0	Won 4.9 percent of the popular vote
1832	Anti-Masonic	William Wirt	7.8	7	Endorsed Whig candidate

Platform Positions

A political party's platform tells voters where the party stands on the important issues of the day. We present excerpts from the 2004 platforms of the United States' two major parties, the Republican and the Democratic, after introductions to each written by experienced party activists. Writing on the Republican Party platform is Tucker Eskew, former deputy assistant to the president in the White House Office of Communications, and on the Democratic Party platform, Marc Ginsberg, former U.S. ambassador to Morocco, managing director and chief executive officer of Northstar Equity Group, and chairman, Alliance for American Leadership.

The Republican Party Platform

By Tucker Eskew

The Global War on Terror: To keep America and the world safer, President Bush will continue working with our allies to fight and win the War on Terror. Since September 11, 2001, our brave military, with help from dozens of other nations, toppled the Taliban in Afghanistan, removed a key ally of al-Qaida, and liberated the Afghan people. In Iraq, Saddam Hussein defied the international community and 17 United Nations resolutions over the course of 12 years, giving no indication that Iraq would ever disarm and comply with the just demands of the world. In 2002 the United Nations Security Council unanimously voted that Saddam Hussein had one final chance to comply with his obligations to the international community, or there would be serious consequences. Today, 25 million Iraqi citizens who once lived under the brutal tyranny of Saddam Hussein are now free, and they are taking the first steps toward democracy. We are working with the people of Afghanistan and Iraq to cultivate liberty and sow the seeds of prosperity in the Middle East. Our nation is more secure because dangerous regimes with links to terror are no longer in power. The world is safer—though not yet fully safe—because we are working with allies to stop the financing of terror, to catch terrorists, and to promote democracy and freedom.

Homeland Security: The president's most important job is to protect the American homeland. Since September

Continued on next page

The Democratic Party Platform

By Marc Ginsberg

The Global War on Terror: The United States and other democratic nations are engaged in a world struggle against radical Islamic terrorists that must be fought offensively on many fronts with all of our resources—diplomatic, economic, informational, as well as military. Although we enjoyed global support following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11), that support has largely disappeared, and our alliances must be repaired in order to wage the most effective struggle to prevail. We must never be on the defensive or wait to be attacked again ... the battle must always be taken to the enemy, but it cannot be primarily focused on military engagements alone. The United States must also engage in a battle of ideas to repair and build new alliances with the Muslim world to help it defeat Islamic radicalism. We must also reengage in promoting a durable peace in the Middle East that irrevocably ends the Arab-Israeli conflict, leaves Israel strong and secure, and produces a new Palestinian leadership that categorically rejects and forcibly opposes terror and accepts Israel's right to exist as a Jewish, democratic nation in the Middle East.

We mistakenly diverted our attention and resources from the real enemy—al-Qaida—by attacking Iraq. The greatest threat we face is the possibility of terrorists obtaining nuclear weapons, and we need to refocus our efforts to prevent this from occurring. Although Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator, that was not a reason to go to war.

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The Republican Party Platform

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11, 2001, we have made tremendous progress. President Bush and Congress created a Department of Homeland Security. By unifying more than 22 agencies and offices, the president has improved the government's ability to guard our borders, protect our infrastructure, and patrol our skies. He has worked to secure our borders while keeping our doors open to foreign visitors.

Trade and the Economy: In his second term, President Bush will focus on building a more prosperous, competitive economy. Elements of his plan include taking the next bold steps in reforming education; building a skilled and effective workforce; encouraging a pro-growth, fair, and simpler tax system; promoting research and development in both the public and private sectors; meeting our energy needs and lessening our energy dependence; reducing the regulatory burden; reforming



Senator John Kerry, left, and President George Bush are shown here during their nationally televised debate on September 30 in Coral Gables, Florida, the first of three such encounters (see page 28) they were scheduled to have in the run up to the elections on November 2. Their vice presidential candidates, Senator John Edwards and Vice President Dick Cheney, also engaged in a nationally televised debate on October 5 in Cleveland, Ohio. During these events, in addition to defending their past records, the candidates argue the wisdom and goals of many of the points in their parties' respective platforms and describe how they intend to implement them.

government; and opening markets for American goods around the globe. Free trade expands choices for America's consumers and raises living standards for our families.

