

Barack Obama vs. John McCain



Sen. Obama and Sen. McCain have responded in writing to the issues outlined in the 18-30 Voter Issues Paper (VIP). We combine their answers in this VIP Match-Up so you can see where the presidential candidates stand on issues important to Americans 30 and under in this election. To check out the 18-30 VIP and to register to vote, go to smackdownyourvote.com.

ECONOMY AND JOBS

1) What specific legislative proposal will you support to ensure that jobs that pay a living wage are available domestically for America's younger generation?

Senator Obama: We can't keep passing unfair trade deals like NAFTA that put special interests over workers' interests. I didn't just start criticizing unfair trade deals like NAFTA because I started running for office - I'm doing it because I've seen what happens to a community when the factory closes down and the jobs move overseas. I began my career as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago, fighting joblessness and poverty in neighborhoods that were devastated when the local steel plant closed.

And it's because of this longstanding commitment to working families that I will not sign any trade agreement as President that does not have protections for our environment and protections for American workers. And I'll pass the Patriot Employer Act that I've been fighting for ever since I ran for the Senate so we can end tax breaks for companies that ship our jobs overseas, and give those breaks to companies that create good jobs with decent wages here in America.

While we have to acknowledge that some of the jobs we've seen go overseas are not coming back, there is more we can do to create new jobs here at home. We can invest in American jobs by investing in America, and rebuilding our roads and bridges. I've proposed a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank that will invest \$60 billion over ten years. This will multiply into almost half a trillion dollars of additional infrastructure spending and generate nearly two million new jobs – many of them in the construction industry that's been hard hit by the housing crisis we're facing. Additionally, we can do

more to create the green jobs that are jobs of the future. My energy plan will put \$150 billion over 10 years into establishing a green energy sector that will create up to 5 million new jobs over the next two decades – jobs right here in Indiana that pay well and can't be outsourced. And we'll provide funding to help manufacturers convert to green technology and help workers learn the skills they need for these jobs.

Senator McCain: The best way to help ensure that Americans have quality jobs in the future is to pursue a pro-growth agenda so that businesses grow and hire more people. Lower taxes and less regulation will unleash the private sector to grow. As president, John McCain will send to Congress a proposal to cut the taxes on America's business, from a rate of 35 to 25 percent. As it is, we have the second-highest tax on business in the industrialized world. High tax rates are driving many businesses and jobs overseas -- and, of course, our foreign competitors wouldn't mind if we kept it that way. As president, John McCain will help fix this drag on growth and job creation, and help American workers compete with any company in the world.

2) What sectors do you perceive as being “high growth” areas for job creation for young adults?

Senator McCain: John McCain sees great growth in green technologies and alternative energies that will be essential to our energy strategy for the 21st century. Senator McCain will also do everything he can to ensure that other high-growth industries develop as he believes the United States needs a farsighted and fervent commitment to advancing technology, which is the key to U.S. competitiveness. He will ensure that economic policy encourages the conditions necessary for innovation markets to thrive: the availability of risk capital; low taxes and sound incentives for entrepreneurs; a regulatory environment that is not too burdensome, supports risk-taking and rewards innovators; adequate support for basic research; and labor market policies that lead to a highly-skilled workforce.



Senator Obama: I believe that America is at a competitive advantage when it comes to building the high- demand technologies of the future, and I will help nurture America's success in clean technology manufacturing by establishing a federal investment program to help manufacturing centers modernize and help Americans learn the new skills they may need to produce green products. Along with the increased federal investment in the research, development and deployment of advanced technologies, this investment will help spur sustainable economic growth in communities across the country.

My plan to create more American jobs will increase funding for federal workforce training programs and direct these programs to incorporate green technologies training, such as advanced manufacturing and weatherization training, into their efforts to help Americans find and retain stable, high-paying jobs. I will also create an energy-focused youth jobs program to invest in disconnected and disadvantaged youth. This program will provide youth participants with energy efficiency and environmental service opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of homes and buildings in their communities, while also providing them with practical skills and experience in important career fields of expected high-growth employment. Participants will not only be able to use their training to find new jobs, but also build skills that will help them move up the career ladder over time.

America should lead the world in broadband penetration and Internet access. As a country, we have ensured that every American has access to telephone service and electricity, regardless of economic status, and I will do likewise for broadband Internet access. Full broadband penetration can enrich democratic discourse, enhance competition, provide economic growth, and bring significant consumer benefits. Moreover, improving our infrastructure will foster competitive markets for Internet access and services that ride on that infrastructure. I believe we can get true broadband to every community in America through a combination of reform of the Universal Service Fund, better use of the nation's wireless spectrum, promotion of next-generation facilities, technologies and applications, and new tax and loan incentives.

3) With many young adults believing Social Security will not be available once they retire, what is being done now so that members of the next generation will be able to meet their financial obligations when they retire?

Senator Obama: As someone who was largely raised by my grandparents, I recognize that Social Security is indispensable to workers and seniors, and it is probably the most important and most successful programs that our country has ever created. I remain committed to making sure Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people, now and in the future.



The underlying Social Security system remains strong, but the projected long-term cash flow of the program needs to be addressed. This is a real but manageable problem. But the longer we wait to solve the problem, the bigger it grows.

