



2008 Democratic Presidential Primary Endorsement Guide



Urban Policy

QUESTION

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?

BACKGROUND

Our cities are the United States on a smaller scale, and all of our national challenges are mirrored in the urban scene. We chose to focus on a few key areas:

- **Infrastructure:** Of the many structures that support life in our cities, public transit and sewer systems are some of those that are most intimately connected to planetary health. It is estimated that if just 10% of Americans use public transit, we would achieve 25% of the carbon emission reductions mandated by Kyoto. (1) The EPA estimates that antiquated sewer systems that overflow during rainstorms cause 850 billion gallons of untreated sewage to be dumped in our rivers, 2-3 billion of which end up in our own Anacostia River. (2) Meanwhile, the growing digital divide is reflected in the fact that in 2003, 83% of households with incomes \$75K or above had an internet connection, compared to 38% for those in the \$15 - 35K range. (3)
- **Housing:** The federal government began a major investment in affordable housing in 1965, through a partnership with private owners. This asset is in danger of being lost due to expiration of the contracts, leaving only 38 affordable rental homes available for every 100 extremely low income renter households. (4) In DC, we lost 2,400 affordable rentals and 9,400 affordable homes between 2003 and 2004, at the same time that we gained 4,600 high-cost rentals and 10,800 high-value homes. (5)
- **Crime:** Since 1986, the federal government has imposed mandatory sentences of 5 years minimum for possession of 500g of powdered cocaine and a mere 5g of crack cocaine (the so-called 100:1 ratio). This law has led to 30% of our prison population of 2.2 million being small-time drug users and dealers, disproportionate numbers of which are young African-American men. These young men are stigmatized for life and face considerably higher odds of extended unemployment, poverty, and disenfranchisement. (6) Meanwhile, the U.S. leads the world's richest nations in gun deaths (murders, suicides, and accidental deaths due to guns), and accounted for 45 percent of those 88,649 deaths. (7)
- **Education:** The bipartisan consensus that led Senator Ted Kennedy to partner with President Bush in passing No Child Left Behind (NCLB) has dissipated, with critics decrying the over-emphasis on standardized testing, as well as lack of funding. Jonathan Kozol, the famous educator, says "its driving motive is to highlight failure in inner-city schools as dramatically as possible in order to create a ground swell of support for private vouchers or other privatizing schemes" (8) Meanwhile, our secondary schoolchildren are expected to somehow learn with a shortfall of 280,000 math and science teachers by 2015 (9).

BIDEN

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>Key force behind 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act, which codified the 100:1 ratio between powdered and crack cocaine. (10)</p> <p>In 1994, introduced the Violent Crime Control Act (also called the Biden Crime Bill), which paid for 100,000 new police officers, \$9B for prisons, expanded the federal death penalty to cover additional offenses, and prevented inmates from pursuing college education. It also banned the manufacture of certain types of assault rifles, restricted firearm sales, and strengthened federal licensing standards for firearms dealers. (11)</p> <p>Co-introduced the Second Chance Act of 2005, providing \$100M per year in grants to promote innovative programs to help prisoners re-entering civil life, through post-release housing, education and job training, substance abuse and mental health services, mentoring programs, etc. (12)</p> <p>In 2002, voted Yes to authorize a \$2.4B federal program aimed at reducing class size by assisting states and local education agencies in recruiting, hiring and training 100,000 new teachers. (13)</p>	<p>Infrastructure No stated policy.</p> <p>Housing No stated policy.</p> <p>Crime Twenty years after championing the Anti-Drug Abuse Act, is leading the charge to undo the damage from that bill, via the Drug Sentencing Reform & Cocaine Kingpin Trafficking Act of 2007 to establish parity for crack and powdered cocaine. (11) Proposes to invest \$10B of federal funding for state and local law enforcement, believing that they are the first line of defense against terrorist attacks. Continue to support rehabilitation as the goal of our prison system, along the lines of the Second Chance Act.</p> <p>Education On NCLB: Sen. Biden said it was a mistake that he voted for the law in 2001 “against my better instinct” because he had great faith in Sen. Edward M. Kennedy of Massachusetts, who was a leading Democratic architect of the broadly bipartisan-supported of the law. “My wife’s been teaching for 30 years,” Sen. Biden added. “She has her doctorate in education. She comes back and points out how it’s just not working.” (14)</p> <p>Source, unless specifically stated: Joe Biden campaign website. (15)</p>