Immigration: The president proposes a new temporary worker program that will match willing foreign

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The Democratic Party Platform

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We have traded a dictator for chaos that has cost us vital support among Iraqis and our allies. Our alliances and global support for the United States were severely undermined by our unsubstantiated rush to war. Based on all available intelligence, Saddam neither possessed weapons of mass destruction, nor was he aiding al-Qaida. The United States is not necessarily safer as a result of toppling Saddam, and the United States lacks vital international support and a coherent strategy to restore stability to Iraq. The consequences of failing to stabilize Iraq compel us to change course and ensure that Iraq faces a stable, prosperous, and democratic future.

The United States needs to embrace again its historical trans-Atlantic partnership to effectively fight the war on terror, rebuild Iraq, stabilize Afghanistan, constrain North Korea, address Iran's nuclear ambitions, and find constructive solutions to overcoming Middle East instability. This also means seeking consensus with Europe on issues like the Kyoto Protocol on the environment, the International Criminal Court, international trade, and foreign aid.

Homeland Security: Democrats are committed to seriously considering taking immediate action on all of the 9/11 Commission's recommendations, including creating the post of director of national intelligence, vastly improving our human intelligence capabilities, and integrating the intelligence we gather. Our focus must be on preventing terrorists from obtaining weapons of mass destruction by securing all unprotected nuclear material, strengthening counter-proliferation efforts, destroying chemical weapons stockpiles, and devoting economic and educational assistance to failed states. Domestically, we must adequately fund the needs of our first responders and take protective actions against bioterrorism.

Trade and the Economy: The challenge for U.S. international trade and economic policy is to keep our own economy growing and high-paying jobs increasing, while cutting the budget and trade deficits. The Democrats will promote the creation of jobs in the United States by passing a tax credit for manufacturers, including small businesses, for keeping jobs at home, while promoting fair trade by insisting on effective labor and environmental standards in agreements and enforcing unfair trade practice rules. Expansion of trade through

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The Republican Party Platform

Continued from previous page

workers with willing American employers when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs. This program will offer legal status, as temporary workers, to the millions of undocumented men and women now employed in the United States, and to those in foreign countries who seek to participate in the program and have been offered employment here.

Global Health: President Bush is committed to the health and welfare of the world's population. For example, he announced a five-year, \$15-billion initiative to turn the tide in combating the global HIV/AIDS pandemic. This commitment of resources will help the most afflicted countries in Africa and the Caribbean wage and win the war against HIV/AIDS. The \$15 billion in funding for this initiative triples the U.S. commitment to international AIDS assistance.

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The Democratic Party Platform

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reduced tariffs and debt relief will benefit all challenged nations, including our closest neighbors to the south.

Immigration: We must remember that from the Arctic Circle to Tierra del Fuego, the peoples of the Americas are linked through commerce, immigration, and family ties as never before. The increase of jobs in one country does not mean corresponding losses in another. The free-flow of ideas and cooperative, sustained reform are the best ways to assure a better life for all our children.

Global Health: Africa is the center of the global HIV/AIDS crisis. Effective treatment and prevention programs need to be driven by science, not by conservative ideology. Imposing an agenda that prohibits government-funded organizations from discussing family planning options, opposes the use of condoms, or emphasizes abstinence as the best measure to prevent the disease robs policymakers of the flexibility to craft solutions that actually work. Payments into the Global Fund need to be increased. The United States also must provide humanitarian assistance directly or provide security that allows unimpeded access for humanitarian workers to all areas that are in crisis.

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Platform Excerpts

The complete platforms are available at <http://www.gop.com/About/PartyPlatform/Default.aspx> and at <http://a9.g.akamai.net/7/9/8082/v001/www.democrats.org/pdfs/2004platform.pdf>