I will be honest with the American people about the long-term solvency of Social Security and the ways we can fix the problem. There are a number of ways to extend the Social Security trust fund, and I will come to the table with an open mind and listen to all those options. But I believe that benefits should not be cut, the retirement age should not be raised, but instead the wealthiest should pay a little bit more through a raise in the payroll tax ceiling to ensure that the most successful social program in history stays strong. This could include a "doughnut hole" to ensure that lifting the payroll tax cap only applies to the wealthiest Americans. I believe that privatization of Social Security, which I have long opposed, is not a valid option for us to consider because it tears the fabric of Social Security – the idea of mutual responsibility – by subjecting a secure program to the whims of the market, and that is not an acceptable way to strengthen this program.

Senator McCain: No government program is the object of more political posturing and spin than Social Security. Americans have the right to know the truth, no matter how bad it is. The current Social Security system is unsustainable. A half century ago, 16 American workers supported every retiree. Today, it's just 3. Soon, it will be only 2. If we don't make some tough choices, Social Security either won't be there for our children and grandchildren or we will have had to raise taxes so dramatically to support them that we will have crushed the prosperity of average Americans. John McCain will fight to save the future of Social Security and believes that we may meet our obligations to the retirees of today and the future without raising taxes. John McCain supports supplementing the current Social Security system with personal accounts -- but not as a substitute for addressing benefit promises that cannot be kept. John McCain will reach across the aisle, but if the Democrats do not act, he will. No problem is in more need of honesty than the looming financial challenges of entitlement programs. Americans have

the right to know the truth and John McCain will not leave office without fixing the problems that threaten our future prosperity and power. He'll submit a plan to save Social Security and Medicare, and ask Congress to do the same. He'll work on a bipartisan basis to make the hard choices; to protect the retirement security of the American worker, and the growth of the American economy. And if Congress is afraid to make those choices, then they can just let him do it. He'll take the heat. He'll ask Congress to let him submit a comprehensive proposal. He'll prepare it carefully, fairly and honestly. And they can vote yes or no: no amendments; no filibuster; no tricks: no band-aid solutions; no more kicking the can down the road as the problem becomes harder and more expensive to solve; no more hoping that a future generation of leaders will have the courage we lack.

4) Because young adults have expressed concern that federal, state and local taxes are too high, what tax reforms would you offer to address this concern?

Senator McCain: John McCain has been fighting for low and fair taxes for over 20 years. He will maintain the current income and investment tax rates and fight the Democrats' plans for a crippling tax increase in 2011. John McCain will permanently repeal the Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT), an onerous tax that threatens 25 million middle class families who were never intended to pay it. John McCain believes the tax code should be less of a burden on those, whether they are mothers and fathers or single parents, who are trying to raise a family. He proposes to raise the personal exemption for each dependent from \$3,500 to \$7,000. He will also ban Internet taxes, and new cell phone taxes. John McCain will also propose an alternative new and simpler tax system, and give America a real choice between our current tax code that costs Americans \$140 billion just to figure out, and a system that is simpler, flatter, and fair. Finally, John McCain will protect the American people against future tax increases by requiring a three-fifths majority in Congress to raise taxes.



Senator Obama: As president, I will end the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans to pay for my health care plan.

I have also proposed a middle class tax cut plan that will restore fairness to the tax code and provide 150 million workers the tax relief they need. My new "Making Work Pay" tax cut will provide up to \$500 per worker, or \$1,000 per working family, and I will completely eliminate income taxes for 10 million Americans. The economy has weakened significantly. I believe we cannot wait for the next president to give workers the tax relief they need. We should make half of the tax credit, \$250 per worker, available immediately in order to quickly get money into the pockets of Americans. This will help maintain consumer spending, strengthen the economy and ease the squeeze so many Americans are currently experiencing. If there is a three-month cumulative decline in employment, I believe we should immediately provide the remaining portion of that tax credit, an additional \$250 per worker. I will also dramatically simplify tax filings so that millions of Americans will be able to do their taxes in less than 5 minutes. My plan will be fully paid for by closing the corporate loopholes and cracking down on international tax havens, increasing the highest bracket for capital gains and dividends and closing the carried interest loophole.

5) What policies and legislation will you promote to help 18-30 year olds achieve greater financial planning and security, and to help those who are living paycheck to paycheck get out of that cycle?

Senator Obama: Only 55 percent of Americans working full-time hold a job with any retirement savings plan. The percentage is even lower for part-time workers and minorities. I want to make retirement saving easier, cheaper, and more automatic for working people who get only minor tax benefits to save and who do not have the option of a defined benefit plan. In the Senate, I supported the Save More for Retirement Act with Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM). The bill provides incentives for automatic enrollment in 401Ks. I would also expand savings by establishing automatic enrollment in IRAs for employees who are not covered by 401K plans and expanding and improving the Saver's Tax Credit to help more low and moderate income households save.



Senator McCain: John McCain believes we must promote savings among all Americans. Low taxes on dividends and capital gains promote saving, and John McCain will keep the current rates on dividends and capital gains and fight anti-growth efforts by Democrats to raise them.

HEALTHCARE

6) How would you describe the current status of health care in America? How will you tackle the challenge of providing all young adults with access to affordable health care? What should the government do, if anything, to ensure that every American has health coverage?

Senator McCain: The problems with health care are well known: it is too expensive and 47 million people living in the United States lack health insurance. John McCain believes the key to health care reform is to restore control to the patients themselves. We want a system of health care in which everyone can afford and acquire the treatment and preventative care they need. Health care should be available to all and not limited by where you work or how much you make. Families should be in charge of their health care dollars and have more control over care.

