

NATIONAL PRIORITIES:

1. Iraq

How many US troops and contractors would you leave in Iraq, if any, as part of your disengagement plan, and what would their mission be?

I support an immediate drawdown of 40,000 to 50,000 combat troops. I believe we should completely withdraw all combat troops in Iraq within a year and prohibit permanent U.S. military bases in Iraq. After withdrawal, we should retain sufficient forces in the region to contain the conflict and ensure that instability in Iraq does not spill over into other countries, creating a regional war, a terrorist haven or genocide.

Do you see any reason to continue combat operations?

There is no military solution to the chaos in Iraq. Instead, the Iraqi people must solve the problem politically by taking responsibility for their country. By leaving Iraq, America will induce the Iraqi people, regional powers, and the entire international community to find the political solution that will end the sectarian violence and create a stable Iraq. We must show the Iraqis that we are serious about leaving by actually starting to leave.

What are the basic elements of an effective diplomatic and humanitarian strategy for Iraq and the broader Middle East?

We have the standing to assert moral leadership in the world. And I believe we can begin by leading in areas that – at first glance – might not seem directly related to our self-interest. I'm talking about global poverty and primary education.

We know that terrorists thrive in failed states, and in states torn apart by internal conflict and poverty. And we know that in many African and Muslim countries today, extreme poverty and civil wars have gutted government educational systems. So what's taking their place? The answer is troubling – but filled with opportunity if we have the courage to seize it. A great portion of a generation is being educated in *madrassas* run by militant extremists rather than in public schools. And as a result, thousands and thousands of young people who might once have been friends to America are being taught to hate America. When you understand that, it suddenly becomes clear: global poverty is not just a moral issue for the United States – it is a national security issue for the United States.

Any new foreign policy strategy must include new preventive measures to win the long-term struggle and fuel hope and opportunity. This includes strong and creative diplomacy, and also new efforts to lead the fight against global poverty. I've proposed a plan to lead an international effort to educate every child in the world. As president, I would increase foreign assistance by \$5 billion a year to make tens of millions of people safer, healthier, and more democratic and by creating a cabinet-level post to lead this effort.

2. America's Role in the World

When, if ever, is "regime change" a justifiable policy, whether through overt or covert means? And how does the case of Iran fit into your thinking?

Iran's president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, is a politically unstable leader and an open supporter of terrorist groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas. He has already failed to deliver on promises to stop corruption and increase economic development and is increasingly unpopular. The world would be a better place with a more moderate regime in place in Iran.

U.S. policy ought to use a combination of carrots and sticks to further marginalize Ahmadinejad from his own people. Thousands of young and moderate Iranians are natural friends of America and the West and want to see Iran succeed economically. We should take steps to open Iran to democratic culture and ideas and should use diplomacy to separate extremists like Ahmadinejad from leaders more inclined to stabilize Iran's relations with the world.

What principles will guide your decisions to intervene in the face of future humanitarian crises?

The United States must restore its moral leadership of the world, and we should begin with humanitarian crises like the one in Darfur. Few areas need help more urgently than Sudan. An aggressive, multilateral approach should guide the United States in responding to such humanitarian crises. The African Union peacekeeping troops stationed in Darfur have acted bravely in a difficult situation. But these 7,000 troops have been unable to protect civilians or enforce a 2004 ceasefire, and security has deteriorated dramatically.

President Bush should convene an emergency meeting of NATO's leadership to provide support to a U.N. deployment of 3,000 troops, backed with logistical, operational, and financial support. NATO must establish a no-fly zone over the region, to cut off supplies to the brutal Janjaweed militias and end Sudanese bombing of civilians in Darfur. NATO member states should also impose a new round of multilateral sanctions on the Sudanese government as well as individuals complicit in the genocide. The United States must also step up. We should employ the extraordinary assets of the U.S. military – our airlift capabilities, logistical support and intelligence systems--to assist UN and African Union peacekeeping efforts in Darfur. And we must continue to pressure other countries with influence in the region, such as China, to meet their own responsibility to end this conflict.

Do you favor more Free Trade Agreements, and if so, what would you do to mitigate the risks they pose?

We need a new era in trade policy. We need smart trade policies that American workers can say yes to – trade policies that do more than pay lip service to people’s needs and that actually make sure prosperity is shared. We need trade policies that are as innovative as the American people. And when I’m president, those are the trade policies we will have.

