The 51st *State*

The State of Online

ISSUES FOR FUTURE PRESIDENTS

What are the issues driving the
2008 presidential election?

- ★ *Iraq?*
- ★ *The economy and recession?*
- ★ *National security?*
- ★ *Healthcare?*
- ★ *Global warming?*
- ★ *Energy and America's
  dependence on oil?*

Well, it depends on whom you ask.

- ★ *The candidates?*
- ★ *The mainstream press?*
- ★ *Policy experts?*
- ★ *And the American people —
  each and every one of us?*

SO WHERE CAN YOU FIND OUT THE POSITIONS OF CANDIDATES ON THE ISSUES THAT MATTER TO YOU, YOUR COMMUNITY, AND THE NATION?

 We provide here a breakdown of the sites that can answer issue questions, including candidate campaign websites, citizen-inspired sites, video search tools, mainstream press, polling organizations, and policy experts. Together, all of these sites provide a direct way to learn more about the issues, the vision of the candidates, how candidates differ from each other, and the solutions they offer to address the difficult and challenging problems that face the nation. ➡➡

by **Laura Gordon-Murnane**, *Information Consultant*

The Candidates

All the presidential campaign websites list the issues each candidate considers important and central to the direction of the country. The use of technology and how these sites make candidates' viewpoints accessible vary depending on the candidate. Some of the candidates provide their views in multiple formats to take advantage of the internet — videos, blogs, podcasts, and text (short bulleted points, position papers, speeches, statements, and articles). Pick the format that is most useful and valuable to you. All provide a laundry list of the different issues. The economy, taxes, Social Security, national security, Iraq — not necessarily in this order — dominate the issues most candidates perceive as relevant and pressing. Dennis Kucinich wins the award for identifying the largest number of issues — 97 and counting.

All the candidates describe the problems along with brief statements on their plans to solve them. Some offer detailed policy plans that lay out how they view the problem through the lens of their experience and how the government should respond. Barack Obama and John Edwards both offer detailed plans available for downloading on how to solve the nation's problems: Barack Obama's "The Blueprint for Change" [http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/ObamaBlueprintForChange.pdf] and John Edwards' "The Plan to Build One America" [http://www.johnedwards.com/issues/plan-to-build-one-america.pdf]. Hillary Rodham Clinton provides an impressive collection of speeches, fact sheets, and podcasts on the issues and how she would deal with them. Mitt Romney uses a combination of videocasts and short bulleted plans to share his take on the issues. John McCain combines videos and text to describe the problems he sees and his proposed solutions.

What issues are most important to the Republican candidates Mitt Romney, John McCain, Mike Huckabee, and Rudy Giuliani? What issues most concern Democratic candidates Hillary Rodham Clinton, Barack Obama, and John Edwards? How do the candidates compare and differ from each other on Iraq? Health

Republican Presidential Candidates Issues From Official Campaign Sites

Rudy Giuliani (withdrawn)	http://www.joinrudy2008.com; http://www.joinrudy2008.com/issues
Mike Huckabee	http://www.mikehuckabee.com; http://www.mikehuckabee.com/?FuseAction=Issues.Home
Duncan Hunter (withdrawn)	http://www.gohunter08.com; http://www.gohunter08.com/inner.asp?z=4 (Core Principles)
John McCain	http://www.exploremccain.com; http://www.exploremccain.com/Informing/Issues
Ron Paul	http://www.ronpaul2008.com; http://www.ronpaul2008.com/issues
Mitt Romney (withdrawn)	http://www.mittromney.com/homepage; http://www.mittromney.com/Issues/index
Fred Thompson (withdrawn)	http://www.fred08.com; http://www.fred08.com/Principles/PrinciplesSummary.aspx

Democratic Presidential Candidates Issues From Official Campaign Sites

Joe Biden (withdrawn)	http://joebiden.com/home; http://joebiden.com/issues
Hillary Clinton	http://www.hillaryclinton.com/?splash=1; http://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues
Christopher Dodd (withdrawn)	http://chrisdodd.com; http://chrisdodd.com/issues
John Edwards (withdrawn)	http://www.johnedwards.com; http://www.johnedwards.com/issues
Mike Gravel	http://www.gravel2008.us; http://www.gravel2008.us/issues
Dennis Kucinich (withdrawn)	http://www.dennis4president.com/home; http://www.dennis4president.com/go/issues
Barack Obama	http://www.barackobama.com/index.php; http://www.barackobama.com/issues
Bill Richardson (withdrawn)	http://www.richardsonforpresident.com/home; http://www.richardsonforpresident.com/issues

insurance? National security? Environment, energy independence, and global warming? Taxes?