John McCain will reform health care, making it easier for both individuals and families to obtain insurance. An important part of his plan is to use competition to improve the quality of health insurance with greater variety to match people's needs, lower prices, and portability. Families should be able to purchase health insurance nationwide, across state lines.

John McCain will reform the tax code to offer more choices beyond employer-based health insurance coverage. While still having the option of employer-based coverage, every family will also have the option of receiving a direct refundable tax credit - effectively cash - of \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families to offset the cost of insurance. Families will be able to choose the insurance provider that suits them best and the money would be sent directly to the insurance provider. Those obtaining innovative insurance that costs less than the credit can deposit the remainder in expanded Health Savings Accounts.

Senator Obama: I believe our health care system is broken. Health care costs continue to rise faster than inflation every year, and more Americans now lack health insurance than at any other point in history. I will tackle this problem by signing universal health legislation by the end of my first term in office that ensures all Americans have high-quality, affordable health care coverage. My plan will save a typical American family up to \$2,500 every year on medical expenditures by providing affordable, comprehensive and portable health coverage for every American; modernizing the U.S. health care system to contain spiraling health care costs and improve the quality of patient care; and promoting prevention and strengthening public health to prevent disease and protect against natural and man-made disasters.

7) What responsibility do employers have to assist in addressing the current health care dilemma for 18-30 year olds, particularly for young adults who are hired as short or long-term temp workers as they start their careers?

Senator Obama: Young people ages 19-29 are one of the largest and fastest-growing segments of the U.S. population without health insurance. 13.7 million lacked coverage in 2004, an increase of 2.5 million since 2000. Young adults often lose coverage under their parents' policies when they turn 19 or graduate from school. Nearly 40 percent of college graduates will be uninsured for some period of time during their first year out, and the same is true for 50 percent of high school graduates who do not go onto college. Under my health care plan, young adults will be able to get their own affordable health care coverage. My plan will also allow young people up to age 25 to continue coverage through their parents' plans if they want to.

All Americans, including young adults, will also have access to a new affordable public health plan as well as quality private health care plans through a National Health Insurance Exchange. The insurance plans available under both programs will be portable so that young adults will not have to worry about losing their health insurance if they lose or leave their job. And large employers will be required to contribute a reasonable amount to the public health plan if they do not offer their employees meaningful health insurance coverage options.

Senator McCain: Americans need new choices beyond those offered in employment-based coverage. They want a reformed system so that wherever you go and wherever you work, your health plan goes with you. John McCain offers a very straightforward way to achieve this.



Under current law, the federal government gives a tax benefit when employers provide health-insurance coverage to American workers and their families. This benefit doesn't cover the total cost of the health plan, and in reality each worker and family absorbs the rest of the cost in lower wages and diminished benefits. But it provides essential support for insurance coverage. Many workers are perfectly content with this arrangement, and under John McCain's reform plan they would be able to keep that coverage. Their employer-provided health plans would be largely untouched and unchanged.

But for every American who wanted it, another option would be available under John McCain's plan: Every year, they would receive a tax credit directly, with the same cash

value of the credits for employees in big companies, in a small business, or self-employed. You simply choose the insurance provider that suits you best. By mail or online, you would then inform the government of your selection. And the money to help pay for your health care would be sent straight to that insurance provider. The health plan you chose would be as good as any that an employer could choose for you. And if a church or professional organization wishes to sponsor insurance for its members, they should be able to do so. The bottom line: Health insurance would be yours and your family's health-care plan to keep without worrying that it will go away along with your job.

8) What should the government do, if anything, to ensure that every American has health coverage?

Senator McCain: The biggest problem with the American health-care system is one of cost and access, and as a result tens of millions of individuals have no insurance. For example, we currently spend about 2.4 trillion dollars a year on health care. A decade from now that number, under current projections, will double to over 4 trillion dollars.

The Obama and Clinton response to these problems is to promise universal coverage, whatever its cost, and the massive tax increases, mandates, and government regulation that it imposes. But in the end this will accomplish one thing only. Under their plans, we will replace the inefficiency, irrationality, and uncontrolled costs of the current system with the inefficiency, irrationality, and uncontrolled costs of a government monopoly. We'll have all the problems, and more, of private health care — rigid rules, long waits, and lack of choices, and risk degrading its great strengths and advantages including the innovation and life-saving technology that make American medicine the most advanced in the world.

John McCain has a different approach. He believes the key to real reform is to restore control over our health-care system to the patients themselves. To that end, his reforms are built on the pursuit of three goals: paying only for quality medical care, having insurance choices that are diverse and responsive to individual needs, and restoring our sense of personal responsibility.

Senator Obama: No response.

EDUCATION

9) What role do you believe the government should play in making higher education more accessible and affordable?

Senator Obama: The federal government certainly has to do more to make college more affordable for every American. The very first bill I introduced in the United States Senate sought to increase the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100. As part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act that was signed into law in September, we moved one step closer toward reaching that goal by increasing the current maximum to \$4,310 in 2007 and to \$5,400 by 2012. The Act also mandates that interest rates on subsidized student loans are cut in half over four years. I sat on the Conference Committee that won these improvements in the bill.