CLINTON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>During her tenure as First Lady of Arkansas, introduced a pioneering program called Arkansas Home Instruction for Preschool Youth, which trained parents to work with their children in preschool preparedness and literacy. (16)</p> <p>In 2002, voted Yes to authorize a \$2.4B federal program aimed at reducing class size by assisting states and local education agencies in recruiting, hiring and training 100,000 new teachers.</p> <p>In 2003, supported establishing a National Affordable Housing Trust Fund and using tax credits to promote home ownership in distressed areas.</p> <p>While campaigning for Senator, vocally supported the Class Size Reduction Initiative, which sought federal funding for helping states hire 100,000 new teachers to reduce class size.</p> <p>Opposed school vouchers. Opposed merit pay for individual teachers, but supported merit pay for entire schools</p> <p>Source: On The Issues, unless specifically noted (17)</p>	<p>Infrastructure Would establish \$10B Emergency Repair Fund for critical infrastructure repairs. Increase public transit funding by \$1.5B per year, and link public transit funds to local land use policies that promote use of public transit. Would add \$1B funding to intercity rail over 5 years. Proposes using tax incentives to encourage broadband investment in under-served areas. Co-sponsored Chris Dodd's pending National Infrastructure Bank Act. [See Chris Dodd section below]</p> <p>Housing Proposes establishing \$1B fund for state housing programs that help at-risk borrowers, plus a \$1B fund to help state/county/municipal housing trust funds build affordable housing. Proposes expanding the role of the Federal Housing Authority (FHA), one specific proposal being to increase the present loan limits on mortgages for high-cost housing areas.</p> <p>Crime Would provide \$200 million in competitive grants in job training and other support services for ex-offenders, in order to reduce high potential of returning to prison. Opposes mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenses.</p> <p>Education "Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., agreed that federal activism is required to boost the schools, "but not the kind of accountability that the NCLB law has imposed. The tests have become the curriculum instead of the other way around." (18)</p> <p>Source, unless specifically noted: Hillary Clinton campaign website (19)</p>

DODD

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>In 2005, voted Yes to the Transportation Equity Act, which appropriated \$295 billion to transportation projects including highway construction, infrastructure repair, safety programs, and mass transit for fiscal years 2004-2009.</p> <p>In 2007, as Chair of Senate Banking Committee, appropriated \$100M for HUD for sub-prime mortgage assistance.</p> <p>In 1997, voted No on school vouchers in DC.</p> <p>In 2005, voted Yes on shifting \$11B from corporate tax loopholes to education.</p> <p>In 2002, voted Yes to authorize a federal program aimed at reducing class size by assisting states and local education agencies in recruiting, hiring and training 100,000 new teachers with \$2.4B annually.</p> <p>In 2007, voted Yes to the Student Loan Lender Subsidy Cuts and Student Grants bill, which expanded federal funds for college students.</p> <p>Source: On The Issues (20)</p>	<p>Infrastructure In August, introduced the National Infrastructure Bank Act of 2007, which would create an independent national bank that would identify, evaluate and help finance infrastructure projects of substantial regional and national significance. Projects would include publicly-owned mass transit systems, roads, bridges, drinking water and wastewater systems, and housing properties that cost at least \$75M. The bank would then arrange a long-term federal financing package for the project. (21)</p> <p>Housing Using his power as Chairman of Senate Banking Committee, has vocally called for Federal Reserve to provide liquidity for current crisis. Calls for prohibiting reckless sub-prime lending practices and modernizing FHA as long-term solutions.</p> <p>Crime Opposes mandatory minimum sentencing; supports eliminating 100-1 ratio between powdered and crack cocaine.</p> <p>Education “The ideals of this bill [NCLB] are admirable,” Dodd said today on a conference call with reporters. “The objections to it, rightly so, are the rigidity and lack of financing for it ... But I don’t think repealing this all together and rolling back the clock to five years ago is the answer.” (22)</p> <p>Source, unless specifically noted: On the Issues or Chris Dodd campaign website. (20, 23)</p>

