THE LONG CAMPAIGN

U.S. ELECTIONS 2008

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A father in Ohio, holding his son, uses an electronic voting machine to vote during the 2006 election. ©AP Images/Amy Sancetta

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About This Issue

In a true democracy, people are free to disagree. As we enter the 2008 election cycle, we will see candidates, voters, pollsters, and pundits agree and disagree on just about everything. Do voters choose the president based on issues or leadership qualities? Does the Electoral College work or should the election system be changed? Do political polls mean anything months before an election?

Far ahead of the November 2008 elections, campaigning was well underway, the presidential candidates had already held several debates, campaign ads were popping up, and poll results were cited frequently. In the 2008 elections, U.S. voters will have the opportunity to vote for president and vice president, congressional representatives, state and local officials, and ballot initiatives. There is much at stake. As several writers point out in this journal, this is the first election in 80 years with no incumbent president or vice president running for office. Political experts Charlie Cook and Jerry Hagstrom provide insights to set the scene. In a very open field, with 18 presidential candidates in the race as this journal goes to press, no one ventures to predict a winner.

The presidential election is just part of the story. In the U.S. system of divided government, the outcome of congressional elections will determine how successful the next president will be in carrying out his or her agenda. Professor of government L. Sandy Maisel describes the role of Congress and the potential impact of congressional elections.

Democratic pollster Daniel Gotoff tells us what opinion polls reveal about voters' attitudes toward the 2008 election and how current hot-button issues might play out over the election cycle. Republican pollster Kellyanne Conway looks at women voters, the importance of their vote in the next election, and the issues women care about.

Three experts share their perspectives on the media's role in election campaigns. Long-time *Washington Post* political reporter Jim Dickenson gives a first-person account of a day in the life of a reporter covering the election. Internet guru Andy Carvin describes how citizen journalism, blogs, Internet fundraising, and social networking sites have affected the political process and, therefore, cannot be ignored in the 2008 election cycle. Pollster John Zogby discusses the value of information acquired through public opinion polls.

Finally, we take a look at the process. Is the U.S. system of elections perfect? Of course not — no system is perfect. Jan Witold Baran describes legislation designed to correct problems associated with campaign finance. The Electoral College, the state-by-state voting system under which American presidents are elected, has been debated throughout its history; experts Ross K. Baker and Jamie Raskin present arguments for and against the system's usefulness. Paul S. DeGregorio, former chair of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, discusses efforts to improve state election processes.

What is the story of the 2008 U.S. election? The election is a fresh start, an opportunity for voters to go to the polls and vote their beliefs. The election system is a work-in-progress, but concerned Americans can and do get on the Internet and organize, register to vote, donate to their candidate, host meet-the-candidate coffees, become local elections poll watchers or judges, and work actively in many ways to make the system better.

The Editors

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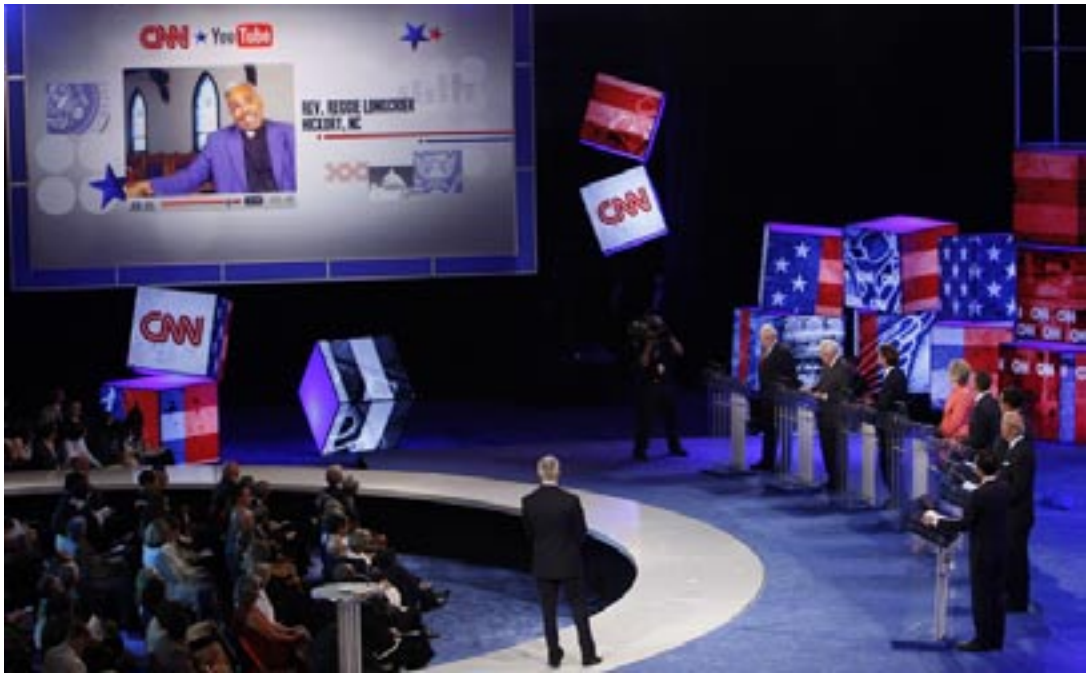
How the Internet Is Changing the Playing Field

Andy Carvin



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Democratic presidential hopefuls Mike Gravel, Chris Dodd, John Edwards, Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, Bill Richardson, Joseph Biden, and Dennis Kucinich listen to a question from the Reverend Reggie Longcrier of Hickory, North Carolina, as they participate in the debate sponsored by CNN, YouTube, and Google at The Citadel military college in Charleston, South Carolina in July 2007.

The Internet has revolutionized communication over the last decade, bringing people together for every imaginable purpose. The author discusses several online innovations that have come into play in the political arena, as candidates and — even more creatively — citizens use technology to influence voters. Andy Carvin is former director of the Digital Divide Network [www.digitaldivide.net] *and writes a blog called Learning.now for the Public Broadcasting Service* [www.pbs.org].

The 2008 U.S. general election will no doubt be a watershed year in American history but not necessarily because of any particular candidate or policy. As has been the case in recent election cycles, the Internet has become a potent political tool in terms of campaigning, fundraising, and civic engagement. What is making this particular election cycle so interesting, though, is that much of the innovation taking place isn't being done by the campaigns or the politicians but by the American public.

Internet access is by no means a new phenomenon in the United States. Beginning in the mid-1990s, millions of Americans have acquired Internet access and technology skills, whether at home, at work, or at school. According to a June 2007 report from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 71 percent of all American adults had Internet access at home, while nearly 50 percent of adults had high-speed broadband access.

Similarly, the vast majority of U.S. public schools and libraries are online. There are still gaps in terms of access and skills among disenfranchised populations, particularly when it comes to education and income levels, as well as among the elderly, people with disabilities, and ethnic minorities. But the general trend over the last decade has been significant growth in Internet penetration.

As the American public first began to go online, much of the content available over the Internet was

produced by professionals or people with technological expertise. Online publishing required prerequisite technological skills, as well as the ability to produce large amounts of polished content. In particular, audio and video online was generally considered the realm of major media outlets.

This did not mean, however, that the Internet was devoid of content produced by the public. Starting in the late 1990s, an ever-growing number of people began to publish their own personal journals, or "Web logs," about the daily goings-on of their lives. Some were interesting; many of them weren't. But the idea of Web logs, or blogs, struck enough of a nerve with some online developers that they began to design tools to make it easier for anyone to publish text online. This phenomenon quickly developed its own terminology, among which "Web 2.0" and "social media" have become some of the most common ways of describing these trends.

Virtual Communities

A growing number of Internet users also began participating in online communities. These communities were not a new phenomenon by any means — e-mail groups and online bulletin board communities have been around since the 1970s — but as Internet use became more mainstream, the types of groups being formed online became mainstream as well. Rather than being dominated by technology-oriented groups, people started forming online communities around geographic communities, such as towns or neighborhoods, as well as communities of interest, like hobbies or professional associations.

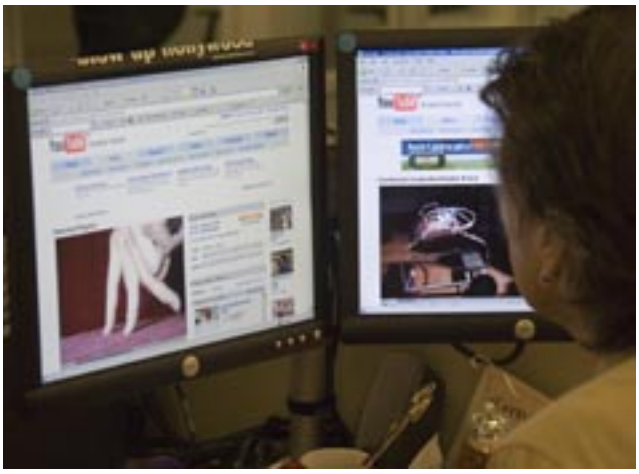
By the early 2000s, blogging, in particular, had taken off in earnest, with thousands of people creating their own blogs. In a matter of years, those thousands would become millions. It didn't take long for some people to publish diaries around political issues. Soon bloggers were rallying the troops around like-minded political causes or candidates. They also began to use online community tools to coordinate interaction among each other.

One of the best-known early examples of these grassroots online communities — or "netroots" as they're also known — is the Howard Dean presidential campaign of 2004. Previously considered by the media and political pundits as a third-tier candidate, Dean galvanized enormous support online through the use of blogs, mass e-mail campaigns, and online community discussions. Soon Dean was receiving political support, including campaign contributions, from thousands of people around the country. As his online profile increased, mainstream media outlets began covering him more as well, taking notice of his fundraising successes and netroots popularity. Almost out of nowhere, he became a political force to be reckoned with. Though ultimately he lost the Democratic Party nomination, his successful online organizing techniques helped develop an online infrastructure of liberal activists prepared to mobilize around other causes.

Other netroots campaigns predated the Dean campaign and continue to this day. For example, the founders of a San Francisco-area software company began e-mailing friends and colleagues in 1997, asking them to urge their elected officials to end the impeachment process against then President Bill Clinton and to "move on" to other policy issues. The e-mail campaign resonated so well that their friends and colleagues started passing along the e-mails to other people. Over time, this small campaign organized itself into an ongoing public policy organization focused on progressive causes, in particular ending the war in Iraq. MoveOn.org is now one of the most powerful political action committees in America, with millions of Internet users participating in their e-mail-based political campaigns.

UGC and Social Networks

By the 2006 congressional elections, there were two new Internet trends that presented examples of things to come during the 2008 cycle. First, we've witnessed an explosion of what's often described as "user-generated content," or UGC. UGC is essentially any type of online material produced by amateurs, including text, photos, audio, and video. One internationally known example of



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YouTube, a video-sharing service on the Internet, is playing a role in politics in the United States.

© AP Images/Lauren Burke

A special section for bloggers is set up near the mainstream broadcast and print media writers at the Democratic National Convention. The "Blogger's Boulevard" covered the national political convention live for the first time in 2004 in Boston, Massachusetts.

UGC is the footage of Saddam Hussein's execution, shot on a mobile phone. While the Iraqi government released an official piece of video documenting the preparations for the execution, it was the user-generated content, shot by an onlooker at the execution, that caused worldwide headlines.

There is no shortage of user-generated content on the Internet, thanks to Web sites that specialize in sharing multimedia content, such as YouTube (for video) and Flickr (for photography). According to research published in 2006 by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, approximately 40 million Americans had published some form of UGC online, while one in seven U.S. Internet users maintained a blog.

During the 2006 election cycle, no incident captured the power of UGC more than the so-called macaca moment.

While campaigning for reelection, Virginia Senator George Allen was regularly followed by a young man named S.R. Sidarth, who was working for the campaign of his challenger, Jim Webb. Sidarth's role was to record Allen's public appearances on video, in order to capture everything he said publicly, in case it could be used by the Webb campaign. On a campaign visit in August of that year, Allen publicly acknowledged Sidarth's presence to participants at the rally, referring to Sidarth on two occasions as "Macaca." Sidarth, who is of Indian descent, posted the video clip of Allen's comments on YouTube and other Web sites, where it was soon viewed by hundreds of thousands of Internet users. Soon the video became a major campaign issue, as Allen had to fend off charges that the word "macaca," which is a genus of primate, was used in a racially derogatory way. Allen apologized and maintained that the word held no derogatory meaning to him. Later that November, Allen lost his reelection bid by a narrow vote, and many commentators speculated that the user-generated content shot by Sidarth played a role in Jim Webb's defeat of Allen.

User-generated content probably would never have become a major force in online politics if it weren't for a second important trend: the growth of online social networks. Online communities have been around since the earliest days of the Internet. But in the last several years, the number and size of online communities have grown significantly as technology improved and made it easier for users to upload their own content and interact with each other. Sites such as MySpace and Facebook expanded from niche communities used by teenagers and college students to online powerhouses with tens of millions of members. According to a July 2007 report from Ipsos Inc., 24 percent of U.S. Internet users have participated in a social network within the previous month, while one-third of all online users have downloaded video. Candidates during the 2006 races took advantage of these trends by creating personal online profiles on major social networking sites, while some uploaded campaign ads and other multimedia materials as well.

Online Innovations for 2008

The 2006 election cycle was just a sampling of what we would see for 2008. Since the previous presidential election campaign, would-be candidates began to take social networking one step further by creating social networks dedicated specifically to their campaigns. In particular, Democratic candidates Barack Obama and John Edwards have stood out with their sizeable social networks, using these tools to rally their supporters and, of course, drive contributions to their campaign coffers.

© AP Images/Charles Dharapak

In 2003, then-White House Director of Communications Dan Bartlett participates in a live online chat from the White House connecting directly with U.S. citizens.

Candidates of both major political parties have embraced online video as a natural way of interacting with their bases, some of them going so far as to announce their candidacy by way of streaming video.

Just as candidates have started to create their own social networks, we are now seeing a whole new trend in which members of the public are creating their own as well, rallying like-minded individuals around political concerns they share. Do-it-yourself social networks were unheard of even in the autumn of 2006, but in the brief time span since then, online tools such as Ning.com now make it possible for anyone to craft a niche-oriented social network. Now individuals, as well as upstart campaigns with limited finances, can use these tools to forge a netroots base.