But there is more we can do. As president, I will create a new American Opportunity Tax Credit to help American families who are struggling to send their children to college. This fully refundable \$4,000 tax credit will be provided to students before they have to pay their tuition bills. I will also simplify the financial aid application process by eliminating the current student aid form altogether. Instead, we will use tax data and make this process far easier for students and their families, because students should not need a PhD to apply for financial aid.

Senator McCain: The federal government has an important role in aiding those students not able to meeting the financial hurdle of college education. Federal grants and loans should be targeted toward those with genuine need for assistance. Moreover, it is imperative that the federal government be good stewards of this money, operating programs without waste, favoritism or loss of integrity. In the short term, students face the possibility that the credit crunch will disrupt loans for the fall semester. John McCain has called on the federal government and the 50 governors to anticipate problems and expand the lender-of-last resort capabilities for each state's guarantee agency.

10) In light of the struggle to pay for college, what will you do to make it easier for young adults to attend college or graduate school without accumulating unmanageable debt?

Senator McCain: John McCain believes that the college experience is essential to empowering the next generation, which is why he believes we must ensure aid to students not able to meet the financial hurdle of college education. John McCain is committed to ensuring the integrity of federal student aid programs to assure access to low-interest loans to college students. In addition, he is proud to support rewarding national service with education benefits to help those who have served causes greater than their own self interest with meeting the financial obligations of higher education.

Senator Obama: My American Opportunity Tax Credit will make community college tuition completely free for most Americans. With tuition and fees at community colleges averaging about \$2,300, the credit will eliminate tuition expenses entirely for lower-income and middleclass families. And because the credit is fully refundable, it will help low-income families that need it the most.



This tax credit will ensure that the first \$4,000 of a college education is completely free for most Americans, and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university. And by making the tax credit fully refundable, the credit will help low-income families that need it the most. I will also ensure that the tax credit is available to families at the time of enrollment by using prior year's tax data to deliver the credit at the time that tuition is due, rather than a year or more later when tax returns are filed. Recipients of this credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of public service a year, either during the school year or over the summer months.

I will also seek to free up money for student aid by reforming the federal student loan program. Currently, there are two basic federal loan programs. The Direct Loan system

allows students to borrow from the government through their schools. The Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL) instead gives private banks federal subsidies to make government-backed student loans. FFEL guaranteed loans cost about \$6 more per \$100 loan than direct loans. As president, I will eliminate wasteful subsidies for banks under FFEL and mandate that all federal student loans be provided through the direct loan program. By switching to the direct lending system, we can save taxpayers billions of dollars a year – money that can and should be directed to making college more affordable for Americans.

I also cosponsored Senator Kennedy's Student Debt Relief Act, which encourages colleges to participate in the Direct Loan program and use the savings to invest in grant aid to students. The legislation also increases need-based aid, and decreases fees and interest rates for student loans.

11) What policies will you promote to help better prepare high school students for college or for entering the workforce?

Senator Obama: To prepare students for college, we can give more high school students access to Advanced Placement programs. I introduced a bipartisan plan to allow students who do not have access to college-level courses at their high schools to apply for need-based grants and seek credit at local colleges or community colleges. I will also expand access to high-quality after school programs that will help children learn and strengthen a broad range of skills and provide relief to working parents who have to juggle child care and work responsibilities. I will double funding for the main federal support for after school programs, the 21st Century Learning Centers program, to serve one million more children. I will include measures to maximize performance and effectiveness across grantees nationwide.



My “STEP UP” plan supports summer learning opportunities for disadvantaged children through partnerships between local schools and community organizations. One portion of this proposal was included in a comprehensive bill to improve U.S. competitiveness that passed the Senate in April 2007 with a provision for summer programs focused on increasing student math and problem-solving skills.

I will also address the high-school drop-out problem by helping at-risk students before they get to high school, because the warning signs often occur well before high school. I will sign into law my “Success in the Middle Act,” which will provide federal support to improve the education of middle school students in low-performing schools by requiring states to develop a detailed plan to improve student achievement, develop and utilize early identification data systems to identify those students most at-risk of dropping out and invest in proven strategies that reduce the number of drop outs. I will also support federal efforts to continue to encourage schools to organize themselves for greater success by developing stronger relationships among adults and students, a more engaging curriculum, more adaptive teaching, and more opportunities for teachers to plan and learn together. I will establish a competitive grant process open to existing or

proposed public/private partnerships or entities that are pursuing evidence-based models that work – such as Diploma Plus or Teacher Advisor programs. These grants will decrease the dropout rate by increasing the capacity of state and district leaders as well as outside leaders – foundations, politicians, entrepreneurs, and community leaders – to collaborate on improving graduation rates.

Senator McCain: John McCain will prepare the next generation of workers by making American education worthy of the promise we make to our children and ourselves. We must be a nation committed to competitiveness and opportunity. We must fight for the ability of all students to have access to any school of demonstrated excellence. We must place parents and children at the center of the education process, empowering parents by greatly expanding the ability of parents to choose among schools for their children.

12) What skills and training can help U.S. workers stay competitive in a global economy?

Senator McCain: John McCain will work with Congress and the states to overhaul unemployment insurance and make it a program for retraining, relocating and assisting workers who have lost a job that's not coming back to find a job that won't go away. He would replace our outmoded and redundant training programs with a single system. His plan will draw on the great strengths of America's community colleges, applying the funds from



federal training accounts to give workers of every age a fresh start with new skills and new opportunities. We must also assure that America's students receive the education they need to compete in the workforce of tomorrow. John McCain believes we can start right now by improving the accountability of public education at the primary and secondary level, allowing competition, and helping provide parents with choices for their children's education. The better educated Americans are, the more capable they will be of adjusting to and benefiting from economic change.