Issue	Republican Party Platform “A Safer World and a More Hopeful America”	Democratic Party Platform “Strong at Home, Respected in the World”
Terrorism	<p>We are defending the peace by taking the fight to the enemy. We are confronting terrorists overseas so we do not have to confront them here at home. We are destroying the leadership of terrorist networks in sudden raids, disrupting their planning and financing, and keeping them on the run.</p> <p>We are preserving the peace by working with more than 80 allied nations, as well as international institutions, to isolate and confront terrorists and outlaw regimes.</p> <p>There is no negotiation with terrorists. No form of therapy or coercion will turn them from their murderous ways. Only total and complete destruction of terrorism will allow freedom to flourish.</p>	<p>Victory in the war on terror requires a combination of American determination and international cooperation on all fronts.</p> <p>It requires the ability and willingness to direct immediate, effective military action when the capture or destruction of terrorist groups and their leaders is possible; a massive improvement in intelligence gathering and analysis coupled with vigorous law enforcement; a relentless effort to shut down the flow of terrorist funds; a global effort to prevent failed or failing states that can become sanctuaries for terrorists; a sustained effort to deny terrorists any more recruits by conducting effective public diplomacy; and a sustained political and economic effort to improve education, work for peace, support democracy, and extend hope.</p>
Iraq	<p>In Iraq, America is serving the cause of liberty, peace, and our own security... We have full confidence in the plan for Iraqi self-government that is currently being implemented by Iraq’s interim government.</p>	<p>We cannot afford to fail at peace. We cannot allow a failed state in Iraq that inevitably would become a haven for terrorists and a destabilizing force in the Middle East.</p>
Middle East	<p>Republicans support President Bush’s policy of working with every government in the Middle East dedicated to destroying the terrorist networks, while in the longer term expecting a higher standard of reform and democracy from our friends in the region. We will extend the peace by supporting the rise of democracy, and the hope and progress that democracy brings, as the alternative to hatred and terror in the broader Middle East.</p> <p>We support President Bush’s vision of two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security... If Palestinians embrace democracy and the rule of law, confront corruption, and firmly reject terror, they can count on American support for the creation of a Palestinian state.</p>	<p>America needs a major initiative in public diplomacy to support the many voices of freedom in the Arab and Muslim world... And we must support human rights groups, independent media, and labor unions dedicated to building a democratic culture from the grassroots up.</p> <p>We will work to transform the Palestinian Authority by promoting new and responsible leadership, committed to fighting terror and promoting democracy. We support the creation of a democratic Palestinian state dedicated to living in peace and security side by side with the Jewish State of Israel.</p>

Issue	Republican Party Platform “A Safer World and a More Hopeful America”	Democratic Party Platform “Strong at Home, Respected in the World”
WMD	We will not allow the world’s most dangerous regimes to possess the world’s most dangerous weapons.	Preventing terrorists from gaining access to these weapons must be our number one security goal.
America’s World Role	We affirm America’s role in leading the world toward greater freedom, opportunity, and prosperity. Our efforts to expand the reach of economic and political freedom are complemented by our work in fostering religious liberty.	We believe in an America that people around the world admire, because they know we cherish not just our freedom, but theirs. Not just our democracy, but their hope for it. Not just our peace and security, but the world’s.
Trade	Free trade must be fair trade that advances America’s economic goals and protects American jobs. To achieve this goal, we must act globally, regionally, and bilaterally to negotiate new trade agreements and enforce existing trade commitments.	We will make it a priority to knock down barriers to free, fair, and balanced trade so other nations’ markets are as open as our own. We will use all the tools we have to create new opportunities for American workers, farmers, and businesses, and break down barriers in key export markets...
Global Health	We fully support the President’s leadership in dramatically expanding resources to find an HIV/AIDS vaccine and in devoting at least \$15 billion over five years towards global prevention, care, and treatment programs...undertaking a comprehensive approach to the pandemic that involves education, abstinence, prevention, testing, treatment, and care...	Addressing global health challenges—including the AIDS pandemic—is a humanitarian obligation and a national security imperative...And we will restore America’s leadership in global health by rejecting policies driven by ideology instead of science.
Homeland Security	The major institutions of American national security...are being transformed to meet the challenge of defending America in a new era.	We need to improve our ability to gather, analyze, and share information so we can track down terrorists and stop them before they cause harm.
Immigration	The Republican Party supports reforming the immigration system to ensure that it is legal, safe, orderly and humane...A growing economy requires a growing number of workers, and President Bush has proposed a new temporary worker program that applies when no Americans can be found to fill the jobs.	We will extend the promise of citizenship to those still struggling for freedom... Undocumented immigrants within our borders who clear a background check, work hard, and pay taxes should have a path to earn full participation in America.
Economy	We want more people to own and build small businesses. We want more people to own and control their health care. We want more people to own personal retirement accounts.	We will revive America’s manufacturing sector, create new jobs, and protect existing ones by ending tax breaks for companies that ship jobs overseas and cutting taxes for companies that create jobs here at home.