There has also been the recent development of social networks that specifically focus on fundraising. One of the most interesting is a site called Change.org. Originally founded to allow individuals to rally around charitable causes, the social network redesigned its structure to allow people to come together to support political causes or candidates. For example, a group of gun-rights activists could use the site to form an informal political action committee and raise funds in support of candidates who agree with their policy positions. If the actual candidate hasn't been selected yet, Change.org will hold the money in escrow until the relevant political party nominates him or her. And when a candidate officially receives the money from these online activists, his or her opponent receives a letter stating that the other candidate received Change.org's money, putting the opponent on notice that citizens are raising money against them because of their position on the issue.

In summary, while Campaign 2008 has yet to run its course, one thing is for certain. The Internet has forever changed the way candidates and the U.S. electorate interact with each other. More than the top one or two candidates can be successful with fundraising, and the candidates can no longer completely control their messaging. The public has embraced Web 2.0 tools to make their voices heard; now it's just a matter of seeing how well the candidates listen. ■

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

New Voting Technology: Problem or Solution?

Paul S. DeGregorio

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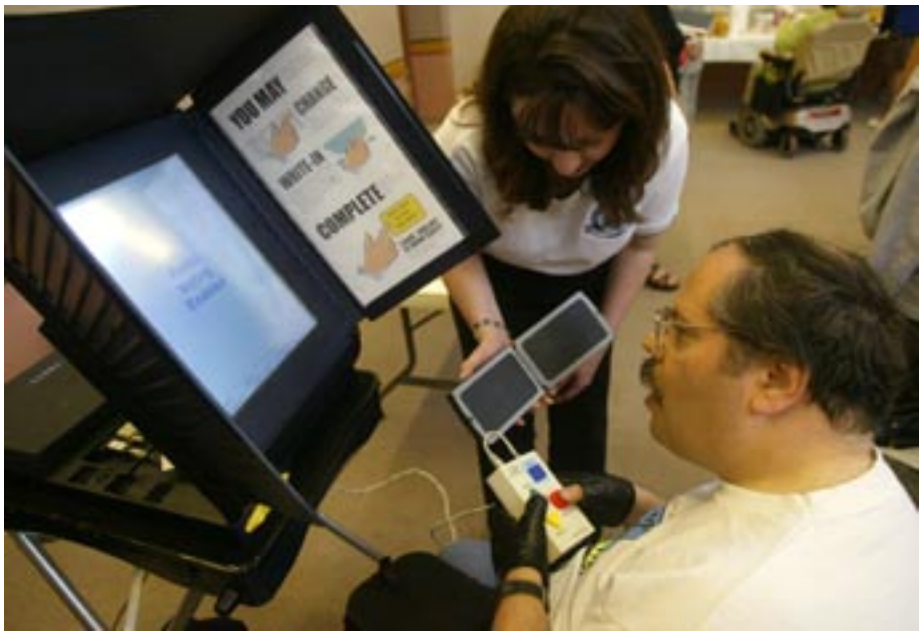
In India, a polling officer checks the electronic voting machines before the election in May 2007.

Like many other democracies, the United States is addressing the need to improve its election process to ensure that all citizens can vote freely, easily, and securely. An election expert describes the actions the U.S. government has taken to facilitate the casting of ballots across the country, and he discusses the promise and pitfalls of electronic voting systems, as technology moves into the mainstream of election administration. Paul S. DeGregorio is the former chair of the U.S. Election Assistance Commission, and he has worked for 22 years as an election expert in more than 20 countries.

During the past decade the world has experienced a significant focus on the process of voting. Many countries, rich and poor, developed and not-so-developed, are using new technologies to select their leaders. Voters in India, the world's largest democracy, cast their ballots using electronic push-button technology, while voters in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, present a modern identification card with photo and thumbprint when obtaining their ballot. Indeed, in Estonia (E-stonia, as they like to be known) voters can now use a smart card to cast their ballot over the Internet from anywhere in the world.

In the United States more than 90 percent of votes are cast or counted electronically. Every polling place is now required by law to have a voting device that allows people with disabilities to vote privately and independently. Thus, a voter who is blind can put on earphones and touch a screen or buttons to advance and vote the ballot — in private. The United States is the only country in the world with this type of mandate.

Voters with other special needs, such as those who do not speak English as a first language, are also helped by this new technology. In Los Angeles County, California,



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As required by the Help America Vote Act, new technology helps voters with disabilities to cast their ballots.

ballots are provided in eight languages. It is clear that new technologies can be a major enabler for those voters who are challenged by physical handicaps or language barriers.

The majority of these new election technologies, and more, have been introduced within the past 10 years. And each year more countries introduce new methods to make voting accessible to all segments of society.

Do these new technologies help to achieve greater voter access and to curb poor turnouts? Are they trusted by all segments of the population? Or do they introduce new problems and provide an unfair advantage for certain voters? These are important issues now being debated within individual countries and in the international community.

Improving the U.S. Election Process

In the United States the election process received dramatic attention at home and abroad after the 2000 presidential election when, during a six-week period, no one was sure who won the presidency. The terms "hanging," "pregnant," and "dimpled" chad became part of the worldwide lexicon. The administration of elections in the United States has come a long way since that watershed event. In 2002 the U.S. Congress passed the historic Help America Vote Act, known as HAVA, which, for the first time, provided significant federal assistance to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and U.S. territories to improve the election process. In fact, there have been more election laws and regulations promulgated in the United States during the past seven years than in the previous 200 years of American history.

Much like the Netherlands, England, Japan, and several other countries, all elections within the United States are local; that is, they are administered by local officials who make most of the decisions on what method of voting is to be used by voters in their jurisdiction. HAVA gave state election officials more authority to oversee and regulate local entities. In most states, a secretary of state, a state official elected on a partisan ticket, is the chief election authority. In a few states, including New York and Illinois, a bipartisan board of elections oversees the voting process. The United States is unique in the fact that more than 70 percent of local election authorities are elected on a partisan basis, with job titles such as county clerk, county auditor, and supervisor of elections. These officials are held accountable by the voters every four years.

The Help America Vote Act created a federal agency, the U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC), to provide a national focus on election administration and, for the first time in American history, appropriated more than $3 billion in federal funds to improve the voting process. The EAC *[http://www.eac.gov]*, which began its work in late 2003, is a four-member body of two Democrats and two Republicans, appointed by the president and confirmed by the U.S. Senate. I was among the first appointees to the EAC and served as chairman in 2006.

In addition to distributing funds, the EAC also set new standards for the use of technology in voting, standards that are being followed closely by other countries. Working with the National Institute of Science and Technology *[http://www.vote.nist.gov]*, the EAC established significant new voting system guidelines that focused on security and human factors. These guidelines are helping the states ensure the integrity and usability of the electronic devices that are utilized by millions of voters in every election. In addition, the EAC has focused

on the management side of election technology and is producing several important documents designed to help election officials manage the important elements of e-voting systems, including logic and accuracy testing. In recent years the Council of Europe *[http://www.coe.int]* also has embarked on a project to provide similar standards for e-voting systems, since many European nations are moving toward the use of electronic voting devices.

Perhaps one of the biggest challenges for all election officials is the training of poll workers and voters on the new voting technologies. In the United States, where the average age of poll workers is 72, the introduction of electronic devices that have computer memory cards that have to be checked and moved has resulted in a shortage of the 1.3 million workers that are required to conduct a nationwide election. Perhaps the United States might follow the lead of Belgium, where 18-year-olds are conscripted to run the polls.

Is Internet Voting in Our Future?

With the increasing penetration of the Internet throughout the world, and certainly within many countries, e-democracy is a concept that is beginning to take hold and spread rapidly. Like the private sector, candidates, political parties, and governments all are utilizing the Internet to get their message to the public — and to have the public respond to them. Several countries, including Estonia, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and England, now allow their citizens to cast ballots via the Internet. In local elections held in May 2007 in Swindon, England, using secure technology developed by Everyone Counts *[http://www.everyonecounts.com]*, voters could cast their ballot by telephone, over the Internet, at public libraries, by mail, by paper ballot, or by using any one of 300 laptop computers placed at 65 locations throughout the borough. It was one of the most ambitious — and successful — voting pilots ever sponsored by the British government.

Living in a global and mobile society, citizens of any country who are living abroad face difficult challenges to participate in elections. This fall, to meet that challenge, Australian military voters will cast their ballot for parliament over the Internet. The estimated 6 million Americans abroad have had a difficult time casting their ballots, with most having to use a cumbersome postal

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In San Jose, California, signs at the polls in English, Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese, comply with the federal Voting Rights Act.

process to exercise their right to vote. The Overseas Vote Foundation *[http://www.overseasvotefoundation.org]* and the EAC have estimated that more than one in four of these citizens who attempt to vote are not having their ballots counted. Efforts by the U.S. Federal Voting Assistance Program *[http://www.fvap.gov]* to improve the process have helped, but a recent report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office *[http://www.gao.gov]* indicates much more needs to be done.

With the United States' most popular television show, *American Idol*, experiencing more votes cast in four hours (73 million) than the number cast for the winner of the 2004 U.S. presidential election (62 million), it is not hard to figure that younger *Idol* voters will demand the use of some type of mobile technology when they are old enough to cast presidential ballots.

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Texas first lady Anita Perry votes early at the Travis County Courthouse in Austin in November 2006.

Along with the increased use of technology in elections have come increased scrutiny and skepticism about electronic voting. While Americans have been using electronic voting devices to cast their ballots since the late 1980s, it has only been since the passage of HAVA and the spread of e-voting across the United States and the world that many groups have organized to question or even oppose the use of electronic voting devices, particularly those without any type of paper trail *[http://www.verifiedvoting.com]*. In Ireland, where the hand-counting of preferential ballots can take up to a week, an attempt to introduce e-voting to speed the process ended in failure.

International institutions and other organizations involved in monitoring and assessing elections, such as the Office of Democratic Initiatives and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe *[http://www.osce.org]*; IFES, formerly the International Foundation for Election Systems *[http://www.ifes.org]*; the Carter Center *[http://www.cartercenter.org]*; and Electionline *[http://www.electionline.org]*, have had to develop new methodologies to determine whether elections involving e-voting are free and fair. It is one thing to watch paper ballots counted by hand; it is entirely another to monitor the electronic capture of a vote.

The new election technology sweeping across our collective democracies has certainly empowered voters, led to increased participation, and, in many cases, enhanced transparency by reporting results before they could be changed. However, has it increased trust in the results? That is a question that remains to be answered as election reform and the use of new technology continue to be debated throughout the world. There is no question, however, that technology will continue to enhance the way we vote — as it continues to enhance our daily lives. ■

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Voting for the First Time

Rebecca Zeifman

Two young Americans describe what voting means to them and their excitement about casting their first ballots. Rebecca Zeifman is a writer with the Bureau of International Information Programs of the U.S. Department of State.

The right to vote is one of the most basic privileges in a democracy. In the United States, any resident who is an American citizen and at least 18 years old is eligible to vote.

For first-time voters, casting that inaugural ballot is a monumental occasion. It is a chance for them to exercise their constitutionally protected right and to participate in political decision making.

Below, two voters — a student who has just come of voting age and a recently naturalized U.S. citizen — reflect on their first time at the polls.

Joanna Fisher is a 20-year-old college student from Charlotte, North Carolina, who spends nine months of the year at college in Waterville, Maine. She voted for the first time in 2005, casting her ballot in the Maine state elections.

For Fisher, there was never a doubt that she would vote at the earliest opportunity. "I always knew I would register to vote as soon as there was an election I was old enough to vote in," Fisher says. "I guess I was raised in a family where you care about politics and you care about what's going on around you."

Even before she was old enough to vote, Fisher participated in the political process. During the 2004 presidential election, she was 17 years old — just one year shy of the legal voting age. In lieu of voting, Fisher worked for U.S. Senate candidate Erskine Bowles, passing out flyers door-to-door in her hometown of Charlotte. She also volunteered at her school, helping her older classmates register. "That was the [election that] was really important to me, and even though I didn't vote in it, I did a lot of work," she says.

When Fisher turned 18, she took it upon herself to register. "My parents didn't even say, 'You have to register to vote,'" she says. "It was just something that made sense to me."

So on November 8, 2005, Joanna registered and cast her first ballot minutes later. "That election was just a Waterville election. It was [for] mayor, city commissioner, and really local things," she explains. "I showed up with a North Carolina driver's license [for identification]. It took three minutes and then I voted."

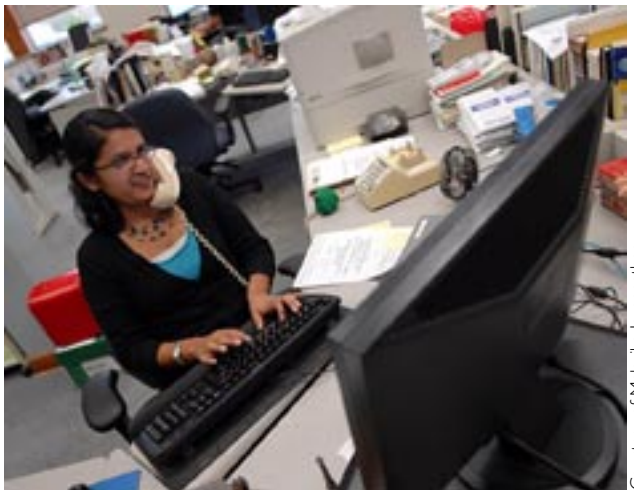
Courtesy of Joanna Fisher

Joanna Fisher, a first-time voter from Charlotte, North Carolina, outside her college dormitory.

Since that first election, Fisher has already voted again, this time in the state governor's race in November 2006. Now she is looking forward to the 2008 elections. "I am very excited to vote because it's my first presidential election," she says. "It's four years and it's our national image, both for us and for other countries."

Malavika Jagannathan, 23, felt similar enthusiasm about voting for the first time. As a reporter for the *Green Bay Press-Gazette* in Green Bay, Wisconsin, Jagannathan was frustrated with covering elections on the job but being unable to participate herself.

