



WASHINGTON BUREAU · NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE
1156 15TH STREET, NW SUITE 915 · WASHINGTON, DC 20005 · P (202) 463-2940 · F (202) 463-2953
E-MAIL: WASHINGTONBUREAU@NAACPNET.ORG · WEB ADDRESS WWW.NAACP.ORG

THE NAACP 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CIVIL RIGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Friends;

Beginning in late August, 2007, the NAACP Washington Bureau sent questionnaires to candidates for President of the United States from both the Democratic and Republican parties. It was made clear at the time that the responses received would be reproduced and distributed to the NAACP members and communities so that we could make informed decisions when going to the polls.

The questionnaire contained questions on issues of crucial importance to the NAACP and the communities we serve. The questions, and the topics that were included in the questionnaire, all pertain to the NAACP public policy priorities as adopted by the delegates at our annual National Convention and confirmed by the NAACP National Board of Directors. In each case, we asked the candidates to limit their responses to 200 words or less.

Attached are the responses to the questionnaire, printed verbatim. In no instance did NAACP staff change, alter or attempt to editorialize any responses. It should be noted that this questionnaire is intended solely for educational purposes; the NAACP does not support, oppose or endorse a particular political candidate or political party.

Should you have any questions or comments on the Presidential Candidate questionnaire or on the NAACP position on any of the issues contained within, please feel free to contact the NAACP Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940. We hope that you find this a useful, effective and thoughtful tool.

Sincerely,

Hilary O. Shelton
Director
NAACP Washington Bureau

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I: Civil Rights

Affirmative Action	3
Reparations	4
Discrimination in "Charitable Choice" proposals	5
Election Reform	6
Voter Re-enfranchisement	7
Congressional Voting Rights for the District of Columbia	8
Fair and Impartial Federal Judgeships	9
Immigration Reform	10

Section II: Criminal Justice

Racial Profiling	11
Police Accountability	12
Ex-Offender Re-Entry	13
Mandatory Minimum Sentences	14
Gun Violence Prevention	15
The Death Penalty	16
In-Prison Education	17
Racial Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System	18

Section III: Economic Justice

The Federal Budget	19
Predatory Lending	20
Public Financing of Congressional Campaigns	21

Section IV: Education

Educational Equity	22
Federal Funding for Public Education	23
School Vouchers	24
Making College More Affordable	25

Section V: Health Care

Universal Health Care	26
Social Security	27
Medicare & Medicaid	28
Health Care Disparities	29

Section VI: Housing

Homelessness	30
Decent and Affordable Housing	31

Section VII: International Affairs

Sudan	32
Cuba	33
Debt Relief	34
Fighting Global Disease and Poverty	35
African & Caribbean Trade and development	36

Section VIII: Labor

Minimum Wage / Living Wage	37
Employment Non-Discrimination	38
The Right to Form and Join a Union	39



NAACP CIVIL RIGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008

SECTION I: CIVIL RIGHTS

CR1: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

- If elected president, what specific actions will you take regarding equal opportunity programs?

Senator McCain

Too often the discussion of affirmative action is at the two ends of the spectrum that have relatively easy answers. Yes, it is appropriate to use factors such as race, ethnicity and gender when needed to remedy specific acts of illegal discrimination, and yes, unlawful discrimination against people on these grounds should be fully prosecuted. No, our society should not use quotas to guarantee results.

The question is how do we affirmatively act to most effectively level the playing field where it needs leveling? The playing field is not level for everyone, but there are people of all colors and all groups at both ends of that field.

The affirmative action remedies designed forty years ago should be reexamined. We need to understand not only where we have been, and the advances and evolution of groups' economic standing and of society more generally, but we need to have the hard discussion about how we move forward.

I believe that government should "not discriminate against, or grant preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting."

Our efforts to promote equal opportunity should focus on those who are disadvantaged. In access to quality education, we should focus on poorly performing schools that are not effectively educating our students, not on the students' race. In access to government contracting, government set-aside programs should focus on disadvantaged enterprises and employees, not their race, ethnicity, or gender. In access to capital, we should focus on programs that fairly help those who need help gaining access. In government employment, we should cast a wide net to ensure that all qualified people are recruited and hired. That is the challenge affirmative action should address.

Senator Obama:

I support affirmative action. When there is strong evidence of prolonged and systemic discrimination by organizations, affirmative action may be the only meaningful remedy available. Affirmative action programs, when properly structured, can open up opportunities otherwise closed to qualified minorities without having an adverse impact on the opportunities for whites. Given the dearth of black and Latino Ph.D. candidates in mathematics and the sciences, for example, a scholarship program for minorities interested in getting advanced degrees in these fields won't keep white students out of such programs, but can broaden the pool of talent that we need to prosper in the new economy. We shouldn't ignore that race continues to matter: To suggest that our racial attitudes play no part in the socio-economic disparities that we often observe turns a blind eye to both our history and our experience – and relieves us of the responsibility to make things right.

The Bush administration has made challenging affirmative action and scholarship programs one of the core missions of the Department of Justice. As president, I will rid the Department of ideologues and political cronies, and for the first time in eight years, the Civil Rights Division will actually be staffed with civil rights lawyers who prosecute civil rights violations, and employment discrimination, and hate crimes. And while I support affirmative action for minorities, I also support efforts to increase opportunities for qualified students from low-income backgrounds to attend colleges and universities – regardless of their race.

**CR2: FEDERAL COMMISSION ON THE EFFECTS OF THE INHUMANITY OF
SLAVERY ON AMERICANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

- If elected President, what, if anything, would you do to initiate discussions about race and America's past history of slavery among all Americans, not just people of African ancestry?

Senator McCain

Slavery was a national tragedy, and an abominable blight on our history. Every young American should be taught about America's history, including its past history of slavery. Every young American should understand the good in the founding and creation of our form of government, the failings in those efforts, and the continued work over the years to perfect our laws and institutions. By understanding and confronting the history, shortcomings and failures of the past, we hopefully build a society that will avoid failure in the future.

I do not support the reparations legislation cited. Today's taxpayers cannot compensate previous generations who are no longer living. We honor their memory by devoting our attention and resources to fighting discrimination and provide equal opportunities for all.

We must instill in our children's character the qualities of fairness and acceptance, and we must live those qualities in our daily lives. I would use the Office of the Presidency to set a positive example and to foster the unity, healing, and understanding that befits a great nation founded on the principle that all men are created equal.

Senator Obama:

The legacy and stain of slavery are immeasurable; nothing, including reparations, can fully compensate. And though the country has made tremendous progress, we still have so much more to do.

I have a lot of respect for Congressman John Conyers and I'm glad the NAACP gave him its highest honor this year. While I know where his heart is at, I fear that reparations would be an excuse for some to say "we've paid our debt" and to avoid the much harder work of enforcing our anti-discrimination laws in employment and housing; the much harder work of making sure that our schools are not separate and unequal; the much harder work of providing job training programs and rehabilitating young men coming out of prison every year; and the much harder work of lifting 37 million Americans of all races out of poverty.

These challenges will not go away with reparations. So while I applaud and agree with the underlying sentiment of recognizing the continued legacy of slavery, I would prefer to focus on the issues that will directly address these problems – and building a consensus to do just that.

CR3: DISCRIMINATION IN "CHARITABLE CHOICE" PROPOSALS

- If elected President, would you pursue initiatives that allow federal dollars to be used to support programs in which individuals are discriminated against based on their religion?