Trade agreements like NAFTA and the WTO include special privileges for corporations, such as strong remedies for commercial rights and unprecedented rights to challenge environmental and health laws. I believe that trade agreements should be judged by their effect on regular families and include strong rights for workers.

Our trade policies should lift up workers around the world. Making sure that workers around the globe are treated fairly and share in trade gains is the right thing to do morally, it’s the right thing to do economically, and it will make us much safer and more secure. Requiring our trade partners to adopt and enforce basic workers’ rights will prevent a global race to the bottom and help build a global middle class. I believe that all of our trade partners should be required to enforce at least the core labor rights defined by the International Labor Organization: the right to organize and bargain collectively and prohibitions against forced labor, child labor, and discrimination. I will pursue these goals through linkage to U.S. trade preference programs, any new bilateral trade agreements, and future World Trade Organization negotiations.

I will also require strong environmental standards so multinational companies cannot profit by exploiting weak environmental laws and enforcement in some countries. For example, after the U.S. has capped its greenhouse gas pollution as I have proposed, trade policy could be used if necessary to encourage similar commitments by other nations.

3. Climate Change

What mechanisms do you believe would most significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions during your presidency?

Our generation must end our nation’s dependence on oil from unstable parts of the world and halt global warming pollution. To do this, I will cap the emission of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as determined by climate science and reduce emissions by 20 percent by 2020 and by 80 percent by 2050. Because we need all nations to join the effort, I will share clean energy technology with cooperating nations and, if necessary, require minimum climate-change commitments in our trade deals.

Renewable energy sources like wind, solar power, biomass and ethanol are cleaner and often cheaper than traditional sources of energy. I will require their use to generate 25 percent of the nation’s electricity by 2025, expand the use of ethanol in cars, and invest more resources in researching and encouraging these clean forms of energy. To cut oil imports by 7.5 million barrels a day by 2025, I will raise standards fuel economy to 40 miles per gallon by 2016, a step that could single-handedly reduce oil demand by 4 million barrels per day and invest far more in developing more fuel-efficient technologies.

We have no choice but to greatly increase our use of clean, renewable sources of energy. I will require power companies to generate 25 percent of their energy from renewable sources by 2025. A large expansion of renewable energy can reduce costs under current trends. Wind is already competitive with conventional sources in many markets. Solar could be competitive within three to eight years.

Conservation is also critical. There are large opportunities for Americans to use power more efficiently, typically at half the cost of producing more power. However, most power companies earn profits from selling more power, not using it more efficiently. I will reform utility payments to encourage efficiency rather than more production, as California has already done. I will also invest in more efficient buildings and appliances, help families weatherize their homes, and use “smart thermostats” to help families monitor and reduce their energy. I believe we need a president who asks the American people to be patriotic about something other than war.

What is your proposal to protect the poor from potentially expensive strategies for mitigating climate change?

It is time we have a president who asks Americans to be patriotic about something other than war. Global warming is a crisis. Within decades, we could be living on a very different planet, with tens of millions of refugees and famine victims.

At the same time, we need to ensure that the burdens of the transition to new energy economy are shared equitably. Poverty is the cause of my life – I have called for a national effort to eliminate it within a generation – and I will never forget the needs of the nearly 37 million Americans living in poverty.

Moving to the new energy economy will require Americans to conserve at home, at work, and in their cars. At the same time, renewable energy can be just as cheap as conventional sources. Wind power already is equally affordable in some parts of the country and solar will be within a few years. And because it is often cheaper to use power more efficiently than to generate more of it, I have called for a national goal of eliminating increases in our electricity use for the next decades.

Moreover, new energy technology can create an economic boom across the nation, creating more than 1 million jobs. A new energy economy can bring struggling family farms back to life, revitalize America’s manufacturing base, and harness American innovation like the Internet boom.

Finally, I will provide the resources needed to weatherize family homes, greatly reducing their winter bills. My Green Corps volunteer program will conduct free climate change mitigation projects in low-income neighborhoods. And I have proposed a Green Collar Jobs program to train 150,000 workers a year in cutting-edge energy jobs, ensuring that we can make this transition and that the resulting economic growth is widely shared.