Originally from Bangalore, India, Jagannathan moved to the United States with her family in 1995, settling in College Station, Texas. From an early age, her family stressed the importance of political participation. "My mom always said that although our passports were from a different country, you had to be an active



Courtesy of Malavika Jagannathan

Malavika Jagannathan, *Green Bay Press-Gazette* reporter, new citizen, and new voter, at work in the newsroom.

participant in any society you are in," Jagannathan says.

Like Fisher, Jagannathan was involved in politics long before she was eligible to vote. In high school she volunteered for the Democratic Party and the Green Party, handing out flyers and organizing voter registration drives at school. "I would set up these little booths, but I couldn't register them [other students] myself because I wasn't registered to vote," she says.

According to Jagannathan, her status as a noncitizen actually inspired her to become more involved in politics. "I knew that I wasn't able to [vote], but I could definitely still contribute in other ways other than voting," she says. "I think that's partially why I was pretty into politics."

On December 14, 2006, Jagannathan became a U.S. citizen. The next day she visited the Green Bay city hall and checked the "Yes" box on the voter registration application that asks, "Are you a citizen of the United States of America?"

Even though it would be almost two months until the next election, Jagannathan was eager to sign up. "I figured I'd been talking about voting for so long, the first thing I should do is register," she says.

Two months later Jagannathan voted in a local primary with a few initiatives on the ballot. "I was very excited. My polling place is a church around the corner from where I live, and it's run by these little old ladies. I told them it was my first time to vote, and they got all excited too," she says.

After covering several elections as a reporter and volunteering for a political party, it was a relief to finally participate as a voter. "I had sort of built it up for a long time, and I think, especially after the November 2006 elections when it was killing me to sit here and cover the elections and not be able to participate, it kind of fulfilled that in a little way," she says.

Even though not all of her favored candidates won that day, Jagannathan made a vow to friends and family that she would try to vote in every subsequent election. "It just felt that I was a part of something," she explains. "And I think not having that for a long time I realized that having it is pretty important."

© AP Images/Lingbing Hang

Students unveil a College Republicans poster at West Virginia University in Morgantown.

According to Jagannathan, new citizens may value the right to vote even more than U.S.-born citizens. "I think that when you're just sort of born with these rights you maybe don't think about them as much," she says. "When you have to live without them and then you get them, it becomes a lot more important." ■

Congressional Elections

L. Sandy Maisel

© AP Images/Lawrence Jackson

Upon their return from Iraq in July 2006, these members of Congress speak to reporters following a meeting in the White House with President Bush.

The election of members of Congress is as important to the people of the United States as the election of the president. This article describes the composition of the U.S. Congress, the factors that come into play in congressional elections, and the possible impact of the 2008 elections on U.S. government policy. L. Sandy Maisel is a professor of government at Colby College in Waterville, Maine.

When citizens throughout the United States go to the polls on November 4, 2008, they will be voting not only for president but also for all 435 members of the House of Representatives and for one-third of the United States Senate. Attention will be focused on the presidential election, but the congressional elections are equally important.

In the system of government established by the U.S. Constitution, the executive and legislative branches share in decision making. Separation of powers would not be important if the same party always controlled the presidency and the Congress and if party members were disciplined in following their leaders. Neither is the case. The governing powers are separated not only in the sense that the two elected branches of the federal government are populated with different individuals — i.e., no U.S. senator or representative may serve simultaneously in the executive branch — but also in that those serving in office are chosen in separate elections, though the elections are held on the same day. Citizens have the option to vote for a president from one party, a senator from another, and a member of Congress from either of those or a third party. It is not only possible, but common, for one political party to control the White House and the other party to control one or both branches of the Congress. This situation is called "divided government." Moreover, members of Congress and senators are not dependent on party leaders for reelection and often express that independence by voting for the interests of their constituents even when they differ from party positions.

Makeup of the Congress

Congress has two bodies: the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House was meant to be the body closest to the people, popularly elected from relatively small districts with frequent elections (every two years). Today California, the most populated state, has 53 seats in the House of Representatives. The seven most sparsely populated states have one each.

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Kathy Roseth, a concerned citizen in Seattle, Washington, gathers petitions to put an education initative on the ballot.

The Senate was designed to reflect state interests. Each state, regardless of population, has two senators. Senators serve six-year terms, staggered so that one-third of the Senate seats are up for reelection every two years. Originally, senators were chosen by state legislatures, but since 1913 they have been popularly elected. The founders thought that the senators would be removed from popular passion because they were indirectly elected for longer terms; many question whether that is the case today.

Though the Senate and the House have equal powers, a Senate seat is generally thought to be more prestigious than a House seat: The constituency is larger (except in the case of the seven smallest states, where it is the same), the term length is longer, and senators receive more national attention because there are fewer of them.

House and Senate elections function under the same rules, with minor variation by state. The Democratic and Republican parties and any other parties active in a state nominate candidates through primary elections; independent candidates achieve a spot on the ballot by petition. The winner of the November general election is the candidate with the most votes; a majority is not needed.

Factors in Electing Members of Congress

There are three basic elements determining congressional elections: partisanship of the district, the presence or absence of an incumbent, and the issues of the day. The U.S. political system has been described as a competitive two-party system; the Democratic and Republican parties have dominated U.S. politics since the middle of the 19th century. More than 99 percent of those elected to the Congress in recent years have been either Democrats or Republicans. A system with single-member districts and plurality winners favors a two-party system. Third-party or independent candidates, who would benefit from a system of proportional representation, gain no benefit from close finishes.

The competition for control of the Congress has been intense in recent decades — just as it has for the presidency. However, the competition is not intense in every district and in every state. Some districts and even some states lean heavily toward one party or the other. For example, Democrats usually win in Massachusetts; Republicans, in Wyoming. Exceptions have occurred, but no politician will enter the 2008 congressional election without knowing the normal partisanship of district or state voters.

Election results can be explained by the presence or absence of an incumbent. For more than three decades, more than 95 percent of those incumbent members of the House of Representatives who have sought reelection have been successful. Incumbent U.S. senators have also been successful in achieving reelection. Even in elections in which many seats switch parties, more partisan turnover comes in seats where no incumbent is running. The effect of these factors is seen when one looks at potential candidates seeking party nominations to run for the House and Senate. In seats likely to be hotly contested — e.g., seats in which no incumbent is running in a district closely divided between Democrats and Republicans — it is likely that many candidates will run in each party's primary. If a seat is open but one party dominates the district, that party's primary is likely to see intense competition, but there will be little or no competition in

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In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Iraq war veteran Patrick Murphy campaigns for a congressional seat in the 2006 mid-term elections.

the other party. Finally, if an incumbent is running, he or she is unlikely to face serious competition, and party leaders in the other party might have to scramble to find anyone to run. Each of these generalizations applies less to the Senate than to the House, because Senate seats are seen as more valuable and fewer election results can be easily predicted in advance.

A new president will be elected in 2008, and national issues — the war in Iraq, terrorism, immigration policy, energy dependence — will dominate the scene. If President Bush's approval rating remains low among voters and these issues are unresolved going into the November election, the Democrats may have an advantage in closely contested races.

Implications for Governance

Following the 2006 congressional elections, Washington was marked by divided government, with the Republicans controlling the White House and the executive branch and the Democrats controlling both houses of the Congress, though by a razor-thin margin in the Senate.

The Republicans currently hold 22 of the 34 Senate seats that will be contested in 2008. Even slight Democratic gains will not give that party an overwhelming Senate majority. Senate rules require 60 votes to take major action; the Democrats are extremely unlikely to approach that number.

The Democrats hold approximately 30 more House seats than do the Republicans. While many incumbents' plans remain in flux, approximately 25 representatives are likely to vacate their seats after this Congress. Most of those seats — and perhaps another 25, many held by Democrats who took over Republican seats in 2006 — will be hotly contested in 2008. The Democrats seem to have a slight advantage in these races and might add slightly to their majority, but again not enough to give them a free hand in governing.

As a result of the upcoming congressional elections, if a Republican is elected president in 2008, he may face a determined opposition that controls a majority of both houses of Congress. If a Democrat is elected, he or she is likely to govern with a Congress controlled by his or her party, but one in which the Republicans retain enough strength to thwart major policy initiatives.

A governing system with separation of powers, significant checks and balances, and the majority of legislative election outcomes determined by incumbent strength, not national trends, fosters slow change in national policy. That is what the authors of the Constitution intended. Critical issues will dominate the 2008 election. While on some issues the new president will be able to act without congressional concurrence, on many more, the policies of the U.S. government, if not the rhetoric, will change only slightly. ■

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

The Changing U.S. Voter

Daniel Gotoff

Recent election polls reveal the concerns, beliefs, and sentiments of U.S. citizens as they prepare to vote for president in 2008. Voters are expressing anxiety over terrorist threats, pessimism on domestic issues, and an interest in government reform. A Democratic pollster concludes that "the U.S. electorate — often reticent about fundamental change — is now more nervous about staying the course." Daniel Gotoff is a partner with Lake Research Partners in Washington, D.C.

© AP Images/Ed Andrieski

This political activist hopes to funnel money into Hispanic voter registration and get-out-the-vote efforts in Colorado.

As the 2008 election for president approaches, the U.S. electorate finds itself in a unique — and tumultuous — situation. Polls show that the country is engaged in a war that a majority of Americans now oppose. Nearly six years after September 11, 2001, fears of another terrorist attack still permeate the public consciousness. And voters' outlook on a panoply of domestic matters is colored with intensifying concern. This swirl of public discontent takes place against a backdrop of spreading cynicism toward our elected leaders, counterbalanced by a sense that only an institutional power as mighty as the U.S. government is equipped to help the country overcome the challenges it now faces. The shifting political tides over the past several years underscore the point that neither major party is able to boast a governing majority. Furthermore, for the first time in decades neither an incumbent president nor a sitting vice president is running for the highest office in the land.

Amid this turbulence, the U.S. electorate — often reticent about fundamental change — is now more nervous about maintaining the status quo. Currently, polls show only 19 percent of Americans believe the country is headed in the right direction — the lowest in a decade. (In July 1997, 44 percent of Americans felt the country was headed in the right direction and just 40 percent felt it was on the wrong track.) Now, fully 68 percent believe the country is off on the wrong track.

Voters' widespread dissatisfaction has created a palpable desire for change in the United States on three key fronts: improved security abroad and at home, shared prosperity on domestic economic matters, and greater accountability on behalf of the government to the people it intends to serve.

Public Anxiety over Terrorism and Security

While the mood of the electorate has shifted dramatically over the last several months, certain political realities will remain true in 2008. Perhaps most prominent, the attacks of September 11, 2001 — and the aftermath of those attacks — still largely define our times and our politics. Voters' instinctive anxieties have meant that each of the three federal elections since September 11 has rested principally, though not solely, on matters of security.

According to exit polls for the last two elections, concerns over terrorism figured prominently. In 2004, 19 percent of voters cited terrorism as their top concern (second only to the economy at 20 percent). Similarly, in 2006, 72 percent of American voters considered terrorism an important issue in their voting decision. And

as recently as September 2006, the last time ABC News asked the question, nearly three-quarters of Americans (74 percent) reported being concerned about the possibility that there will be more major terrorist attacks in the United States, including 29 percent who were worried a great deal. While the intensity of these fears has ebbed somewhat in the years since September 11, overall levels of concern have barely budged. In October 2001, less than one month after the attacks, 81 percent of Americans were concerned about the possibility of additional terrorist attacks on U.S. soil (41 percent were very worried).

Since the invasion of Iraq and the growing public opposition to the war, dimensions of security and terrorism have grown more complex — and politically elusive. In October 2002, Americans saw Republicans as better able to handle the issue of terrorism than Democrats by a 23-point margin: 47 percent to 24 percent. By October 2006, however, the ground on this key issue had shifted significantly, with the public preferring Democrats to Republicans, 44 percent to 37 percent.

In 2008, U.S. voters will select the candidate they trust most to secure America's place in the world.

Increased Pessimism on the Domestic Front

While Iraq and terrorism often steal the headlines, voters' concerns on the domestic front are equally intense. In fact, in 2006, exit polls showed concerns over the economy on a par with concerns over national security, Iraq, and ethics. When asked about the importance of various issues in determining their vote for Congress, 82 percent of Americans said the economy was either extremely important (39 percent) or very important (43 percent). By comparison, 74 percent identified corruption and ethics as important (41 percent "extremely"), 67 percent identified Iraq as important (35 percent "extremely"), and 72 percent identified terrorism as important (39 percent "extremely").

Since the 2006 election, voters concerns over the economy have grown more pointed. Two-thirds (66 percent) of Americans rate economic conditions in the country as only fair (43 percent) or poor (23 percent). Just 5 percent rate the economy as excellent and 29 percent rate it as good. Moreover, a 55 percent majority of Americans believe the national economy is getting worse. Another 28 percent say the economy is staying the same — hardly a positive diagnosis — and just 16 percent say the economy is getting better.

© AP Images/Mike Carlson

President Bush speaks on the global war on terror at the port of Tampa, Florida, in February 2006.

Americans' economic concerns have changed over time. Well-paying, secure jobs are still central, but in an environment where U.S. workers are finding it increasingly difficult to keep pace with the rising cost of living, the affordability of health care now ranks as voters' top economic concern. Asked to choose the economic issue they are personally most worried about, a 29 percent plurality of voters pick the rising cost of health care, higher than the number who choose higher taxes (24 percent), a secure retirement (16 percent), losing one's job (11 percent), or expenses like child care and tuition (10 percent). Americans, who describe affordable health care as one of the pillars of the American Dream, now regard surging health care costs as a direct threat to their families' ability to stay in the middle class and achieve that dream. Voters also believe that health care costs are a major impediment to starting one's own business, a significant finding in an entrepreneurial society in which 48 percent aspire to do just that.