John McCain knows we will not compete successfully by using old technology to produce old goods. We will succeed by knowing what to produce and continuously inventing new technologies to produce it. America has the world's best entrepreneurs, innovators, inventors and workers. That's why our advantages in the global marketplace have never been better. John McCain knows an educated work force equipped with American technology will out-compete anyone. When our education and training programs match our technology, our country will move ahead, and no American worker will be left behind.

Senator Obama: I am committed to strengthening the economy to make sure that young people with and without college degrees can enter and thrive in the job market. I believe we need to double federal funding for basic research, expand the deployment of broadband technology, and make the research and development tax credit permanent so that businesses can invest in innovation and create more and better jobs. As president, I will make long-term investments in education, language training, and workforce development so that Americans can leverage our strengths – our ingenuity and entrepreneurialism – to create new high-wage jobs and prosper in a global economy.

IRAQ WAR & THE WAR ON TERRORISM

13) What steps would you support for withdrawing U.S. troops from Iraq and why? Before U.S. troops leave Iraq, what structure needs to be in place to ensure stability in Iraq?



Senator Obama: I favor an immediate withdrawal of our troops engaged in combat operations in Iraq at a pace of one or two brigades every month, to be completed in 16 months. The withdrawal would be strategic and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Troops would be removed from secure areas first, with troops remaining longer in more volatile areas.

Under my plan, American troops may remain in Iraq or the region for two specific missions: facility and personnel protection and counter-terrorism operations. These American troops will protect American diplomatic and military personnel in Iraq, and continue striking at al Qaeda in Iraq. If Iraq makes political progress and their security forces are not sectarian, we would also continue training of the Iraqi Security Forces. I would call for a new constitutional convention in Iraq, convened with the United Nations, which would not adjourn until Iraq's leaders reach a new accord on reconciliation. I would use presidential leadership to surge our diplomacy with all of the nations of the region on behalf of a new regional security compact. And I would take immediate steps to confront the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Iraq.

Senator McCain: Americans are fighting bravely in battles that are as dangerous, difficult and consequential as the great battles of our armed forces' storied past. In Iraq, John McCain knows the war has not gone well, and the American people have grown tired of it. He too has been made sick at heart by the many mistakes made by civilian and military commanders and the terrible price we have paid for them. He wants our troops home, too, but he wants our troops to return home with honor and in victory. We cannot react to past mistakes by embracing calls to begin troop withdrawals or to revive our previous failed strategy of a partial troop pullback that will be an even greater mistake, a mistake of colossal historical proportions, which will seriously weaken American security.

Critics say that the "surge" of troops isn't a solution in itself, that we must make progress toward Iraqi self-sufficiency. John McCain agrees. Iraqis themselves must increasingly take responsibility for their own security, and they must become responsible political actors. It does not follow from this, however, that we should now recklessly retreat from Iraq regardless of the consequences. We must take the course of prudence and responsibility, and help Iraqis move closer to the day when they no longer need our help.

That is the route of responsible statesmanship. John McCain believes we have incurred a moral responsibility in Iraq. It would be an unconscionable act of betrayal, a stain on our character as a great nation, if we were to walk away from the Iraqi people and consign them to the horrendous violence, ethnic cleansing, and possibly genocide that would follow a reckless, irresponsible, and premature withdrawal. The job of bringing security to Iraq is not finished, and considerable challenges remain before stability in

Iraq can be assured. But there is no doubt about the basic reality in Iraq: we are no longer staring into the abyss of defeat, and we can now look ahead to the genuine prospect of success. John McCain believes that success in Iraq is the establishment of a generally peaceful, stable, prosperous, democratic state that poses no threat to its neighbors and contributes to the defeat of terrorists. It is the advance of religious tolerance over violent radicalism. It is a level of security that allows the Iraqi authorities to govern, the average person to live a normal life, and international entities to operate. It is a situation in which the rule of law, after decades of tyranny, takes hold. It is an Iraq where Iraqi forces have the responsibility for enforcing security in their country, and where American troops can return home, with the honor of having secured their country's interests at great personal cost, and helping another people achieve peace and self-determination.

Today these goals are within reach. "Never despair," Winston Churchill once said. And we did not despair. We were tested, and we rose to the challenge. Some political leaders close their eyes to the progress that the surge has made possible, and want only to argue about the past. We can have that debate. John McCain profoundly disagrees with those who say we would all be better off if we had left Saddam Hussein in power. Americans should be proud that they led the way in removing a vicious dictator and opening the door to freedom, stability, and prosperity in Iraq and across the Middle East.



But the question for the next President is not about the past, but about the future and how to secure it. Our most vital security interests are at stake in Iraq. The stability of the entire Middle East, that volatile and critically important region, is at stake. The United States' credibility as a moral and political leader is at stake. How to safeguard those interests is what we should be debating.

14) How will you balance the continuing costs of the war in Iraq with the costs of domestic policy needs?

