

Who is Dennis Kucinich?

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You've seen the bumper stickers. You've heard people speculate about how to pronounce his name. You may have even seen him on T.V. or heard him on NPR. Still, you may be wondering, who is Dennis Kucinich and why would anyone want to vote for him?

Kucinich is a 56-year-old congressman and former mayor from Cleveland, Ohio. Currently, he is chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the largest congressional caucus. According to cnn.com, as a vegan and a staunch environmentalist, Kucinich has campaigned for labeling of genetically engineered foods and was an early critic of nuclear power because of its waste products.

Known for his unabashedly left-wing views, Kucinich has been criticized by liberals for his voting record on abortion, which until last year was consistently pro-life. However, he has since switched sides on the issue. He voted against the ban on partial-birth abortion and promises that if elected, he would only nominate pro-choice judges for the Supreme Court. Kucinich is on the ballot in all 50 states and has promised supporters that he will stay in the race for the long haul.

Kucinich campaigners report hearing the same comment over and over from left-wing voters: "I love Kucinich, but is he electable?"

James Barnett, a junior majoring in Peace and Conflict Studies, believes that the Democrats' first priority should be to win the presidential election, rather than to elect their "perfect" candidate.

"It's not that I don't like Kucinich, I strongly agree with his views on 'the issues.' However, I feel that it is more important to work on a campaign of someone who is 'electable' than someone who agrees with you on all 'the issues.' It's more important to get Bush out of the White House then to get the perfect candidate in. My vote for the election will be 'not Bush.' "

However, Kucinich's supporters are



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Presidential candidate Kucinich greets Democrats in Cleveland on Feb.17

confident that his campaign can make a difference, if by nothing else than drawing attention to the liberal ideas for which he stands. Kucinich came in third in the Maine caucus, ahead of John Edwards, Rev. Al Sharpton, and Wesley Clark.

Some Guilford students love Kucinich for one reason. Cori Parmenter, a junior from Kucinich's home state of Ohio, said: "I would like to see Kucinich win, especially since Governor Taft just signed the super-Defense of Marriage Act into law last Friday. I think it's awesome that he's the only candidate who actually supports gay marriage."

Others agree with many of Kucinich's goals, but feel that portions of his platform miss the mark.

"The only thing I would disagree with him is on his agricultural proposals," said first-year David Unger. "I feel we should go full steam ahead in all areas of genetic development and bring the agribusinesses under the direct control of the Federal Government."

Jeff Jeske, Professor of English, attended college with Dennis Kucinich.

"In college it was clear to me that he was extremely intelligent and also extremely critical-minded. What he seemed to lack then was generosity of

spirit. Without it - and I haven't seen any evidence during the campaign that he has significantly changed - I can't imagine him building a true coalition," Jeske said.

One obstacle that Kucinich's presidential campaign must overcome is that it is less well-funded than others. This means that the advertising budget is lower, and therefore Kucinich receives less name recognition than most of the Democratic candidates.

Regardless, the Kucinich campaign hopes to win five to seven percent of the vote, resulting in five to seven percent of the delegates. They are counting on the support this might win them from swing voters who love Kucinich's ideas but lack confidence in his ability to be elected.

If you are interested in learning more about Dennis Kucinich, visit his website at www.kucinich.us or help Kucinich supporters distribute information to local shopping centers at 10 am on Friday, Feb. 27.

Cnn.com reports each candidate's platform. Here are Kucinich's views on the major issues:

Civil Rights: Kucinich supports affirmative action, gay adoption, and gay marriage with full economic benefits. He sponsors hate crime legislation

and opposes the ban on openly LGBT individuals in the military.

Defense: After opposing the Iraq war from the start, Kucinich wants to bring troops home quickly and safely, and to create a cabinet-level Department of Peace. He also proposes a cut in the military budget by 15%, to be used on health care and education. Kucinich disagrees with putting weapons in outer space. He wants to repeal the Patriot Act because he believes it violates civil liberties, and to let the U.N. control the rebuilding efforts in Iraq.

Environment: Kucinich opposes drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and wants to increase fuel efficiency and research alternative, renewable energy sources. He supports public ownership of utilities.

Health Care: He wants to regulate HMOs, drug prices, and drug company profits. Kucinich would like to preserve Medicare, keep seniors' prescription drug prices low, and have a universal, publicly financed national health care system

Social Issues: Kucinich supports a woman's right to choose, opposes the death penalty, wants to allow medical marijuana, and has co-sponsored gun control and safety legislation. He encourages unions and the workers' right to organize.

Education: If elected, Kucinich would increase educational funding and create educational incentives for the poor. **Economy:** Kucinich supports a U.S. withdrawal from NAFTA. To reverse the current budget deficit, he advocates a repeal of the recent tax cuts, giving no-interest loans to states, and spending \$300 billion on creating jobs and revitalizing the economy through infrastructure (building roads, etc.). He also wants to increase corporate taxes and to drop the legal retirement age to 65.



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