

U.S. Elections 2008 - The General Election





The Long Campaign

In 2008 nearly 60 primary elections or caucuses were held to decide the presidential candidates for the two major political parties in the United States.

On the eve of the primary season 16 candidates vied for their party's nomination. By April the field had been reduced to three.

This presentation offers information about the major-party candidates, and outlines the electoral process from now until the new President is inaugurated on January 20, 2009.



The major candidates for 2008; starting at the top (Republican), Barack Obama (D), Hillary Clinton (D), Chris Dodd (D), John Edwards (D), Rudy Giuliani (R), Mike Gravel (D), Mike Huckabee (R), Duncan Hunter (R), Dennis Kucinich (D), John McCain (R), Barack Obama (D), Ron Paul (R), Bill Richardson (D), Mitt Romney (R), Tom Tancredo (R), Fred Thompson (R).

John McCain

John McCain was born in 1936, the son and grandson of U.S. Navy admirals. A graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, McCain served as a jet pilot during the Vietnam War, and was a prisoner of war for more than five years.

He has been a U.S. Senator from Arizona since 1986, and has seven children, including a daughter adopted from Bangladesh and two adopted sons.

If he wins in November John McCain will be the oldest person elected President of the United States.



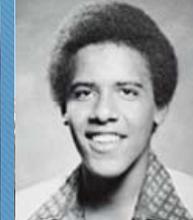
Clockwise from top, with wife Cindy and four of his seven children, circa 1999; in the U.S. Senate, 2003; campaigning for President, 2008; as a Navy midshipman circa 1955; meeting President Richard M. Nixon, 1973. (All ©AP Images)

Barack Obama

If elected Barack Obama will be the first African-American President of the United States.

Obama was born in 1961, in Hawaii. His mother was from Kansas, his father from Kenya, and Obama has six half-brothers and a half-sister from Kenya, and a half-sister from Indonesia. Obama and his wife, Michelle, have two young daughters.

Obama is a graduate of Columbia University and Harvard Law School. He served for eight years in the Illinois State Senate before being elected as United States Senator from Illinois in 2004.



Clockwise from top, with wife Michelle and daughters Sasha, left, and Malia, 2004; High School graduation photo, 1978; in the U.S. Senate, 2007; campaigning for President, 2008, and teaching law at the University of Chicago, circa 1995. (All ©AP Images)



Convention Goals

In primary elections voters elect delegates who are pledged to support a particular candidate at their party's national convention. "Senator McCain won the New Hampshire primary" means that all of New Hampshire's delegates to the Republican National Convention are pledged to vote for Senator McCain as their party's nominee for President.

The number of delegates for each state is determined by various factors, but larger states usually have more delegates than smaller ones.

Because the two parties use different formulas, Democrats tend to have twice as many delegates as Republicans.



Democratic Convention
August 25 - 28, 2008
Denver, Colorado

Total Number of delegates: 4,234
Needed to win: 2,118



Republican Convention
September 1 - 4, 2008
Minneapolis-Saint Paul, Minnesota

Total Number of delegates: 2,380
Needed to win: 1,191



Winning the Nomination

At the convention a simple majority of delegates is needed to win.

On March 4, 2008, after nearly forty primaries and caucuses across the United States, John McCain had enough delegates to win the nomination at the Republican Convention in September.

McCain is the presumptive nominee of his party.



Republican Delegate Count

John McCain: 1,331

Mike Huckabee: 264

Needed to win: 1,191

Source: CNN March 4, 2008



John McCain and his wife Cindy celebrate winning enough delegates to secure the Republican nomination for President, March 4, 2008. (©AP Images)



Super Delegates

If no one wins a majority of delegates in the Democratic primaries, the outcome could be decided by delegates who are not pledged to any candidate prior to the convention.

These unpledged delegates – informally known as super delegates – include party leaders, all Democrat members of the U.S. Congress, state governors, former U.S. Presidents and Vice Presidents, and the Mayor of Washington, DC.

