



PRESIDENTIAL

YOUTH VOTER GUIDE



10 QUESTIONS FOR
THE NEXT PRESIDENT

A Project of Generation Vote & United States Student Association



WHAT'S THIS VOTER GUIDE ALL ABOUT?

We, Generation Vote, are a national alliance of young people who work on issues at the local level — because they directly affect our lives and our communities. If candidates want our votes, they need to get serious about the issues we face every day. This voter guide puts the views of the two leading presidential candidates side by side in addressing our most serious issues.

At the end of the day, what we want is simple — a fair chance to get an education, a job, and a place to live in a safe and sustainable world regardless of sex, race, class, identity or ability. We pay taxes, we vote and we want to live in a country that respects young people and invests in us to succeed. We're not asking for handouts. We're demanding fairness and smarter priorities.

We came up with 10 questions to ask the two leading presidential candidates. Our questions address the issues that will make or break our generation, that will answer Jay-Z's one big question: "Can I live?" If you are undecided who to vote for, or want to make your case for a particular candidate, use this voter guide as a resource to get the conversation started.

All candidate responses were drawn from the candidates' own websites. For more information about where the candidates stand on the issues, visit those sites at www.barackobama.com and www.johnmccain.com.

1 What specific proposals will you support to ensure that young people and their families can afford to pay for college without amassing an unmanageable debt?



John McCain believes the existing tax benefits are too complicated, and many eligible families don't claim them. By simplifying the existing benefits, he can ensure that a greater number of families have a lower tax burden when they are helping to send their children to college. McCain also proposed consolidating the complicated landscape of federal financial aid programs to help simplify the administration of these programs, and help more students have a better understanding of their eligibility for aid. As far as private student lending programs, John McCain has proposed an expansion of the lender-of-last resort capability of the federal student loan system and will demand the highest standard of integrity for participating private lenders. Effective reforms and leveraging the private sector will ensure the necessary funding of higher education aspirations, and create a simpler and more effective program in the process.



Obama will make college affordable for all Americans by creating a new American Opportunity Tax Credit. This universal credit will ensure that the first \$4,000 of a college education is completely free for most Americans, and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university and make community college tuition completely free for most students. Recipients of the credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of community service. Obama will also streamline the financial aid process by eliminating the current federal financial aid application and enabling families to apply simply by checking a box on their tax form, authorizing their tax information to be used, and eliminating the need for a separate application.

2 If elected, how will you ensure that young people who aren't college bound graduate from high school with the skills they need to make a living?



Obama will reform No Child Left Behind, which starts by funding the law. Obama believes teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests. He will improve the assessments used to track student progress to measure readiness for college and the workplace and improve student learning in a timely, individualized manner. Obama will also improve NCLB's accountability system so that we are supporting schools that need improvement, rather than punishing them.



McCain believes that the deplorable status of preparation for our children, particularly in comparison with the rest of the industrialized world, does not allow us the luxury of eliminating options in our educational repertoire. He will fight for the ability of all students to have access to all schools of demonstrated excellence, including their own homes.

3 What plans do you have to strengthen the economy to ensure that young people and their families can find jobs that pay a fair wage and offer them respect in the workplace?



John McCain believes that globalization is an opportunity for American workers today and in the future. 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. He opposes the Employee Free Choice Act.



Obama plans to invest in a clean energy economy and create 5 million new green jobs. He will create an energy-focused youth jobs program. Obama also believes that it is critically important for the United States to rebuild its national transportation infrastructure - its highways, bridges, roads, ports, air, and train systems - and, in so doing, will create countless jobs. Obama will strengthen the ability of workers to organize unions. He will fight for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act. Obama will ensure that his labor appointees support workers' rights and will work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers. Obama will also increase the minimum wage and index it to inflation to ensure it rises every year.

4 What are your top priorities for improving our health care system? What role do laws related to abortion play in your plan?



Obama will make available a new national health plan to all Americans. Under his plan, no American will be turned away from any insurance plan because of illness or pre-existing conditions. The plan will cover all essential medical services, including preventive, maternity and mental health care. There will be affordable premiums, co-pays and deductibles. Individuals and families who do not qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP but still need financial assistance will receive an income-related federal subsidy to obtain coverage. Obama has also been a consistent champion of reproductive choice and will make preserving women's rights under *Roe v. Wade* a priority as President. He is a co-sponsor of legislation to expand access to contraception and increase funding for comprehensive sex education that teaches both abstinence and safe sex methods.



John McCain believes the key to health care reform is to restore control to the patients themselves. Under his plan, 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. John McCain believes *Roe v. Wade* is a flawed decision that must be overturned, and as president he will nominate judges who understand that courts should not be in the business of legislating from the bench. He sees the reversal of *Roe v. Wade* as only one step in the long path toward ending abortion.

5 What are your plans to address global warming and greenhouse gas emissions?



John McCain will establish a market-based system to curb greenhouse gas emissions, mobilize innovative technologies, and strengthen the economy. He will work with our international partners to secure our energy future, to create opportunities for American industry, and to leave a better future for our children. He plans to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 60 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. He plans to reduce our dependence on foreign oil and cut greenhouse emissions through a mix of nuclear power, "clean coal" technologies, committing our country to expanding domestic oil exploration, expanding the use of domestic natural gas supplies, and investing in renewable energy sources.



