

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Introduction

Focus

Americans are seeing one of the most exciting and hard-fought races for the White House in decades. While the Republican campaign appears to be over, the Democratic race is still a cliff-hanger. In this *News in Review* story, we explain the process of becoming U.S. president and note the major political leaders involved in the chase.

On November 4, 2008, Americans elect a new president to succeed incumbent George W. Bush, who will be stepping down after two tumultuous terms in office. But the election campaigns for the presidential nominations of both major U.S. political parties—Republican and Democratic—have been underway for some time. They have captured the interest and enthusiasm of millions of Americans far more than similar electoral battles have done in the past. The field of prospective candidates seeking their party's nomination at the national conventions to be held this summer has already narrowed considerably following the primaries and caucuses held in a number of states in the first two months of 2008. By early March, Arizona Senator John McCain had locked up the Republican nomination. His last main remaining rival had been former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee.

The little-known Huckabee had surprised many with his strong showing in early January in Iowa, the first state to vote in a series of public meetings to elect convention delegates known as caucuses. He had continued to perform well in southern and Midwestern states where his socially conservative positions on issues such as abortion, school prayer, and gay marriages resonated with voters there. But as other prospective Republican candidates, including former New York City mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney dropped out of the race, throwing their support behind McCain, this long-time senator and Vietnam War hero built up an insurmountable lead among committed delegates to the Republican national convention.

McCain went on to win key primaries in important states such as New York and California, where his moderate stance on the main issues appealed to many Republicans tired of the hard-line conservatism of the Bush era. But the “religious right” of social conservatives, an important voting bloc that was instrumental in Bush's back-to-back election victories and essential for the Republicans' chances of holding on to the presidency in 2008, continues to regard McCain with suspicion. As a result, he will face a difficult challenge in securing its much-needed support in the months ahead if he is to succeed in retaining the presidency for his party.

On the Democratic side, the race for the nomination was being hotly contested by the last two candidates still in the field: New York Senator and former first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton and freshman Illinois Senator Barack Obama. Whoever finally secures the party's endorsement will make history as the first woman or African-American to run for president as the candidate of a major American political party. The other main contestant, former North Carolina senator and 2004 vice-presidential candidate John Edwards, withdrew from the race in mid-February. However, by the end of the month he had not yet thrown his support behind either of his two remaining rivals. For the Democrats, the opportunity of nominating either a woman or an African-American as their party's presidential candidate is an exciting prospect, and they are immensely proud of both contenders. The party believes it has an excellent chance to recapture the White House after eight years of Republican rule under an increasingly

Update

On March 4, important primaries in Texas, Ohio, Vermont, and Rhode Island took place. The results appear to have sealed the nomination of John McCain as Republican candidate for president. Among Democrats, the close results suggested that the long, hard-fought battle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama would continue for many weeks to come.

unpopular George W. Bush. This is because many Americans are opposed to the ongoing, costly war in Iraq that Bush began in 2003. They also hold him responsible for the growing economic problems facing the country, including rising unemployment, inflation, the lack of affordable health care, and a rash of mortgage foreclosures in the U.S.

The hotly contested race between Clinton and Obama, which at the end of February remained too close to call, was something of a surprise to many political pundits. Before the first states began voting in primaries and caucuses, most observers believed that Hillary Clinton had all but sewn up the nomination, since she enjoyed a wide lead in opinion polls, a famous name, and financial resources that dwarfed those of her opponents. For his part, Obama was a little-known senator with scant legislative experience and a slight national profile. But Obama's upset win in Iowa, which led to a string of other primary and caucus victories in many states across the country, caught the Clinton camp by surprise and put the once-confident New York senator in the unlikely position of the underdog.

On "Super Tuesday," February 4, 2008, where voters in almost half the states in the U.S. cast their ballots in a series of primaries and caucuses, the two candidates emerged neck and neck. Even though Clinton won big prizes like her home state of New York and California, which elect a large number of delegates, Obama's strong showing elsewhere put him in a dead heat with her. And in the primaries that followed Super Tuesday, he rang up an impressive total of 11 straight victories, shutting out his opponent. The soaring eloquence of Obama's speeches, his calls for change in the direction of American policies both at home and abroad, and his youth, energy, and obvious appeal to black and young voters, appeared to capture the imagination of many Americans from diverse backgrounds. While Clinton remained widely respected within the party establishment, and her policy positions on key issues differed marginally, if at all, from Obama's, the easy road to the Democratic nomination that many had predicted for her at the outset of the campaign was becoming an increasingly arduous trek, with the ultimate result very much in doubt.