Additionally, as globalization forces U.S. workers to compete against low-wage workers in countries that may not protect basic rights, they have become quite skeptical about its benefits. Fully 65 percent of Americans view increased trade between the United States and other countries as mostly hurting U.S. workers. And underscoring a shift in attitudes from the end of the last decade, when a 56 percent majority saw increased trade as mostly helping U.S. companies, fully half of Americans (50 percent) now view trade as mostly hurting U.S. companies.

More fundamentally, there is a growing sense among the public that the middle class is no longer sharing in the nation's prosperity, but actually losing ground while an elite few reap gargantuan profits. The exit polls speak to this erosion of voters' faith in the American Dream in

the 21st century. Fully half of voters said they had just enough to get by and another 17 percent said they were falling behind. Less than one-third of voters (31 percent) said they were getting ahead financially. Even more startling is the extent to which Americans have grown pessimistic in their outlook for their children's future. A 40 percent plurality said they expected life for the next generation of Americans to be worse than life today, 28 percent said about the same, and just 30 percent expected life for the next generation of Americans to be better than life today. In 2008, American voters will select the candidate they trust most to ensure the promise of the American Dream — namely, shared economic prosperity and the opportunity for workers to provide better opportunities for their children.

The Increasing Desire for Change and Accountability

The gathering storm of public anxiety on issues both foreign and domestic is feeding an appetite for fundamental reform of the U.S. government. The 2006 election was in many ways a public cry for greater accountability. Three-quarters of voters identified corruption and ethics as important to their vote in Congress, and with considerable intensity (41 percent "extremely important").

While the Iraq war may help explain the current president's low job approval ratings, it does not explain why the new Congress, controlled by the opposition party, is also held in such poor esteem by the voters.

© AP Images/Mark Humphrey

Buttons urging veterans to vote are displayed at the Vietnam Veterans of America leadership conference in Nashville, Tennessee.

President Bush's job approval rating sits at just 31 percent, though Congress' job approval rating — at 21 percent — is even more critical. In short, the public is demanding change and holding all elected leaders accountable for effecting that change. To wit, a 56 percent majority of Americans now agree that "the federal government needs to be transformed — that is, undergo major and fundamental changes." Just 34 percent believe "the federal government needs to undergo small changes but does not need to be transformed," and only 3 percent believe "the federal government does not need to undergo any changes."

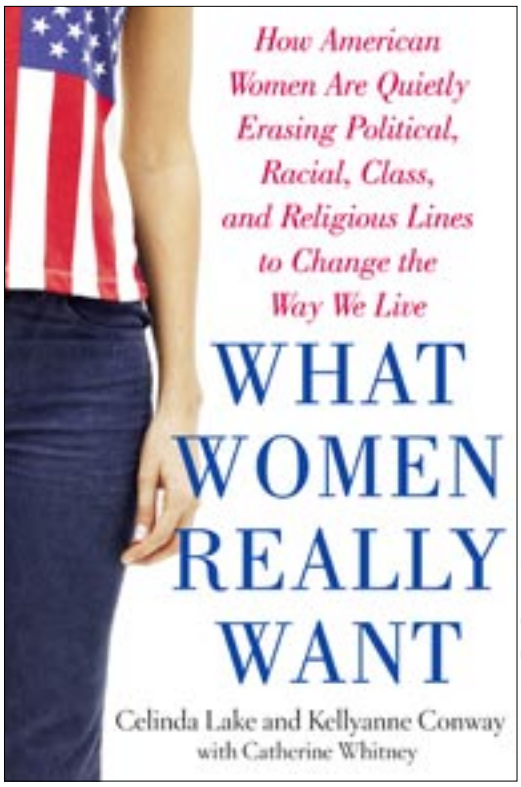
And despite reduced trust in government, more than half of Americans want an increased role for the institution in addressing the challenges facing the country. Fifty-two percent agree that "government should do more to solve problems and help meet the needs of people," compared to just 40 percent who believe that "government is doing too many things better left to businesses and individuals." It is worth noting that these numbers are virtually the mirror opposite of the sentiment recorded nearly a decade ago (41 percent "government should do more" to 51 percent "government is doing too much").

In conclusion, the U.S. voter is indeed changing — becoming more cynical, more anxious, and less secure. At the same time, the U.S. voter remains guardedly hopeful about the future. Voters are seeking a leader who has the demonstrated ability to recognize and resolve the challenges facing the United States in the 21st century and, in so doing, secure the United States' place in the world. Countering this inclination toward an experienced, steady hand is a strong desire for a leader who represents the change that an overwhelming majority of Americans now demand. The candidate who can convincingly reconcile these seemingly contradictory dimensions of leadership is the candidate who will win the presidency in 2008 — and with it the ability to transform the nation, both in the eyes of U.S. citizens and, just as important, in the eyes of the world. ■

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

Women Voters in the United States

Kellyanne Conway



Jacket design by Eric Fuentecilla
Jacket photograph © Stockbyte/Getty Images

Book cover of *What Women Really Want,* written by author Kellyanne Conway, 2005.

Women comprise more than half of the U.S. electorate and have influenced electoral outcomes for more than 40 years. A Republican pollster examines voting patterns among women, discusses issues that are important to them, and describes several categories of women voters to watch in 2008. Kellyanne Conway is the president and chief executive officer of a firm called the polling company,™inc., in Washington, D.C. WomanTrend is a division of the firm.

The average woman in the United States wakes up each morning to a myriad of responsibilities, curiosities, and concerns, none of which are political, per se, but all of which are affected by political and governmental action. These issues might include: Is my child learning in this school? Is this neighborhood safe? If I switch jobs, will I lose my health insurance? Is Social Security income enough for my parents to keep their house and not deplete their savings?

Looking Back: A Historical Perspective

Since 1964 women have comprised a majority of the eligible electorate, but it was not until 1980 that the percentage of eligible women who actually voted surpassed the percentage of qualified men casting ballots, as Table 1 indicates. For all the angst by the bean counters that a fraction of women seek or hold elective office in this country (and that a woman has never been elected president), women voters have influenced electoral outcomes for more than eight decades, deciding on presidents and precedents in a way that has shaped public policy directly and dramatically.

Women tend to favor incumbents, especially for president, preferring to stick with a trusted brand already on the shelf rather than trying something new and unknown. In fact, the last three presidents who won reelection increased their support among women in their second bids. Women are also reliably pro-incumbent in

Table 1
Women's Voting Behavior

	% of Eligible Women Voting	% of Eligible Men Voting
1980	59.4%	59.1%
1992	62.3%	60.2%
1996	55.5%	52.8%
2000	56.2%	53.1%
2004	60.1%	56.3%

congressional elections, evidencing more consistency in their voting patterns than men. Ironically, this natural bias toward reelecting incumbents is one reason many women who run for office as challengers are unsuccessful.

The female nonvoter is ignored by politicians, parties, pundits, and professional consultants, who seem obsessed instead with "likely" or "swing" voters. In the 2004 presidential election, more than half (54.5 percent) of women between the ages of 18 and 24 did not vote. However, women in this age bracket voted at a higher rate than their male counterparts, only 40 percent of whom cast ballots. At the other end of the age spectrum, only 29 percent of women aged 65 to 74 did not vote, compared to 26.1 percent of men in the same category. The top reasons women offer for opting out include "illness/disability" (19.8 percent), "too busy/ scheduling conflict" (17.4 percent), "not interested" (10.7 percent), and "did not like candidates or campaign issues" (9.7 percent). Excluding the final two responses, it is important to note that nearly nine in ten women didnot participate for reasons other than a lack of feeling engaged.

What Do Women Voters Really Want?

Traditionally, women are thought to gravitate more toward the "SHE" cluster of issues, Social Security, health care, and education, while men are considered more interested in the "WE" issues, war and the economy. The last three national elections (2002, 2004, and 2006) show that these convenient boxes no longer apply.

In 2004 and again in 2006, women told pollsters that the concerns that motivated them to decide whether and for whom to vote were centered on nontraditional "women's issues." From a closed-ended question in which 10 possible choices were offered, the situation in Iraq topped the list as the motivating concern (22 percent), followed by the war on terror (15 percent). Morality/ family values and jobs/economy each received 11 percent, while the remaining six options only garnered single-digit responses, as Table 2 demonstrates.

As my coauthor, Democratic pollster Celinda Lake, and I posit in *What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class, and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live* (Free Press, 2005), women are not single-issue voters, either. Rather, they tend to consider a plethora of ideas, issues,

Table 2
2004 and 2006 Post-Election Surveys conducted by the polling company,™ inc.

When deciding on whom to vote for in the election today, which of the following issues was most important to you?

Actual Women Voters on Election Night

2006	2004	
22%	16%	Situation in Iraq
15%	23%	War on Terror
11%	17%	Morality/ Family Values
11%	16%	Jobs/Economy
6%	3%	Education
6%	7%	Health Care/ Medicare/ Prescription Drugs
5%	3%	Taxes
5%	N/A	Abortion
4%	N/A	Immigration
2%	2%	Environment

individuals, impressions, and ideologies before making a final decision. The media's focus on the contentious ones makes it seem as if women only care about one issue on Election Day and that it takes special attention to that issue to compel women to vote. In reality, women's voting patterns indicate quite the opposite.

Women Do Not Comprise a Niche

Women are not monolithic in their attitudes about, or votes within, the political system. When it comes to voting, one woman might vote for all Democrats, another might vote straight-ticket Republican, while a third might take the salad-bar approach and pick and choose from who and what suits her best. In the end, women voters ask themselves two core questions when deciding whom to support for president: "Do I like that person?" and "Is that person like me?" The first question is the classic "living room" test: Would you like to see that candidate on the television set in your living room for the next four or eight years? The second is a more complex inquiry that probes whether women believe a candidate cares about, values, confronts, and fears the same things they do.

It is impossible to divide the life experiences and attitudes of American women into the binary Republican and Democrat categories. As women take more than their political ideology to the polls, politicians must be cognizant of the life stages, as well as the demographic categories, into which women fall. A concept we frequently use at my firm, the polling company,™ inc./WomanTrend, is the "Three Faces of Eve," which is illustrated through the three very distinct lives a 48-year-old woman in this country might have. She could be a blue-collar grandmother, an unmarried and childless professional, or a married mother of two young children. Technically, they would all fall into the same age and gender demographic categories, but their life experiences vastly differ, resulting in varied perspectives on the current state of affairs. Politics is not an isolated category for women; rather, politics is an all-encompassing arena into which women export their life experiences, needs, and expectations.

© AP Images/Ted S. Warren

Twelve-year-old students load boxes with petitions onto their school bus. They hope to get a referendum on the ballot providing additional funding for education in Seattle, Washington.

Some groups of women to watch in 2008 include:

- Woman Entrepreneurs: Women own approximately 10.4 million firms in the United States and employ more than 12.8 million Americans. While 75 percent of all U.S. firms do not have employees, an eye-popping 81 percent of woman-owned firms are single-person or "Mom-and-Pop" operations. The rate of growth of woman-owned firms consistently increases at a rate double to that of all firms.
- Unmarried Women: American women are delaying marriage not because they are without choices, but simply because they do have choices. Currently, 49 percent of all women over the age of 15 are not married and more than half (54 percent) of these women fall in the 25 to 64 age category.
- Not-Yet-Moms: With more women entering the workforce and the ever-increasing number of women having children beyond the traditional childbearing years, fewer women in their late 20s and early 30s can identify with the "married-with-children" label.
- Junior-Seniors: Women aged 50 to 64, many with children living at home, are expecting entitlements and eternity (the quest to extend life), seeking solutions and sophistication.
- Minority Women: Minorities now comprise one-third of U.S. residents, and four states are already a majority-minority, with five others expected to follow by 2025. The Hispanic population is poised to have the most significant impact to the U.S. population, but the increase in Asian-American voters is also a trend to follow.
- Gen Y Women: As Table 3 indicates, a survey for Lifetime Television by the polling company, ™ inc., and Lake Research Partners found that a majority (54 percent) of Gen Y women (those born since 1979) believe that the best way to make a difference in American politics is to vote. Beyond politics, almost half (42 percent) of Gen Y women indicated that the best way to make a difference in the world was to "help those less fortunate than I, with either time or money." Among the six other options posed to them, only 2 percent said that taking an

"active role in politics" was the best way to do so. Behind helping those in need, included "be a good person" (16 percent), "help stop violence and sexual assaults against women" (9 percent), "help save the environment" (8 percent), and "defend my country and keep it safe by serving in the military" (4 percent).

If a woman bristles, "I hate politics," what she is saying in effect is that she cares not who manages the public schools and what is taught there; how health care is accessed, delivered, and paid for in the United States; whether the nation is safe, prosperous, and globally competitive. Yet clearly she does not mean that. Politics and governance are the vehicles through which change in these areas is accomplished but not necessarily the prism through which women interact with them.

Table 3
Which of the following do you think is the best way for you personally to make a difference in American politics?

(accepted one answer)

54%	Vote in elections
9%	Volunteer for a political campaign
8%	Donate to a cause
7%	Write a letter or e-mail to an elected official
7%	Activate my social network of friends and family
4%	Run for political office
3%	Donate money to a campaign

Looking Ahead to 2008

What can the 2008 presidential contenders expect from women voters? The variable in this presidential election could be a woman candidate, taking the debate from not if, but when. The discussion has shifted from a hypothesized woman president to that woman president; namely, Hillary Rodham Clinton.

Still, past practice has proved that women do not necessarily vote for other women. If they did, U.S. Senators Elizabeth Dole or Carol Moseley-Braun would have won their parties' nominations for president when they sought the nod in 2000 and 2004, respectively, based on the simple notion that women comprise a majority of the voters. The 2008 race differs from past elections in that this is an election of many firsts. A woman, an African American, a Mormon, and a Hispanic are all well-poised to take their parties' nominations.