<u>Senator McCain</u>	<u>Senator Obama:</u>
<p>I support faith-based initiatives and recognize their important role in our communities. I have co-sponsored legislation to foster improved partnerships with community organizations, including faith-based organizations, to assist with substance abuse and violence prevention. Such organizations do not and must not discriminate against who their programs will assist.</p>	<p>I support government efforts to partner with faith-based organizations. I have said repeatedly that these organizations can be important partners in delivering social services, whether it's helping with prisoner re-entry programs or providing job training skills. However, my administration will not pursue initiatives that permit taxpayer dollars to be used to support programs that practice discrimination in hiring.</p>
<p>As to who the organization employs to help provide such charitable service, however, I believe that it is important for faith-based groups to be able to hire people who share their faith. I do not believe that hiring at faith-based groups should be subject to regulation by the government. If a Baptist or Catholic faith based organization wishes to hire Baptists or Catholics, that is that organization's choice, and the federal government should not be stepping in to preclude that.</p>	

CR4: ELECTION REFORM

- If elected President, which initiatives would you pursue to ensure that every eligible American is allowed to cast a free and unfettered vote, and to be assured that their vote was counted?

Senator McCain

There's always room for improvement in election law. It is fundamentally important in our democracy that every eligible voter be able to cast his or her ballot freely and without fear, and that it be counted. Likewise, the system must ensure that ballots are not cast illegally, by those who are not U.S. citizens or who have already voted once on election day, to give two obvious examples.

My record in defending the integrity of the electoral process speaks for itself. I am proud of the McCain-Feingold legislation, which has that integrity as its central focus. In 2006, I voted in favor of extending the protections of the Voting Rights Act, to ensure that no American is denied the right to vote because of his or her skin color or ethnicity.

As president, I would demand aggressive enforcement of the voting laws that are already on the books. One example is section 11(b) of the Voting Rights Act, which prohibits the intimidation and coercion of voters.

Finally, I would support strengthening the voting laws where necessary to ensure that deception, intimidation, and ballot fraud are stopped, and to ensure that the voting process reflects improvements in the available technology. Valid photo identification is a valid, constitutional way for states to protect against voter fraud.

Senator Obama:

More than 40 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), there are still numerous obstacles to ensuring that every citizen can vote. As a community organizer, I successfully registered 150,000 new black voters. As a civil rights lawyer, I worked on voting rights cases. In the U.S. Senate, I helped lead the fight in the Senate to reauthorize the VRA and I led the opposition to photo identification requirements for voting. For me, protecting the right to vote has not just been a cause of this campaign; it has been a cause of my career.

As president, I will sign into law my Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act, a bill that cracks down on insidious misinformation campaigns designed to keep voters – usually racial minorities, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled – from exercising their right to vote.

We must also do everything we can to regain the trust and confidence in our electoral system that has been lost in recent years, and voter-verification should be a top priority in that effort. I think we should require the use of accessible paper trail systems at every polling place that uses electronic voting machines. I also believe that a paper trail requirement will be most effective if we combine it with a system of reasonable manual audits. I am cosponsor of legislation in the Senate that would implement these systems within the next few years.

CR5: VOTER REENFRANCHISEMENT OF EX-FELONY OFFENDERS

- If elected President what, if anything, would you do to help restore the voting rights of ex-felony offenders?

Senator McCain

This is a State rather than a federal issue, because the Supreme Court has held that States may prohibit felons from voting, and most States do. The Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution specifically recognizes that the right to vote may be taken away if a person commits a crime.

Personally, I believe ex-felons *should* forfeit certain rights when they commit a serious crime, such as the right to bear arms and the right to participate in the electoral process. This serves as part of an overall deterrent to the commission of crime.

The right to vote should be restored to felons only on a case by case basis after they have served their full sentences and have satisfactorily demonstrated that they have turned over a new leaf.

Senator Obama:

I support restoration of voting rights for ex-offenders. I am a cosponsor of the Count Every Vote Act, and would sign that legislation into law as president.

CR6: CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RIGHTS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- If elected President, what would you do to promote the rights of the citizens of the District of Columbia?

Senator McCain

I do not support legislation to give the District a vote in Congress because I believe that such a law would be unconstitutional. The Constitution says that “[t]he House of Representatives shall be composed of members chosen every second year by the people of the several states.” Because the District of Columbia is not a state, it is not eligible to send a full representative to Congress unless and until either the Constitution is amended to allow this, or residential districts of the District become part of Maryland.

Senator Obama:

I am an original cosponsor of the Senate bill that will provide the District of Columbia with voting representation in the House of Representatives. I consider passage of this bill to be an important step toward justice. In our great democracy, it’s a shame that residents of the District who pay taxes, fight in wars, and enjoy the same rights as every other American have no voting representation in our nation’s capital. I will continue to champion this issue as president.

CR7: FAIR AND IMPARTIAL FEDERAL JUDGESHIPS

- If elected President, what criteria would you use in determining who to nominate for positions in the federal judiciary?

Senator McCain

I believe that judges should enforce our laws as written, including all constitutional provisions and statutes that protect civil liberties and civil rights. Judges should decide cases objectively and impartially, without regard to the race, ethnicity, or gender of the parties before them.

I will strive to nominate judges to the federal bench who take seriously the principle of equal justice under the law. I would select the most highly qualified and well-respected judges, who believe in judicial restraint and proper application of the Constitution, and who would not legislate from the bench. I would seek a pool of candidates that is extensive and inclusive. Basing the decision solely on merit will most certainly mean selections that include people of diverse backgrounds, races, and genders.

Senator Obama:

As a Senator, I have a track record of opposing nominees on the basis of their record on civil rights issues – a record born out of my own experiences as a civil rights lawyer and constitutional law professor. I opposed the confirmation of Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court in large part because of their records on civil rights and civil liberties. More recently, I led the opposition in the Senate to the nomination of Judge Leslie Southwick to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

As president, I will select federal judges who are highly-qualified and who have a clear record of public service. And I will select men and women who I think bring a certain empathy to the task of judging – the ability to see themselves in other people’s lives. This is not an insignificant consideration. When I opposed the Roberts and Alito nominations, I gave a speech on the Senate floor about those 5% of cases that often turn on what’s in a judge’s heart. Some may have scoffed at that. But when you have the Supreme Court of the United States doing what we saw last term – equating Jim Crow segregation of schools with efforts to voluntarily diversify K- 12 education – it shows you why you should care about what’s in a judge’s heart. Because what’s in their heart tells you a lot about their judgment.

Chief Justice Roberts likened being a judge to an umpire in his confirmation hearings. But law is not sport; and the art of judging is not the art of calling balls and strikes. I will appoint judges who understand that being a judge is also about empathy and sound judgment – that’s why we call them judges. And that’s what we need to do to make sure our judiciary protects and honors civil rights and civil liberties.

CR8: IMMIGRATION REFORM

- If elected President, what basic elements would you include in any proposal to reform our Nations immigration laws?

Senator McCain

Immigration reform is a national priority. I and many other colleagues twice attempted to pass comprehensive immigration legislation to fix our broken borders; ensure respect for the laws of this country; recognize the important economic contribution of immigrant laborers; apprehend those who came here illegally to commit crimes; and deal practically and humanely with those who came here to build a better, safer life for their families, without excusing the fact they came here illegally or granting them privileges before those who have been waiting their turn outside the country. But many Americans did not believe us when we said we would secure our borders, and so we failed in our efforts.

I do not want to fail again to achieve comprehensive immigration reform. We must prove that we have the resources to secure our borders and use them, while respecting the dignity and rights of citizens and legal residents of the United States. When we have achieved our border security goal, we must enact and implement the other parts of a practical, fair, and necessary immigration policy.