4. Immigration

What would you add to the recent immigration proposal in Congress? What elements do you support, and what elements do you oppose?

Immigration is central to the story of America, but today our immigration system needs a fundamental overhaul. Our security is threatened by borders we cannot control. Our economy is harmed by an underground economy featuring a large and unprotected labor force. And our values are violated when over 12 million people live in the shadows of our society, vulnerable to abuse and fearful of deportation.

The first step in overhauling the immigration system is to secure our borders and stop illegal trafficking. I support doubling the number of border patrol agents and investing in surveillance technology to police the borders. We also need to crack down on employers that hire undocumented immigrants. I support more vigorous workplace enforcement and increased fines for businesses that knowingly break the rules.

It is unrealistic to think that we can deport more than 12 million people. I believe people who are already here should have the opportunity to earn American citizenship. Before earning citizenship, immigrants must avoid a criminal record, pay a fine in recognition that they came here illegally, and learn English—the surest path to success in this country.

America is a land of equals, not a land of first-class citizens and second-class laborers. I oppose new temporary guest worker programs that do not provide adequate workplace protections and a reasonable path to citizenship. If we invite you to work in America, we should invite you to become an American with all the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

How would you achieve political consensus for your policy?

First, I know that a majority of Americans believe as I do that we need comprehensive immigration reform to secure our borders and provide an earned path to citizenship. And when ordinary Americans speak up, change happens. I grew up in the midst of the civil rights movement and I know it started with groups like yours. The great changes in American history didn't start in the Oval Office.

Second, by running a strong 50-state campaign, I will strengthen progressive majorities in Congress, reducing opposition to measures like comprehensive immigration reform.

5. New Orleans

What role should the federal government play in the restoration of New Orleans to ensure that all of its people benefit?

New Orleans, in so many ways, shows the Two Americas that I have long talked about. I have a three-part plan for rebuilding New Orleans. We need to rebuild infrastructure – housing, schools, and hospitals – and build it to last so that people have something to come back to. We need to create the jobs that will bring them back. And we need to make the city safe from storms – with levees that can withstand another Katrina, and by strengthening public safety to keep residents safe from crime.

There are several specific things the federal government could do immediately to help New Orleans. One of them is building a new veterans' hospital downtown. There is no better place for America to fulfill its commitment to those who have sacrificed for our country than in the city of New Orleans. Constructing the new hospital downtown – to recognized flood-safe specifications – will enhance development of the downtown medical district, create hundreds of construction jobs for local residents and bring back health care workers to the city.

The government should also integrate new housing. We must end the old racial and economic isolation of pre-Katrina New Orleans. I support the construction of affordable rental and owner-occupied housing in economically integrated developments. I will increase federal funding for housing vouchers and the HOPE VI neighborhood revitalization program, and I will tie federal housing and transportation funding to state and local efforts to reform zoning and housing laws and promote effective transportation policies. That way, the poor housing that separated hundreds of thousands of city residents from good jobs, good schools and good health care – and new isolation of trailer homes – will be a thing of the past.

Displaced New Orleans residents will not return unless there are good jobs to return to. I will make sure the jobs of rebuilding New Orleans carry good, local prevailing wages. I have proposed hiring 50,000 Gulf Coast residents to fill stepping stone jobs dedicated to rebuilding infrastructure that will help local and returning residents gain skills and experience.

Finally, the government can help protect the Gulf from another major storm. The Army Corps has missed its deadlines for planning new levees. Now we are in the middle of the second hurricane season after Katrina and the city is not safe. The current target for the Army Corps of Engineers -- to protect against a 100-year storm – is inadequate. It would not have stopped Katrina, and global warming is raising the risk of future catastrophic storms. As president, I will do whatever is necessary to ensure that Katrina never happens again. That means stronger levees and the restoration of coastal wetlands -- a natural barrier for storm surges that also protect ports, refineries, and other infrastructure.

6. Urban Revitalization

What strategies should the federal government use to preserve and uplift working and middle class communities in our inner cities? How would you empower these

communities to actively participate in their development, rather than being the targets of top-down approaches?