Party loyalty trumps gender, as indicated by a July 2007 *Newsweek* survey, which found that 88 percent of men and 85 percent of women say that if their party nominated a woman candidate that they would vote for her if she were qualified for the job. Americans express less enthusiasm, however, about the "female factor," when it comes to how they judge their fellow citizens: Only 60 percent of men and 56 percent of women believe that the country is ready for a woman president. With regard to race, voters are less hesitant to vote for a qualified African-American candidate of their party, as 92 percent of whites and 93 percent of nonwhites say that they would endorse such a candidate. Like gender, fewer voters doubt that the country is ready for an African-American president: Only 59 percent of white voters and 58 percent of nonwhite voters believe that the country would elect a black president. When responding to polls, voters can sometimes displace their attitudes and stereotypes onto their friends, family, and community members as a way to reaffirm their own position while simultaneously hiding what they believe or know to be an "unacceptable" or "unpopular" position. One caveat of this concept is that voters' opinions could be influenced by the fact that in 2007 there is a prominent African-American and a prominent woman candidate. Any opposition to an "African-American" or a "woman" could well be the dislike of an individual candidate.

Whereas the contest for president is the most wide-open in decades (it is the first time in 80 years that neither a sitting president nor vice president is seeking the presidency), one thing is certain: Women, as they have since 1980, will be a majority of the electorate that decides who next occupies the Oval Office. ■

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

Covering the Presidential Campaign: The View from the Press Bus

Jim Dickenson

© Reuters/Jim Bourg

Members of the news media film, photograph, and question the candidate aboard the press bus during a campaign bus tour of Iowa in January 2004.

A veteran political journalist shares the inside story of life on the road with a U.S. presidential candidate and discusses the reporter's role in conveying a candidate's message to the American people. The days are long and packed with events. Campaign staff and advisors are valuable sources of information if properly cultivated. And while campaign stops may become routine, the professional journalist must always be prepared to handle unexpected events and breaking news. Jim Dickenson is a retired political reporter for the Washington Post.

The last act of a long campaign day is distribution of the next day's equally long schedule, the "bible," as it's known, to all hands — press, staff, advisers — either given to us as we're getting off the plane or slipped under our hotel room doors. A typical day begins something like this:

- 6:15 a.m. Bags in the lobby.
- 7:15 a.m. Candidate and press pool depart hotel for station KXYZ-TV.
- 7:30 a.m. Staff and press corps board bus for the Palm Restaurant for 8 a.m. breakfast with Chamber of Commerce and Rotary Club.
- 7:45 a.m. Five-minute candidate interview with KXYZ morning anchor Joe Smith.
- 7:50 a.m. Depart KXYZ for the Palm.
- 9:00 a.m. Depart the Palm for Avery Houston airport.

And so it goes — a lot of events and moving parts for the day. At least the Chamber/Rotary meeting means we don't have to worry about whether there's time to grab breakfast in the hotel coffee shop. (One iron rule on the campaign: Eat at every opportunity, because the schedule can cause you to miss a meal.) And the press pool for KXYZ will give us a written "fill," or report, of what

was said and done there. The pool is for events where time, space, and other considerations won't accommodate the full press corps. It generally includes a daily newspaper reporter, TV reporter, news magazine reporter, and wire service (AP or Reuters) reporter, and we all are assigned our turns in the pools.

The bible is a meticulously detailed document compiled by the campaign staff that enables everyone to plan their day; each reporter has different priorities and projects to work on. What looks like the main event, the likely source of the news lead for the day? Is "filing time" to write and transmit stories built into the schedule, and at the right points? Most of us have different deadlines due to geography and our organization's individual production schedules. Is there an event I can skip so I can grab the candidate's staffers with whom I need to talk for a news analysis I'm working on?

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Television cameramen film a campaign bus arriving in Davenport, Iowa, in October 2004.

An American presidential campaign is a complex, intricate dance involving many people. For everyone involved, it also is a long, grueling process, more exhausting for some than for others. A candidate who is running third or fourth or fifth in the primaries, for instance, will try to cram more events into the day, particularly in the small but crucial states of Iowa (first caucus in the nation) and New Hampshire (first primary), where "retail politics" — face-to-face contact with the voters — is not only essential but expected.

Preparing for the Campaign

Long before I get on the campaign plane, I have researched the members of the campaign staff. Who are the paid consultants, media experts, and pollsters? Who are the unpaid and unofficial advisers who, as respected former officeholders, activists, or policy "wonks" (specialists), are highly influential?

I also have internalized the campaign strategy. How much effort will go into the traditional early primary states, such as Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina? How will the campaign deal with the new February 5, 2008, "super primary" held simultaneously in so many states — including such blockbuster states as New York, California, and Florida — that it could determine each party's presidential nominee that day, nine months in advance of Election Day? In which states is the candidate strong and in which ones weak? In which areas of each state are the different candidates strong and weak? All these details are building blocks in the most important political decision the American people make — their choice of president.

We in the press corps are a major factor in this electoral process. Because of the decline of the political parties, concurrent with the primaries' rise in importance, the media have become the early screeners of the candidates. Our function is to evaluate their policies; their personal characteristics, such as intelligence, temperament, honesty, judgment, organizational ability, and persuasiveness; and their fitness for the presidency, to help the voters make informed decisions in this vital matter. We have taken this role very seriously ever since publication of *The Making of the President 1960*, Theodore White's famed best-selling book about John F. Kennedy's victorious presidential campaign against Richard Nixon.

Working with Sources

Cultivating staff and consultants who can be good information sources is a top priority for political reporters. This is an ongoing exercise in character evaluation, courtship, and diplomacy. The key is to identify sources who truly know what's going on in the campaign and who will share it with you, a rare combination both on the campaign and in the Oval

© AP Images/Stephan Savoia

After announcing his candidacy for president, Senator John McCain travels with his wife and staff on his campaign bus from Portsmouth to Concord, New Hampshire, in April 2007.

Office. Outside professional consultants are often better for this purpose than long-time personal loyalists because they know that they'll likely be back on a future campaign, as will I, and we need each other.

I also evaluate the unpaid advisers who have a national political interest rather than a career or personal investment in the campaign. On one Democratic presidential campaign, I befriended a genial political activist and veteran of the Kennedy presidential races. We had dinner on the road a couple of times and shared a drink at the bar other times. At a certain point, he decided he couldn't abide the campaign's mistakes and miscalculations any longer. Believing that he could trust me to get the story right and protect his identity, he gave me a great running inside view of the campaign on "background," which meant that I could use the information but couldn't quote him by name or identify him. The result was some of the best campaign analysis I've ever written.

In 1988 I was with the *Washington Post* and covered then-Senator Al Gore in the so-called Super Tuesday primary election in which several southern states held their primaries on the same day in an effort to increase the region's influence on the presidential nomination. (He did well there but didn't have the resources for the subsequent primaries in northern states.) Gore made a stop in his home state of Tennessee at a hospital that had a new, state-of-the-art children's wing. We were met there by then-Governor Bill Clinton of Arkansas, and I decided to miss the hospital tour in order to interview Clinton. I had learned in previous conversations that he was an excellent and accessible political analyst, and the interview was time extremely well spent. I covered myself by agreeing with a colleague from a noncompetitive paper in the Midwest to fill him in on Clinton in return for his fill on the hospital tour.

Expecting the Unexpected

The bible lays out what's planned, but it can't anticipate the thousand and one unforeseen events that invariably pop up. Always I must be ready to respond to the unexpected, which of course is the definition of the news business. New developments in Iraq. New action

Courtesy of Jim Dickenson

Author Jim Dickenson (on left) with editor Lionel Linder at the *National Observer*, 1972.

in Congress on immigration or health care. A candidate dropping out of his party's primary because of fundraising problems. And so forth.

Often these twists are welcome simply because both reporters and editors become weary of the candidate's standard "stump," or campaign, speech. It is repeated at event after event to appreciative new audiences but drives us reporters to look constantly for a fresh news lead or for feature and analysis stories. In one campaign, however, I had composed and filed what I thought was a marvelous story in which the day's major campaign events wonderfully illustrated the candidate's position on his three major issues. I was very proud of the story and filed it well before deadline. At the next event, however, my candidate pointed out that his opponent had opened his current campaign tour with a questionable assertion that carbon dioxide emitted by tree leaves was the cause of haze and smog in an eastern U.S. mountain range, thus igniting a critical discussion of his environmental policies. We spent the next couple of days scrambling to report that, and my painstaking literary effort from days earlier was obliterated by what I thought was a nonsensical issue.

With the newer technology of laptop computers, Blackberries, cell phones, and the like, we are increasingly able to anticipate developments even when out on the road. We can monitor the wire services and other news organizations' Web sites. We don't have to chase campaign staff and advisers for reactions to breaking events because they generally beat us to it with an e-mail. Filing stories from the road in time for deadlines could be difficult in the era prior to computers and modems, but communication with the news desk back home is now generally constant and instantaneous with cell phones, wireless Internet access, and high-speed, broadband-quality modems for transmitting and receiving stories, memos, and background documents on our laptops. The new technology, including satellites, obviously also has eased the lives of television crews, for whom the logistics of getting film and tape back to their hometown headquarters in time for the evening newscast used to be a daily logistical nightmare.

New technology, however, means more work. Reporters for news organizations that have Web sites and radio stations are expected to file breaking stories for them throughout the day. And for technical reasons none of us ever understood, the first-edition deadlines at both major dailies where I worked, the *Washington Star* and the *Washington Post*, became an hour earlier, 7 p.m. rather than 8 p.m., after the newsrooms were computerized. It also means the desk can easily reach you with sometimes really dumb story ideas.

It's a great life if you don't weaken. It's a life for the young and strong who can work 16-hour days and defer dinner until 11 p.m. When I was young and macho (up to about age 50), I considered it an invigorating challenge.

One of the most frequent remarks I heard from people when they learned that I was in the news business was, "That sounds interesting. You must learn something new every day." "Yes," I would respond, thinking to myself, "you have no idea." ■

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Political Polls: Why We Just Can't Live Without Them

John Zogby

Since the 1960s, the number of public opinion polls has increased dramatically. In this article, polling expert John Zogby discusses the importance of polls, not only in gauging people's attitudes toward candidates running for office but also in revealing voters' values and their feelings about current issues. The author is the president of Zogby International, based in Utica, New York, with offices in Washington, Miami, and Dubai. They have been tracking public opinion since 1984 in North America, Latin America, the Middle East, Asia, and Europe.

© AP Images/Jeff Geissler

Alfonso Martinez registers to vote as he pumps gas in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

I make my living by asking questions and so here are a few: What do early polls mean many months before an election? Do they predict or are they simply barometric readings? With all the talk of global warming, are Americans (and those who follow American elections) victims of "poll-ution" — i.e., too many polls out there in the public domain? Can we do without the public polls? I will try to answer each of these questions.

What do early polls mean many months before an election? Do they predict or are they simply barometric readings?

The best metaphor I can think of for the value of early polls is a person setting a goal to lose weight by November 2008. Should that person merely avoid a scale for months or try to measure progress every so often? Most who try to lose weight are just like political professionals and junkies. They want the information often. Now, of course, the person who is dieting is not assured that his goal will be achieved on the target date, but the progress reports that polls represent will provide arguments for either more effort or the occasional slice of chocolate cake.

Early polls can provide a wealth of data well beyond simply showing which candidates are ahead in the race. What are the issues that are dominant at a moment in time? Will these top issues change and will they have to be addressed? Early polls also portray the overall mood of the public. Are they pleased with the direction the country is heading in or, as we all put it to them, "are things off on the wrong track?" These are very important readings. And polls merely add science to what candidates see and what crowds feel — contentment, resentment, anger, frustration, confidence — or even despair.

It is important to understand that we pollsters are probing more than one-dimensional feelings or fleeting opinions about things voters may not even understand. Good polling tries to define the values that voters attach to specific issues. Values are not fleeting. Rather, they are ingrained and sacrosanct. And often people can be conflicted about their own values. The same voter can feel that the war in Iraq is going badly because it is causing unnecessary death and destruction — but also care just as deeply that America's honor and integrity are at stake. It is up to the candidates and their professional handlers to craft the right symbols and messages to convince voters to break their own internal conflicts. That is why polling is valuable to help determine the optimum communications message and theme to be emphasized.

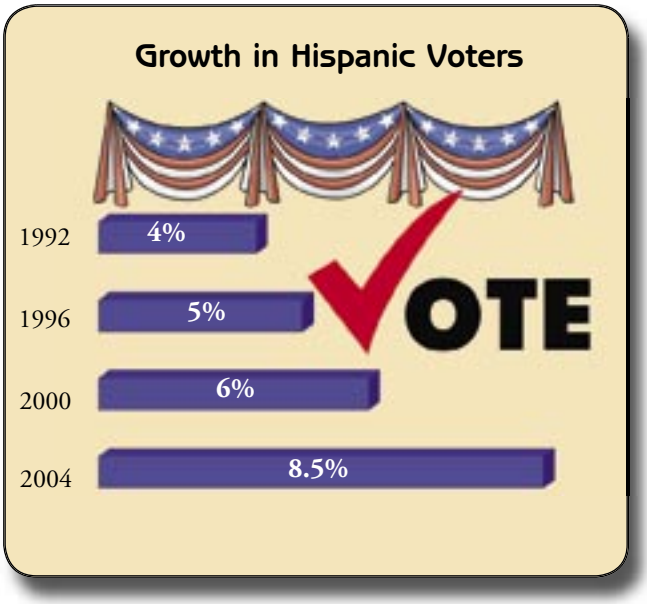
Along the same lines, I have learned from three decades as a polling practitioner that majorities can often matter less in political campaigns than intensity of feelings on key issues. Let's examine for a moment the top issues right now in the 2008 presidential race. In overwhelming first place is the war in Iraq. Almost three in five voters list it as the top issue for them. While opposition to the war was mainly among Democrats (more than 80 percent) and many independents (more than 60 percent) in 2004, Republican support back then was just as intense as Democratic opposition. Thus, President Bush found that the war did not hurt him as he linked it to the war on terrorism — something that most voters saw him as better able to handle than his Democratic opponent, Senator John Kerry. But by 2005, Republican conservative support for the war not only became softer, but a solid minority of Libertarian and moderate Republicans became opposed to the president.

The war on terrorism is the second top issue and provides a useful look at the dynamics of public opinion. When Bush was reelected in 2004, he was favored as the one better able to handle this issue, 67 percent to 24 percent over Kerry. By 2005, Democrats were about tied with Republicans in the public's view on their capacity to fight terrorism. But as we move into 2008, the Democrats are not ready to gain on the Republicans on this issue because voters do not have a high intensity of support for the Democrats that can propel them to victory. At least not yet.