Pick the candidate or candidates that interest you and take a look at their websites. By looking at the candidate's own speeches, videos, and position papers, you can understand their view of the world, the experience they bring to the table, and how each candidate would work to move the country in what direction.

And when you get some time, you might take another look at withdrawn candidates. See what didn't fly and what might have been some good ideas. After all, some of these candidates might make it to the White House after all — for cabinet meetings.

Citizen-Inspired Sites and Video Sites

The internet has made it possible to gather and present a wealth of information. This election cycle showcases one of the strengths of the internet. Citizen-inspired issue sites are providing helpful and innovative ways to understand the issues, the candidates, the solutions they offer, and the differences between them.

OnTheIssues.org [http://ontheissues.org/default.htm], a volunteer effort by Jesse Gordon and Naomi Lichtenberg, is an issues-based political portal. Information is collected from "newspapers, speeches, press releases, and the internet" and organized by candidate or issue. Click on an issue, e.g., budget and economy, and you will see the positions of each candidate arranged alphabetically [http://www.issues2000.org/Budget_+_Economy.htm]. From there, you will see a list of brief statements along with the date the candidate made the statement on the particular topic. (See Figure 1 at right.)

OnTheIssues.org provides a short statement with a link to the longer statement the candidate made, the source of the statement, and the date. The strength of OnTheIssues.org is that it provides a snapshot of the candidate's positions over time. How has the candidate's position evolved over time? Has it changed? Has it stayed the same? Is it the same depending on where the candidate is speaking? OnTheIssues.org allows you to research these questions. (See Figure 2 at right.)

Another useful feature of the site is the Topics in the News section. Topics in the News provides a current list of issues dominating news headlines. Clicking on a topic of interest will launch a new window that provides statements made by candidates on issues as reported by mainstream news sources. (See Figure 3 at right.)

The site does, however, have some problems. The 2008 election information needs to be put at the top of the page. Links to

Figure 1. The OnTheIssues site features the positions of the candidates, arranged alphabetically, concerning the budget and economy. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)
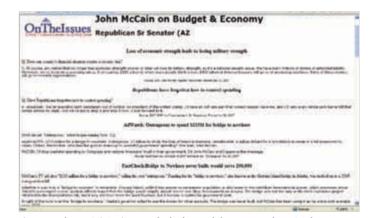

Figure 2. John McCain's views on the budget and the economy from OnTheIssues. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)
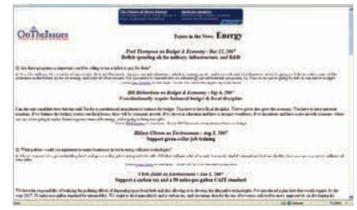

Figure 3. OnTheIssues shows what policies the candidates would implement concerning big business and energy-efficient technologies. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Don't Forget Old Friends

Professional groups, organizations, and interest groups all have positions on the issues for the upcoming election. For example, as librarians and information professionals, we are supported by our professional organizations and groups (Special Libraries Association, American Library Association, American Association of Law Librarians, etc.). These groups supply lobbyists who try to capture the ear of Washington and share their members' perspectives on issues near and dear. Not sure where a particular group falls on the issues? Take a look at the organization's website. The site most likely will have a section on legislation and Washington issues that can help you understand the position the organization takes in supporting a particular candidate for president.

the 2004 election need to be archived. It is very confusing and less than helpful if you click on candidates at the top of the menu bar and it takes you to a list of the candidates who were running 4 years ago. It is also confusing to include people not running for president. Al Gore is listed as a Democratic candidate for the 2008 election, though we all know he is not running and should not appear in a list of democratic candidates. Some cleanup is necessary for this site, but don't let it stop you from using it to learn more about this election's candidates.

Video Search Tools

Political videos have become pretty commonplace in the 2008 presidential campaign. Most presidential candidates have plastered their campaign websites and blogs with campaign videos — videos of them debating, answering questions, giving speeches, and offering position statements. The mainstream press also provides video footage available of campaign events and posts it on their websites. Not to be left out, the American public has become actively involved in the 2008 presidential election by posting videos that ask the candidates to answer questions important and relevant to them. By posting the questions via video, a dialogue exchange can blossom between the candidates and the American public. People want answers, something more than canned campaign talking points or polished campaign ads. Web video can establish a connection from the candidate to his or her audience. British PM David Cameron posts informal videos on his website. The videos are snapshots of his daily activities or answers to questions submitted by constituents. This innovation is something the current crop of pres-

idential contenders could incorporate in their own video offerings.

In March 2007, YouTube launched YouChoose '08 [http://youtube.com/you choose], the first site to organize and centralize political videos. (See Figure 4 below.)