Senator Obama:

I am committed to fighting for comprehensive immigration reform during my first term as president. As president, I will put comprehensive immigration reform back on the nation's agenda, and I will not rest until it is passed once and for all. We are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We need comprehensive immigration reform that creates a system that is fair, consistent, compassionate, and emphasizes both maintaining the rule of law and the security of our borders while working to keep families together and putting the undocumented on an earned path to citizenship.

In the most recent immigration debate on the U.S. Senate floor, I fought to improve and pass amendments to put greater emphasis on keeping immigrant families together and to revisit a controversial new points system that never received a proper public hearing. On security, comprehensive reform has to mean gaining operational control of our borders by using better technology, improving infrastructure, and making smart choices about where we deploy resources on the Southern and Northern borders. These actions can strengthen our security while discouraging people from taking the risk of crossing the border and a dangerous desert illegally. And at the workplace, we need a simple, but mandatory electronic system that enables employers to verify the legal status of the people they hire. We also need to bring the 12 million undocumented immigrants out of the shadows. We need to be realistic about the fact that they are here, we can't deport them, and they have become an integral part of our society. We need to give this population a chance to pay a fine, to have provisional status in the country, and to get into the back of the line for citizenship.

SECTION II: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CJ1: RACIAL PROFILING

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to address the problem of racial profiling by law enforcement officials?

Senator McCain

No one should be stopped by the police because of his or her racial or ethnic identity. At the same time, law-enforcement officers must be permitted to carry out their duties based on fair, professional, non-discriminatory criteria, such as acting on a specific description. I will demand proper training and attention with respect to race relations and citizen rights.

Senator Obama:

This year, the Department of Justice released a survey that found that blacks and Hispanics are more than twice as likely as whites to be searched, arrested, or threatened or subdued with force when stopped by police. Of those who had force used against them, 83 percent felt that the force was excessive. As a State Senator, I introduced and passed a law requiring the Illinois Department of Transportation to record the race, age, and gender of all drivers stopped for traffic violations so that bias could be detected and addressed. As a United States Senator, I cosponsored federal legislation to ban racial profiling and require federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to take steps to eliminate the practice. As president, I will continue my decades-long fight against racial profiling, and sign legislation that will ban the practice of racial profiling by federal law enforcement agencies and provide federal funding to state and local police departments if they adopt policies to prohibit the practice.

CJ2: POLICE ABUSE, BRUTALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- If elected President, what, if anything would you do to address the issue of police misconduct?

Senator McCain

Police misconduct can never be tolerated in a democratic society. However, the decision of whether to create civilian police accountability review boards and mandate other provisions for police accountability should be made at the applicable state and local level. The decision must be made by citizens who best know if they are being well-served by their community's law-enforcement organization. Local, state, tribal, and federal jurisdiction and authorities with respect to public integrity and corruption cases should not be diminished

Criminal misconduct, whether committed by ordinary citizens or law-enforcement officers, must not be tolerated and must be appropriately punished. There should be no double standards.

If there is systemic misconduct, police brutality, or violations of federal laws, including civil rights laws, it is the duty of the Department of Justice to take appropriate federal law enforcement action.

Senator Obama:

I will direct my Attorney General to have the Justice Department work closely with state and local law enforcement to ensure the effective implementation of standards for use of force.

CJ3: EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY INTO OUR COMMUNITIES

- If elected President what, if anything, would you do to help reintegrate former felons into society?

Senator McCain

Just last year some 750,000 inmates reentered society. Unless we change our approach over the next four years, released prisoners are likely to reoffend in high numbers, committing millions of new crimes and finding millions of new victims. We need to be as committed in preparing ex-convicts for freedom as we were in taking that freedom away.

Across a prison and jail population of 2.3 million souls, there may be some who will never find or even seek the path of redemption. But the way should be open to all. This was the spirit of the Second Chance Act of 2007, a law I supported which is designed to make the walk out of prison, past the gates and razor wire, a one-way journey. Ex-convicts need more than a few bucks and a bus ticket out of town. Many will need job training, a place to live, mentors, family counseling, and much more. Beyond government, there are churches and community groups all across our country that stand ready to help even more. And these groups will have the committed support of my administration. With so many sentences about to expire, and so many second chances about to be offered, the stakes are high for our country.

Senator Obama:

America's urban communities are facing an incarceration and post-incarceration crisis. Up to two-thirds of the 650,000 prisoners released every year are rearrested within three years. Nearly 2 million children have a parent in a correctional facility. It is simply unacceptable to keep ignoring this crisis in American families and communities. In the U.S. Senate, I cosponsored the Second Chance Act and have worked to provide job training, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and employment opportunities to ex-offenders. In addition to signing these important programs into law, I will create a prison-to-work incentive program, modeled on the Welfare-to-Work Partnership, to create ties with employers, third-party agencies that provide training and support services to ex-offenders, and to improve ex-offender employment and job retention rates. I will also reduce bureaucratic barriers at state correctional systems that prevent former inmates from finding and maintaining employment. As a state senator, I fought for and passed legislation to provide ex-offenders with expanded mental health counseling and remove barriers that prevent non-violent offenders from finding and maintaining employment.

CJ4: MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

- If elected President, would you work to increase or decrease the number of offenses which trigger a mandatory minimum sentence?

Senator McCain

I have supported mandatory minimum sentencing for certain crimes, particularly for violent crimes and serious offenses. It is appropriate for society to determine that certain crimes have minimum consequences. Minimum sentencing also addresses the concerns about disparate punishment for the same crime.

I will enforce the nation's laws fairly and effectively, without discrimination. As President, I will support evaluating whether the type and number of offenses that trigger mandatory minimum sentences are effective in combating crime and in protecting law abiding members of society from criminal activity.

Senator Obama:

There are at least 171 mandatory minimum provisions in federal criminal statutes. According to the United States Sentencing Commission, in FY 2006, 33,636 counts of conviction carried a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment, affecting 20,737 offenders. Most of these counts of conviction – 82.9 percent – were for drug offenses. Black and Hispanic offenders make up the overwhelming majority of individuals convicted under a mandatory minimum sentence. A RAND study found that mandatory minimum sentences are less effective than discretionary sentencing and drug treatment in reducing drug-related crime, and every leading expert body in criminal justice has opposed the use of mandatory minimum sentences, including the Sentencing Commission, the Judicial Conference, the American Bar Association, and leading criminal justice scholars. Chief Justice Rehnquist observed that “one of the best arguments against any more mandatory minimums, and perhaps against some of those that we already have, is that they frustrate the careful calibration of sentences.” Justice Kennedy stated that he “can accept neither the necessity nor the wisdom of federal mandatory minimum sentences.” Justice Breyer, one of the architects of the Sentencing Guidelines, noted that “[m]andatory minimum statutes are fundamentally inconsistent with Congress’ simultaneous effort to create a fair, honest, and rational sentencing system through the use of Sentencing Guidelines.” Politicians of both parties have also come out against mandatory minimums. I will immediately review these sentences to see where we can be smarter on crime and reduce the ineffective warehousing of non-violent drug offenders.

CJ5: GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

- If elected President, what, if anything, would you do to stem gun violence in our country?

Senator McCain

I oppose restricting the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens to bear arms. Those rights were recognized by the Supreme Court in the recent *District of Columbia v. Heller* decision, and I agree with that decision. Therefore, I oppose restrictions on gun manufacturers and owners that diminish or impinge on those rights. I support effective, commonsense measures that help keep firearms out of the hands of criminals, children, and the mentally incompetent, such as instant criminal background checks for all gun purchases, including purchases at gun shows. I oppose mandatory waiting periods.