Debating the Issues

Nationally televised debates are a highlight of the presidential race during the closing weeks of the campaign.



Presidential debates have been a mainstay of the U.S. election process since 1976 when they were resumed following the first televised debate in 1960 between Richard Nixon and John Kennedy. Voters consistently cite debates as an influential factor in deciding their votes, and in close races—like the 2004 presidential race—they take on increased significance. President Bush and Senator Kerry faced off in 90-minute debates in Florida on September 30 and in Missouri on October 8, and were to meet on October 13 in Arizona. Meanwhile, the vice presidential candidates, Vice President Dick Cheney and Senator John Edwards, held a debate October 5 in Ohio, another hotly contested state in the election.

Since its founding in 1987, the nonpartisan Commission on Presidential Debates (CPD) has organized the debates and set the rules for candidate participation and conduct. The CPD prescribed guidelines to ensure fairness and transparency. This year, the first and third debates were to follow a single-moderator format with clear rules for time limits and candidate actions. For example, candidates were not to pose direct questions to each other and were

to be prohibited from walking around onstage or manipulating the stage to improve their own appearance. The second debate was a town hall meeting where audience members could pose questions directly to the candidates.

Although the impact of presidential debates is difficult to quantify, they clearly play a crucial role in the U.S. election process. This year's debates have already exceeded the estimated 37.5 to 46.6 million people who tuned in to the 2000 presidential debates. There is “no question that the very large number of people who watch the debates and the fact that they learn from the debates ... makes them an extremely important piece of the general election process,” said CPD Executive Director Janet Brown.

Above: Senator Kerry, left, listens as President Bush speaks September 30, 2004, in Coral Gables, Florida, during the first of their three scheduled debates. (AP Photo/Ron Edmonds)

Voting Day

While millions of Americans go to the polls on Election Day, more citizens than ever before will vote by absentee ballot this year, either by necessity or by preference.

On November 2, registered voters across the United States will travel to local schools, churches, or town halls to cast their ballots not only for president and vice president, but for local and state officials as well. While no one voting system is used throughout the country (see Voting Technology), one practice is the same: voting at all polling places is confidential and conducted in the privacy of a voting booth.



Upon entering a polling place, voters find election officials and volunteer poll workers, who check voter registration records and assist voters with the voting process. A candidate or his or her supporters may stand outside of a polling place, shaking hands or handing out election materials. However, laws require these partisan activities to remain a certain distance from the polls to ensure that voters have the privacy they need to cast their votes.

Polling places open early in the morning and remain open throughout the day. Many people vote on their way to or from work, or at some other convenient time during the day. Some voters, however, will never see the polling place on Election Day. In 2004, many Americans will vote by absentee ballot, a procedure that once was available only to those who were unable to travel to their polling places. Absentee voters request a ballot from their local election officials and return the ballot by mail. In many states, absentee voting has become a popular



alternative, allowing voters to cast their ballots at the time of their choosing without having to leave home. The state of Oregon has done away with polling places altogether: all voters will be required to vote by mail in 2004.

Many proponents of absentee voting argue that the process will increase voter turnout. Experts estimate that more than 100 million Americans will vote on November 2, but this number represents only about half of those who are eligible to vote. Low voter turnout has been an important issue in many elections, and voter registration drives are a key component of an election year. Representatives of political parties and various civic groups can be found at local shopping malls, movie theaters, and other public places and events, handing out registration cards to those who recently have become eligible to vote by turning 18 years old or by becoming U.S. citizens, as well as to people who may have been eligible to vote for some time but have not registered.

*Above: One sign, left, directs voters to a polling place in Little Rock, Arkansas, and another to a drop box for mailed ballots in Portland, Oregon.
(AP Photos/left: Danny Johnston; right: Don Ryan)*

Voting Technology

With the help of computers and other machines, the United States is moving toward more efficient and reliable voting methods.



The technology of voting—how voters physically cast their votes—has taken many forms in U.S. electoral history. During the colonial period, when many people could not read, voters often voted through a show of hands or a voice vote. By the late 1700s paper ballots had become predominant. Their use, however, declined steadily following the invention of the mechanical voting machine in 1869. In 2004, less than 1 percent of all U.S. voters will use traditional paper ballots.