Poverty, unemployment and its incidental effects remain concentrated in America's urban and rural areas. Every American should have the chance to work their way out of poverty, but some willing workers cannot find jobs because of where they live, a lack of experience or skills, or other obstacles like a criminal record. As president, I will create a million short-term Stepping Stone Jobs to help individuals move into permanent work. Jobs would be chosen carefully with local business and labor leaders to meet local needs without displacing existing workers.

In central cities, homeownership is half the national average. More than 8 million Americans live in neighborhoods of concentrated poverty; high-poverty neighborhoods undermine every other effort to help low-income families. Urban schools' dropout rates are twice the national average, while their college attainment rates are only half. For too long, federal policies have segregated low-income people from good jobs and schools. I have proposed creating 1 million new housing vouchers and cutting red tape to support more affordable housing in mixed-income neighborhoods.

7. Economic Security

What steps will you take to protect working and middle class Americans from economic insecurity caused by globalization and catastrophic debt?

American families are working harder to get by. Despite living in the land of opportunity, most families' incomes have stagnated for the past generation. Meanwhile, President Bush's Washington has let corporate interests grow stronger than ever. For too long, our trade policies have been formulated behind closed doors with extensive input from lobbyists for big multinational corporations. And financial interests are writing our economic policies-- so while their profits are setting records, record numbers of families are going bankrupt and losing their homes.

My primary criterion for new trade deals will be simple: considering its impact on jobs, wages and prices, will it make most families better off? I reject President Bush's use of trade agreements to encourage countries to support his foreign policy, rather than to strengthen our economy. I will insist on pro-worker provisions in new deals, hold trade partners to their commitments, and invest more in dislocated workers and communities. I believe that the U.S. should not enter any new trade deals that do not meet these tests.

I will also put a federal agency on the side of working families to help them get a fair deal from lenders and finance companies. Right now, there's no sheriff in town. States cannot regulate lenders operating within their borders. We have a mortgage foreclosure crisis today because the government turned a blind eye while irresponsible predatory lenders pulled a fast one on hard-working homeowners.

My Family Savings and Credit Commission will put consumer protection first, dealing with all financial services -- credit cards, mortgages, car loans, check-cashers, payday

loans, investment accounts, and more. It will ban the most abusive terms and make sure consumers understand the others. I will also pass strong national laws protecting us against the worst abuses in credit markets – predatory mortgages, abusive credit card terms and payday loans with interest rates of 36 percent or higher. I will help create alternatives to abusive lenders – helping working families build up a cushion by matching their savings and bringing bank accounts to the 28 million without them. And I will support non-profit groups offering affordable, short-term loans. We need a new era of responsible lenders who see families as long-term investments, not quick bucks.

Half of U.S. bankruptcies are caused by medical expenses so a critical step to helping families being squeezed is providing universal health care coverage. Rising health care costs are increasingly unaffordable for many families, and 47 million Americans lack any health insurance at all. I have a proposed a specific plan to guarantee quality affordable health care for every man, woman and child in America in my first term as president.

American families are also struggling because our tax code rewards wealth instead of rewarding work. Our tax code is the perfect example of the Two Americas – one for the wealthiest Americans and Washington insiders, and the other for everyone else. I believe that wholesale changes are needed to put our economy and our tax system back in line with our values. I will overhaul the tax code to strengthen the middle class pillars of saving, work, and family by creating a new “Get Ahead” tax credit to match up to \$500 a year in savings for families earning up to \$75,000, expanding the child care credit to pay up to 50 percent of child and dependent care expenses and making it partially refundable to help stay-at-home parents, and tripling the Earned Income Tax Credit for single adults and cutting its marriage penalty. I will also raise the tax rate on capital gains for the most fortunate taxpayers, repeal the Bush tax cuts for the highest-income households, crack down on offshore tax havens, and close unfair loopholes like tax breaks for hedge funds and unlimited executive pensions.

What role should organized labor play in a global economy?

Organized labor has been the most important anti-poverty movement in American history – providing millions of good jobs and strengthening the middle class. Unions helped move manufacturing jobs into the foundation of our middle class, and they can do the same for the service economy here and around the world. I will support unions and make it easier for workers to organize because we need strong unions to restore workers’ voices in the workplace—that’s how we’ll stop a global race to the bottom and raise living conditions for workers around the world.

8. Healthcare

Do you support a national single payer health care system, and if not, what is your alternative? What role would private and/or employer sponsored health insurance play?

