

# Which Candidate is Right for You?

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Part one of a two-part series covering the issues at stake for the 2004 Presidential Election. What is important to you, and more importantly, which candidate do you agree with?

The first presidential election of the 21st century is less than six weeks away. Every voter has issues or a genre of issues of primary concern that his/her ideal candidate will share a similar opinion. There are many important issues that Americans are concerned about. The Bush-Cheney "Agenda for America" issues include a focus of the job market and the economy, compassion and values, education, health care, safety and security and the environment. The Kerry-Edwards "Plan for America" issues include national security, jobs and economy, energy independence, health care, homeland security, education and the environment.

In the social issues genre, candidates are polarized on issues such as abortion, the death penalty, drug policy, gun control laws, education reform, and the Supreme Court. President Bush opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest, or to save the life of the woman; however, he did sign the Partial Birth Abortion Ban which does not exclude the aforementioned cases.

Senator Kerry and Ralph Nader both support a woman's right to have an abortion. Kerry additionally advocates family planning resources. In regards to the death penalty, Bush supports it as evident in his record as governor of Texas. Both Kerry and Nader oppose the death penalty. Nader believes that it has more racial and class bias than deterrence of crime. Bush is somewhat less specific regarding drug policy, he plans to reduce illegal drug use by ten percent over the next two years. Kerry wants more police, a target on illegal drug traffickers, and funding for drug addiction treatment. Nader wants to end the "war on drugs", legalize some drugs such as marijuana, and treat addiction as a health problem.

Gun control is becoming more pertinent as the Assault Weapons Ban expired Sept. 13, 2004. Bush wants to protect gun-makers from lawsuits and did not push for renewal of the Assault Weapons Ban. Kerry wants to close the gun shows 'loophole', which unlike requirements for licensed gun dealers, do not require a background check. Some known and suspected terrorists have been able to purchase guns at gun shows because of the 'loophole'. Kerry also supports child safety locks. Nader backs trigger locks, licensing of gun owners, and some bans.

The candidates are relatively uniform in regards

to education reform. Bush-Cheney "Plan for America" states, "that education is the key to opportunity and America's best tool in an increasingly competitive global economy," the plans include "reforming America's high schools: strengthen Head Start; expanding the Reach Out and Read program; increased minority outreach." Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind" (NCLB), although the federal budget has not yet fully funded legislation. Both Kerry and Nader want to bar school vouchers. When it comes to education, the The Kerry-Edwards "Our Plan for America", states on the education issue, "build the ladder of college opportunity by enrolling 1.5 million more students in college within five years; offer a college opportunity Tax Credit on up to \$4000 of tuition for four years of college; recruit teachers by raising pay where we need teachers most; and create an Education Trust to fund NCLB." Kerry also wants to fully fund special education and school building. Nader backs curbing the standardized testing push.

Supreme Court appointments have the candidates split. Bush calls conservative justices Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia model justices. Kerry favors appointing judges that are committed to law, civil, and abortion rights. Nader does not have a public position on justices.

Closely related to

social issues are civil rights issues. The candidates are still polarized. In regards to affirmative action, Bush has both supported and opposed it. Both Kerry and Nader support affirmative action policies. The issue of gay marriage has become more relevant to the election as it has been prevalent in the past year. Bush supports a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage. Kerry is against same-sex marriage as well, although he supports benefits and rights for gay couples. Nader backs same-sex marriage to ensure full rights to the gay and peripheral community. In regards to gays in the military, Bush supports the "don't ask, don't tell" policy. Both Kerry and Nader (as of 2000) favor allowing gay men and women to serve openly in the military.

In the issue of gay adoption, Bush opposes it. Kerry and Nader (inferred) support adoption by gay men and women. In the avenue of hate crime legislation, Bush opposes expanding the federal hate crime law to cover sexual orientation. Kerry supports expanding federal hate crime legislation to include sexual orientation. Nader, as of 2000, supported strengthening hate crimes legislation.

The last issue addressed in Part one is energy. As the gas price increase over the summer indicates, energy is becoming scarce. Bush supports

opening the Arctic wildlife refuge for gas and oil exploration. He also supports drilling there. Both Kerry and Nader oppose oil exploration in the Arctic wildlife refuge. Alternative fuels are becoming more appealing. Bush proposed \$1.7 billion to develop hydrogen powered fuel cells. Kerry endorses clean, renewable fuel sources such as ethanol. Nader suggests renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power. The candidates are fairly uniform in regards to energy policy. Bush supports a market-based solution to improve air quality. Kerry proposes setting goals, and incentives to reduce dependence on fossil fuels such as alternative fuels listed above. Nader supports not subsidizing energy interests and promotes sustainable energy. Another issue concerning energy use and automobiles is gas mileage requirements. Bush supports a 1.5 mpg increase for SUVs, and light trucks by 2007. Kerry also wants to push new gas requirements. He backs hybrid cars and hydrogen fuel. Nader also emphasizes more efficient automobiles and energy sources.

Stay tuned for part two of this series in the next issue of the *Meredith Herald*. Part two will cover spending, security, defense, international policy, and healthcare. For more information on John Kerry, go to [www.johnkerry.com](http://www.johnkerry.com). For more information on George W. Bush, go to [www.georgewbush.com](http://www.georgewbush.com). For more information on Ralph Nader, go to [www.votenader.org](http://www.votenader.org).

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