In the past few election cycles, the high-intensity issues have been about "God, guns, and gays." But Republicans may be losing their edge because voters are turning to other issues like Iraq and health care, which trigger insecurity, anger, and frustration — reactions featuring very intense emotions.

What promises to be the intense issue of 2008 is immigration. And here, polling is instructive. Americans oppose illegal immigration, but they believe it is fair to have a path to citizenship for those already in the United States. They want stronger border control, but they oppose the spending of hundreds of millions of dollars on building a fence between the United States and Mexico. However, as with the Iraq war, this issue has not been influenced as much by majorities who support or oppose varying measures, but instead turns on the depth of support or opposition of a relatively small number of voters. Republicans again are in a tough position as they face the issue.

Republican presidential and congressional candidates are caught between the loudest and most conservative voices who oppose any efforts to legalize those now in the country illegally and the growing number of Hispanic voters who are alienated by efforts to build a wall along the southern border. Consider these numbers: Hispanics were 4 percent of 92 million voters in the 1992 election, 5 percent of 95 million voters in 1996, 6 percent of 105 million voters in 2000, and 8.5 percent of 122 million voters in 2004. And as a percentage of the American electorate, they continue to grow at a faster rate than the overall population. When President Bush received 40 percent of the 2004 Hispanic vote (up 5 points from 2000), he was capturing a much larger piece of a much larger pie. As a result of mainly the immigration issue (along with Iraq and the economy), the Republican share of the total vote in the 2006 congressional elections went down to 28 percent. And the Republicans suffered a huge defeat. With early polling in the 2008 election cycle showing they are suffering among Hispanics, Republicans face a tough choice on the immigration issue.



Is there poll-ution?

In the 1960s, there were the Gallup and Harris polling organizations. By the 1970s, the major television networks teamed up with the large newspapers. By 1992, there were still only a few major polls. The reasoning for media and independent polls was clear. They acted as a check against abuse by conniving candidates who could

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International pollster John Zogby addresses an audience in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, describing the increasingly important role of Hispanic voters in the 2008 election.

claim to be doing better by simply releasing bogus polls to mislead both the public and potential contributors by establishing a public record of survey results performed by credible, independent sources.

With the explosion of cable news networks and other new media, there has been a proliferation of public polls. There were at least two dozen independent polls in the public domain as of 2006 — and the number is growing. Thus, the real question is whether or not there are too many news outlets and too many polls. Thus far, Americans seem to like both the additional news options and the extra polls. Americans want to feel connected, to know if their own views are in the mainstream or on the fringes, and to see how their candidate is doing among the larger public — beyond their own world of friendships, hairdressers and barbers, convenience stores, family, and neighborhood.

But with the greater number of polls comes some additional responsibilities for pollsters, the public, and the media. Those of us in this profession have an obligation to remind Americans what polls can do — and what they cannot do. We hear all the time how we are "making predictions" each time we publish our findings, when in fact we are only taking a snapshot of a moment in time, getting a meter reading, plotting progress on a scale. Anything can happen between the time a poll is taken and an election is held, even if the poll is taken the day before an election.

Polls are also not perfect. We do not talk to every single person in a designated universe of the population, but instead take a sampling from it. Thus, there is a built-in source of sampling error (though there are other factors that can cause errors as well). Most of us operate within a margin of sampling error of "plus or minus three" in national polling, thus there can be a swing of six points. If Candidate A is receiving 53 percent of the vote in such a poll and Candidate B posts 47 percent, then A can be as high as 56 percent and as low as 50 percent, while B can be as high as 50 percent and as low as 44 percent. In other words, the candidates could be tied. We can tell if an election is close or not close, but we do not predict an outcome, except through hunches and analysis of our numbers. And that is mainly for entertainment, not predictive, purposes.

The public needs to possess a healthy skepticism about polls. They are very useful tools to understand the dynamics of an election, so they should not be dismissed. And generally our work product is very accurate. But in 2000, when my polls (along with those of CBS News) suggested a tiny margin of victory for then-Vice President Al Gore in the popular vote and a few other polls had then-Governor George W. Bush leading by two or three points, we were basically saying the same thing.

Finally, the media — particularly the broadcast media — has to do a better job explaining sampling errors, question wording, and other sources of possible limitations in polls, while at the same time reporting results within their proper context, i.e, events, speeches, and other factors that might have influenced results while the poll was being taken.

Can we do without the polls?

Well, I certainly cannot. Apparently neither can the professional politicos and political observers. Polls perform an important function of revealing the innermost thoughts, feelings, biases, values, and behaviors of the body politic. I have learned after all these years that individual Americans can be ill-informed, indifferent, and simply wrong, but the American people as a whole are always sufficiently informed and are hardly ever wrong when they answer a poll — or, ultimately, cast a vote. ■

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A Fresh Start

An Interview with Charlie Cook and Jerry Hagstrom

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Voters stand in line to vote in the 2006 mid-term election in Alexandria, Virginia, on Tuesday, November 7, 2006.

The 2008 U.S. presidential election is unusual because neither an incumbent president nor vice president is running for the highest office in the land. In an interview with Bureau of International Information Programs staff writer Michelle Austein, two experts discuss this phenomenon and take a look at what else is in store for the 2008 election season. Charlie Cook is editor and publisher of the Cook Political Report*, and Jerry Hagstrom is contributing editor of the* National Journal.

Question: Can you tell us why Americans and international audiences are paying so much attention so early to the 2008 presidential race and why this race seems to be different than previous U.S. elections?

Cook: It's really the first one in 80 years that we haven't had a sitting president or vice president seeking the presidency. To have a wide-open race for both parties is really extraordinary.

Usually you have a president or vice president on one side that is generally going to win [his party's nomination] easily, or maybe just two people running, and then a big field of lots of candidates on the other side. This time, it's big fields on both sides. It's really an amazing election cycle. We have never seen anything like it.

Hagstrom: I think it's also both a fun race to watch and an important race for people in other countries. And it's important to start watching it earlier because it's so unclear who will be the candidates and, of course, who will finally win the election.

Q: Candidates began raising money earlier than in past elections. Part of the reason is that no incumbent is running. Are there other reasons?

Cook: It's harder and harder to reach voters than it used to be. Twenty and 30 years ago, you had three television networks, and you could pretty much reach everyone that

© AP Images/Alan Diaz

Democratic presidential hopefuls Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton at the Democratic primary debate in Coral Gables, Florida, in September 2007.

way. Now with cable and satellite television and hundreds and hundreds of channels, and with a lot of other distractions, it's harder to reach voters; it's hard to get a message across to them.

Hagstrom: Many, many years ago, people used to campaign at big events, or they campaigned at big factories, and they got a big turnout. Today you can't do that. You have to realize that Americans are working in offices. They don't really turn out for these big events. So you have to reach people through television and radio, and that requires money to buy advertising.

Cook: In the United States, people are really voting on the candidate — the person — and not the party. That requires a lot more spending than you would see in a parliamentary form of government.

Hagstrom: Because we use a primary system of selecting our candidates, that means that a candidate can really come from nowhere. He or she does not have to have a long history within the party in order to get a nomination. But it takes money and people and time to reach those party members before the primary takes place.

Q: This year's candidates seem to be among the most diverse in American history. Do you have thoughts on why that is happening this season and if this sets any type of precedent for future elections?

Hagstrom: Well, I think that one reason is because the society has evolved and is really more diverse and more accepting of diversity. Twenty or 30 years ago, it would have been hard for these [candidates] to get taken seriously.

Cook: A Gallup poll earlier this year said 94 percent of Americans would vote for a qualified candidate who is an African American. Eighty-eight percent would vote for a qualified candidate who is a woman. Those statistics wouldn't have existed eight or 12 or 16 or 20 years ago. Our country is more diverse now than it used to be. It's more accepting of diversity now than it used to be. Yes, we have had women run before. We have had African Americans run for president, but they never had a real chance. This time they are running and they have a real chance, and that says something about how America has changed.

> [A candidate] does not have to have a long history within the party in order to get a nomination.

Q: Many people in the United States expect Iraq will dominate campaigns. What other issues are we hearing about?

Cook: I think Iraq is going to be a big factor, but I'm not sure — we don't know where this situation will be in the fall of 2008. How the economy is doing could be an issue. The environment and global warming have finally come of age. It's finally the issue that some people — for 20, 30 years — have been working to make it. But at the end of the day, most voters are evaluating people, not issues.

Hagstrom: In the end, what really matters in a presidential race is character. It's a question of whom do you trust.

Q: Many of the states have moved their primary elections earlier on the calendar. It seems like a large number are going to have their election on February 5. What impact does this have on the campaign season?

Cook: Well, it's ironic that a lot of states have moved their primaries forward to February 5 so that they could have a role. And now, so many have done so that most

of those states and people aren't really going to have much of a say. When you have 21 or 22 or 23 out of 50 states, including some of the largest states in the union, all voting on the same day, it's kind of hard for individual states to get personal attention. My guess is that we will know who the candidates are, if not after February 5, then maybe the set of primaries a week or so after that.

Then we'll have the campaign kind of go into remission for a little. And people will focus on other things for two or three months, and then the campaign will sort of resume and pick back up all the way through the November election.

Hagstrom: So far, it looks like the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, which will be held before these February 5 primaries, will still be important in giving a signal of whom the American people like.

Q: What do undecided voters look for, and do we have any sense yet of what they will be looking for in this season?

Cook: They are looking for character, or sort of comfort. It's like you are trying to decide whom you want to invite into your living room and be on your television set for the next four years. Voters understand that they are not even aware of a lot of the issues that presidents have to face. It's whom they feel comfortable with, who is going to make decisions about things that they have no way of even knowing exist.

Hagstrom: I think that, in terms of those voters, one issue that will matter is where the war in Iraq stands when we really get into the campaign season. It could be their dominant issue or maybe something else will be dominant.

Q: How will the 2008 race affect U.S. foreign policy?

Hagstrom: The Democratic candidates have all said that they would make changes in the policy in Iraq, while the Republican candidates at this point are differing about whether they would follow the course that President Bush has laid out or what changes they would make.

Cook: I think the president of the United States represents the face of America to the rest of the world. It's an opportunity to start afresh.

Q: Would either of you be able to suggest whether or not voter turnout will be on the rise?

Cook: We've actually seen voter turnout rise for the last six or eight years for a couple of reasons. We used to hear people say, "It doesn't matter who wins." Well, you don't hear that anymore because, I think, people understand whether it's terrorism or whether it's the war or poverty or Hurricane Katrina, people believe now that it matters who's president of the United States.

Photograph by Sandra Bruckner

Charlie Cook (left) and Jerry Hagstrom at the U.S. State Department in Washington, D.C., in June 2007.

Some of the comparisons that are made of U.S. voter turnout, they're not really fair comparisons. You look at the United States and you think of municipal, county, state, federal, primary elections, general elections, in some cases run-offs, special elections. Americans are simply asked to vote more often than people in other countries. I think there are over 600,000 elective offices in the United States. It's really not a fair comparison because Americans do vote more than any other people in the world. It's just that they're spread over a lot more different elections.

Hagstrom: People do realize that it does matter who wins, and I would think that the voters would be quite highly motivated to turn out, but it also may depend on who the candidates are and whether the base of each party really cares about electing the person who has been nominated.

Q: We've seen technology playing more of a role in how candidates are discussed, especially informally on the Web. Do you think that affects how candidates campaign?

© AP Images/Bill Sikes

Republican presidential hopefuls (from left) Tom Tancredo, Ron Paul, Mike Huckabee, Rudy Giuliani, Mitt Romney, John McCain, Sam Brownback, and Duncan Hunter come to the University of New Hampshire in Durham for a Republican presidential debate in September 2007.

Cook: I think if you looked at overall campaign budgets, you would find a larger but still very, very small percentage of [candidates'] campaign budgets devoted to new technologies.

Hagstrom: [The Internet] is very good for organizing your supporters; it's very good for raising money, but it is not good for persuasion. The exception to that has been the development of YouTube, a visual medium that is on the Internet.

Every campaign now has some young person with a camera following the opposition candidate. It comes back to this issue with character. [Americans] want to see who this person is in an unguarded moment. And some of these unguarded moments occur when the candidate is speaking to a friendly audience. And so this development of filming all the candidates all the time and putting any mistakes on YouTube is, in a way, very revealing. I don't think voters should think that it is the only aspect of that candidate, but it has become an important part of these campaigns.

© AP Images/Shane Macomber

At a Republican election party in Vail, Colorado, a joyful reaction to an Electoral College update during the vote counting in November 2004.

Q: In U.S. elections, the outcome of the presidential race comes down to a handful of swing states, and we generally see the same few states being targeted again and again because they could vote either Democratic or Republican. Do we have a sense that this time around it's going to be the same handful of influential states, any new states?

Cook: To a large extent it's the same states. If you look at the 2000 George W. Bush-Al

Elected Offices

There's a popular American saying that goes, "He can't be elected dogcatcher" — which means essentially that a candidate is unelectable. It's a purely metaphorical saying because in the United States, dogcatchers are indeed one of the few local offices where elections do not come into play. True, local elected officials hire dogcatchers and voters are spared the obligation of checking out the potential dogcatcher's qualifications. But there are many opportunities for voters to weigh in on their favorites for elected office.

While the United States has a single federal government, the country contains 50 state governments, more than 300,000 elected positions with local governments (county, city, and town), and nearly 200,000 special purpose districts such as school districts and water districts. Consequently, U.S. voters are asked to vote not just for president and Congress but also for thousands of state and local government officials, including state legislators, state governors and lieutenant governors, state auditors, county commissioners, mayors of towns and cities, aldermen, judges, constables, magistrates, sheriffs, justices of the peace, and members of school boards, college boards, utility boards, and other positions of public trust.