I oppose a ban on “assault weapons.” Gun bans do not work, because they restrict only the rights of law-abiding citizens. Criminals pay no more attention to laws banning guns than they do to laws banning assault, robbery, or murder. I was pleased to see the law rightfully sunset in 2004, because it represented an arbitrary restriction on the constitutional rights of law-abiding citizens.

Gun violence is illegal. Criminals who perpetrate gun violence should be prosecuted. I support enforcing laws with respect to the criminal possession or use of a firearm.

Senator Obama:

Every year since coming into office, President Bush has proposed to either eliminate the Community Oriented Policing Services program or to dramatically slash its funding between 80 percent and 90 percent. This is in spite of the fact that violent crime has been on the rise in recent years. As president, my first act on this issue will be the restoration of full funding for COPS.

I also support reasonable, common-sense measures to limit the occurrence of gun violence that has taken the lives of too many Americans, and that has particularly ravaged black communities. These measures include closing the gun-show loophole and requiring mandatory background checks on purchasers at gun shows. That loophole has been exploited by everyone from foreign terrorists to the Columbine High School shooters. Closing it would not impair the rights of hunters and other lawful gun owners. I also want to make sure the background check system works well so that mentally deranged people, criminals and others who should not have firearms are prevented from purchasing them. I want to make guns in this country child proof. This is, again, a common-sense solution: guns and kids don't mix. And I would make the expired federal Assault Weapons Ban permanent. These weapons, such as AK-47s, belong on foreign battlefields and not on our streets. These are also not weapons that are used by hunters, sportsmen, and sportswomen.

CJ6: THE DEATH PENALTY

- If elected President, how would you work to ensure that as long as we have a death penalty that, at the very least, the color of one's skin or a person's financial status are not determining factors when deciding who should receive the death penalty?

Senator McCain

I support the death penalty for heinous crimes in which the circumstances warrant capital punishment. I have supported legislation that sought to expand the number of federal crimes punishable by death, including terrorism and narcotics trafficking by drug kingpins.

The color of one's skin or a person's financial status must never be factors when deciding who should receive the death penalty. I oppose all forms of discrimination.

Senator Obama:

I believe there are a few crimes so heinous that they warrant the ultimate penalty. But the question is whether that sentence can be implemented in a fair and just way.

As a member of the Illinois state senate, I led efforts to reform a broken death penalty system that sent 13 innocent people to death row because it was filled with error, questionable police tactics, racial bias, and shoddy legal work. I drafted and passed a law requiring videotaping of interrogations and confessions in capital cases to ensure that prosecutions are fair. As president, I will encourage the states to adopt similar reforms.

I also support efforts to ensure that capital defendants receive quality counsel. A big factor in the faulty administration of the death penalty has been the unevenness in the quality of indigent defense counsel. That's why I support loan-forgiveness and similar programs that will encourage the nation's top law students to become public defenders.

Finally, I will direct my Justice Department to undertake a comprehensive study of the administration of the federal death penalty and to make recommendations on how to address the problems that have been identified with the system, including racial bias.

CJ7: REDUCING RECIDIVISM THROUGH IN-PRISON EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS

- If elected President, what actions would you take to help reduce recidivism among prisoners?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>I support the Second Chance Act, which funds programs that prepare prisoners for the transition from prison to society by providing job training, counseling, mentors, counseling, and more. As President, I will ensure that the federal government continues to fund such programs.</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>In addition to providing more opportunities for rehabilitation programs like substance abuse treatment and education during incarceration, I believe we need to focus on helping ex-offenders successfully transition into society after incarceration. That is why I have been a strong advocate of re-entry programs for prisoners, as described above. Additionally, many faith-based organizations and nonprofits have successfully worked to provide needed programs to prisoners, and I will work with those groups to reduce our high recidivism rate as president.</p>
---	--

CJ8: THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to address the numerous disparities that exist in the current juvenile justice system, including disproportionate minority arrest and confinement and the high number of Black youth who are tried as adults?

Senator McCain

Where significantly disproportionate minority confinement exists, states should work to determine why. If it is proven to be the result of discriminatory law-enforcement or criminal-justice procedures, such problems need to be remedied. Juvenile crime, however, should be vigorously addressed, without respect to race, creed, or national origin.

I supported the 1999 Juvenile Justice bill that prohibits the incarceration of juveniles in prisons where they may come in close contact with adult criminals who may harm them. Teenage offenders who are cognizant of their crimes should be tried as adults. But I cannot support incarcerating children in prisons where they would have contact with potentially dangerous adult inmates.

I supported the Safe Schools initiative to introduce a positive law-enforcement presence in schools. I supported an amendment to require a juvenile who unlawfully possesses a firearm in school to be detained at least 24 hours. I introduced legislation to prevent juveniles from illegal access to weapons, punish persons who assist juveniles convicted of violence crimes as adults, and punish juveniles who carry or use handguns in schools.

Senator Obama:

I believe that the travesty of justice we saw in Jena exposed glaring inequities in our justice system that were around long before that schoolyard fight broke out. And as president, I'll take steps to ensure that our criminal justice system works for everyone.

Part of what we saw in Jena was a rush to prosecute and try young men as adults. As president, my Justice Department will work with local law enforcement to strengthen identify and implement strategies that seek to prevent youth crime before it occurs. I will build on my efforts in the Senate to end racial profiling. And I will work to improve the quality of our nation's public defenders by creating loan-forgiveness programs for law students who enter this field. Additionally, I will work to replicate the successful efforts of drug courts across the country by signing a law that would authorize federal magistrates to preside over drug courts and federal probation officers to oversee the offenders' compliance with drug treatment programs. I will ensure that our federal courts and probation offices have adequate resources to deal with this new program. Coupled with the elimination of sentencing disparities and mandatory minimum reform, this will help many of our youth avoid a life of crime.

SECTION III: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

EJ1: THE FEDERAL BUDGET

- If elected President, what would your priorities be when developing a federal budget?

Senator McCain

I support adopting policies that reduce the high costs of gas, energy and food that American families are facing. I have proposed the Lexington Project – a comprehensive program to break the nation’s strategic dependence on foreign oil and provide every American with reliable, low cost sources of energy. I will end policies such as ethanol subsidies, tariff barriers, and sugar quotas that drive up gas prices and food prices and hurt Americans.

I have proposed a pro-growth economic agenda that is focused on creating more jobs for American workers. I have proposed raising the tax exemption for dependents from \$3,500 to \$7,000 to give families more support.

I have proposed comprehensive health care and housing plans that will enable American families to purchase health insurance and will help distressed homeowners stay in their homes.

I have proposed education reforms designed to give every American child an equal education opportunity in our public schools, so that low and moderate income Americans have the same chance to succeed as those that can afford to send their children to private schools.

Senator Obama:

Today, our tax and budget system have become increasingly complex and unfair. My top priority for reform is bringing back fairness and responsibility to government tax and budget policy. I will reverse the policies of this Administration which favor the wealthy and well-connected over low and middle-income American families.

I will increase federal funding for programs that help working families, including providing universal health care, dramatically improving education opportunities from birth to college, providing a “Marking Work Pay” tax credit to 150 million working Americans, fully funding the CDBG program and other programs that increase the availability of affordable housing, increasing funding for transitional jobs and career pathways programs, and expanding eligibility and increasing the EITC to benefit 12 million Americans.