Voting technology varies by county in each state. In the 2004 election, six voting systems will be used. Following are the percentages of registered voters who will use each system, as projected by Election Data Services. The voting systems are:

- punch card: voters punch holes next to their selections on a paper ballot—13.7 percent

- mechanical lever: voters pull a machine lever to mark their choices—14 percent
- optical scan: voters fill in a machine-readable ballot—34.9 percent
- Direct-Recording Electronic Systems (DREs): voters use touch-screen or push-button machines—29.3 percent
- paper ballots: votes are marked on paper and counted by hand—0.7 percent
- mixed: machine use varies by towns within each county—7.4 percent

The rise of electronic voting machines received a tremendous boost with the 2002 Help America Vote Act. Congress enacted the law, which dedicated \$3.9 billion to



improve election administration, after a ballot controversy in the 2000 presidential election demonstrated the need to update and improve voting systems. Because the popular vote in Florida was so close, the Gore campaign requested a recount.

The law featured a \$325-million buyout program to replace older punch card and mechanical lever voting systems with new DRE systems. The number of voters using DREs is expected to rise from 12.6 percent in 2000 to 29.3 percent in 2004.

The Help America Vote Act also includes provisions to combat election fraud and to ease ballot access. Reforms that come into effect this year include regulations to verify the identity of first-time voters and to mandate state definitions of what constitutes a valid vote. Each precinct is also required to have at least one machine accessible to the blind and disabled. Additional reforms are to be fully implemented by 2006.

Previous page: Iris Stanley casts her ballot on an electronic voting machine in the presidential preference primary at her polling place in Roswell, Georgia, on March 2. (AP Photo/Ric Feld) Above: Deborah Clark, supervisor of elections in Pinellas County, Florida, demonstrates the voting procedure using a touch-screen voting machine during a news conference on July 27. (AP Photo/Phil Coale)

Ballots

Election ballots in the United States contain the names of candidates for national, state, and local offices, as well as questions concerning important legislative issues.

REFERENDUM B

Amendments to articles IV, VII, and IX of the constitution of the state of Colorado, concerning the elimination of obsolete provisions of the state constitution.

YES

NO

President and Vice President
(Presidente y Vice Presidente)

George W. Bush /
Dick Cheney (REP)

John F. Kerry /
John Edwards (DEM)

Michael Badnarik /
Richard V. Campagna (LIB)

Write-in (Voto Escrito)

An extract from a state of Colorado ballot (top) is an example of a referendum—in this case, approval of amendments to the state constitution—that U.S. citizens often vote on at the polls. Below it is a portion of the bilingual (English-Spanish) ballot from the state of Texas.

Whether through touch-screen technology or the traditional paper ballot, U.S. voters make decisions on a wide range of offices and legislative proposals on Election Day. According to Washington political consultant Earl Bender, the United States has more than 176,000 elective offices within various levels and branches of government. This year, all 435 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, 34 U.S. Senate seats, and 11 governorships are up for election, in addition to the presidency. Ballots also include contests for state and local government positions, from state supreme court justices and treasurers to city commissioners and school board members.

Voters can also participate in the legislative process on the state and local levels by approving and even making laws. Depending on state and local law, voters can call for a referendum, that is, a vote to determine whether a measure passed by the state legislature becomes law. They can also add voter-initiated legislative measures or initiatives to ballots through a petition process. In many areas, voters also vote on local tax measures and the removal from office of elected officials.

State election laws determine ballot appearance and organization. Ballots can group candidates by party affiliation or by office. Some ballots allow voters to mark one party to vote for all candidates from that party. Every state offers a write-in option, so that voters can write in votes for unlisted candidates.

Ballot language options also vary by locality to reflect voter needs. Federal election law protects the rights of non-English speaking voters and requires bilingual ballots in jurisdictions with 10,000 or more non-English speakers.

The Electoral College

As prescribed in the U.S. Constitution, American presidents are elected not directly by the people, but by the people's electors.



The Electoral College was created by the framers of the U.S. Constitution as an alternative to electing the president by popular vote or by Congress. Each state elects the number of representatives to the Electoral College that is equal to its number of Senators—two from each state—plus its number of delegates in the House of Representatives. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, has three Electoral College votes. There are currently 538 electors in the Electoral College; 270 votes are needed to win the presidential election.