In 2008 there are approximately 800 super delegates, roughly 20 per cent of the delegate total.

Many super delegates announce in advance how they will cast their vote, but are not required to do so and may change their minds at any time before the convention.



Democratic Delegate Count

Barack Obama

Pledged delegates: 1,762

Super delegates: 394

Total: 2,156

Hillary Clinton

Pledged delegates: 1,637

Super delegates: 286

Total: 1,923

Needed to win: 2,118

Source: CNN June 4, 2008



At the Conventions

Since the 1830s the major parties have chosen their candidates at national conventions, held on the eve of the fall campaign leading to the general election in November.

Delegates elect their party's nominees for President and Vice President, adopt a party platform of goals for the country, and put before a large national audience the reasons their party should win the November election.



Meet the Candidate

The conventions put their candidates into the national - and international - spotlight, showing them off to their best advantage.

Key campaign themes are addressed, and the background and experience of the candidates extolled.

Delegates and party workers are inspired to campaign hard in the weeks ahead.



John F. Kennedy arrives at the Democratic National Convention, 1960. (©AP Images)

Rising Stars

Conventions can also provide important public exposure to rising stars within their parties.

Leaders whose early convention experiences helped them to the presidency in later years include Franklin Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton, and George W. Bush.



Clockwise from top left, actor Ronald Reagan, 1964; Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1928; Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton, 1988; Texas Governor George W. Bush, 1996. (©AP Images)

Casting Their Votes

In a roll call vote the delegates from the 50 states, territories, and the District of Columbia cast their ballots according to the results of their primary elections and caucuses.

Unpledged or super delegates are free to support any candidate.

Though anything can happen at a convention, since 1976 the outcome has been clear before the balloting begins.



Casting their votes are delegates from (clockwise from top left) Pennsylvania, Hawaii, Maryland, and Florida. (©AP Images)

The Running Mate

Vice presidential candidates - called running mates - are chosen by the presidential nominees.

There are no formal rules for picking a running mate. Often they are chosen to balance the ticket - an older presidential candidate from a rural state might choose for vice president a younger candidate from a more urban, populous state.

The vice presidential nominee may be someone who did well in the primaries but lacked enough votes to win the presidential nomination outright.

Or, the vice presidential candidate may be someone well-qualified for the job but not currently in public service.



From top to bottom, Dwight Eisenhower and Richard M. Nixon, 1952; Bill Clinton and Al Gore, 1992; George W. Bush and Dick Cheney, 2000. (©AP Images)



Strategies for Winning

The primary elections are about winning delegates to the national conventions. The goal in the general election is to win a majority of votes in the Electoral College.

The Electoral College, mandated by the U.S. Constitution in 1787, grants a certain number of electors to each state. The number of electors equals the number of a state's senators and representatives in Congress. States with more people have more electors than states with fewer.

In 2008 there are a total of 538 electoral votes. 270 votes - a simple majority - are needed to win the presidency.