EJ2: PREDATORY LENDING

- If elected President, what would you do to address the problems of predatory lending?

Senator McCain

As President, I will create a Department of Justice Mortgage Abuse Task Force to aggressively investigate potential criminal wrongdoing in the mortgage industry and bring to justice any who violated the law. This task force will offer assistance to State Attorney Generals who are investigating abusive lending practices.

I have also proposed a comprehensive plan to provide robust, timely, and targeted help to those hurt by the housing crisis. Under my "HOME plan," every deserving American family or homeowner will be afforded the opportunity to trade a burdensome mortgage for a manageable loan that reflects their home's market value.

Senator Obama:

I have proposed a robust agenda to cut down on predatory lending, and ensure that communities have access to affordable lending products. I introduced the STOP FRAUD Act, nearly two years ago to address the subprime problem and crack down on fraud, and in wake of reports that African Americans were being unfairly steered to high-risk subprime loans, I called on the Federal Trade Commission to immediately investigate these disturbing reports.

I have also called to put an end to the most unscrupulous payday lending and credit card practices, which disproportionately affect urban minorities. I will extend the 36 percent interest cap on payday loans that applies to U.S. service members to all Americans. I will sign into law a Credit Card Bill of Rights that bans the most egregious credit card activities. And I will work with my Secretary of Treasury and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to encourage banks, credit unions and CDFIs to provide affordable short-term and small dollar loans – and to drive the sharks out of business. Finally, I will fight to ensure that more Americans are empowered in the fight against predatory lending by supporting initiatives to improve financial literacy and financial planning.

EJ3: PUBLIC FINANCING OF HOUSE AND SENATE CAMPAIGNS

- If elected President, what would you do to promote public financing of campaigns?

Senator McCain

I have worked for many years on campaign finance reform that stops corruption and the appearance of corruption, including the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, commonly known as McCain-Feingold. This legislation has improved our campaign finance system, most notably by prohibiting "soft money" contributions to national party committees and solicitations of these unlimited contributions by federal candidates.

I have also supported other campaign finance reforms, including improvements in the funding of Presidential campaigns. I committed to participate in the voluntary public funding system for the general election campaign this year. I regret that Senator Obama refused to do. His refusal is a repudiation of the pledge he made to the NAACP and makes him the first major party nominee since the system was created not to participate.

I do not support the public financing of congressional campaigns. Public financing should be used only if no other means to control campaign spending exist. When no other available option exists, taxpayer financing of campaigns must be limited, drawn from existing funds, and clearly explained. I do not believe that public financing for all congressional campaigns is a fair use of taxpayer's money.

Senator Obama:

I support public financing of campaigns combined with free television and radio time as a way to reduce the influence of moneyed special interests. I introduced public financing legislation in the Illinois State Senate, and am the only 2008 candidate to have sponsored Senator Russ Feingold's (D-WI) bill to reform the presidential public financing system. In February 2007, I proposed a novel way to preserve the strength of the public financing system in the 2008 election. My plan requires both major party candidates to agree on a fundraising truce, return excess money from donors, and stay within the public financing system for the general election. The proposal followed announcements by some presidential candidates that they would forgo public financing so they could raise unlimited funds in the general election. The Federal Election Commission ruled my proposal legal, and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has already pledged to accept this fundraising pledge.

SECTION IV: EDUCATION

ED1: EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

- If elected President, what would you do to ensure that all American children have equal access to a high quality public education?

Senator McCain

Equal access to a high quality education is a goal I fully support, but it could in fact be undermined by an arbitrary rule that “equal money be spent on all public school children.” More money may need to be spent in poorer performing public schools. Too many of our children are trapped in failing schools by geography and by economics. My education reform plan focuses on standards and accountability to ensure that every child can reach his or her potential. I will devote federal funds to see that public schools recruit teachers with stellar academic records. I will use federal funds to give incentive bonuses for high performing teachers to locate in the most challenging educational settings—thus providing direct help to the neediest students. I will also enable students to learn outside of school by expanding online educational opportunities and by providing direct federal funds to help low-income parents pay for tutoring.

Senator Obama:

I’ve introduced a comprehensive plan to give every American child the chance to receive the best education America has to offer.

The **first** part of my plan focuses on providing quality, affordable early childhood education to every American child. I will launch a Children’s First Agenda that provides care, learning and support to families with children ages zero to five. I will create Early Learning Grants to help states create a system of high-quality early care and education for all young children and their families, so that children are prepared and ready to succeed before they enter kindergarten. I will increase Head Start funding and quadruple Early Start to include a quarter of a million at-risk children.

The **second** part of my education plan is to recruit, support, and reward teachers and principals to ensure that every school in America is filled with outstanding educators. I will create a new Service Scholarship program to recruit top talent into the profession, and place these teachers in our highest-need classrooms.

The **third** part of my plan is to work with our nation’s governors and educators to create and use assessments that can improve achievement in school districts all across America by including the kinds of research, scientific investigation, and problem-solving that our children will need to compete in a 21st century knowledge economy.

ED2: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

- If elected President, please describe some of the initiatives your Administration would undertake to increase funding for public education.

Senator McCain

We should offer more choices to those who wish to become teachers and end the monopoly on teacher certification that prevents them from getting that chance. School choice for all who want it, an expansion of Opportunity Scholarships, and alternative certification for teachers will be part of my agenda of education reform. I will target funding to recruit teachers who graduate in the top 25 percent of their class, or who participate in an alternative teacher recruitment program such as Teach for America, the American Board for Teacher Excellence, and the New Teacher Project.

We will pay bonuses to teachers who take on the challenge of working in our most troubled schools. We will award bonuses as well to our highest-achieving teachers. And no longer will we measure teacher achievement by conformity to process. We will measure it by the success of their students.

We will expand support for virtual learning. I propose to direct \$500 million to build new virtual schools, and to support the development of online courses for students. We will allocate another \$250 million to support state programs expanding online education opportunities.

Senator Obama:

I share the NAACP's concerns about No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I believe that the overall goal of the NCLB is the right one – ensuring that all children can meet high standards – but the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed, including the lack of necessary resources to fully implement the plan. We have simply failed to provide high-quality teachers in every classroom and failed to support and pay for those teachers. That's why I have introduced will increase federal public education spending by about \$18 billion per year to ensure that all of America's children – no matter where they are located – have meaningful access to a high-quality public education.

ED3: SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- If elected President, what if any steps would you take regarding publicly funded vouchers to allow students to attend private school?

Senator McCain

I support vouchers because they have a demonstrated record of improving educational opportunities. In Washington, D.C., the Opportunity Scholarship program serves more than 1,900 boys and girls from families with an average income of 23,000 dollars a year. And more than 7,000 more students have applied for that program. I will expand the annual budget for that program from 13 million dollars to 20 million dollars.

Senator Obama:

We need to invest in our public schools and strengthen them, not drain their fiscal support. And for this reason I do not support vouchers. In the end, vouchers would reduce the options available to children in need. I fear these children would truly be left behind in a private market system.

ED4: MAKING COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE

- If elected President, please describe initiatives that you would promote to make college more affordable.

Senator McCain

I have proposed a Student Loan Continuity Plan to keep the credit crunch from hurting college students. I have called on the federal government and the 50 governors to anticipate loan problems and expand the lender-of-last resort capabilities for each state's guarantee agency. There is much that can be done to simplify and consolidate federal grant programs that have been destroyed by earmarks to improve college access. As part of this effort, we should simplify the multiple tuition credits into a single credit for every individual that can be used to pay for tuition or college-related expenses. Furthermore, we can simplify the application process for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid to one page, to improve access to these programs and strengthen of nation's government to vision of higher college enrollment for all Americans.