EDWARDS

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>In 1999, voted Yes to regulate the sale of guns at gun shows.</p> <p>In 2002, sponsored the Rural Rental Housing Act, which was never brought to a vote. During the 2004 election, was not considered a strong candidate by affordable housing advocates. "I would say that he's well intentioned," says Constance Stancil, executive director of the North Carolina Low Income Housing Coalition, "but recently he has shown little interest in or awareness of the major housing shortage faced by North Carolinians." (24)</p> <p>In 2002, voted Yes to authorize a \$2.4B federal program aimed at reducing class size by assisting states and local education agencies in recruiting, hiring and training 100,000 new teachers.</p> <p>Source, unless specifically noted: Project VoteSmart on Edwards (25)</p>	<p>Infrastructure Sets a goal of giving all U.S. homes and businesses access to real high-speed internet by 2010. Encourage local service providers and municipal wireless projects. Proposes lifting restriction on low power FM radio.</p> <p>Housing Proposes creating 1 Million new housing vouchers over 5 years, as well as reforming and expanding the HOPE VI public housing program to replace dilapidated housing in areas of concentrated poverty.</p> <p>Crime No stated policy.</p> <p>Education "No Child Left Behind used cheap standardized tests to measure our children's learning, failed to accurately identify struggling schools, and mandated unproven cookie-cutter solutions for our schools' problems." (26)</p> <p>Plans to promote economic diversity within school districts and across district lines by giving bonuses to middle-class schools enrolling low-income students and double current federal magnet schools funding to attract middle-class suburban students to high-poverty urban neighborhoods.</p> <p>Source: John Edwards campaign website and DC for Democracy questionnaire. (27)</p>

GRAVEL

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>While serving in the Alaska State Legislature, from 1963-1966, established a system of regional schools for rural Alaskans.</p>	<p>Infrastructure No stated policy.</p> <p>Housing No stated policy.</p> <p>Crime Opposes prohibition of drug use, and wants to treat drug addiction as a public health issue, rather than as a crime.</p> <p>Education “No Child Left Behind has left far too many children behind. We have a dire situation in America; 30% of our kids do not graduate from high school. Nearly a third of our children are condemned to a substandard economic existence. Education in America must be properly funded. However, money will not solve all the problems.” (28)</p> <p>“Developments in science and technology, along with tax and healthcare reform, need to be promoted to revitalize the American manufacturing industry. These jobs are what expanded the American middle class and fueled the development of cities such as Pittsburg[h], Detroit and Baltimore. A strategy to re-invigorate America’s manufacturing base to create and restore jobs that used to draw people to cities is essential.” (DC4D candidate questionnaire)</p> <p>Source, unless otherwise noted: Mike Gravel campaign website (29)</p>

KUCINICH

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>In 2005, introduced the Rebuilding America's Infrastructure Act (re-introduced this year). The bill would create a Federal Bank for Infrastructure Modernization (FBIM) that would establish zero interest mortgage loans for states and local governments to use to fund specific projects. This would create a long-term funding source for infrastructure modernization. (30)</p> <p>"...twice voted in the Committee on Education and the Workforce to fully fund NCLB and was a co-sponsor of the "Keep Our Pact Act", a bill to mandate that NCLB be fully funded each year." (31)</p> <p>Source, unless otherwise noted: Project VoteSmart on Kucinich (32)</p>	<p>Infrastructure Refer to his record.</p> <p>Housing No stated policy.</p> <p>Crime Supports expanding federally sponsored drug education and drug treatment programs. Supports programs to provide prison inmates with educational, vocational and job-related skills and job-placement assistance when released; provide inmates with drug and alcohol addiction treatment.</p> <p>Education Refer to record.</p> <p>Source, unless otherwise noted: Project VoteSmart on Kucinich (33)</p>