To Consider

1. Why is the current U.S. presidential election campaign more interesting than previous contests?
2. Who are the main candidates still in the race for the Republican and Democratic parties? Which candidates have withdrawn?
3. What problem does John McCain face in his efforts to unite the Republicans behind his presidential bid?
4. Why has the race for the Democratic nomination been such a surprise?
5. Why will the Democrats' choice of a presidential nominee be historic no matter which of the two remaining candidates wins?
6. Who do you think will win the presidency later in the year? Why?
7. Who would you prefer to win the presidency? Why?

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Video Review

Did you know . . .

High-profile stars such as Scarlett Johansson, Herbie Hancock, will.i.am of the Black-Eyed Peas, John Legend, and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar have appeared in a YouTube video supporting the Obama campaign.

Quote

"You voted not just to make history, but to remake America."— Hillary Clinton (*Toronto Star*, February 6, 2008)

Watch the video and answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1. a) What is a primary? _____

b) What is a caucus? _____

c) What role do these processes play in the election of a U.S. president?

2. Why will the Democrats make history no matter which of the two candidates running for the nomination wins?

3. Why were the results of the Iowa caucuses such a surprise for both parties?

4. Why does John McCain attract both positive and negative responses from members of his Republican party?

5. What messages did the three main candidates for the Democratic presidential nomination present to the voters of Iowa in a bid to attract their support?

6. What moment of emotion helped Hillary Clinton temporarily regain the momentum she needed to win the New Hampshire primary over Barack Obama?

7. What candidates on the Republican side had withdrawn from the race by the end of February 2008?

8. What major endorsement did Obama gain from a prominent Democrat? Why was this so significant?

Quote

"Our time has come. Our movement is real, and change is coming to America." — Barack Obama (*Toronto Star*, February 6, 2008)

9. What role is the Internet, and particularly sites such as YouTube, playing in this U.S. election campaign? Why is it so appealing to younger voters?

10. What was "Super Tuesday" and why was it so important for both parties? What were the results of these elections for the Democrats and Republicans?

11. Which candidates appeared to have the most momentum to win their parties' nominations at this time?

For Discussion

Form groups with your classmates to discuss the following questions arising from the video. Once you have completed your discussion, report back to the rest of the class with your group's ideas about the question.

1. From the information in the video, what do you think are the main differences between the way elections are conducted in the United States and Canada?
2. What role does religion play in American politics and elections?
3. To what groups of American voters do the main candidates for both political parties appeal, and why?
4. How did the results of the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary influence the race to the White House?
5. Why is the Internet becoming such an important part of the political process in this year's U.S. presidential election?
6. For what different reasons are the Republicans and Democrats finding it difficult to choose a presidential nominee, according to David Yepsen of *The Des Moines Register*?
7. Who do you think will win the presidential nomination for the Democrats and the Republicans in 2008 and why?
8. Which candidate do you think would be best for Canada's interests? Why?

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Electing a President

Did you know . . .

Both Obama and Clinton had raised well over USD\$100-million by 2007 in their race to the White House. Hundreds of millions more will be spent in the general election to come later in the year. In the Republican race, candidate Mitt Romney spent \$35-million of his own money in a losing race.

The process of electing a U.S. president is long, expensive, and complicated, especially compared to the way Canadians elect their federal and provincial governments. Election campaigns in Canada normally take just over a month; the 2008 American presidential race began in earnest almost two years before the voters finally mark their ballots for their next president, on November 4, 2008. The road to the White House is a bumpy, exhausting, and costly one. Many of the candidates for both major parties—the Democrats and the Republicans—who announced their intention of running to succeed President George W. Bush had already withdrawn from the race by early 2008 because of limited voter support and insufficient financial backing. In order to mount an effective campaign for the presidential nomination of one of the two main U.S. political parties, one must be able to raise many millions of dollars, mainly to fund expensive television advertisements and public appearances across the country.