Senator Obama:

The very first bill I introduced in the United States Senate sought to increase the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100. As part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act that was signed into law in September, we moved one step closer toward reaching that goal by increasing the current maximum to \$4,310 in 2007 and to \$5,400 by 2012. The Act also mandates that interest rates on subsidized student loans are cut in half over four years. I sat on the Conference Committee that won these improvements in the bill.

But there is more we can do. That is why, as president, I will create a new American Opportunity Tax Credit to help American families who are struggling to send their children to college. This fully refundable \$4,000 tax credit will be provided to students before they have to pay their tuition bills. I will also simplify the financial aid application process by eliminating the current student aid form altogether.

I will also seek to free up money for student aid by reforming the federal student loan program. Currently, there are two basic federal loan programs. The Direct Loan system allows students to borrow from the government through their schools. The Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL) instead gives private banks federal subsidies to make government-backed student loans. FFEL guaranteed loans cost about \$6 more per \$100 loan than direct loans. As president, I will eliminate wasteful subsidies for banks under FFEL and mandate that all federal student loans be provided through the direct loan program. By switching to the direct lending system, we can save taxpayers billions of dollars a year – money that can and should be directed to making college more affordable for Americans.

SECTION 5: HEALTH CARE

HE1: UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to ensure that all Americans have access to comprehensive, high quality and affordable quality health care?

Senator McCain

Health care reform should address the rising costs of care that threaten people's budgets, business competitiveness, and government programs by making the entire system responsive to the needs of health care consumers. Americans should receive quality care at lower costs, so I have proposed comprehensive health care reform that will decrease costs while increasing consumer choice.

Under my plan, every American that has employer-provided coverage can continue that coverage. Every family will receive a direct refundable tax credit - effectively cash - of \$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families to offset the cost of insurance. Families will be able to choose the insurance provider that suits them best and the money would be sent directly to the insurance provider.

I will look to bring greater competition to our drug markets through safe re-importation of drugs and faster introduction of generic drugs. I will emphasize prevention, early intervention, healthy habits, new treatment models, new public health infrastructure, and the use of information technology to reduce costs.

To ensure that no American with a pre-existing condition is denied quality care, I will work with states to create Guaranteed Access Plans, which will have reasonable premium limits and financial help for low-income Americans.

Senator Obama:

I will sign a universal health bill into law by the end of my first term in office. My plan will ensure that all Americans have health care coverage through their employers, private health plans, the federal government, or the states. My plan builds on and improves our current insurance system, which most Americans continue to rely upon, and creates a new public health plan for those currently without coverage. Under my plan, Americans will be able to choose to maintain their current coverage if they choose to. For those without health insurance I will establish a new public insurance program, and provide subsidies to afford care for those who need them. My plan includes a mandate that all children have health care coverage and I will expand eligibility for the Medicaid and SCHIP programs to help ensure we cover all kids. My plan requires all employers to contribute towards health coverage for their employees or towards the cost of the public plan.

Under my plan a typical family will save up to \$2,500 each year. We will realize tremendous savings within the health care system from improving efficiency and quality and reducing wasted expenditures system-wide. Specifically, these savings will result from investments in health information technology, improvements in prevention and management of chronic conditions, increased insurance industry competition and reduced industry overhead, the provision of federal reinsurance for catastrophic coverage, and reduced spending on uncompensated care.

HE2: SOCIAL SECURITY

- Do you have a specific plan to reform the current Social Security system? If so, what are the major provisions?

Senator McCain

Social Security is a sacred compact with America's seniors. I will fight to save the future of Social Security while meeting our obligations to the today's and tomorrow's retirees. Reform and protection of Social Security will require a bipartisan cooperation between the next president and the Congress, and I am committed to such an effort. I will not leave office without fixing the problems that threaten our future prosperity. I support proposals to ensure that disability insurance remains available, risk-free and intact.

Senator Obama:

As someone who was largely raised by my grandparents, I recognize that Social Security is indispensable to workers and seniors, and it is probably the most important and most successful programs that our country has ever created. I remain committed to making sure Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people, now and in the future.

The underlying Social Security system remains strong, but the projected long-term cash flow of the program needs to be addressed. This is a real but manageable problem. But the longer we wait to solve the problem, the bigger it grows.

I will be honest with the American people about the long-term solvency of Social Security and the ways we can fix the problem. I believe that benefits should not be cut and the retirement age should not be raised. I also believe that privatization of Social Security, which I have long opposed, is not a valid option for us to consider because it tears the fabric of Social Security – the idea of mutual responsibility – by subjecting a secure retirement to the whims of the market, and that is not an acceptable way to strengthen this program. I believe that the first place to look for ways to strengthen Social Security is the payroll tax system. Currently, the Social Security payroll tax applies to only the first \$97,500 a worker makes. I support increasing the maximum amount of earnings covered by Social Security and I will work with Congress and the American people to choose a payroll tax reform package that will keep Social Security completely solvent for at least the next half century.

HE3: MEDICARE & MEDICAID

- Do you have specific plans to reauthorize or reform the current Medicare, Medicaid or S-CHIP programs? If so, what are the major provisions?

Senator McCain

I believe that we must reform the payment systems in Medicaid and Medicare to compensate providers for diagnosis, prevention, and care coordination. Medicaid and Medicare should not pay for preventable medical errors or mismanagement. I also believe that middle-class Americans should not subsidize the prescription drugs of America's most affluent individuals.

I strongly support the central purpose of SCHIP and believe that children of low-income families should have health insurance coverage. I was pleased to join many of my colleagues in supporting its establishment in 1997. I am concerned, however, that the program has expanded beyond what Congress first intended. In some cases, SCHIP coverage has been extended to middle-income children and to certain adult populations. I do not believe that was the intention of Congress when we created this program. Last year I supported the Kids First Act, which would have reauthorized SCHIP, focused on efforts to cover SCHIP eligible children currently not enrolled in the program, provided an increase in funding, and avoided a costly regressive tax increase.

Senator Obama:

I have long supported efforts to expand the Medicaid and SCHIP programs, and reform these programs to ensure that beneficiaries receive high-quality care. In the Illinois State Senate, I expanded Illinois' version of SCHIP to cover 150,000 children and parents. I have continually opposed President Bush's efforts to undermine these programs.

My universal health care reform plan will expand eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP, and my health care quality initiatives will place a greater emphasis on prevention, chronic disease management and other measures that have been proven to improve patient health outcomes.

HE4: HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

- If elected President, what if anything would you do to reduce or eliminate the disparities that currently exist in the health care problems that affect racial and ethnic minorities in the United States?

Senator McCain

Many Americans, including racial and ethnic minorities, are disconnected from our health care system, including high rates of being uninsured and problems accessing essential health care services, including preventive care. The lack of timely care translates into a higher risk of developing chronic conditions, such as obesity and diabetes.

Although employer-sponsored insurance provides coverage for millions of Americans, many people do not have access to this coverage. My plan will offer new support to help people without employer provided coverage buy it, by providing everyone with a refundable tax credit (\$2,500 for individuals and \$5,000 for families). It is much better to help individuals buy portable health insurance plans of their own than to kill jobs and lower wages with an unfunded mandate requiring small businesses to provide every employee with health insurance.

To ensure that no American with a pre-existing condition is denied quality care, I will work closely with states to create Guaranteed Access Plans which will have reasonable premium limits and financial help for low-income Americans.