Some of the more unusual elected positions are county coroner, members of irrigation districts and town cemetery commissions, and tree warden, the worker overseeing the removal of hazardous trees on town property. ■

Gore race and the 2004 George W. Bush-John Kerry race, there are only three states in the whole union that were different from one time to the next. Gore was able to win both New Mexico and Iowa but lost New Hampshire, and Kerry won New Hampshire and lost New Mexico and Iowa. I think it's largely going to be the same states, but we're seeing Democrats moving up a little bit more in some of the southwestern states. We'll see New Hampshire, which used to be a very conservative, Republican-oriented state, has become less and less conservative and more Democratic. But at the same time you're seeing some other states that are getting less Democratic and more Republican. Louisiana, for example. West Virginia — we're seeing its voting patterns change and getting hard for Democrats, and it used to be a safe Democratic state.

Hagstrom: What I'm expecting in this election is a lot of fighting for the rural voter. Rural America is generally regarded as Republican territory, but it isn't always Republican, and the Democrats did quite well in the congressional races in 2006.

Q: States have been spending a lot of time and money since 2000 looking at how they conduct their elections. Do you think this is going to affect voter turnout?

Cook: Voter turnout in 2004 was higher than it was in 2000. In the last two mid-term elections, voter turnout has gone up. As a country we do not spend a whole lot of money on our voter-election administration process, and as a result we have a system that has got a lot of flaws. It's not fraud, contrary to what a lot of people believe.

If Americans wanted to spend more money on vote counting and election administration, we could have a really, really good system, but do you want to do that at the expense of, say, education? Health care? Our responsibilities around the world in terms of foreign aid? In the great scheme of things, having an exact, precise count on elections when the vast majority of them aren't even close — that's just never been a real high priority for people in terms of allocating their money.

Hagstrom: One of the reasons you see so many stories about these variations in the elections is that our elections are run by the state governments. The federal government gets involved only when there is a major problem. So you do have a lot of variation from state to state and county to county.

Another factor is that we have this legacy of not allowing African Americans in the southern states to vote. And nobody wants to go back to a system in which we are restricting the right to vote. There is a resistance to becoming so strict that you might be preventing somebody from voting. And this is a very important issue in a country that is as diverse in population as the United States. ■

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

How the 2008 U.S. Elections Will Be Financed

Jan Witold Baran

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Campaigning in Mount Gilead, Ohio, Senate candidate Sharrod Brown speaks to voters at a coffee shop in August 2006.

Running for election to federal office in the United States requires candidates to raise enormous sums of money to finance their campaigns, and the raising and spending of that money is highly regulated by the U.S. government. Election law expert Jan Witold Baran explains the legal restrictions on campaign contributions from individuals and organizations, describes how campaigns determine expenditures, and discusses private and public funding of presidential elections. The author is a partner in the law firm Wiley Rein LLP in Washington, D.C., and is a commentator and legal analyst for Fox News, National Public Radio, and ABC News.

By the summer of 2007, almost two dozen candidates had launched election campaigns to become the next president of the United States. The election itself will not occur until November 4, 2008, yet these candidates had already started campaigns for the nomination of their respective political party, Republican or Democratic. The parties formally choose their presidential nominees at conventions in the summer of 2008, but the candidates must start their quest for delegates in the primary elections that begin in January 2008. This lengthy and arduous process demands candidates who are skilled, resilient, and tireless. It also requires large sums of money.

The offices of president, senator, and representative are federal offices. They constitute the elective members of the White House, the U.S. Senate, and the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C. The campaigns for election to these offices are regulated by federal law, which also dictates how campaigns may raise funds, from whom, and how much. Federal campaign finance laws are separate from state laws that regulate elections for state and local offices, such as governor, mayor, or member of

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Sam Aiona, Hawaii Republican Party state chairman, urges the Federal Election Commission to pursue issues of campaign finance and oversight.

the state legislature. Accordingly, a candidate for federal office must abide by the federal laws, which are somewhat complex and restrictive. Presidential candidates find it necessary to raise hundreds of millions of dollars for campaigns directed at a nation of more than 100 million voters, but the way in which these candidates raise and spend this money is highly regulated.

Organizing a Campaign

A candidate for president must designate a campaign organization, called a political committee. The political committee must have a treasurer and must register with the Federal Election Commission (FEC). Notwithstanding its name, the FEC only supervises and enforces campaign finance laws; it does not actually conduct the elections. In the United States, the process of registering voters, conducting the balloting, and counting the votes is the responsibility of state and local election officials.

Various types of political committees are registered with the FEC. In addition to the candidates, political parties must register their own committees with the agency. In addition, any group of private citizens may form a political committee, including individuals from corporations, labor unions, or trade associations. These political committees are often referred to as PACs, or political action committees, and must also register with the FEC.

Once registered, political committees may start raising campaign funds. All such funds, as well as expenses, must be disclosed on reports that are filed with the FEC on either a quarterly or monthly basis. The reports are filed electronically and are available to the public on the FEC's Web site *[http://www.fec.gov]*. Numerous private organizations also maintain Web sites to monitor the contributions and expenses of the candidates, political parties, and PACs.

Lawful Sources of Contributions

All donations to federal candidates or political committees must be either from individuals or committees registered with the FEC. Direct contributions

from corporations or labor unions are prohibited, although these entities may sponsor PACs that raise money from individuals. Contributions in cash of more than $100 to PACs are illegal, as are contributions from individuals who are deemed "foreign nationals," i.e., noncitizens who have not been admitted permanently to the United States. However, foreign citizens who are admitted for permanent residence may contribute, even though they cannot vote in an election.

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Mike Gordon, candidate in California's 53rd congressional district, discusses strategy with campaign volunteers.

Limits on the Size of Contributions

The amount that an individual or political committee may contribute is subject to various limits. For example, an individual may not contribute more than $2,300 to any one candidate's campaign. This limit is calculated as "per election." Accordingly, an individual may contribute a maximum of $2,300 to a candidate's primary election campaign and another maximum of $2,300 to the same candidate's general election campaign. A husband and wife are treated as separate individuals and, therefore, collectively may donate twice the limit, or $4,600 per election.

In addition to limits on how much may be contributed to candidates (and other types of committees), individuals also are subject to an "aggregate" contribution limit. An individual may not donate more than $108,200 to all federal candidates and political committees during a two-year election cycle. (The limits are adjusted every two years according to the rise in inflation, which explains the unusual dollar amounts.)

PACs are subject to a limit of $5,000 per election for a candidate's campaign. The amount that can be contributed to political parties is also limited but is higher than the limit on PAC contributions to an individual candidate.

Accordingly, a candidate for president who aspires to raise, for example, $23 million — a relatively modest amount for a presidential campaign — must do so by attracting individual donors, who may not donate more than $2,300, and perhaps also PACs, which are limited to $5,000. In order to raise $23 million, such a candidate, at a minimum, would need 1,000 people to donate the maximum amount. More likely, the candidate will attempt to find several thousand contributors, most of whom will donate less than the legal maximum.

Campaign Expenditures

In order to campaign for office, a candidate needs to hire staff; arrange for office space and travel; conduct research; issue position papers; advertise on radio and television, in publications, and on the Internet; and conduct numerous public appearances and fundraising events. Candidates for the House of Representatives will undertake these activities in their specific congressional district, while Senate candidates will do likewise in their constituency, which is their entire state.

Candidates for president have the daunting task of organizing their campaigns state by state and then, if nominated, throughout the nation. The initial planning of a presidential campaign — winning the party's nomination — will focus on the earliest primary states. Thus, the candidates will attempt to organize in Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Nevada, and Florida, all of which will hold caucuses or primary

elections in January 2008. In the past, other states held their primary elections in a cycle running through June. In 2008, however, a majority of states, including such large states as California, New York, and Texas, will hold their primary elections on February 5. This greatly shortened election schedule imposes enormous demands on presidential campaigns to raise substantial amounts of money — by some estimates at least $100 million — in order to finance activities in these primaries. How much is raised and where the money is spent will be a matter of public record since the campaign committees will have to disclose their finances to the FEC. These reports, particularly throughout 2007 and for January 2008, are known as "the money primary" because they are widely viewed as a barometer of the amount of support each candidate is attracting before the start of actual voting.

Public Financing of Campaigns

Since 1976, candidates for president have been eligible to participate in a public financing system whereby the U.S. government provides funding to qualified campaigns. Until the 2000 elections, all candidates nominated for president participated in this system by accepting government funds in exchange for a promise not to spend more than a specified amount. However, this system has become increasingly unappealing to candidates because the imposed spending limit is considered too low — and less than the amount that major candidates can often easily raise from private sources. Consequently, in 2000 then-Governor George W. Bush became the first major candidate to forego public financing in the primary elections. Four years later, President Bush, a Republican, and Democratic candidates Senator John Kerry and Governor Howard Dean opted out of public funding for the primary races. In 2008 it is widely expected that for the first time all major Democratic and Republican candidates, with the exception of Democrat John Edwards, will opt out of public funding for the primaries. It also seems likely that the eventual Democratic and Republican presidential nominees will bypass the public financing system during the general election campaign.

How Much Will Be Spent?

It is difficult to predict the amount that campaigns will spend in the 2008 election, but it is quite safe to make one prediction: More money will be spent in this election than ever before. In 2004 President Bush raised $270 million for the primaries and received $75 million in public funds for the general election. Senator Kerry, his eventual opponent, was close behind, raising $235 million for the primaries and receiving the same $75 million for the general election. In 2008 the number of candidates has increased, but so has the contribution limit ($2,300, up from $2,000 in 2004). There also is an increase in the number of Americans contributing to campaigns; doing so is facilitated by the ease of contributing electronically through campaign Web sites on the Internet.

In addition to candidate spending, the political parties, PACs, and other interest groups will spend money. In 2004 the Center for Responsive Politics estimated that $3.9 billion was spent by all federal candidates, political parties, and others for that year's election campaigns. This constituted a 30 percent increase over the 2000 campaign. The odds are that 2008 will see another increase. ■

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Has the Electoral College Outlived Its Usefulness?

Two scholars debate the pros and cons of the Electoral College, the system by which each state appoints electors who choose the U.S. president after the popular vote has been cast. Ross K. Baker makes the case for retaining the Electoral College as it was established by the U.S. Constitution in 1787. Baker is a professor of political science at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Jamie Raskin presents the arguments for adapting the Electoral College system to ensure that election results reflect the national popular vote. Raskin is a Maryland state senator and a professor of constitutional law at American University in Washington, D.C. He introduced legislation that made Maryland the first state in the country to join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

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Ohio's delegation to the Electoral College certify their votes during the voting ceremony in the Columbus statehouse in December 2004.

PRO
The Electoral College: Still Useful in the 21st Century

Ross K. Baker

On the evening of November 7, 2000, the newly elected Democratic senator from the state of New York, Hillary Rodham Clinton, addressed a cheering crowd of supporters in Manhattan and vowed to go to Washington and work to abolish the "archaic and undemocratic" Electoral College that had failed to produce a clear-cut winner in the presidential election.

No one thought of pointing out to her that the institution to which she had just been elected, the

CON
Let's Use the Electoral College to Give the United States a National Popular Vote for President

Jamie Raskin

As Americans, it is in our character to promote democracy and sweeping political reform all over the world.

Back at home, we are more reticent. We call our election practices "democracy" without ever measuring them against our democratic principles, much less the best practices that have emerged in other nations.

U.S. Senate, was both archaic (it was established in 1789) and undemocratic (each state, irrespective of its population, is represented by two senators). If we apply to the U.S. Constitution the standard that all of its provisions be modern and democratic, there in fact would not be much left of this very durable and successful plan of government.

The U.S. Constitution is full of features that some critics would consider outmoded, including the system of federalism whereby the national government shares power with the 50 states. It would probably be more efficient for the United States to be run exclusively from the nation's capital in Washington, D.C., but the men who wrote the Constitution did not think of efficiency as a priority. They valued liberty much more highly and felt it was safer to fragment political power. One feature of that fragmentation is that the national, or federal, government shares power with the states.

One important aspect of American federalism is the inclusion of the 50 states, as states, in the selection of the president. This system — the Electoral College — gives every state a number of electoral votes equivalent to the combined number of its members in the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives, where states receive seats proportionate to their population. The presidential candidate who is able to win the popular vote in a number of states whose electoral votes constitute a majority of all electoral votes (currently 270 out of 538) becomes president.

Critics of this system argue for the simplicity of direct election. You just count up the votes nationally, ignoring the vote totals in the individual states, and declare a winner. If the United States adopted such a system, candidates would have an incentive to campaign only in the most populous states and seek to get the largest number of votes in those places, ignoring states with smaller populations.

The Electoral College forces candidates to reach out beyond the large population centers and campaign in places that would be ignored in a direct election system. It would be possible,

This complacency is embarrassing in light of the fact that some of our current electoral practices reflect the nation's beginnings in a far less democratic context.

The most dramatic example is in how we choose our president, a convoluted process that turns all the major principles of democracy on their heads. Consider how the basic precepts of democracy are capsized in a U.S. presidential election:

- The majority rules — but not in our presidential elections. Majority rule is the heart of political democracy, but in the United States it is not the winner of the national popular vote who becomes president. It is the winner of the Electoral College, a system by which each state appoints a certain number of "electors" who then choose the president. In the much-publicized election of 2000, Vice President Al Gore beat Governor George W. Bush by more than 500,000 votes in the national popular tally but lost in the Electoral College because of a last-minute, 537-vote margin in Florida. Popular-vote losers have prevailed in the Electoral College in three other elections, and there are many near-miss elections in which a small shift of popular votes would have propelled popular-vote losers to the White House.
- The people vote for their president — but not in the United States. Here, the people vote for the electors from states who then choose the president. Of course, most people believe that they are voting for the president.
- Every vote counts equally — but not in the weird arithmetic of the Electoral College, where a citizen's vote in Delaware or North Dakota is mathematically worth far more (measured by the ratio of voters to the state's electors) than a single vote in larger states like California or Texas or New York. But if you weight the votes by the likelihood that voters will actually have an impact on who wins a state's electors, the arbitrariness changes and the disparities

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In Arizona, the state electors' ballots are affixed with the official state seal during a ceremony at the state capitol in Phoenix.

in theory at least, for candidates to campaign only in the 12 most populous states and win the presidency. That means that candidates would have every reason to ignore the other 38. But under the Electoral College system, it would be highly unlikely that any candidate could win enough electoral votes by campaigning only in the 12 most populous states. A Democratic presidential candidate could probably count on winning New York, California, and Massachusetts. And a Republican would likely win the electoral votes of Texas, North Carolina, and Georgia. In order to win the minimum 270 electoral votes necessary to go to the White House, however, each would need to capture not only the larger so-called swing states — places such as Ohio and Florida where party strength is more evenly divided — but also states with smaller populations. Since all states are guaranteed at least three electoral votes, candidates cannot afford to neglect even these places.

grow even more striking. For example, in 2004 the presidential election was settled by a 365-vote difference in the state of New Mexico but by a 312,043-vote difference in Utah, meaning that a voter in New Mexico was hundreds of times more likely to influence the appointment of electors than a voter in Utah.

- Every voter should have an equal incentive to vote — but in the United States we don't. The vast majority of people live in states that are considered "safe" areas where the Republicans or Democrats have a presumptive lock on the state's presidential electors. Two-thirds of the states have thus become fly-over territory as the candidates rush to the dwindling band of "swing" states. In the last two election cycles, the two parties spent 99 percent of their campaign resources on a mere 16 states and an astonishing 70 percent in five states. Most of us — including people living in Texas, New York, and California, three of the four largest states — are spectators to the real campaign that takes place in Florida and Ohio and a handful of other states. The bypassing of most of the country depresses turnout in the forgotten states. Voter turnout in the general election approaches 70 percent in swing states but hovers in the low-50s in demoralized spectator states, driving our national turnout rates down to among the lowest on earth.

What can be done about the perverse dynamics of our presidential elections? Public opinion polls have long shown that upwards of 65 percent of Americans favor a direct national popular vote for president in which all of our votes count the same regardless of geography. People want the president to represent all Americans, not a patchwork of states stitched together through partisan manipulation. The puzzle has been how to reconcile the instinctive desire for a national popular election with the antique mechanics of the Electoral College, a vexed institution that Thomas Jefferson called "the most dangerous blot on our Constitution."

The Electoral College also makes it much less likely that a strictly regional candidate will be elected, since no single region of the United States contains enough electoral votes to choose a president. Critics of the Electoral College system dwell strictly on the number of voters; defenders of the system point to the distribution of those votes and whether they are drawn from a broad cross-section of states and regions of the country.

Throughout American history, the Electoral College system also has made it more difficult for minor party or third-party candidates to be successful in presidential races. Some critics of the present system might point to this as a negative feature of U.S. politics, but the two-party system has served the United States well. By imposing a degree of moderation on American politics, the two-party system has been a major factor in the country's stability. It discourages extremist movements, but, at the same time, if a minor party or candidate proposes ideas that prove popular with the voters, one of the major parties probably will adopt them. An extremist candidate might be able to win the popular vote and the electoral votes in a few states — as happened with Strom Thurmond and his segregationist States Rights party in the 1948 election — but would be unlikely to win the presidency. There is room for protest in American politics under the Electoral College system, but extremism is discouraged.

Furthermore, while political extremism is discouraged by the Electoral College system, racial and ethnic minority groups are actually empowered by it. Hispanics, for example, constitute only about 12 percent of the U.S. population and an even smaller share of the electorate. In a direct-election system, their influence would be greatly reduced, but their numbers are large enough in some states to have considerable influence. In Arizona, which has tended to be a political swing state, the percentage of Hispanics is about 25 percent, or double the national average, giving this minority group much more political influence under the Electoral College system than it otherwise would have. Likewise,

© AP Images/Daniel Shanken

Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice J. Michael Eakin is sworn in at the Electoral College proceedings at the capitol in Harrisburg in December 2004.

But now the state of Maryland has taken a bold and historic step to show how we can use the Electoral College to get to a national popular vote for president. On April 10, 2007, Governor Martin O'Malley signed into law a plan to have Maryland enter and launch an interstate compact in which all member states agree to cast their Electoral College votes for the winner of the national popular vote. The agreement takes effect when it is enacted by a number of states representing a majority of electoral votes (270). The plan, which passed overwhelmingly in the Maryland Senate and House of Delegates, has passed in a dozen state legislative chambers already and in both chambers in California, Hawaii, and Illinois. It is being driven by the sense that our presidential elections depart dramatically from "government of the people, by the people, and for the people."

The National Popular Vote plan rests on the powers that states have to create interstate compacts and to appoint electors. Article II, Section I, of the U.S. Constitution provides: "Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof

in a state such as Virginia, African Americans number almost 20 percent of the population and, thus, make the politics of that state much more competitive.

Finally, there is the larger question of the health of the federal system. The writers of the Constitution saw in the division of power between the national and state governments an important safeguard for individual freedoms, yet the trend over recent years has been for the federal government to assume more and more power in areas that traditionally have been the responsibility of the states. To diminish the influence of the states even further by abolishing the Electoral College would undercut one of the main pillars of a political system that has withstood the challenges that have faced it over 220 years of American history. ■

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may direct, a Number of Electors." This power has been deployed by legislatures in different ways. When the nation began, the legislatures mostly named electors directly. The Electoral College operated as a deliberative body and each elector voted his conscience. In 1800, for example, Maryland saw seven of its electors vote for Adams and four for Jefferson. When states began to award their electors in winner-take-all fashion based on a statewide popular vote, smaller states complained that this newfangled "unit" bloc voting diluted the power of small states (and they were right). They sued — and lost. In Delaware v. New York (1966), the U.S. Supreme Court rejected the challenge, emphasizing that the states' power to award electors may be exercised in any manner they see fit. The state's power is total, "plenary."

Thus, from California to New Jersey, from Texas to Utah, our legislatures — led by the spectator states — can now unite and use their constitutional powers to give the United States something we have promoted for the rest of the world but never achieved at home: a truly national election for president based on principles of majority rule, one person-one vote, and every vote counting equally. Such an election will revitalize our lethargic low-turnout democracy by energizing tens of millions of currently superfluous voters. It will also bring us into line with the way democracies all over the world elect their presidents. ■

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The Electoral College

When American voters go to the polls to vote for president, many believe that they are participating in a direct election of the president. Technically, this is not the case — they are actually voting for "electors" who have pledged to vote for a particular candidate.

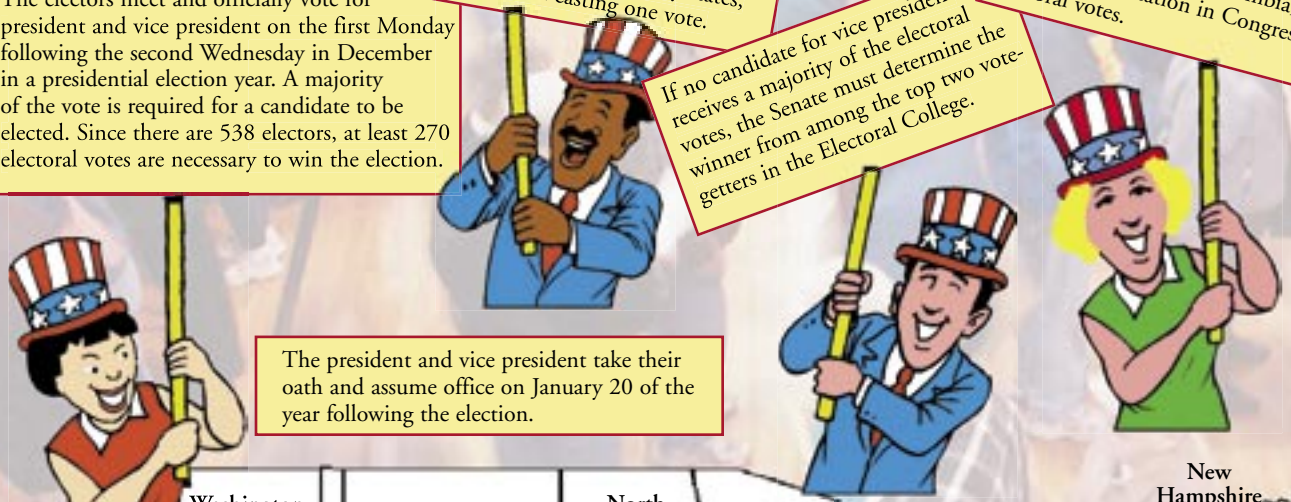
The candidates who win the popular vote within a state usually receive all the state's electoral votes. (Technically, all the electors pledged to those candidates are elected.)

If no candidate for president receives a majority of the electoral votes, the House of Representatives must determine the winner from among the top three vote-getters in the Electoral College. Members of the House vote by states, with each state delegation casting one vote.

A state's number of electors equals the number of senators and representatives from that state. The District of Columbia, which has no voting representation in Congress, has three electoral votes.

The electors meet and officially vote for president and vice president on the first Monday following the second Wednesday in December in a presidential election year. A majority of the vote is required for a candidate to be elected. Since there are 538 electors, at least 270 electoral votes are necessary to win the election.

If no candidate for vice president receives a majority of the electoral votes, the Senate must determine the winner from among the top two vote-getters in the Electoral College.



The president and vice president take their oath and assume office on January 20 of the year following the election.

Registered voters in the 50 states and the District of Columbia cast ballots for president and vice president on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November in a presidential election year.

Electoral votes by state/federal district for the elections of 2008

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The U.S. Department of State assumes no responsibility for the content and availability of the resources listed above.

Internet Resources

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

Collections of Elections Links

P2008: Race for the White House
http://www.gwu.edu/~action/P2008.html

U.S. Department of State, Foreign Press Center: Elections 2008
http://fpc.state.gov/fpc/c21250.htm

U.S. Department of State: U.S. Elections
http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/democracy/elections/elections_links.html

U.S. National Archives: U.S. Election & Voting Resources
http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/links2.html#maps

Vanderbilt University Elections Links
http://lib11.library.vanderbilt.edu/diglib/godort.pl?searchtext=Elections&Type=Simple&Resource=DB&Website=FDTF

Voice of America. The Road to the 2008 Election
http://www.voanews.com/english/US-Elections-2008.cfm

Videos

Campaign Network — From C-SPAN and Congressional Quarterly
http://www.campaignnetwork.org/

ExpertVoter.org: A Video Guide to the 2008 Presidential Candidates
http://www.expertvoter.org/

The Living Room Candidate: Presidential Campaign Commercials, 1952-2004
http://livingroomcandidate.movingimage.us/

RealClearPolitics Videos — Videos from mainstream news sources
http://video.realclearpolitics.com/video_vault/

RealClearPolitics Vlog — Videos on elections 2008 from YouTube and other sources
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video_log/

You Choose '08
http://www.youtube.com/youchoose

PrezVid: The YouTube Campaign-2008
http://www.prezvid.com/

Candidates

Presidency 2008 — From Politics1.com
http://www.politics1.com/p2008.htm

The Presidential Field: Full Coverage of the 2008 Candidates
http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates/

Religion & Politics '08
http://pewforum.org/religion08/

Youth Voting

Can I Vote?
http://www.canivote.org/

CIRCLE: Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement
http://www.civicyouth.org/

Generation Engage
http://www.generationengage.org/

I'm 18 in 08 — Youth voting blog and documentary film
http://im18in08.blogspot.com/

Opinion Polls

CBS News Polls
http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/opinion/polls/main500160.shtml

The Gallup Poll
http://www.galluppoll.com/

The Harris Poll
http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/

Los Angeles Times Poll
http://www.latimes.com/news/custom/timespoll/

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press
http://people-press.org/

PollingReport.com
http://www.pollingreport.com/

RealClearPolitics Polls
http://www.realclearpolitics.com/polls/

Survey Research Links
http://felix.iupui.edu/Links.htm

Zogby International
http://www.zogby.com/

Mainstream Media Blogs on Elections

ABC News: The Note
http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/

CBS News: Politics
http://www.cbsnews.com/sections/politics/main250.shtml

CNN: The Situation Room
http://www.cnn.com/CNN/Programs/situation.room/blog/

Fox News: Update '08
http://www.update08.foxnews.com/

MSNBC News: First Read
http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/

National Journal: The Hotline
http://hotlineblog.nationaljournal.com/

New York Times: The Caucus
http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/

Washington Post: The Fix
http://blog.washingtonpost.com/thefix/

Campaign Finance

The Campaign Finance Institute
http://www.cfinst.org/

Federal Election Commission: Campaign Finance Law
http://www.fec.gov/law/feca/feca.shtml

Office of the Clerk, House of Representatives: Federal Election Campaign Reports
Federal Election Campaign Finance Reports

Project Vote Smart: Campaign Finance
http://www.vote-smart.org/official_five_categories.php?dist=finance.php

Race for the White House: Banking on Becoming President
http://opensecrets.org/pres08/index.asp

Election Law Resources

The Campaign Legal Center
http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org/

Commission on Federal Election Reform
http://www.american.edu/ia/cfer/

Election Law @ Moritz (College of Law)
http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/electionlaw/

Federal Election Commission: Administering and Enforcing Federal Campaign Finance Laws
http://www.fec.gov/index.shtml

Help America Vote Act of 2002
http://www.fec.gov/hava/hava.htm

U.S. Constitutional Provisions
http://www.eac.gov/clearinghouse/u-s-federal-election-system
(Click on "Constitutional Provisions")

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Voting Section: Frequently Asked Questions
http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/voting/misc/faq.htm

Voting Rights Act
http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=100

Electoral College

Library of Congress: Who Really Elects the President?
http://www.loc.gov/wiseguide/oct04/election.html

U.S. National Archives: Electoral College Calculator
http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/calculator.html

U.S. National Archives: U.S. Electoral College
http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/

Voting Technology

Caltech-MIT Voting Technology Project
http://www.vote.caltech.edu/

Election Reform Information Project
http://www.electionline.org

How E-voting Works
http://people.howstuffworks.com/e-voting.htm

The National Association of State Election Directors
http://www.nased.org/membership.htm

Vote: The Machinery of Democracy
http://americanhistory.si.edu/vote/

Web Sites for the Secretaries of State and/or Directors of Elections
http://fvap.gov/links/statelinks.html

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