Idaho

Population 1,467,000

Electoral Votes 4



New York

Population 19,310,000

Electoral Votes 31

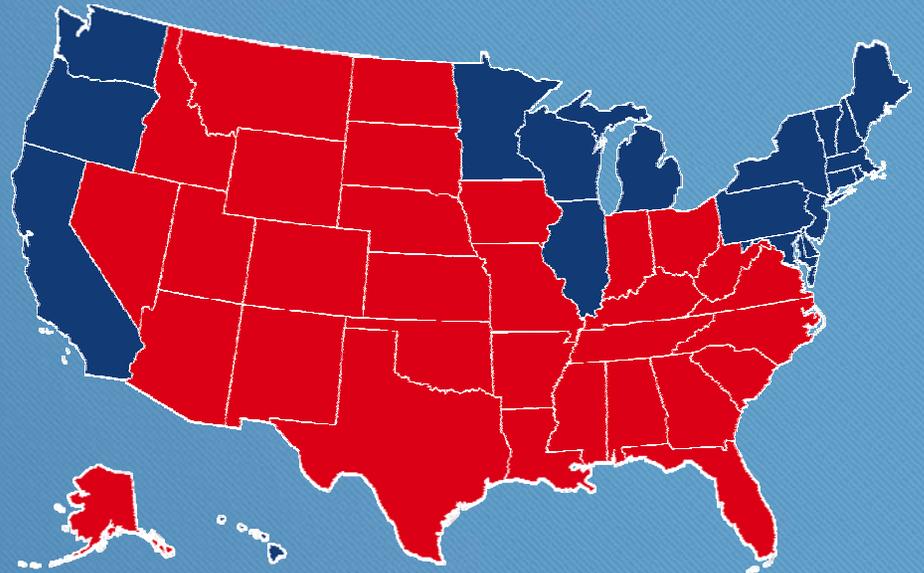




Strategies for Winning

In almost all of the states winning a simple majority of the popular vote will win 100 percent of the electoral vote. A candidate may win the popular vote in Ohio, for example, by the slimmest of margins, and reap all 20 of that state's electoral votes.

Many states consistently vote for one party or the other over the course of decades. Past election results and current opinion polls allow candidates to safely guess – in most cases – which party will win the electoral votes for that state.



1992 Democrats

2000 Republicans

1996 Democrats

2004 Republicans



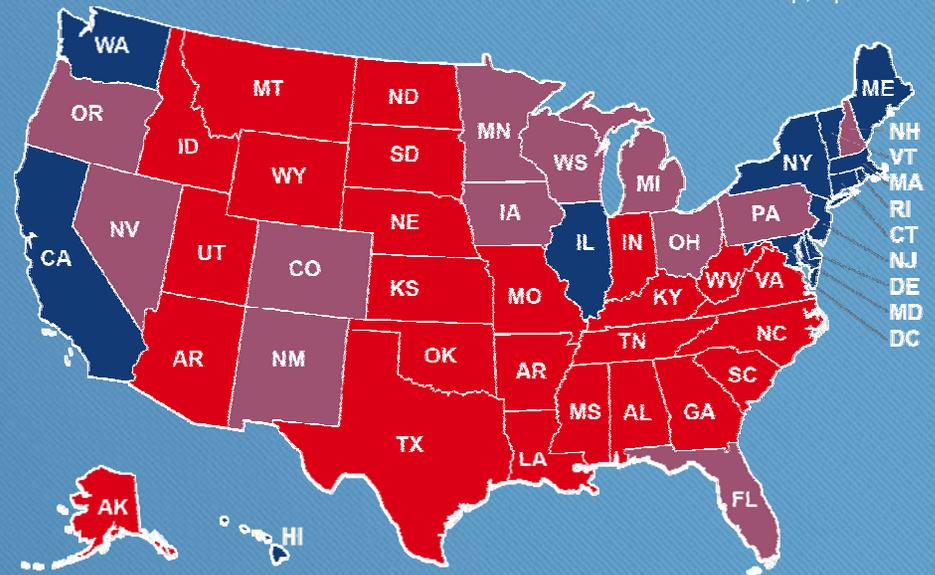


Source: Gallup, April 2008

Strategies for Winning

The states where the outcome is not clear are called swing, or battleground states. Winning a small number of these states, rich with electoral votes, can decide the outcome of the entire election.

Candidates put much of their effort, time, and money into these hotly contested states.