I will also encourage greater preventive and wellness care, like diabetes testing and smoking cessation programs, with more effective community outreach, and will continue my long time support of community health centers.

Senator Obama:

Tackling minority health disparities is a top priority for me. My universal health care plan expands coverage to all Americans, addressing a major cause of health disparities for minorities: health insurance coverage. My plan promotes research into combating health care disparities, conducts educational and health outreach to minorities, increases the diversity of healthcare professionals, and improves the delivery of health care to minorities. Finally, my plan also requires health providers to inform the public about disparities and take steps to reduce those disparities. In the U.S. Senate, I helped write the Kennedy-Cochran-Obama *Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity Elimination Act*. This bill puts new emphasis on disparity research by directing the Department of Health and Human Services to collect and report health care data by race and ethnicity, as well as geographic and socioeconomic status and level of health literacy.

SECTION VI: HOUSING

HO1: HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

- If elected President, what steps would you take to eliminate homelessness in the United States?

Senator McCain

The homeless are among America's most vulnerable, and I have supported providing assistance to our homeless population while addressing the varied underlying causes of this heart-breaking issue.

In addition to my commitment to address the housing crisis, I have supported public housing programs that play a significant role in helping meet the housing needs of many seriously mentally ill Americans, and have supported the effort to eradicate homelessness among our Nation's veterans – many of whom are fighting mental illness.

Among the most disturbing aspects of America's homeless problem is the number of women and children left homeless in order to flee the threat of domestic violence. It is tragic that victims of domestic violence are forced to choose between their personal safety and a place to live. As president, I will continue my efforts to support assistance for these families in need.

Senator Obama:

I will implement a multi-prong strategy to address homelessness in the United States, building off of my record in the Senate to tackle homelessness with our nation's veteran population. First, I will work to increase the availability of affordable housing in the U.S. by creating an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, reversing the Bush cuts to the CDBG program and ensuring that public housing operates by a one-by-one replacement rule. Second, I will work to engage more chronically unemployed Americans into the workforce by investing \$1 billion over 5 years into transitional jobs and career pathways programs. Third, I will increase and expand eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) benefits so that more working Americans, including childless working Americans, have access to more economic supports. Fourth, I will also expand resources for ex-offender job training and support services, as well as substance abuse programs to help more disengaged Americans rebuild their lives.

HO2: DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- If you are elected President what areas, if any, would your administration focus on in the housing field?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>Home ownership is part of the American dream, and current housing market troubles and foreclosure levels require action by the federal government.</p> <p>I introduced my HOME plan to help homeowners who need and deserve assistance. It offers every deserving American family or homeowner the opportunity to trade a burdensome mortgage for a manageable loan that reflects the market value of their home. Homeowners would end up with a 30-year mortgage and an equity stake in their home. People decide if they need help, they apply for assistance and if approved the government under my HOME Program supports them in getting a new mortgage that they can afford. There will be qualifications which require the home to be a primary residence and the borrower able to afford a new mortgage.</p> <p>I also support aggressively investigating potential criminal wrongdoing in the mortgage lending and securitization industry. If there were individuals or firms that defrauded innocent homeowners or forged loan application documents, then the punishments of the market are not enough, and they must answer for their conduct in a court of law.</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>Throughout my career as a community organizer, civil rights lawyer, and elected advocate, I have worked to increase the availability of safe affordable housing. As President, I will fully fund the Community Development Block Grant program and create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to build thousands of new affordable housing units each year. I will also making buying a home more affordable by creating a new mortgage interest tax credit, which will predominantly benefit families making under \$50,000 per year.</p>
---	---

SECTION VII: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IA1: DARFUR, SUDAN

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to end the genocide in Darfur Sudan?

Senator McCain

I do support the U.S. taking aggressive action to stop the killings. The genocide in Darfur is unconscionable, and we need to do more to support the international efforts to end it. The African Union needs our help deploying and supporting the forces called for by the UN Security Council resolution. The government of Sudan needs to be pressured to allow the multinational force to perform its missions and restrain the Janjaweed militia. NATO needs to give more support to the UN/AU force, providing aerial surveillance and intelligence the force on the ground needs to protect the people of Darfur. I also support efforts to hold those responsible for the genocide accountable for their actions.

Senator Obama:

The U.S. needs urgently to change the calculus in Khartoum and stop the genocide. Therefore, the Administration should immediately implement the oil sanctions it threatened last year and still failed to impose last May. I worked with Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) on the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, a version of which was signed into law, to impose targeted sanctions on the leading perpetrators of the genocide.

With our allies and our partners in Africa, we need to take immediate steps – economic and military – to let Khartoum know we will not tolerate continued genocide. These steps should include more effective sanctions by the U.S., the EU and the UNSC. We also need to establish a no-fly zone to protect civilians and increase pressure on Khartoum to halt the killing and consent to the robust international force.

In addition to taking immediate steps to protect civilians and end the genocide, the U.S. should step up its diplomatic efforts to negotiate a lasting peace among the Darfur rebel groups and the Sudanese Government.

IA2: U.S. RELATIONS WITH CUBA

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to improve the United States' relations with Cuba?

Senator McCain

I do not support lifting the embargo on Cuba. The embargo should stay in place until the Castro regime releases all political prisoners unconditionally, legalizes all political parties, labor unions and free media, and schedules internationally monitored elections. I would provide more material assistance and moral support to the human rights activists who bravely defy the regime every day, and increase Radio and TV Martí and other means to communicate directly with the Cuban people. My Justice Department would vigorously prosecute Cuban officials implicated in the murder of Americans, drug trafficking, and other crimes.

Senator Obama:

I understand that after nearly 50 years of failure, we must turn the page and begin to write a new chapter in U.S.-Cuba policy to help advance the cause of freedom and democracy in Cuba. To write this new chapter, I will keep U.S. national interests, and not partisan or electoral interests, at the forefront. I will strive to empower the Cuban people and aim to position the United States to help foster a stable and peaceful transition in Cuba to avoid potential disasters that could result in mass migration, internal violence, or the perpetuation of the Cuban dictatorship. A democratic opening in Cuba is, and should be, the foremost objective of our policy. I believe we need a clear strategy to achieve this objective – one that takes some limited steps now to spread the message of freedom on the island, but preserves our ability to bargain on behalf of democracy with a post-Fidel government. As president, I will grant Cuban Americans unrestricted rights to visit family and send remittances to the island. I will also take steps to liberalize relations with Cuba now while holding back important incentives such as relaxation of the trade embargo and greater foreign aid so that we can encourage change in a post-Fidel government.

IA3: DEBT RELIEF

- If elected President, what steps would you take to support developing nations struggling to improve their situation?

Senator McCain

Debt relief to these nations should be considered on a case by case basis and must be tailored to the specific situations. Debt relief can be part of the effort to combat poverty in these regions, but free trade and job creation are the most important steps we can take to help lift people out of poverty. Access to our markets and reducing tariffs on American goods and services is good for both our economy and the economies of developing nations. Agricultural subsidies in our farm bill, which Senator Obama supported, hurt poor African farmers. I have opposed those subsidies. I support the incentivization of good governance represented by the Millennium Challenge Accounts, and efforts both by the US government and the generosity of our society to eradicate malaria, combat AIDS, and strengthen public health systems in developing countries. These efforts have enormous positive effects in moving people out of poverty.