Created to serve as "a voter education initiative that enables political candidates to easily inform millions of potential voters about their campaigns through video," the site features campaign videos, speeches, informal chats, and behind-the-scenes footage. Probably as important as a repository of presidential videos, the site also allows the average Joe or Jo to post his or her own videos, questions, and issues to the candidates, which "provides a platform for people to engage in dialogue with candidates and each other through the use of community features such as video responses, text comments and ratings" [http://youtube.com/press_room_entry?entry=v-gju VQrwIk]. The site lists six issues (education, energy, healthcare, immigration, Iraq, and the economy) and the responses of the candidates who have submitted videos on those issues. Each candidate has a separate "channel" and, even though some candidates have since withdrawn from the campaign, their videos remain available for viewing.

Figure 4. YouTube — YouChoose '08 lists the Republican and Democratic candidates running for president in 2008. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Click on an issue — say energy — and you will see which candidates have posted videos on the topic. (See Figure 5 at right.)

You can also submit your own questions to the candidates by clicking on any issue. You will need to set up an account with YouTube, but once you have an account, you can also comment (text) on any video (candidate or citizen) or post your own video response to the candidate and the question. (See Figure 6 at right.)

Choose a candidate and you go to his or her YouTube "channel" site. (See Figure 7 at right.)

The candidate can provide a wealth of information about him- or herself, including brief biographical information, more videos, favorites, supporters, groups, and playlists. This section is an opportunity for the candidate to get creative and use this tool to post insightful and thoughtful information about who they are and why they should be president.

The newly launched Truveo 2008 election video site (owned by AOL) bills itself as the site "that brings together election related videos from major television networks, popular user generated video sites and the campaigns' own web sites" [http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/google/index.jsp?ndmViewId=news_view&newsId=20080117005214&newsLang=en]. (See Figure 8 on page 45.)

However, unlike YouChoose, Truveo has culled the list of presidential contenders down from the 17 who declared for the race to only three contenders for the Democratic nomination (Clinton, Obama, and Edwards) and four Republican contenders (Giuliani, Huckabee, Romney, and McCain). If you wish to see the other candidates (those who have officially withdrawn and others still in the race), you will need to use the search tool to find videos from and on those candidates. For example, Ron Paul does not make it on the front page, but you can find his videos if you do a search for Ron Paul. (See Figure 9 on page 45.)

The site offers multiple ways to refine your view of the candidates and the different videos. You can limit your results to top ranked, most viewed today, most viewed this week, most viewed this month, highest rated, most recent, and most relevant. Campaign coverage comes in four flavors — local news [http://www.truveo.com/2008-election-videos/local-coverage], national news [http://www.truveo.com/2008-election-videos/national-coverage], international news [http://www.truveo.com/2008-election-videos/international-coverage], and political commentary [http://www.truveo.com/2008-election-videos/political-commentary]. You can set up feeds for all the candidates and "Snag" your favorite campaign videos with a little

Figure 5. Go to YouChoose '08 Issue: Energy to view Republican and Democratic candidate videos on the issue of energy. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 6. Under the topic of '08 Health Care, YouChoose lets you submit comments and responses to the candidates video statements – in this instance Barack Obama's position on healthcare. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 7. Check out Mitt Romney's 'Channel' on YouChoose for brief biographical information, along with videos. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

The 51st State: Issues for Future Presidents

widget that you can embed on your own blog or website. As for issues, you can find videos that address specific issues, but not as easily as with YouTube's YouChoose site. You must pick the candidate and then look for the "issues" link on the right side of the page (scroll down). One drawback — the videos are not organized by issue, so you might have to click on multiple pages to find the issue relevant to you.

Yahoo! News and MSN Video also provide election videos. (See Figures 10 and 11 on page 46.)

Google News has its own U.S. Elections '08 section and its own Political News widget that includes election videos. (See Figures 12 and 13 on page 46.)

Mainstream Press/Polling Organizations

The mainstream press offers some very useful campaign resources to help the voting public learn more about candidates and the positions they hold on a core group of issues and topics.

CNN's Election Center 2008 [http://www.cnn.com/ELEC TION/2008] provides a list of eight issues (abortion, guns, Iraq, healthcare, immigration, same sex marriage, Social Security, and taxes) that includes a brief statement or definition of the issue and a brief position statement for each candidate. (See Figure 14 on page 46.)

One plus is that CNN includes all 17 candidates who declared for the presidency, even those candidates who have officially withdrawn from the race. Click on the candidate and you will find a lot of information — biographical information, fundraising, blogs, supporters, campaign advisors (brief description of who they are), latest news, polls, and a section on the candidate's position on the select list of issues deemed important by CNN. (See Figure 15 on page 46.)