Senator McCain: As president, John McCain will take all his responsibilities to the American people seriously. But he would have one responsibility that would outweigh all the others, and that is to protect the security of this great nation from all enemies. The defense of our nation against a determined enemy is a national priority that must be funded accordingly. However, by enforcing fiscal discipline, John McCain believes we can meet our obligations, both domestically and abroad, by eliminating wasteful spending and ensuring that discretionary spending is going where it belongs -- to essential priorities like the security of our citizens, job training, and the care of our veterans.

Senator Obama: At a time when we're on the brink of recession -- when neighborhoods have "For Sale" signs outside every home, and working families are struggling to keep up with rising costs -- ordinary Americans are paying a price for this war. The most conservative estimates say that Iraq has now cost more than half a trillion dollars, more than any other war in our history besides World War II. Some say the true cost is even higher and that by the time it's over, this could be a \$3 trillion war.

This is all part of the reason I opposed this war from the start. It's why I said back in 2002 that it could lead to an occupation not just of undetermined length or undetermined consequences, but of undetermined costs. It's why I've said this war should have never been authorized and never been waged.



When I am President, I will spare no expense to ensure that our troops have the equipment and support they need. There is no higher obligation for a Commander-in-Chief. But we also have to understand that the more than \$10 billion we're spending each month in Iraq is money we could be investing here at home. Just think about what battles we could be fighting instead of fighting this misguided war. Instead of fighting this war, we could be fighting the terrorists who attacked us on 9/11 and who are plotting against us in Afghanistan and Pakistan. We could be securing our homeland and stopping the world's most dangerous weapons from falling into terrorist hands.

I will also work with Congress to cut income taxes for working Americans to offset the payroll tax they're paying. I will provide middle class tax cuts of up to \$1,000 for working families. And I will eliminate income taxes for any retiree making less than \$50,000 each year. My plan will also reduce taxpayers' headaches and payments during tax season by simplifying tax filings so middle class Americans can complete their taxes on their own in 5 minutes or less. By the end of my first term, I will sign universal health care into law to ensure that every American has access to affordable, quality and portable health insurance coverage. My plan will lower a typical family's premiums by \$2,500 each year.

15) What recruitment and retention measures do you support to ensure our military maintains adequate personnel levels?

Senator Obama: The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have demonstrated the consequences of underestimating the number of troops required to fight two wars and defend our homeland. I support plans to increase the size of the Army by 65,000 troops and the Marines by 27,000 troops. Increasing our end strength will allow units to retrain and reequip properly between deployments and decrease the strain on military families. I also will invest in an equipment reset for the Armed Services, including the National Guard, which has seen its readiness for homeland security missions decrease significantly.

Senator McCain: We are a nation at war, and we have asked of our men and women of the armed forces an almost unprecedented level of commitment and sacrifice. Extended deployments and back-to-back combat tours have, unfortunately, become the standard rather than the exception so that we can effectively prosecute operations against our enemies -- such as Gen. Petraeus and our brave troops are now doing in Iraq. For many years, John McCain has been calling for a larger ground force so we would not have to resort to such extended, yet necessary, deployments. Moreover, while our nation can never truly repay the debt owed to the brave men and women in its armed services, he believes we must strive to assure they receive the compensation they deserve, which is why he recently supported an across-the-board pay raise for our military. He believes these approaches will buttress an effective recruitment and retention effort.

16) What actions do you support to stabilize U.S. relations with Iran?

Senator McCain: John McCain believes the U.S. should continue to pressure Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions and oppose its efforts to dominate the region. Iran has a record of hostility toward the U.S., has sponsored terrorist attacks that have killed Americans, and is supporting forces in Iraq that have killed American soldiers. While all options to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions must remain on the table, there is much more the U.S. and our allies can do short of military force: increasing the cost of doing business in Iran, investigating firms that invest in Iran, divesting from Iran, tightening economic and financial sanctions, and support for the vast majority of Iranians who wish to live under a different government.



The U.S. should also privatize the sanctions effort by launching a disinvestment campaign. By persuading individuals, pension funds, and financial institutions to divest from companies doing business with Iran, we can isolate and delegitimize a hostile government. John McCain is committed to increase the level debate inside the country about whether the present course serves the interests of the Iranian people or merely those of a misguided elite. Americans and all proponents of freedom need to reassure the millions of Iranians who aspire to self-determination that we support their longing for freedom and democracy. There is much more we can and should do to translate such support into concrete action.

Senator Obama: Iran's nuclear ambitions, its support for terrorist groups, and President Ahmadinejad's calls for Israel's destruction demonstrate that Iran poses a serious threat to the United States, our allies and our interests in a vital region. The question is, what is the best way to handle that threat? The recently released National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran clearly undercuts the argument of those who called for swift military action. While the military option must remain available, the NIE makes clear that we have time to address the Iranian nuclear issue diplomatically -- but we need to use that time wisely. Tehran is continuing to enrich uranium and, as the NIE also makes clear, if it continues to make the kind of progress it has made during the Bush Administration could produce enough fissile material for a bomb sometime in the first part of the next decade. To make sure that does not happen, we need the kind of sustained, aggressive and unconditional diplomacy that I have long supported. Collective diplomacy, with real sticks in the form of tougher sanctions and increased economic pressure, and real carrots in the form of potential normalized relations over time, could dissuade Iran from pursuing a nuclear weapons capability.

Environment and Energy Policy

17) What steps will you take in order to ensure that our environment will be protected for future generations?

Senator Obama: My plan will set a hard cap on all carbon emissions at a level that scientists say is necessary to curb global warming – an 80% reduction by 2050. To reach that goal, I will implement a 100 percent auction for carbon allowances to ensure that all polluters have to pay based on the amount of pollution they release. I will use the proceeds from that auction to invest \$150 billion over the next decade in developing and

deploying clean, affordable energy and creating millions of new American jobs. A part of this effort will include launching a Clean Technologies Venture Capital Fund to get the most promising clean energy technologies off the ground so the American economy can benefit from America's innovations.

My plan also uses a variety of conservation and renewable energy policies to put



America on the path of true energy independence, starting by reducing our national oil consumption by at least 35%, or 10 million barrels per day, by 2030. This will more than offset the equivalent of oil we are expected to import from OPEC nations in 2030.

To meet this goal, I have called for both increasing the production of American-grown biofuels and improving the efficiency of our cars and trucks. I have called the production of 60 billion gallons of biofuels by 2030, including advanced biofuels like cellulosic ethanol and advanced biodiesel. I have also called for ending subsidies to the oil and gas industries to help level the playing field for biofuels producers, and I have helped lead efforts in the Senate to investigate whether big oil companies are preventing biofuels from coming into the market. I am also the only candidate to call for a National Low Carbon Fuel Standard to lower the carbon content of our fuels by 10 percent by 2020 and reduce our dependence on foreign oil.

To reduce our demands for fuel, I have introduced a plan, based on my innovative bipartisan effort in the Senate, to double our fuel economy standards within 18 years and reduce oil consumption. Finally, my energy plan will both invest in advanced vehicle research and development and support efforts to build more sustainable communities to ensure a long-term strategy for energy independence

Senator McCain: Among John McCain's highest priorities will be working with Congress, national, state, and local leaders, and the full range of stakeholders to promote U.S. energy security and implement a national market-based cap and trade system tailored to protect the nation's economic, environmental, and national security. As part of this initiative, John McCain will use the powers of the presidency to see that the international community, including China and India, fulfill its obligations to address climate change in a manner that will effectively protect the global environment and our economy. He will institute federal policies to help achieve an energy mix that is far more diverse, dependable, economical, clean, and sustainable. Another of his top objectives will be to draw into his administration the most qualified individuals in our country to fill key cabinet and other positions in these vital policy areas.



John McCain's priorities on environmental issues outside of energy and global warming will be: improving management of the nation's wetlands, fisheries and ocean ecosystems; improving the care and maintenance of our national parks; instituting executive policies and procedures to ensure that policy and rule making in his

administration is based on merit, public interest, sound science, cost-benefit, and the faithful execution of the law; improving efforts to provide the clean water that Americans need and deserve, and submitting a budget that reflects responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars and the environment—a budget which emphasizes legitimate environmental priorities, and eliminates pork barrel spending that mistreats taxpayers and the environment.

18) What are your thoughts on global warming and its growing impact? How do you plan to address this issue?

Senator McCain: The issue of climate change is one of the most important issues facing our nation and the world today. Accordingly, John McCain believes that the next President of the United States, working with Congress, has an obligation to act. The environmental and economic threat posed by climate change is enormous, as are the stakes of how well we deal with the problem. Clearly, the quality of our response to this challenge will heavily influence the safety, security, and prosperity of our country for many decades to come.

John McCain believes we should pursue a market-based, cap-and-trade system to achieve appropriate limits on greenhouse gas emissions as efficiently and effectively as possible. He will ensure that such a system is employed as a means of diversifying the nation's energy mix, which, in turn, will make us less dependent on foreign oil, and place America at the forefront of developing energy and environmental protection technologies that the world will demand for many years to come. He will also ensure that these efforts meet several key tests, including protecting consumers and the economy, preventing other countries from dodging their responsibilities, promoting the development and deployment of advanced technology, and prioritizing America's economic, environmental, and national-security interests.



Senator Obama: To combat global warming and preserve our natural resources, I support implementation of a market-based cap-and-trade system to reduce carbon emissions 80 percent by 2050. I also introduced legislation with Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA) to reduce carbon in our fuel supply by establishing a National Low Carbon Fuel Standard. The standard will require fuel suppliers to reduce the carbon their fuel emits by one percent every year. The standard will increase one percent each year, reducing lifecycle greenhouse gas emissions 10 percent by 2020. In addition, I support increasing fuel economy standards; requiring that 25 percent of electricity come from renewable sources by 2025; increasing domestic production, distribution, and use of biofuels and biodiesels, making gas stations eligible for a tax credit to install E85 ethanol refueling pumps, and investing in advanced technologies that will spur innovation, create jobs, and help stop climate change.

As the world prepares for the post-2012 phase of the UNFCCC, the United States must regain its leadership role in multiple forums to negotiate effective climate agreements. An Obama administration will re-engage with the diplomatic efforts under the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change. I will take seriously the U.S. leadership role in combating climate change by creating a negotiating process that involves a smaller number of countries than the nearly 200 countries in the current Kyoto system. I will

create a Global Energy Forum - based on the G8+5, which included all G-8 members plus Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa - of the world's largest emitters to focus exclusively on global energy and environmental issues. This Global Energy Forum will complement - and ultimately merge with - the much larger negotiation process underway at the UN to develop a post-Kyoto framework. On a technical level, it will also allow facilitate technology transfer, joint international research, and, importantly, the numerous large scale international demonstration projects that must be embarked upon immediately in order to make these technologies economically appealing alternatives.

19) What will you do to address factors that are detrimental to the environment, such as pollution and a potential energy crisis?

Senator Obama: As president, I will make energy conservation a top priority and use my position as president to communicate directly with the American people about the importance of reducing our energy consumption. My goal is to make America 50 percent less energy intensive by 2030, and to ensure that all new buildings built starting in 2030 are carbon neutral. To help achieve these objectives, my plan will:

- Ensure that the federal government continuously updates its energy appliance standards so that more Americans have access to highly-efficient consumer products. I will also implement legislation that phases out traditional incandescent light bulbs by 2014, which will save American consumers \$6 billion per year on monthly electricity bills and will save 88 billion kilowatt hours of electricity per year.
- Create a competitive grant program to award those states and localities that take the first steps in implementing new building codes that prioritize energy efficiency, work to flip incentives to utilities so that they are rewarded for conservation, not increased energy consumption, and provide a federal match for those states with leading-edge public benefits funds that support energy efficiency retrofits of existing buildings.
- Invest in a smart, digitally-connected energy grid that will help consumers produce electricity at home through solar panels or wind turbines, and be able to sell electricity back through the grid for other consumers, and help consumers reduce their energy use during peak hours when electricity is more expensive.
- Implement a Renewable Portfolio Standard so that the U.S. produces 25 percent of its energy supply from renewable sources by 2025.
- Increase CAFE standards by 4 percent each year, so that we can double our fuel economy standards within 18 years.

Senator McCain: As President of the United States, John McCain would ensure that the Clean Air Act is vigorously enforced, that the national air quality standards are based on sound economic and environmental science, and comply fully with the requirements of the law to protect human health and the environment.



He believe in the “polluter pays” concept, but we should be careful to ensure that the term “polluter” is defined as those who actually pollute, not those simply in a business

with the potential to do so because of irresponsible or negligent action. Polluted sites that pose a threat to human health and the environment must be cleaned. As President, he will work to ensure that parties responsible for polluted sites are made to pay the bill. In cases where no responsible party can be found and held accountable in a timely fashion, then he will see that ample resources are available to address threats to human health and the environment, efficiently and expeditiously.

The Clean Water Act is one of our most successful environmental laws. Wetlands are a vital component of our natural aquatic ecosystems and should be recognized as such. Among other benefits, they play an important role in mitigating floods, provide key habitat for a variety of flora and fauna, and naturally purify waters around them. John McCain supports wetlands protection, and as President he will work to develop a wetlands policy that provides necessary protection of our aquatic resources, builds strong and lasting partnerships, and respects local conditions and needs.

John McCain also believes that strengthening our energy security goes hand-in-hand with addressing global climate change, which he believes is real with human activity contributing to the buildup of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. He is proud to support a market based, cap-and-trade system to achieve appropriate limits on greenhouse gas emissions, while diversifying our energy supply away from foreign oil, as efficiently and effectively as possible.

20) What measures do you support to address our country's dependence on foreign oil? What should be done, if anything, by the government to reduce our use of and dependence on fossil fuels?

Senator McCain: John McCain will also deliver a national energy strategy that declares independence from the risk bred by our reliance on oil imported from petro-dictators the vulnerability to the troubled politics of their lands. John McCain is a proven conservative, and his strategy will not rely on subsidies, rifle-shot tax breaks, line-items for lobbyists, or big-government debacles. It will promote the diversification and conservation of our energy sources and substantially reduce the impact of our energy consumption on the planet. It will rely on the genius and technological prowess of American industry and science. Government must set achievable goals, but the markets should be free to produce the means.

Fuel efficiency standards can play a significant role in reducing our dependence on foreign oil and improving the nation's air quality, and the production of more fuel-efficient cars may also help the America's automobile manufacturing industry to compete more successfully both at home and abroad. Energy diversity and fuel efficiency can and should be improved. As President John McCain will work with Congress and all stakeholders to see that achievable and appropriate standards are put into place that will optimize advances in technology, protect auto safety, meet family needs and consumer demands, promote the nation's energy security, and help our industry compete in a global economy. He believes that the use of advanced materials and other technologies including alternatively fueled vehicles, flexibly fueled vehicles, and plug-in hybrid vehicles can help us meet our objectives successfully. He has supported CAFE standards in the past and will continue to work to increase CAFE standards to a level that is practical and achievable for all new vehicles, foreign and domestic, because improved fuel economy will help our nation achieve national energy security, reduce carbon emissions, and improve local and regional air quality.

Senator Obama: My plan also uses a variety of conservation and renewable energy policies to put America on the path of true energy independence, starting by reducing our national oil consumption by at least 35%, or 10 million barrels per day, by 2030. This will more than offset the equivalent of oil we are expected to import from OPEC nations in 2030.



To reduce our demands for fuel, I have introduced a plan, based on my innovative bipartisan effort in the Senate, to double our fuel economy standards within 18 years and reduce oil consumption. My energy plan will both invest in advanced vehicle research and development and support efforts to build more sustainable communities to ensure a long-term strategy for energy independence.

I will ensure that my comprehensive climate change initiative not only stems the emission of greenhouse gas emissions, but also that this initiative invests in clean technologies that can be used to retrofit existing outdated power plants across the country. We have a responsibility to not only ensure that new power plants are equipped with the latest clean technology, but also that we upgrade existing facilities as soon as we can.