Likely Republican States

| | | | | | | | | |
|----|----------|----|----|----------------|----|----|---------------|----|
| AL | Alabama | 09 | LA | Louisiana | 09 | SD | South Dakota | 03 |
| AK | Alaska | 03 | MS | Mississippi | 06 | TN | Tennessee | 11 |
| AR | Arizona | 10 | MO | Missouri | 11 | TX | Texas | 34 |
| AR | Arkansas | 06 | MT | Montana | 03 | UT | Utah | 05 |
| GA | Georgia | 15 | NE | Nebraska | 05 | VA | Virginia | 13 |
| ID | Idaho | 04 | NC | North Carolina | 15 | WV | West Virginia | 05 |
| IN | Indiana | 11 | ND | North Dakota | 03 | WY | Wyoming | 03 |
| KS | Kansas | 06 | OK | Oklahoma | 07 | | | |
| KY | Kentucky | 08 | SC | South Carolina | 08 | | | |

Likely Swing States

| | | |
|----|---------------|----|
| CO | Colorado | 09 |
| FL | Florida | 27 |
| IA | Iowa | 07 |
| MI | Michigan | 17 |
| MN | Minnesota | 10 |
| NV | Nevada | 05 |
| NH | New Hampshire | 04 |
| NM | New Mexico | 05 |
| OH | Ohio | 20 |
| OR | Oregon | 07 |
| PA | Pennsylvania | 21 |
| WI | Wisconsin | 10 |

Likely Democrat States

| | | | | | |
|----|----------------------|----|----|---------------|----|
| CA | California | 55 | MD | Maryland | 10 |
| CT | Connecticut | 07 | MA | Massachusetts | 12 |
| DE | Delaware | 03 | NJ | New Jersey | 15 |
| DC | District of Columbia | 03 | NY | New York | 31 |
| HI | Hawaii | 04 | RI | Rhode Island | 04 |
| IL | Illinois | 21 | VT | Vermont | 03 |
| ME | Maine | 04 | WA | Washington | 11 |

Possible total 213

Possible total 142

Possible total 183



Electoral votes needed to win: 270

Election Day

Since 1845 U.S. presidential elections have been held on the first Tuesday following the first Monday in November, in years divisible by four.

For this election the date is November 4, 2008.

There are an estimated 150,000 to 170,000 polling places in the United States Most open before dawn, and close after dark. They are staffed by local registered voters.



Left to right, in rows from top to bottom are polling places in Dayton, Ohio; Silk Hope, North Carolina; Cleveland Heights, Ohio; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Los Angeles, California; Columbus, Ohio; Brooklyn, New York; Yampa, Colorado. (©AP Images)

Election Day

Voter participation has increased in recent elections.

Sixty-four percent of U.S. citizens age 18 and over voted in the 2004 presidential election, up from 60 percent in 2000. The rate is expected to be higher for 2008.



2004 Voter Turnout

197 million citizens eligible to vote

142 million (72 percent) registered to vote

126 million (89 percent of registered voters) voted

65 percent of women voted

62 percent of men voted

70 percent of citizens age 45 or older voted

45 percent of citizens age 18 to 24 voted

67 percent of non-Hispanic whites voted

60 percent of blacks voted

47 percent of Hispanics voted

44 percent of Asians voted

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, May 2005



Voters in Washington, DC, November 2, 2004. (photo by Tim Brown)

The Last Vote

On a Monday in December – 41 days after election day – the presidential electors meet in their state capitol buildings to formally cast their ballots for President and Vice President.

The tallies are signed by each elector and mailed to Washington, DC. There, in a joint session of Congress, the electoral votes are counted, and the candidate receiving 270 or more votes is declared to be the President-elect. The process is repeated for the Vice President.