OBAMA

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>In the Illinois State Legislature, introduced legislation that made Illinois the first state to require that interrogations be taped in capital crime cases, to prevent abuse by law enforcement. Was credited with persuading law enforcement and Republican politicians to support the law, after having initially opposed it. The bill was passed unanimously by the State Senate. (34)</p> <p>Regularly supported gun-control measures, including a ban on semiautomatic "assault weapons" and a limit on handgun purchases to one a month. (34)</p> <p>In 1997, as State Senator, opposed legislation in Illinois that sought to treat juvenile offenders in adult courts (35)</p> <p>In 2006, introduced Homes for Heroes Act, which would expand access to long-term, affordable housing for veterans, by providing a \$225 million assistance fund so that community and nonprofit organizations can purchase, build or rehabilitate homes and apartments for veterans. Supported by the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. (36)</p> <p>The first bill Obama introduced in the Senate would have increased the maximum Pell Grant from the existing limit of \$4,050 to a new maximum of \$5,100. Introduced a bipartisan plan to allow students who do not have access to college-level courses at their high schools to apply for need-based grants and seek credit at local colleges or community colleges.</p> <p>Source, unless specifically noted: Project VoteSmart on Obama. (37).</p>	<p>The only candidate to propose a specific plan for Urban America. Would create White House Office of Urban Policy that will report directly to President, propose a strategy for urban America, and coordinate all programs for urban areas.</p> <p>Infrastructure Would strengthen the federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program to ensure that additional federal public transportation dollars flow to the highest-need communities. Endorses city-wide wireless/internet for free or low-cost to bridge the digital divide.</p> <p>Crime Proposes 20 Promise Neighborhoods in areas with high levels of poverty and crime, which will develop long-term goals and plans in terms of education and health, with community participation and buy-in. Half of the funding will be provided by the federal government, with the remaining funds provided by the city or private entities.</p> <p>Housing Supports restoration of funding for the Community Development Block Grant program.</p> <p>Education "No Child Left Behind is "one of the emptiest slogans in the history of American politics...Creativity drains from the classroom when teachers are forced to focus on testing that doesn't even provide valuable information about students' learning." (38)</p> <p>Proposes the 5-E (Energy Efficiency, Environmental Education and Employment) Disconnected Youth Service Corps to directly engage disconnected and disadvantaged youth in energy efficiency and environmental service opportunities.</p> <p>Source: Barack Obama campaign website and DC for Democracy questionnaire. (39)</p>

RICHARDSON

Record	Platform/Statements
<p>In April 2007, signed legislation that made New Mexico the first state to provide limited immunity from drug possession charges when a witness or victim of a drug-related overdose calls 911 for help. (40)</p> <p>As Congressman in 1996, voted Yes to repeal the ban on semi-automatic assault weapons.</p> <p>Sept. 21, 2008: the only Democratic Presidential candidate to speak at the National Rifle Association (NRA) Convention at the Capitol Hilton in Washington, DC. (41)</p> <p>As Governor, launched Albuquerque's "RailRunner" light rail service; the state purchased 300 miles of track as part of a larger plan for mass transit. (42)</p> <p>In 2006, created a state housing tax credit and a housing trust fund in New Mexico. (43)</p> <p>Invested nearly \$100 million in need-based college scholarships.</p> <p>As Governor, started the pre-kindergarten program in 2005 with \$5 million, covering about 1,500 students. Later expanded to 2,200 children. A Rutgers University study found evidence that it significantly enhanced children's learning abilities. (44)</p> <p>Source, unless specifically noted: Project VoteSmart on Richardson (45)</p>	<p>Infrastructure No stated policy.</p> <p>Housing No stated policy.</p> <p>Crime No stated policy.</p> <p>Education "I have a one-point plan for No Child Left Behind: Scrap it. NCLB has failed. It has failed our schools, it has failed our teachers and it has failed our children." (46)</p> <p>Would create 250 new science and math academies.</p> <p>Source: Bill Richardson campaign website (47)</p>

FURTHER READING

n/a

NOTES

- (1) Conserving Energy and Preserving the Environment, Shapiro, et al., p. 16 (http://www.fypower.org/pdf/RES171664_shapiro.pdf)
- (2) American Society of Civil Engineers (<http://www.asce.org/reportcard/2005/page.cfm?id=35>)
Natural Resources Defense Council (<http://www.nrdc.org/water/pollution/fanacost.asp>)
- (3) National Telecommunications & Information Administration (http://www.ntia.doc.gov/reports/anol/NationOnlineBroadband04.htm#_Toc78020942)
- (4) DC Fiscal Policy Institute. (<http://dcfpi.org/?p=67>)
- (5) National Low Income Housing Coalition (http://www.nlihc.org/detail/article.cfm?article_id=4412&id=130)
- (6) Drug Policy: a Change of Values, Eric E. Sterling, p. 21 (<http://www.cjpf.org/booksandresources/challengeofvalues.pdf>)
- (7) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study in the International Journal of Epidemiology (April 17, 1998 quoted by MedicineNet (<http://www.medicinenet.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=6166>))
- (8) Jonathan Kozol (<http://lquilter.net/blog/archives/2005/09/04/jonathan-kozol-on-education-no-child-left-behind>)
- (9) <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/06/11/AR2007061102110.html?referrer=emailarticle>
- (10) Alternet (<http://www.alternet.org/rights/60065/>)
Senator Biden's website (<http://biden.senate.gov/newsroom/details.cfm?id=277893>)
- (11) Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Violent_Crime_Control_and_Law_Enforcement_Act)
- (12) Senator Biden's website (<http://biden.senate.gov/newsroom/details.cfm?id=249255&&>)

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Please contact dcfordemocracy@gmail.com with any questions/comments.