Americans elect a president every four years, on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Along with the presidency, they also elect one-third of the members of the 100-seat Senate, and all 435 members of the House of Representatives. Under the Constitution, U.S. presidents are entitled to serve two four-year terms in office. For this reason, George W. Bush, who was first elected in 2000 and re-elected in 2004, cannot stand again. This means that both major political parties must choose a candidate they believe has the best chance of winning the presidency in November. For the Republicans, the goal is to retain control of the White House in the post-Bush era; for the Democrats, the

challenge is to nominate someone who can end the eight years of right-wing Republican rule.

Both parties hold national conventions a few months before the election when their candidates for president are officially nominated, along with their respective running-mates for vice-president. The Democrats will hold their convention in Denver, Colorado, at the end of August, while the Republicans will meet in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in early September. In most cases these nominating conventions are nothing more than a formality, since by that time the winning candidates usually have amassed enough delegates committed to supporting them during the primaries to ensure their nomination. However, this may not be the case for the Democrats in 2008 if neither of the main candidates—Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton—is able to secure enough committed delegates prior to the convention once the primary season ends in late spring.

Over the first half of 2008, Americans of both parties have the chance to vote for the candidate of their choice for the nomination through a complicated process involving state caucuses and primary elections. The purpose of these votes is to indicate which candidates have the most popular support and, more importantly, to determine which of them will win the most convention delegates from that state. Since the political parties set the rules for the operation of state caucuses and primaries, the process can vary from state to state and also depends on whether it is a Democratic or Republican race. One major difference is the fact that most of the Republican primaries are winner-take-all, meaning that whichever candidate

Definition

A *primary* is an election where registered voters cast their ballots, while a *caucus* is a meeting or series of meetings where party members discuss and then vote for their candidates.

wins the most votes in that state also wins all the delegates. On the other hand, the Democrats follow a system of proportional representation, under which the number of delegates each candidate wins is in proportion to the percentage of the vote he or she won in that state.

By the end of February 2008, primaries and caucuses had been held in most states. On the Republican side it appeared that Arizona Senator John McCain was well on his way to securing his party's presidential nomination. To win, he needed 1191 delegate votes, and he had already gained 1033, compared with his nearest rival, former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee's 247. For most observers it appeared almost certain that McCain would be the party's nominee. However, for the Democrats things were far less clear. To secure his or her party's nomination, the successful candidate had to win 2 025 delegates, and the two main candidates, Illinois Senator Barack Obama and New York Senator Hillary Clinton, were both far from achieving that figure. The race was very close, with Obama holding 1 369 delegates to Clinton's 1 267. What complicates the Democratic race even further is the fact that along with delegates elected at the state level through the process of primaries and caucuses, there are also over 800 "superdelegates." They are chosen by the national party. They are generally elected legislators and leaders of the party. They do not have to declare their support for either candidate until the convention is held.

After the conventions have met and the parties have nominated their respective presidential and vice-presidential candidates, the last and most important lap of the marathon race for the White House really begins. From September to the general election in early November, the nominees criss-cross the country,

focusing their efforts and spending on a number of populous "battleground" states that hold the key to victory. This is because Americans do not actually elect their president by popular vote, but through a complicated institution called the Electoral College. Under the Constitution, each state is granted a number of presidential electors equalling its total number of senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress.

While all states, from the most to the least populous, have two senators, large states like New York, California, Florida, and Texas have many more Representatives than smaller ones such as Vermont or Wyoming. In addition, the federal District of Columbia, which elects no senators or representatives, has three presidential electors. There are 100 senators and 435 members of the House of Representatives that, when combined with the D.C. electors, result in a total of 538 members of the Electoral College. To secure the presidency, the winning candidate must secure a majority vote in the Electoral College, or 270 electoral votes.

Unlike the Democratic primaries, the presidential election in all states except Maine and Colorado is a winner-take-all affair, meaning that the candidate who carries the state wins all of its electoral votes. Thus it is mathematically possible for a candidate to win the presidency by carrying only 11 of the most populous states, even if he or she were to lose all the other states and win fewer votes overall than his or her main rival. While such a scenario is highly unlikely, it has happened in the past that the decision of the presidential electors did not reflect the will of the majority of American voters. For example, in 2000 George W. Bush actually won many fewer votes nation-wide than his opponent, Vice-President Al Gore. However, he was elected anyway because he carried

enough electoral votes to secure the presidency as a result of an extremely narrow and disputed victory in the state of Florida that took months to resolve after the election. While some Americans believe the Electoral College is an undemocratic institution that should be abolished, such a step would require an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, a measure that would have to obtain the consent of two-thirds of the states and equivalent majorities in both houses of Congress. This is highly unlikely to occur.