Top, Colorado's nine Presidential Electors cast their ballots in Denver, December 13, 2004. Below, electoral votes from the 50 states and the District of Columbia are counted in a joint session of Congress, January 6, 2005. (All ©AP Images)



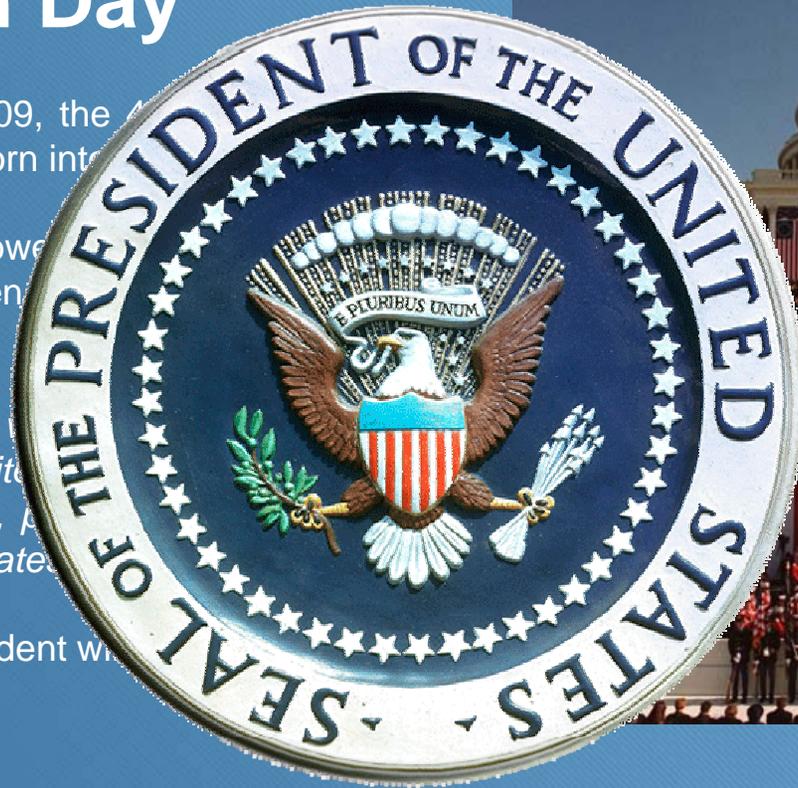
Inauguration Day

At noon on January 20, 2009, the 44th President of the United States will be sworn into office.

The peaceful transition of power is a tradition that has been carried on with a simple oath, first taken by George Washington in 1789.

"I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States."

The long campaign for President will culminate on Inauguration Day.



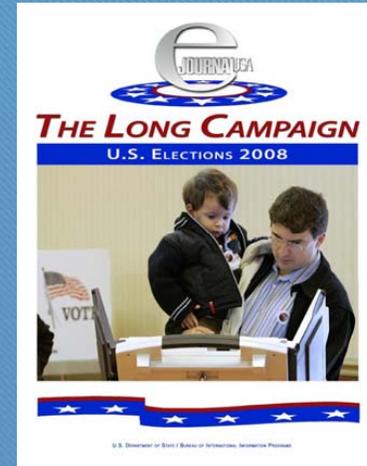
President Bill Clinton delivers his first Inaugural Address, at the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, January 20, 1993. (©AP Images)

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The screenshot shows the America.gov website's 'U.S. ELECTIONS | Guide to the 2008 Election' page. The page is organized into several columns and sections:

- Introduction:** Overview of the election process.
- CHART:** 'Path to Presidential Nominations' - A section explaining the requirements for becoming a presidential nominee, including the need for a majority of delegates at a national convention.
- Photo Gallery: The Candidates' Stories:** A section with a video player and text describing the candidates' backgrounds.
- VIDEOS:** A section with two video thumbnails: 'New Media: Moving Forward' and 'New Media: A New Era'.
- POLL:** A section titled 'Who will win the Democratic nomination?' with radio button options for Hillary Clinton, Barack Obama, and 'I Don't Know'.
- Podcast:** A section titled 'Immigration' with a description of the issue and a 'Download Now (MP3)' link.
- Articles:** A list of recent news articles, including 'Oregon Congressional Democrat Faces Challenge Within His Party', 'Big Win in North Carolina Expands Obama's Lead', and 'Clinton, Obama Target Voters in Indiana, North Carolina'.
- Resources:** A section with links for 'Frequently Asked Questions', 'Directory', and 'Links'.



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