Several weeks after the general election, electors from each state meet in their state capitals and cast their official vote for president and vice president. The votes are then sent to the president of the U.S. Senate who, on January 6 with the entire Congress present, tallies the votes and announces the winner.

The winner of the Electoral College vote usually is the candidate who has won the popular vote. However, it is

possible to win the presidency without winning the popular vote. The most recent case occurred in the 2000 presidential

election when President Bush won the Electoral College vote—271 to 266—after losing the popular vote to then Vice President Al Gore. Two other presidents—Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876 and Benjamin Harrison in 1888—became president without winning the popular vote. In the 1824 election between John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson, Jackson won the popular vote but neither won a majority of Electoral College votes. Adams secured the presidency only after the election was decided by vote of the House of Representatives, a procedure provided for in the Constitution when no candidate wins a majority of the Electoral College.

Presidential electors in the state of West Virginia unanimously cast their votes for George W. Bush for president at the state capitol in Charleston on December 18, 2000. (AP Photo/Bob Bird)

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Internet Resources

Online sources for information about the U.S. electoral process

Electoral College

Center for Voting and Democracy—Electoral College

http://www.fairvote.org/e_college/index.html

Federal Election Commission: The Electoral College

<http://www.fec.gov/pages/ecmenu2.htm>

National Archives and Records Administration: U.S. Electoral College

http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/

Election Reform

Campaign Finance: Constitutional and Legal Issues of Soft Money (Congressional Research Service Report)

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/29688.pdf>

Center for Responsive Politics

<http://www.opensecrets.org/home>

Election Reform Information Project: Reports on Election Reform

<http://www.electionline.org/index.jsp?page=Publications>

Election Reform: Overview and Issues (Congressional Research Service Report)

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/28920.pdf>

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ABC News Political Unit

<http://abcnews.go.com/sections/politics/TheNote/TheNote.html>

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<http://pcl.stanford.edu/campaigns/campaign2004/index.html>

CBS News: Campaign 2004

<http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/politics/main250.shtml>

Cook Political Report

<http://www.cookpolitical.com/>

CNN

<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2004/>

Fox News Channel

<http://www.foxnews.com/>

New York Times—2004 Election Guide

http://www.nytimes.com/packages/html/politics/2004_ELECTION_GUIDE_GRAPHIC/index.html

MSNBC Decision 2004

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/3032553/>

Voice of America: Road to the White House

<http://www.voanews.com/specialreport.cfm?objectid=6B65B21A-4280-4D94-87D90E84B6298834>

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Political Parties

Bush/Cheney 04

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<http://www.pollingreport.com/wh2004.htm>

The Polls, the Pundits, and the Election of 2004, by John Zogby

<http://usinfo.state.gov/products/pubs/election04/polls.htm>

Quinnipiac University National Polls

<http://www.quinnipiac.edu/x701.xml>

Real Clear Politics

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/bush_vs_kerry.html

Presidential Election Campaigns

Commission on Presidential Debates

www.debates.org

Council on Foreign Relations: Campaign 2004

Foreign Policy in the Presidential Election

<http://www.cfr.org/campaign2004/>

Democracy in Action: P2004 Race for the White House

<http://www.gwu.edu/~action/P2004.html>

Elections 2004 (University of Michigan)

<http://www.lib.umich.edu/govdocs/elec2004.html>

Federal & State Election Resources

<http://www.llrx.com/columns/roundup25.htm>

Federal Election Commission: About Elections and Voting

<http://www.fec.gov/elections.html>

Foreign Press Center: Campaign 2004

<http://fpc.state.gov/c9752.htm>

League of Women Voters: The Election Process

<http://www.lwv.org/voter/read.cfm?pid=elections101>

Political Campaign Management

<http://www.nyu.edu/gsas/dept/politics/pcml/links.shtml>

Politics1—Presidency2004

<http://www.politics1.com/p2004.htm>

Project Vote Smart

<http://www.vote-smart.org/>

Scholastic News: Election 2004

<http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/election2004/>

Voters

Center for American Women and Politics

<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cawp>

Center for Voting and Democracy

<http://www.fairvote.org>

Motivating Younger People to Vote

http://www.pewtrusts.com/pdf/new_voters_brief_0504.pdf

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