Senator Obama:

The poorest countries in the world suffer under the weight of an enormous burden of external debt. Resources are flowing out of the least developed countries to creditors in the rich world, when these resources are desperately needed for health care, education, and infrastructure. We have seen that multilateral debt relief can be effective – 30 countries have seen their debt stocks reduced by almost 90 percent – but more relief is needed. I want to see 100 percent debt cancellation for the world’s heavily-indebted poor countries. I am committed to living up to the promise to fully fund debt cancellation for Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). My administration will also dedicate itself to preventing a future in which poor countries face pressing debt burdens again. I will press for reforms at the World Bank to ensure that poor countries receive grants rather than loans, and that countries have the resources they need to respond to the external shocks that threaten to derail economic progress. And as president, I will lead a multilateral effort to address the issue of “odious debt” by investigating ways in which “loan sanctions” might be employed to create disincentives for private creditors to lend money to repressive, authoritarian regimes.

IA4: FIGHTING GLOBAL DISEASE AND EXTREME POVERTY

- If elected President, what steps would you take to address global disease and extreme poverty throughout the world?

Senator McCain

I have consistently supported the most aggressive global AIDS program in the history of this pandemic, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Afflicted nations with whom we partner to fight this disease must also know that we expect a certain level of governance, transparency, and effectiveness from them in order to make the fullest use of AIDS assistance and therefore the greatest impact on people's lives. Our commitment must be sustained, and our nation must always be faithful to those at home and abroad as they cope with the ravages of HIV/AIDS.

As President, I will establish the goal of eradicating malaria on the continent of Africa—the number one killer of African children under the age of five.

Senator Obama:

As president, I will double our annual investments in foreign assistance to \$50 billion by 2012 and ensure that these new resources are invested wisely with strong accountability measures and directed towards strategic goals. I will work to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals and will target new U.S. assistance to help the world's weakest states to build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth. I will also increase U.S. commitments to fighting the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as malaria and tuberculosis. The first priority should be to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) when it expires in 2008, but also to rewrite much of the bill to allow best practices – not ideology – to drive funding for HIV/AIDS programs. In that context, I will commit \$50 billion over five years to strengthen the existing program and expand it to new regions of the world, including Southeast Asia, India, and parts of Europe, where the HIV/AIDS burden is growing. My administration will also increase U.S. contributions to the Global Fund to ensure that global efforts to fight endemic disease continue to move ahead.

IA5: AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to promote increased trade and development with Africa and the Caribbean?

Senator McCain

I have in the past, and will continue in the future, to fully support increased trade opportunities with African and Caribbean nations, including the Morocco free trade agreement, the Central American Free Trade Agreement, and the Trade And Development Act Of 2000, which included a dramatic expansion of our trade and development partnerships with Sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean that President Clinton signed into law. Trade is an economic opportunity for American workers and for the people of these nations.

My administration will lower barriers to trade. Ninety-five percent of the world's customers lie outside our borders and we need to be at the table when the rules for access to those markets are written. To do so, the U.S. should engage in multilateral, regional, and bilateral efforts to reduce barriers to trade, level the global playing field, and build effective enforcement of global trading rules. In doing so, we must respect the sovereignty of other nations and enforce all applicable trade laws

Labor standards and environmental considerations are legitimate areas for U.S. foreign policy, but they should not be exploited by those seeking to protect U.S. industry from competition or to advance anti-free-market policies.

Senator Obama:

To achieve sustainable growth, Africa needs to participate fully in the global economy. Eliminating barriers to trade, enhancing regional integration and promoting American investment are essential to achieving high growth rates and broad scale development. To ensure that these goals are achieved, as president, I will seek to: expand the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides incentives for African countries to build free markets and eases them into the global trading community, and work to ensure that Africa's key exports gain greater access to the American market.

SECTION VIII: LABOR

LA1: MINIMUM WAGE

- If elected President, what steps would you take to ensure that the federal minimum wage was consistently a fair living wage throughout our Nation?

Senator McCain

I believe that it is vitally important that every American be able to earn an adequate wage, but we must be careful not to force businesses, especially small businesses, to cut entry-level jobs by driving up their costs. I voted last year to increase the federal minimum wage because the legislation included protections for small businesses. I oppose another increase in the federal minimum wage at this time, and I do not support indexing the wage to the cost of living. Those policies are a sure way to add to the costs of small businesses and slow the creation of new jobs.

Senator Obama:

This past summer, America's lowest paid workers received their first raise in ten years. This increase was long overdue. We stood up to corporate special interests that wanted to deny hard working Americans the basic dignity of a small increase in pay. Americans are rightly cynical about a Congress that fails to increase pay at the bottom of the wage ladder even as it raises its own pay and cuts taxes for the wealthy.

As president, I will work to make sure Washington represents the national interest instead of the special interests. We must increase the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour and tie future increases in the minimum wage to inflation so that it grows along with the costs American workers face. And we need to make the minimum wage a living wage that helps American families not just survive, but succeed.

LA2: THE EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to ensure that people are not discriminated against because of their sexual orientation?

Senator McCain

I oppose employment discrimination, whether based on race, gender, creed, color, national origin, or sexual orientation. However, I have not supported this legislative proposal because, as written, it would open floodgates of civil litigation in employment law, to the detriment of the stated goal of promoting tolerance and harmony in the workplace and society.

In addition, the bill could expose individuals, who might hold deeply felt religious beliefs, to legal liability. Numerous employers have already adopted non-discrimination policies similar to the proposed legislation without creating a legal cause of action, and I believe these private-sector initiatives help promote acceptance and understanding.

Senator Obama:

I have been a long-time advocate for LGBT rights. I believe the Employment Non-Discrimination Act should be expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. I co-sponsored legislation in the Illinois State Senate that would ban discrimination in employment and housing on the basis of sexual orientation. I am a co-sponsor of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, which would expand federal jurisdiction to reach violent hate crimes perpetrated because of the race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical disability of the victim. And I believe that we should repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which has prevented from serving brave men and women who are able and willing to serve.

LA3: THE RIGHT TO FORM AND JOIN A UNION

- If elected President, what actions would you take to ensure that labor unions were able to continue to support workers in their efforts to form and be represented by a union?

Senator McCain

I support the fundamental right of employees to vote on the issue of union representation. Every worker's right to vote in a fair election process, using a secret ballot, must be protected. Hardworking Americans must have the right to hear both sides of an argument and privately cast their vote on whether or not to organize -- free of intimidation and coercion from union representatives, from employers, and from other employees.

The "Free Choice Act" is a purposefully misnamed piece of legislation that would eliminate National Labor Relations Board overseen employee elections. It is designed to facilitate union organization without giving employers a chance to present their views to their employees and without giving employees the opportunity to vote in a fair election. This is an abysmal bill, and I would veto it if the Congress passed it while I was President.

Senator Obama:

Unions give workers a voice in the workplace, our political process, and our public policy debates. Simply, unions give workers a voice in deciding their future. For these reasons, they are essential to our democracy and our economy.

I am a co-sponsor of and for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act because I firmly believe that workers should choose whether they want to join a union without fear of intimidation, coercion, or threats to their livelihoods. I am convinced that millions of Americans would join a union if given a fair opportunity, but the National Labor Relations Act in its current form too often allows employers to violate workers' rights with impunity. The Employee Free Choice Act will make the process of organizing less vulnerable to employer lawbreaking by requiring card-check recognition and increasing penalties on employers that violate the law. I support it, will continue to advocate for it, voted for it as a Senator, and would fight for its passage and sign it into law as President.

EFCA is a starting point, but there is more to do. I will use the bully pulpit of the presidency to educate our country about the important role of unions. And I will use the power of the office to appoint members of the National Labor Relations Board and the Labor Department who understand the situation of working families and respect their desire to organize and I will work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers.