



**MIDWEST DEMOCRACY NETWORK**  
**PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE QUESTIONNAIRE**  
**ON POLITICAL REFORM**

**HILLARY CLINTON, MIKE HUCKABEE,  
JOHN MCCAIN, BARACK OBAMA, AND  
RON PAUL**

*Released on February 28, 2008*

## I. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

### **Issue: Presidential Public Financing System**

#### **Question I-A:**

As President, would you support and work to enact legislation to strengthen, keep the same, or repeal the presidential public financing system?

*Strengthen* \_\_\_\_

*Keep the same* \_\_\_\_

*Repeal* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Strengthen

**PAUL:** No response.

#### **Question I-B:**

If you are nominated for President in 2008 and your major opponents agree to forgo private funding in the general election campaign, will you participate in the presidential public financing system?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes. I have been a long-time advocate for 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. My 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 the proposal legal, and

Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has already pledged to accept this fundraising pledge. If I am the Democratic nominee, I will aggressively pursue an agreement with the Republican nominee to preserve a publicly financed general election.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: Congressional Public Financing**

**Question I-C:**

If elected President, would you support and work to enact legislation creating a voluntary public financing system for congressional candidates?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes. I am a cosponsor of the Fair Elections Now Act because I believe it imperative that we get big money out of the political process. That's why I have also made the pledge that my campaign will not accept money from special interest PACs or registered federal lobbyists.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: 527 Groups**

**Question I-D:**

Do you believe that Section 527 groups which are organized primarily to affect federal elections should be required by the Federal Election Commission and/or Congress to comply with the campaign finance laws that apply to all other candidate, party and political committees whose goal is to influence federal elections?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: U.S. Senate Campaign Disclosure**

**Question I-E:**

In the interest of increasing transparency and public accountability, should incumbent Senators, Senate candidates, and Senate campaign committees be required to file their campaign finance disclosure reports electronically?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: FEC Reform**

**Question I-F:**

As President, will you actively support and sign legislation that would replace the current Federal Election Commission with a new and more effective enforcement agency?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I believe that the FEC needs to be strengthened and that individuals named to the Commission should have a demonstrated record of fair administration of the law and an ability to overcome partisan biases. My initial goal as president will be to determine whether we can make the FEC more effective through appointments. What the FEC needs most is strong, impartial leadership that will promote integrity in our election system. That's precisely why I led the opposition to Hans von Spakovsky to serve a full term at the Commission. As president, I will

appoint nominees to the Commission who are committed to enforcing our nation's election laws. Unlike von Spakovsky, my nominees will not have a record of poor management, divisiveness, and inappropriate partisanship.

**PAUL:** No response.

## II. GOVERNMENT ETHICS

### Issue: Executive Branch Reforms

#### Question II-A:

Because many citizens believe the President bears a special responsibility for setting and enforcing high standards of honesty, transparency and accountability in government, what specific steps, if any, would you take, as President, to:

*(1) Slowdown or close the “revolving door” for high-ranking and influential administration officials who leave their positions to become high paid registered lobbyists?*

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Early in my campaign, I released a proposal to close the revolving door between the executive branch and lobbying shops. I will prohibit all political appointees from working on contracts related to their former employer for two years, and I will prohibit appointees from lobbying the executive branch after leaving office for the remainder of his administration. My political appointees will serve the American people, not their own financial interests.

**PAUL:** No response.

*(2) Limit or ban the acceptance of gifts by administration employees from lobbyists and others with an interest in influencing policy?*

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I will restore objectivity to the executive branch by banning lobbyist gifts, assuring that political appointees get their jobs based on merit and not solely on the basis of political affiliation or contribution, and removing the use of public office for partisan advantage.

**PAUL:** No response.

*(3) End insider abuses in the federal government's no-bid contract procedures?*

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** The current administration has abused its power by handing out contracts without competition to its politically connected friends and supporters. These abuses cost taxpayers billions of dollars each year. I will end abuse of no-bid contracts by requiring competitive bidding on all contracts over \$25,000 unless the contracting officer provides a written justification that the contract falls within a specified exception.

**PAUL:** No response.

*(4) Provide the public with information about the sponsors, purposes and beneficiaries of the special interest-supported appropriation "earmarks" approved by Congress?*

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Building on my "Google for Government" bill, which was signed into law and allows every American to do a simple search and see exactly how federal money is being spent, I will ensure that any tax breaks to special interests, or tax earmarks, are publicly available by directing the Office of Management and Budget to post them on its website. I will also create a "contracts and influence" database which will disclose how much federal contractors spend on lobbying, ensuring that citizens have easy access to contract details and contractor performance, such as compliance with federal regulations.

**PAUL:** No response.

*(5) Publicly disclose the content, participants and outcomes of closed-door policy-related discussions involving high administration officials and interest group representatives and lobbyists?*

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I will require my appointees who lead the executive branch departments and rulemaking agencies to conduct the significant business of the agency in public, so that any citizen can see in person or watch on the Internet as the agencies debate and deliberate the issues that affect American society. Videos of meetings will be archived on the web, and transcripts will be made available to the public. I will also require my appointees to commit to employ all the technological tools available to allow average citizens not just to observe, but to participate and be heard on the issue that affect their daily lives.

I will also ensure that communications about regulatory policymaking between private individuals and all White House staff are disclosed to the public. The Obama White House would only invoke executive privilege to protect the confidentiality of communications concerning national security and similar traditionally sensitive matters, not to withhold information about communications with special interests on regulatory policy.

Finally, under the Presidential Records Act, presidential records are supposed to be released to the public 12 years after the end of a presidential administration. In November 2001, President Bush issued an order that gave current and former presidents and vice presidents broad authority to withhold presidential records or delay their release indefinitely. As president, I will nullify the Bush order and establish procedures to ensure the timely release of presidential records.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: Congressional Reforms**

**Question II-B:**

If you were President now, would you sign, veto, or try to amend S. 1?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I voted for S. 1, the Honest Leadership and Open Government Act of 2007, and will enforce that law as president.

**PAUL:** No response.

### III. COMMUNICATIONS POLICY

#### Issue: Broadcasters' Public Interest Obligations

##### Question III-A

Do you support regulatory and legislative efforts to clarify the public interest obligations of broadcasters, including adoption of new license processing guidelines that would encourage digital broadcasters to (1) air a certain minimum number of hours of qualifying civic and/or election-related programming each week and (2) file periodic reports with the Federal Communications Commission detailing how stations are meeting this and related guidelines?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

#### Issue: Media Vouchers

##### Question III-B:

In the interest of mitigating the high costs of election campaigns, fostering electoral competition, and enabling more candidates to communicate with voters, would you, if elected President, support and sign legislation that would (1) provide qualifying congressional candidates and party committees with vouchers with which to pay for some broadcast advertising time; (2) impose a modest user fee on broadcasters' gross advertising revenues to underwrite the voucher program; and (3) allow qualified candidates and parties to purchase non-preemptible advertising time at rates below stations' lowest unit charges during the final weeks of primary and general election campaigns?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.



**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

#### **IV. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION**

***Issue:* Federal Funding for Election Reform**

***Question IV-A:*** Do you support ongoing federal funding to improve the conduct of federal elections in exchange for better information from state and local election authorities on how they are administering elections and whether they are complying with federal law?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

***Issue:* Voter Protection**

***Question IV-B:***

As President, will you insist that the Department of Justice vigorously enforce the Voting Rights Act and other federal laws in order to curtail practices and procedures that have a disproportionately negative impact on the political participation of minority, low-income, disabled, and elderly voters?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** For too many elections, misinformation and intimidation have kept thousands of Americans from voting. During the 2006 election, for example, thousands of Latino voters in Orange County, California received letters telling them that immigrants who voted would be jailed – implying that this applied to naturalized citizens. In Maryland, voters received fabricated sample Democratic ballots that featured Republican candidates for governor and senator. And in Virginia, voters were phoned by a fraudulent “Virginia Elections Commission” claiming they were ineligible to vote. These tactics most often target vulnerable communities, such as minorities, the elderly, and the disabled.

That’s why I introduced the Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Act. The bill, which recently passed the Senate Judiciary Committee, will make voter intimidation and election misinformation punishable by law, and contains strong penalties for those who commit these crimes. Furthermore, it would establish a process for providing misinformed voters with accurate information so they can cast their votes in time.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: Voter Registration**

**Question IV-C:**

As President, would you work to ensure that every eligible citizen can easily register to vote by vigorously enforcing the National Voter Registration Act’s requirements that registration services be provided at motor vehicle facilities, public assistance offices, and agencies serving people with disabilities?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** Yes.

**PAUL:** No response.

**V. REDISTRICTING**

**Issue: Once-A-Decade Redistricting**

**Question V-A:**

As President, would you support federal legislation prohibiting states from redrawing valid congressional district lines more than once a decade?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I opposed the partisan mid-decade gerrymandering that Tom Delay engineered in Texas. I believe that mid-decade redistricting is rarely justified. There may be some exceptional cases, such as a natural disaster, that create population shifts that may warrant mid-decade redistricting. But I do not support state efforts to redraw otherwise valid congressional district lines more than once a decade.

**PAUL:** No response.

**Issue: Independent Redistricting Commissions**

**Question V-B:**

As President, would you support federal legislation requiring states to form diverse, transparent, and independent redistricting commissions to redraw congressional district lines?

*Yes* \_\_\_\_

*No* \_\_\_\_

**CLINTON:** No response.

**HUCKABEE:** No response.

**MCCAIN:** No response.

**OBAMA:** I would encourage states to form such commissions.

**PAUL:** No response.