Whoever wins a majority in the Electoral College, whose members cast their deciding ballots for the next

president one month after the general election, will be officially sworn in as the 44th U.S. president at the gala inaugural ceremony held in Washington, D.C., in January 2009. At that time the long campaign road to the White House will be finally over and the winner can assume the world's most important and powerful political position. But within two years of the next president's first term in office, potential candidates for the party that does not control the White House will be organizing their own campaigns to replace him or her and another long and costly battle for the White House will begin again.

Analysis

1. What are some major differences between the way Americans and Canadians elect their political leaders?
2. What important role does the U.S. Constitution play in setting the rules for presidential elections?
3. Why are state primaries and caucuses such an important part of the presidential election campaign, even before the parties have nominated their candidates?
4. Why might the Democratic national convention in August 2008 be more important than most of these events?
5. What is the Electoral College, and what important role does it play in the selection of a U.S. president?
6. Do you think the United States should abolish the Electoral College and instead choose its president by direct popular vote? Why/why not?

Source: CBC News In Depth, "The long road to the White House," www.cbc.ca/news/background/usvotes/process.html; "Q&A: US election delegates," <http://newsvote.bbc.co.uk>; CNN election coverage www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Profiles of the Major Candidates

Further Research

To learn more about the major candidates, consider a visit to their official Web sites: Barack Obama (www.barackobama.com), Hillary Clinton (www.hillaryclinton.com), John McCain (www.johnmccain.com), and Mike Huckabee (www.mikehuckabee.com).

Did you know . . .

Michelle Obama was a senior lawyer assigned to mentor and tutor her future husband.

Barack Obama

“This isn’t just about the past, it’s about the future. I don’t talk about my opposition to the war in Iraq to say ‘I told you so.’” — Barack Obama

Illinois Senator Barack Obama has captured the imagination and enthusiasm of millions of Americans who normally do not pay much attention to politics. This is largely due to his magnetic, charismatic public image, his impressive oratorical abilities, his youth, and the fact that he has been able to tap into a strong desire for change in the direction of America’s politics and channel it in his favour. Most Americans had their first taste of the Obama magic during the 2004 Democratic National Convention, where he delivered a stirring keynote address to the party faithful and was catapulted onto the national political stage. Prior to that, he was practically unknown outside his home state of Illinois, where he was serving as a state senator representing the Chicago area. But within months of his convention debut, Obama would go on to win election to the U.S. Senate, setting the stage for his presidential bid, which he announced in early 2007 after having gained only two years of political experience in Washington.

Obama’s background is quite cosmopolitan and differs markedly from his political rivals in both parties. He was born in Hawaii on August 4, 1961, to a black Kenyan father and a white Kansas-born mother. When Obama was very young, his father, after whom he had been named, returned to Kenya, leaving him and his mother behind. Shortly after, his mother, Ann, remarried an Indonesian businessman, and the family settled in Jakarta, where Obama attended

school. Even though his stepfather was a Muslim, Barack’s education was entirely secular, and he was not raised in the Islamic faith, although his middle name, Hussein, is a common Muslim name.

As a teenager, Obama returned to Hawaii to attend college and live with his grandparents. While studying, he became involved in some of the main political issues of the 1970s and 80s, including the worldwide campaign to end the racist apartheid system in South Africa. Obama’s political awakening led him to studies in political science at New York’s Columbia University, followed by three years as a community activist in the disadvantaged and mainly black communities of Chicago’s south side. In 1988 he returned to school, obtaining a law degree from Harvard, where he became the first African-American president of the prestigious Harvard Law Review. After graduating, he returned to Chicago to practise civil-rights law, representing victims of discrimination in city housing and employment. There he met his future wife, Michelle Robinson, a fellow lawyer. Barack and Michelle married in 1992, and the Obamas now have two young daughters, Natasha and Malia. Michelle Obama has energetically campaigned with her husband during his presidential nomination bid and is extremely popular with African-American women.

Obama is the author of two best-selling books, *Dreams from My Father*, a memoir of his separation and eventual reconciliation with his father, and *The Audacity of Hope*, which states his political beliefs. As the first African-American to become a serious presidential contender, Obama has had to deal with the contentious issue of race in U.S. politics. The great civil-rights leader

Did you know . . .
On Super Tuesday over 14 million Democrats cast their ballots and, in the end, only 53 000 votes separated Obama and Clinton in the states involved in the balloting.

Martin Luther King Jr. is one of his role models, and his speeches appear to have been influenced by King's inspiring flights of oratory. At the same time, he has been careful to distance himself from other African-American political leaders, such as Rev. Jesse Jackson, whose abortive bids for the Democratic presidential nomination in the 1980s appeared to divide Americans along racial lines. Instead, Obama has called for an inclusive, "colour-blind" U.S., where the categories of black and white would not continue to pit people against each other.

Obama's presidential bid was not given much chance of success when it began, but in the first months of 2008 he confounded the pundits, first by winning the Iowa caucuses, and then by rebounding from a narrow loss to Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire. Since the showdown of "Super Tuesday," where he held the New York senator to a draw, he has scored an impressive series of primary victories in a number of states and gained support from an ever-widening cross-section of U.S. voters. Obama's campaign is a media phenomenon that has attracted young first-time voters and previously disaffected African-Americans who had all but given up on politics.

As the last primaries appeared on the horizon, and he was moving steadily ahead of Hillary Clinton in the total delegate count, Obama also was gaining more support from voting blocs that had previously leaned toward Clinton, including Hispanics, blue-collar workers and women. And as his campaign gained momentum, he was able to amass a formidable financial war chest that could compete with Clinton's legendary fund-raising abilities. This would prove crucial in the states still to vote, including Ohio, Texas, and Pennsylvania, where a flood of television ads promoting his candidacy and his

charisma were broadcast to sway undecided voters there. Meanwhile, the pool of superdelegates, party insiders who were mainly leaning toward Clinton, now appeared to be splitting more evenly between the two candidates.

Hillary Rodham Clinton

"It's easy to give a speech about restoring the middle class but it is hard to actually do it. We've been there before with a president who leaves the economic cupboard empty on Election Day." — Hillary Rodham Clinton

Most American political observers predicted that Hillary Rodham Clinton would be a shoo-in for her party's presidential nomination when the race among the Democratic candidates began. As a former first lady during the two terms of her husband, former president Bill Clinton, and a New York senator since 2000, Hillary Clinton had earned for herself a strong record of political experience and achievements. She enjoys a high profile both at home and abroad for her tireless efforts promoting women's rights, health care, and job creation, and as a senator has been instrumental in securing the passage of key legislative initiatives. As a result of her impressive credentials, she has promoted herself to the voters as the candidate of proven experience, as opposed to her main opponent, Barack Obama, who has only sat in the U.S. Senate for two years and has few legislative accomplishments to his credit. But Clinton's early lead began to vanish after the first caucuses and primaries were held, and by the end of February 2008 she found herself in a closely contested race with Obama for a nomination many once believed was hers for the taking. Clinton is a poised and confident woman who shines in debates, where her mastery of detail and her ability to cut to the crux of any

issue impresses many. But her somewhat cool, detached public persona does not always ingratiate herself to voters, and it was only after a moment captured on television, where she briefly lost her composure and revealed her emotions about her commitment to politics, that she began to connect with many average Americans. It is widely believed that this moment of emotion was enough for her to eke out a narrow victory over Obama in the New Hampshire primary.

Hillary Rodham was born in Chicago on October 26, 1947, the daughter of a former U.S. Navy officer who always expected nothing but the best from her. She credits her family with giving her the drive, determination, and iron will that have served her well in her political career. She studied at Wellesley College and Yale University, where she obtained a law degree. At Yale, she met a young graduate student from Arkansas named Bill Clinton, and they were married in 1973. Five years later, Bill Clinton won election as governor of Arkansas, and Hillary became one of his closest political advisors. The Clintons have one daughter, Chelsea, who was born in 1980 and is now a strong supporter of her mother's presidential bid. Clinton is the author of many books, including *Living History*, a memoir of her years in the White House, and *It Takes a Village*, a commentary on the need for communities to co-operate to achieve social goals.

Clinton proved her loyalty to her husband through a series of embarrassing and widely covered affairs he conducted with other women, including Gennifer Flowers, a former Miss Arkansas, and even more sensationally with Monica Lewinsky, a young White House intern with whom Clinton pursued a much-publicized liaison during his first and second terms as president. This second scandal almost cost Clinton the presidency, as he narrowly avoided an

impeachment vote in the Senate in 1999. Throughout this ordeal, Hillary Clinton remained loyal to her husband and denounced his political and media critics as a "vast right-wing conspiracy" that she believed was determined to remove him from office. As first lady during her husband's first term as president, from 1993 to 1997, Clinton was also instrumental in seeking to achieve a national public health-care system for Americans.

Her failure to bring this program to fruition left her determined to try again as the Democratic nominee, and as a result she has made health care one of the major issues of her campaign. But her vote in the Senate in support of President Bush's war in Iraq in early 2003 has come back to haunt her in the campaign because of the attacks on her position from her main rival, Barack Obama, who was opposed to the war from the start. While Clinton now claims she no longer supports the Iraq war and calls for U.S. troops to be withdrawn, her earlier support for a now extremely unpopular conflict has cost her dearly with strongly anti-war Democratic primary voters.

As first lady and U.S. senator, Clinton has always been a political figure who has attracted strong support and equally strong opposition. She is viewed as someone with great intelligence, poise, and legislative experience, but also as a divisive figure whose manner alienates many voters. To many women, she represents the hope that she may succeed in breaking through the "glass ceiling" by becoming the first female president, and she continues to enjoy solid backing among some of the core constituencies of the Democratic Party, including Hispanic voters, women, and industrial workers. However, she had been caught by surprise by Obama's unexpectedly powerful challenge to a nomination she believed at the outset to

be hers, and has sometimes responded with anger and frustration to the Illinois senator, particularly over what she views as his lack of experience compared with her own record. Whether she is able to rescue what was increasingly appearing to be a floundering candidacy in the days before the key primaries in Texas and Ohio remains to be seen.

John McCain

“For all of the grandiose promises made in this campaign, has any candidate spoken honestly to the American people about the government’s role and failings and about individual responsibility?”

— John McCain

Arizona Senator John McCain is a straight-shooting, sometimes blunt politician with a chequered past in his own Republican Party. The fact that he had all but locked up the presidential nomination by the end of February 2008 was one of the biggest surprises of the campaign, since his presidential bid, always a long-shot, had more than once been given up for dead. Should McCain be elected president in November 2008, he will make history as the oldest incoming U.S. president, at the age of 72. McCain’s single-minded pursuit of his party’s leadership, against formidable opponents, strong internal opposition, and long odds, is a testament to his determination and strength of character, which were tested severely during over five years in captivity in North Vietnam as a U.S. prisoner of war.

McCain was born on August 29, 1936, in the Panama Canal Zone, then a U.S.-administered territory surrounding the strategic Panama Canal. His father was a career Navy officer, and McCain followed in his footsteps, graduating from the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, Maryland, in 1958 and beginning a 22-year stint as a Navy pilot. He was deployed to Vietnam in 1967

and was shot down during a bombing run in North Vietnam, narrowly escaping death by drowning as he floundered with both arms broken in a lake near the power station his bombs had just destroyed. Local peasants rescued him and handed him over to the authorities. For the next five years, he endured the harsh conditions of a North Vietnamese prison, which captured U.S. pilots nicknamed the “Hanoi Hilton.” There, he claims to have been subjected to severe interrogations and beatings that caused permanent damage to one arm, already injured when he ejected from his fighter-bomber. Largely because of his own experience as a POW, McCain has strongly condemned the use of torture and other brutal interrogation techniques that U.S. troops have meted out to prisoners in Abu Graib prison in Iraq and at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

McCain was freed from captivity in 1973 as the Vietnam War was coming to an ignominious end for the United States. He returned to active duty back home until his retirement from the services in 1981. One year later, he was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives from Arizona, and in 1986 won a seat in the Senate, which he has held since then. As a Republican senator, McCain showed a great ability to work in a bipartisan way with his Democratic colleagues to promote a number of major legislative initiatives. These include a law to introduce carbon trading and binding carbon dioxide targets to curb global warming, which he co-sponsored with Democratic Senator Joe Lieberman, who ran for vice-president in 2000, and a controversial immigration bill that offered an amnesty to illegal immigrants living in the United States, which failed to pass through Congress in 2007. In 2002, he co-sponsored a bill with Wisconsin Democratic Senator Russ Feingold to reform U.S. election financing laws in order to reduce the

Definition

Bipartisan refers to a situation where members of two parties, factions, or groups work together to make an agreement or proposal. In the U.S., Republicans and Democrats often work across party lines, a situation that is rare in the Canadian political system.

influence of big money and powerful pressure groups on the American political system.