Are you interested in technology issues and the presidential campaign? Technology is not one of the primary issues that have garnered a great deal of attention from the mainstream press. *National Journal*'s Tech Daily has put together a useful site that addresses technology-related issues for both Republican and Democratic presidential candidates. Campaign 08 Tech Profiles [http://nationaljournal.com/about/technologydaily/candi dates07.html] has been compiled from "the Congressional Record, speeches and statements on campaign web sites. Technology Daily also contacted the campaigns for information on a series of technology-related issues, but not all of them

Figure 8. Truveo's Election Video portal includes campaign videos from major television networks, popular user-generated video sites, and the campaigns' own websites. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 9. You can do a 'Ron Paul' search on Truveo for videos of his campaign and his mention in the mainstream press and popular user-generated videos. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

responded. The information from those who did is incorporated here." (See Figure 16 on page 47.)

Information is arranged by three categories — policies, supporters, and on the issues. Click on Hillary Clinton and you will see brief statements on her technology related policies, her supporters, and where she falls on a range of technology issues. Links to position papers, videos, speeches, sponsored legislation, votes, and news reports are all provided for additional research and review. (See Figure 17 on page 47.)

The New York Times — Election Guide on the Issues [http:// politics.nytimes.com/election-guide/2008/issues/index.html#/ context=index/issue=health] has identified seven important issues relevant to the 2008 campaign: abortion, climate change,

Figure 10. The Yahoo! News Election 08 Presidential Election news portal (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 13. Google's 'Follow the Candidate' widget can be added to your iGoogle page. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 11. The MSN 2008 Election Videos portal (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 14. On CNN Politics.com's ElectionCenter 2008 Primaries and Caucuses, view the list of issues CNN has chosen to highlight. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 12. Google News, U.S. Election 08 (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 15. CNN Politics.com's ElectionCenter 2008 Primaries and Caucuses shows Barack Obama's views on the issues. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

healthcare, immigration, Iran, Iraq, and the economy. Select a topic and all the candidates are listed with brief statements on the issue. Click on more and get detailed statements. The source of the statement and link to the video, statement, interview, debate, or article are made available for additional examination. You can compare specific candidates together by clicking on one of the candidates and then clicking on another candidate of interest. For example, if you click on Mike Huckabee's position on healthcare, you can compare his views with John McCain's position to see the similarities and differences. (See Figure 18 below.)

The candidates that have dropped out of the race are not included in the current information.

The Washington Post site offers an Issue Coverage Tracker [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/interactives/campaign08/issues] — an interactive, time-related site that allows you to track all the candidates and their positions (even those who have withdrawn) over time. The issues include abortion, civil rights, economy and budget, education, environment, globalization, healthcare, immigration, and the Iraq War. (See Figure 19 on page 48.)

The Issue Coverage Tracker includes information from websites of a wide variety of sources across the political spectrum. Sources include news organizations, political parties, interest groups, bloggers, unions, trade organizations, candidates, activists, and more. The Issue Coverage Tracker is a nifty way to chart the candidate's positions on the issues the *Washington Post* considers important. You have several ways to view the candidates and the issues. If you select an issue, you will see which candidate has received the most coverage on that particular issue. (See Figure 20 on page 48.)

If you select a candidate you will see the issues on which that candidate has received the most coverage. (See Figure 21 on page 48.)

You can limit or expand your tracking of the candidate and the issues by limiting your coverage by date range. Expand the dates and you will find statements and links to a variety of sources beginning with February 2006 through to the current date.

Do you follow political polls? PollingReport.com [http://www.pollingreport.com/index.html] is a one-stop shop for the latest national political polls. One useful feature of the site is the section on issues [http://www.pollingreport.com/issues.htm]. (See Figure 22 on page 49.)

The wide range of issues that PollingReport com considers to be facing the nation include problems and priorities, abortion, budget and taxes, crime, disaster preparedness and relief, edu-

Figure 16. National Journal's Tech Daily Campaign '08 Tech Profiles for both the Democratic and Republican candidates (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 17. National Journal's Campaign 08 Tech Profiles – Hillary Clinton (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 18. The New York Times Election Guide 2008 compares John McCain and Mike Huckabee's views on the subject of healthcare. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 19. The Washington Post Issue Tracker (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 20. The Washington Post's Issue Tracker shows the candidates' views on immigration. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 21. See what issues are most mentioned by Mitt Romney at The Washington Post's Issue Tracker. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

cation, energy, environment, foreign affairs and defense issues, government and politics, guns, health policy, illegal drugs, immigration, law and civil rights, race and ethnicity, and Social Security. Click on an issue to see the polling results on that topic. For example, you will see how the American public feels about the problems and priorities facing the nation or healthcare issues. (See Figures 23 and 24 on page 49.)