- (13) On the Issues: Joe Biden (http://www.ontheissues.org/Joe_Biden.htm)
- (14) Education Week (http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/NCLB-ActII/2007/07/youve_been_youtubed_1.html)
- (15) Joe Biden campaign website (<http://www.joebiden.com/issues/>)
- (16) Women's International Center (<http://www.wic.org/bio/hclinton.htm>)
- (17) On the Issues, Hillary Clinton (http://www.ontheissues.org/Hillary_Clinton.htm)
- (18) San Francisco Chronicle (<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/06/11/EDGKOP3DE11.DTL>)
- (19) Hillary Clinton campaign website (<http://www.hillaryclinton.com/issues/>)
- (20) On the Issues, Chris Dodd (http://www.ontheissues.org/Chris_Dodd.htm)
- (21) Senator Dodd's website (http://dodd.senate.gov/multimedia/2007/080107_InfrastructurePacket.pdf)
- (22) MSNBC (<http://firstread.msnbc.msn.com/archive/2007/08/10/312348.aspx>)
- (23) Chris Dodd campaign website (<http://chrisdodd.com/issues>)
- (24) Affordable Housing Finance magazine comparison of 2004 Presidential candidates (http://www.housingfinance.com/ahf/articles/2003/July/Dem_Candidates.html)
- (25) Project Vote Smart on John Edwards (http://www.vote-smart.org/voting_category.php?can_id=21107)
- (26) Education Week (http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/NCLB-ActII/2007/09/edwards_promises_nclb_overhaul.html)
- (27) John Edwards campaign website (<http://johnedwards.com/issues/>)
- (28) Mike Gravel campaign website (<http://www.gravel2008.us/?q=ISSUES&page=2>)
- (29) Mike Gravel campaign website (http://www.gravel2008.us/Meet_Mike_Gravel.pdf)
- (30) Rep. Kucinich's website (<http://kucinich.house.gov/News/DocumentSingle.aspx?DocumentID=70849>)
- (31) Rep. Kucinich's website (<http://kucinich.house.gov/Issues/Issue/?IssueID=1460>)
- (32) Project Vote Smart on Dennis Kucinich (http://www.vote-smart.org/voting_category.php?can_id=318)
- (33) Dennis Kucinich campaign website (<http://www.dennis4president.com/go/issues/>)
- (34) SaukValley.com (<http://www.saukvalley.com/articles/2007/01/18/news/state/295106092528764.txt>)
- (35) University of Chicago Chronicle (<http://www-news.uchicago.edu/releases/97/971104.juvenile.justice.shtml>)
- (36) Testimony of the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, 2006 (http://banking.senate.gov/_files/beversdorf.pdf)
- (37) Project Vote Smart on Barack Obama (http://www.vote-smart.org/voting_category.php?can_id=9490)
- (38) National Education Association (<http://www.nea.org/annualmeeting/raaction/07obamaspeech.html>)
- (39) Barack Obama campaign website (<http://www.barackobama.com/pdf/UrbanPovertyOverview.pdf>)
- (40) New York Times
(<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/05/us/05drugs.html?ex=1190001600&en=8121acafda430cbe&ei=5070>)
- (41) http://www.wptv.com/news/local/story.aspx?content_id=3d7daae0-0da1-41bc-b14d-fa711a7fc118
- (42) Albuquerque Light Rail service (http://www.lightrailnow.org/news/n_abq_2006-07a.htm)
- (43) Affordable Housing Finance magazine (<http://www.housingfinance.com/ahf/articles/2005/june/region.html>)
- (44) SantaFeNewMexican magazine (<http://www.freewmexican.com/news/65930.html>)
- (45) Project Vote Smart on Richardson (http://vote-smart.org/voting_category.php?can_id=26964)
- (46) Bill Richardson's USA Today blog (<http://blogs.usatoday.com/oped/2007/09/opposing-view-1.html#more>)
- (47) Bill Richardson campaign website (<http://www.richardsonforpresident.com/issues/>)