Covering all Americans -- with comprehensive coverage -- will be one of my top priorities as president. I am proud to be the first major candidate with a plan for universal health care. Instead of just picking another demographic group and trying to add them to the rolls of the insured, I want to bring everyone into a system that works. I said earlier that half of all bankruptcies are due to medical bills. But the really striking thing is that three-quarters of those bankruptcy filers had health insurance. Coverage needs to be meaningful.

As president, first, I will require businesses and other employers to either cover their employees or help finance their health insurance. Second, I will make insurance affordable by creating new tax credits, expanding Medicaid and SCHIP, reforming insurance laws, and taking innovative steps to contain health care costs. Third, I will create regional Health Care Markets -- purchasing pools to give every American the bargaining power to purchase an affordable, high-quality health plan increase choices among insurance plans, and cut costs for businesses offering insurance. Once these steps have been taken, I will require all American residents to get insurance. This will help cover both the insured and underinsured.

The U.S. government will help states and groups of states create regional Health Care Markets, non-profit purchasing pools that offer a choice of competing insurance plans. At least one plan would be a national public program based upon Medicare. All plans will include comprehensive benefits, including full mental health benefits. Families and businesses could choose to supplement their coverage with additional benefits. The markets will be available to everyone who does not get comparable insurance from their jobs or a public program, and to employers that choose to join rather than offer their own insurance plans.

Health Care Markets will offer a choice between private insurers and a public insurance plan modeled after Medicare, but separate and apart from it. Families and individuals will choose the plan that works best for them. This American solution will reward the sector that offers the best care at the best price. Over time, the system may evolve toward a single-payer approach if individuals and businesses prefer the public plan.

How would you overcome the political obstacles to your plan?

As I mentioned above, I will work to build a progressive majority in Congress, and champion this issue. Powerful corporate interests have dominated the health care discussion in this country and they are never going to just negotiate away their power. You have to fight them for it and beat them in order to take it away from them. That's what I've spent my entire career doing -- and I've won.

But the next president can't solve all our problems alone. We all know that. The strength in America is in its people. As president, I will ask every American to join me in fighting for big change. All of us have to do it-- together. We have to take action and responsibility for this country we all love so much.

9. National Debt

What would you do to reduce near-record debt and deficits that threaten our national economic security?

We should aim to bring the record deficits rung up by President Bush down over time. The most important question is not whether the budget is balanced-- it is whether we are making the investments we need to make in areas like health care, energy, and education. Solving these problems is more important for our economy and our society than balancing the budget. And the most important thing we can do to address our long-run challenges funding our entitlement programs is to begin bringing down health care costs.

I will pay for my proposals and bring down the deficit by repealing the Bush tax cuts for families earning more than \$200,000 a year, collecting unpaid taxes and cutting excessive spending, like student loan subsidies, Medicare prescription drug costs, and unnecessary government workers and contractors such as those at HUD.

10. Civil Rights/Civil Liberties

Does a national security crisis justify the use of secret detention facilities, extraordinary rendition, suspension of habeas corpus, and violations of international standards of interrogation? If not, what would you do to reverse these departures from the rule of law?

America must do whatever it takes to defeat terrorism, but lasting victory will take moral as well as military strength. President Bush has used the “Global War on Terror” doctrine like a political sledgehammer to justify the worst abuses and biggest mistakes of his administration from Guantanamo to the war in Iraq and illegal spying on American citizens. And the worst thing about the “Global War on Terror” approach is that it has backfired—our military has been strained to the breaking point and the threat from terrorism has grown.

As president, I will close the prison at Guantanamo Bay, which has become a symbol that galvanizes our enemies and alienates our allies. I will protect our troops and our values by upholding the Geneva Conventions anywhere American security forces -- military or civilian -- are engaged. I will end President Bush’s illegal program of warrantless domestic spying. And I will restore the right of habeas corpus and bring all accused detainees to justice.

Do you support same sex marriage (as opposed to civil unions)? If not, please explain the reason(s) for your opposition.

I believe that all couples in committed, long-term relationships should have the same rights, benefits, and responsibilities, whether they are straight couples or same-sex

couples. I support civil unions to guarantee gay and lesbian couples the same rights as straight couples, including inheritance rights, hospital visitation rights, equal pension and health care benefits, and all of the 1,100 other legal protections government affords married couples. I support the repeal of the Defense of Marriage Act. I also believe same-sex families should be treated in the same manner as other families by our immigration laws.

I believe the right president could lead the country toward consensus around equal rights and benefits for all couples in committed, long-term relationships and I oppose divisive Constitutional amendments to ban same-sex marriages.

What would you do to restore the integrity of our election system? Do you think electronic voting is inherently unreliable, and what is your view on current legislation?

Forty years after the Voting Rights Act, we still have more work to do to ensure a meaningful right to vote for every American. We need to secure voting rights by requiring paper ballots in all voting machines while facilitating access for people with disabilities and speakers of minority languages.

I will also restore the right to vote in all federal elections to ex-offenders who have served their sentences. I believe we should allow voters to register on Election Day, ending the fiasco of purge lists, provisional ballots and voter registration intimidation, and oppose voter photo identification legislation, which disproportionately disenfranchises people of color.

DC PRIORITIES:

If the DC House Voting Rights Act passes the Senate, will you commit to join a bipartisan delegation to meet President Bush and urge him to sign the bill?

If the DC House Voting Rights Act does not pass or has not yet come up for a vote in the Senate, will you commit to meet with at least one senator who is undecided on the DC House Voting Rights Act to persuade him/her to support the bill?

I support the D.C. House Voting Rights Act and I would talk to President Bush or senators on this important issue. All Americans have a right to political representation. As the license plates say -- it's taxation without representation. D.C. residents should also have to right to choose full self-governance and statehood.

LEADERSHIP:

Describe the most significant achievement of your life, something that demonstrates your ability to lead large numbers of people in the accomplishment of important goals.

I've had the opportunity to work with so many dedicated people in my life that it's difficult to choose just a single experience to share. One thing I'm proud of is the work I did in 2006 to help get minimum wage increases on the ballot and passed in six states. We still have more work to do on this issue. The federal minimum wage in this country is a disgrace. I believe we should raise it to \$9.50 by 2012.

I'm also proud of the work I've been doing to help organize workers into unions. I have participated in more than 170 labor events and organizing drives since 2004. Walking picket lines, calling and writing to employers, and meeting with workers behind closed doors, I have seen firsthand what unions go through every day trying to protect the right to organize, bargain collectively, get a decent wage and get health care. That's why I am more convinced than ever that we need to strengthen our labor laws to give workers a real choice to join a union.

Do you call yourself a progressive? If so, what values make you one?

Yes, I am a progressive. To me, being a progressive means believing that the way a strong nation becomes stronger is by giving all its citizens a chance to prosper. I believe that we can build One America – a place where everyone has a fair shot at the American Dream.

I believe in a Democratic Party that fights for those who have no voice: the forgotten middle class, the poor, those who have labored a lifetime, and all those who speak the truth against overwhelming public opinion.

And I believe in a Party willing to take stances that are right, whether or not they are popular. This is the tradition of America, fighting for what is right regardless of the odds, regardless of the power of those on the other side. It is what the Democratic Party I believe in is all about. We do not have to posture or to accept mediocrity or compromise our values. We can decide to be great, we can address great problems, we can see great possibilities.

I do not believe in a Party obsessed with incrementalism, half-measures, and positions based on yesterday's polls. If we want to lead — and in these times we desperately need to lead in another direction — we have to represent something greater than our own self-promotion. We have to believe that our country is more important than ourselves. These times are critical, so let me be clear: in this battle for the soul of our Party, no less than the future of America and the future of the world are at stake.

What are your proudest achievements in progressive politics?

I'm proud of leading the fight to make sure that the Patients Bill of Rights was passed by the Senate. That's the kind of fight – for regular Americans against big insurance

companies-- that I've been waging -- and winning -- my whole life, and that I'll take on as president.

Name the qualities that make you appealing to independents and moderate Republicans.

Americans -- Democrats, independents, and Republicans -- are tired of not being heard by Washington because their voices are drowned out by powerful special interests and their Washington lobbyists. I have never taken a dime from Washington lobbyists. I think people from all parties are fed up with George W. Bush and the establishment he's built and they're ready for a president who is willing to make big changes. It's not enough to trade their insiders for our insiders.