

The dummy's guide to Elections 2004

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The election is about seven months away. The players are making themselves known and the issues are hotter than ever. The list below was compiled from CNN.com and the Bush, Kerry and Nader websites.

President Bush will face tough competition for re-election from Massachusetts senator John Kerry and Independent candidate, Ralph Nader.

Education

George Bush – As part of the “No Child Left Behind” bill, Bush believes that education should start early and keep track of a child’s progress, giving detailed report cards to parents. (From the Bush campaign website)

John Kerry – Kerry supports the “No Child Left Behind” bill, but feels it can be improved. Kerry believes that schools should be judged on more than just standardized test scores and that schools that have high academic standards should be rewarded. (From the Kerry Campaign website)

Ralph Nader – Believes that standardized testing should be disregarded as an educational-scoring tool in the school system.

Economy

George Bush – The Bush ticket supports investing Social Security taxes in stocks. During his last four years as President he has signed two tax-cut bills; however, more tax cuts seem unlikely. Bush says that the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts have helped keep economy going.

John Kerry – He opposes privatizing Social Security and increasing the child tax credit and feels that tax cuts should be repealed for the wealthy. He believes in assisting small businesses and training workers.

Ralph Nader – Nader calls for a solid retirement fund and increases in corporate taxes, tax stock, and bond sales, also retaining the estate tax. Nader plans to fund public works projects and amend trade pacts.

Iraqi War and Reconstruction

George Bush – Bush originally declared war to oust the Saddam Hussein regime. He was initially opposed to U.N. involvement but seems to be now warming up to idea.

John Kerry – Initially Kerry supported the war, but later said that Bush misled the nation. In regards to the Iraqi reconstruction, Kerry says that the United States needs to involve other nations more in Iraqi rebuilding.

Ralph Nader – Nader believes that a faulty and fabricated rationale led to the quagmire in Iraq. He calls for the replacement of U.S. troops with U.N.

forces and speedier Iraqi elections.

Health Care

George Bush – Supports reducing drug costs for low-income patients, as well as introducing private sector competition to reduce costs. Bush supports adding drug benefits to Medicare and favors improving the current system over a government-based system. He also favors placing limits on patient lawsuits against HMOs.

John Kerry – His ticket plans to close loopholes in the Medicare system and use financial incentives to lower drug costs. He wants to fund all health care by withdrawing tax cuts and cutting medical waste. By tightening rules on drug companies, more focus would be put on seniors and veterans. Also, he wants to allow people buy into government system that would be funded by reversing tax cuts. Unlike President Bush, Kerry wants to allow patients to sue HMOs and collect money for damages.

Ralph Nader – Challenges the drug industry to negotiate for cheaper drugs. Says a single-payer system will fix the program’s “precarious future.” Universal health care addresses issues, lowers drug prices. He wants to form a single-payer program with full coverage for all and will attempt to get insurance companies out of health care administration.

Social Issues

George Bush – On abortion: he opposes it except in cases of rape, incest or to save a woman’s life. On gay rights – has proposed a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Supports “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in the military and opposes gay adoptions.

John Kerry – On abortion: Kerry fully supports a woman’s right to an abortion. On gay rights: according to cnn.com, Kerry is “against same-sex marriage, backs benefits, rights for same-sex couples; Favors allowing gay men, women to serve openly in military; Supports adoption by gay men, women.”

Ralph Nader – On abortion: Fully supports a woman’s right to choose. He believes that the government has no right to determine whether or not a woman can have an abortion. On gay rights: Nader supports same-sex marriages to ensure GLBT full equal rights. In addition he favors abolishment of “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy.

Both Kerry and Nader are attacking Bush from every angle on their campaign websites. Kerry challenged Bush to a monthly debate on March 31.

Bush has still not responded to the challenge.

It looks like Election 2004 will truly be an all-out dogfight.

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