PollingReport.com has identified the issues that national polling organizations ask the American public about. Are the candidates sensitive to the issues of most concern to the American public? You decide.

The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has launched its own Religion and Politics '08 website [http://pewforum. org/religion08]. The site provides a detailed examination of the religious beliefs of the presidential candidates running in the 2008 election. The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life has collected the positions of the candidates on issues including, but not limited to, abortion, church and state, death penalty, education, environment, faith-based initiatives, gay marriage, healthcare, immigration, Iraq war, poverty, and stem cell research. Click on a specific issue and you will find brief statements by the candidates on the issue with links to other sources for more detailed examination of their view and position. (See Figure 25 on page 49.)

Experts

The presidential election of 2008 has inspired different groups of experts to showcase their views and positions on a variety of topics. The goal is to shape the views, positions, and solutions the candidates embrace when dealing with the different problems facing the nation.

health08.org [http://www.health08.org] is part of a broad effort by the Kaiser Family Foundation to provide a central hub for resources and information about health policy issues in the 2008 election. (See Figure 26 on page 49.)

The site — operated by Kaiser Family Foundation staff — provides analysis of policy issues, regular public opinion surveys, daily news updates, video of speeches and debates from the campaign trail, original interviews, and resources for journalists covering the election. The issues include healthcare coverage, cost containment, improving the quality of care, and financing. The analysis section provides an analysis of the positions of each candidate along with an interactive tool that allows you to compare the positions of up to four candidates

Figure 22. Polling Report.com — Issues Facing the Nation (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 25. Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life — Religion & Politics '08 looks at the candidates' proposals on dealing with healthcare. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 23. PollingReport.com's 'Problems and Priorities' (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 26. The Kaiser Family Foundation's website, Health08.org, provides resources and information about health policy issues in the 2008 election. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 24. PollingReport.com highlights miscellaneous healthcare issues. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 27. Healthcare08.org presents a healthcare issues comparison between Giuliani, Huckabee, McCain, and Romney. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 28. Brookings and ABC News Opportunity 08 website. (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

Figure 29. Science Debate 2008 (Accessed Jan. 27, 2008.)

[http://www.health08.org/analysis.cfm]. (See Figure 27 on page 49.)

If your issue is healthcare, then this is a site to visit and visit regularly. It offers a wealth of information in addition to issues.

Opportunity 08 [http://www.opportunity08.org, http://www.brookings.edu/projects/opportunity08.aspx] is a project of the Brookings Institution in partnership with ABC News. "Voters say they want to hear more from candidates about the issues and less about partisan politics." (See Figure 28 above.)

Opportunity 08 aims to help presidential candidates and the public focus on critical issues facing the nation, providing ideas, policy forums, and information on a broad range of domestic and foreign policy questions." To extend the reach of Opportunity 08, Brookings has teamed with ABCNews.com and ABC News Now to reach beyond the policy community — to connect with the American public to provide reports, analysis, and information on the different issues facing the next president. The list of issues is broad-based and wide-ranging, arranged by categories: Our World [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/opportunity08/Our-World.aspx], Our Society [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/opportunity08/Our-Society.aspx], and Our Prosperity [http://www.brookings.edu/projects/opportunity08/Our-Prosperity.aspx]. Each issue comes with a thoughtful statement of the problem and possible solutions. Additional commentary and research are also made available. This is a useful site designed to get beyond the bitter partisanship that has divided presidential politics for too long.

Sciencedebate2008 is the passionate and urgent call by American scientists to political candidates to understand the important role science and technology play in the economic growth and competitiveness of the nation. They call on the presidential candidates to engage in a public debate to "share their views on the issues of The Environment, Medicine and Health, and Science and Technology Policy" [http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/index.php]. (See Figure 29 at left.)

The issues include the environment, health and medicine, and science and technology policy [http://www.sciencedebate2008.com/www/index.php?id=8]. The site provides links to news and hot topics published by the mainstream press and a useful collection of science- and technology-related blogs. The site does not provide a breakdown of the position of the candidates on the science and technology issues, but it does call attention to the need to have this debate.

Voters, to Your Computers!

The sites provided here should get you started on learning more about the issues, the positions of the candidates, and the solutions they offer to deal with these and other problems that the next president will have to address. The sites use technology tools to present the candidates and their positions and provide for us a useful way to determine which candidate best reflects our views, values, and vision for the future. Have at it. ■