Obama's comprehensive New Energy for America plan sets out to end U.S. dependence on foreign oil and cut carbon emissions. The plan will provide short-term relief to American families facing pain at the pump. It will help create five million new jobs by strategically investing \$150 billion over the next ten years to catalyze private efforts to build a clean energy future. Under the plan, within 10 years we will save more oil than we currently import from the Middle East and Venezuela combined. It will put 1 million Plug-In Hybrid cars -- cars that can get up to 150 miles per gallon -- on the road by 2015, cars that we will work to make sure are built here in America. The plan will ensure 10 percent of our electricity comes from renewable sources by 2012, and 25 percent by 2025. And it will include an economy-wide cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050.

6 What do you believe are winning strategies for reducing crime, making our streets safer, and helping communities break the cycle of violence and imprisonment?



Obama believes that America is facing an incarceration and post-incarceration crisis in urban communities. He will create a prison-to-work incentive program, modeled on the successful Welfare-to-Work Partnership and work to reform correctional systems to break down barriers for ex-offenders to find employment. In order to end the dangerous cycle of youth violence, Barack Obama will support innovative local programs, such as the CeaseFire program in Chicago, that have been proven to work. Such programs implement a comprehensive public health approach that implements a community-based strategy to prevent youth violence. He will also double funding for federal afterschool programs. In addition, he has cosponsored federal legislation to ban racial profiling and require federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to take steps to eliminate the practice.



John McCain believes we should support having parents with children in the home rather than in prison, former prisoners working and paying taxes, and citizens contributing rather than taking from the community. John McCain supported the Second Chance Act which authorized up to \$360 million for reentry services in 2009 and 2010. The Second Chance Act funds programs, many of them faith-based, which prepare prisoners for the transition from prison to society by providing job training, counseling, mentors, counseling, and more.

7 What are your policies related to the war in Iraq and defense spending generally?



McCain believes the most important weapons in the U.S. arsenal are the men and women of American armed forces, and we must enlarge the size of our armed forces to meet new challenges to our security. Throughout his career, he has fought pork-barrel defense spending that diverts scarce defense resources to parochial, home-state projects rather than addressing the needs of service personnel. He believes succeeding in Iraq is critical to American security because if our troops are ordered to retreat, we risk all-out civil war, genocide, and a failed state in the heart of the Middle East.



In 2002, as the conventional thinking in Washington lined up with President Bush for war, Obama spoke out against going to war and warned of “an occupation of undetermined length, with undetermined costs, and undetermined consequences.” Immediately upon taking office, Obama will give his Secretary of Defense and military commanders a new mission in Iraq: ending the war. The removal of our troops will be responsible and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government.

8 If elected, what changes will you support to reform our election systems and make voting easier and more accessible, especially for youth and students?



Barack Obama believes there is no more fundamental American right than the right to vote. As a community organizer, Obama helped 150,000 African Americans register to vote. And in the U.S. Senate, Obama has been a leading advocate for protecting the right to vote, helping to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act and leading the opposition against discriminatory barriers to voting.



The McCain-Palin 2008 campaign has formed an “Honest and Open Election Committee.” The core principles of the committee are (1) every eligible citizen has the right to vote and have his or her vote counted; (2) no qualified voter should have his or her vote canceled or diluted by illegal votes; (3) election officials should take necessary steps well in advance of the election to ensure that voting is orderly, efficient, and in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations; (4) election officials and campaigns should have zero tolerance for voter intimidation or discrimination in the election process based on age, sex, race, disability, political affiliation, or other categories unrelated to voter eligibility; and (5) election officials and campaigns should have zero tolerance for fraud.

9 If elected, how will you ensure that low-income and middle class Americans will be able to afford to stay in their communities and not get priced out?



John McCain has proposed a new “HOME Plan” to provide robust, timely and targeted help to those hurt by the housing crisis. Under his 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. Individuals pick up a form at any Post Office or download the form over the Internet and apply for a HOME loan. The FHA HOME Office certifies that the individual is qualified, and contacts the individual’s mortgage servicer. The mortgage servicer writes down and retires the existing loan, which is replaced by an FHA guaranteed HOME loan from a lender.



Obama believes that in the long run regions are only as strong as their people and neighborhoods. The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program is an important program that provides housing and creating jobs primarily for low- and moderate-income people and places. Barack Obama has fought against Bush Administration cuts to the CDBG program and, as president, he will restore funding for the CDBG program. In addition, Obama will crack down on fraudulent brokers and lenders. He will also make sure homebuyers have honest and complete information about their mortgage options, and he will give a tax credit to all middle-class homeowners.

10 What are your proposals for American immigration policy, and how do you propose to deal with immigrants already in this country without permission under current law?



Obama believes we need comprehensive immigration reform in this country – reform that promotes our national and economic security and creates a pathway to earned citizenship for the 12 million undocumented immigrants in this country. Obama supports a system that allows undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens. He supports the DREAM Act which would give young people who have graduated from American high schools the opportunity to earn a degree or serve in our military and eventually become legalized citizens.



John McCain’s top immigration priority is to finish securing our borders in an expedited manner. Governors of border states will be required to certify that the border is secure. John McCain will address the fact that we have a large number undocumented individuals living in the United States and working in our economy by requiring that all undocumented individuals enroll in a program to resolve their status. This program will use background checks to identify criminal aliens for prosecution and deportation. The program will also ensure that all undocumented aliens either leave or follow the path to legal residence. America cannot permit a permanent category of individuals that do not have recognized status – a permanent second class.



Generation Vote, a project of the Tides Center, is a national alliance of youth and student organizations working to engage young people from historically disenfranchised communities in the political process.