Because of his stands on issues such as global warming, illegal immigration, and campaign finance reform, McCain has incurred the wrath of the Republican right-wing, which strongly opposes his positions. In addition, his liberal views on abortion and the role of religion in U.S. political life have also put him at odds with the “religious right,” a core Republican constituency responsible for delivering two presidential election victories to George W. Bush. Right-wing radio and television commentators such as Rush Limbaugh and Ann Coulter have been vehement in their denunciations of McCain and their warnings about what may lie in store for the Republican Party should he win the nomination. As a result, he has been obliged to offer conciliatory gestures to the party’s right-wing, assuring them of his conservative credentials and record, particularly on economic issues. He has also strongly supported the war in Iraq, calling for a greater commitment of U.S. troops to secure victory over insurgents, while at the same time levelling harsh criticisms of the way his Republican president, George W. Bush, has managed the conflict since it began in 2003.

Despite the many challenges his campaign has faced, McCain has persevered doggedly through the ups and downs of the primary season, overcoming serious financial shortfalls and facing off against well-funded rivals such as former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani and multimillionaire former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney. Both chose to back him once their own campaigns had run aground. His one significant rival for the nomination, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, had strong support among social conservatives, particularly in southern states, but was far behind McCain in his delegate total. In early March, Huckabee ceased to be a challenger to the maverick Arizona Senator and prospective Republican presidential candidate. McCain is the author of a series of books stressing themes such as personal bravery, patriotism, and loyalty, whose titles include *Hard Call*, *Character is Destiny*, *Why Courage Matters*, *Worth Fighting For*, and *Faith of My Fathers*.

Source: <http://newsvote.bbc.uk> profiles of Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, and John McCain, www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/, CNN election coverage, and www.nytimes.com, *The New York Times* election coverage, candidate profiles

Inquiry

1. From the profiles above, what are the main similarities and differences among the three major candidates for the U.S. presidential nomination, in terms of a) background, b) political experience, and c) views on important national issues?
2. What do you think are the most important strengths and weaknesses of each of the three main presidential candidates? Which of these do you consider most significant for the success of their campaigns, and why?
3. Based on your reading of the profiles, which of the three candidates for the U.S. presidency would you like to see elected president, and why?

THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE WHITE HOUSE

Activity: The Road to Victory

On March 4, 2008, voters in four states—Vermont, New Hampshire, Ohio, and Texas—voted in Republican and Democratic primaries. The results decided the outcome of the Republican nomination contest, with front-runner John McCain reaching the magic number of 1 191 delegates needed to clinch victory. His main rival, Mike Huckabee, conceded defeat. The next day, McCain met with President Bush to receive his formal endorsement. For McCain, who had also contested the nomination against Bush in 2000 without success, his triumph was a vindication of his determination to overcome long odds to win his party's support.

On the Democratic side, however, the race between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama looked certain to continue for some time, after Clinton scored a major comeback victory in three states: Rhode Island, and the two prizes of the night, Texas and Ohio. Had she failed to carry either of these big, delegate-rich states, the future of her campaign bid would have been very uncertain—to say the least. Although she still narrowly trailed Obama in the overall delegate count, her victories were immensely important, breathing new life into what was beginning to appear to be a faltering campaign, and stalling the momentum of Obama's drive for the nomination, which was starting to seem inevitable.

The next major primary, in Pennsylvania, will not be held until April 22. Until then, the two contenders for the Democratic Party nomination will continue their struggle within their own party's ranks, while McCain, his nomination victory behind him, will enjoy the luxury of planning his run for the presidency.

Your Task

Form groups to prepare and present a report to the class on one of the following candidates for the U.S. presidency: John McCain (Republican), Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton (Democrat).

Your report should include the following:

1. Background information on the candidate (see the profiles on pages 40-44)
2. Their positions on the main issues in the campaign
3. The successes and failures of their campaign strategies so far
4. A possible campaign strategy they could follow in the months leading up to the general election in November 2008
5. A brief statement indicating which candidate you think is most likely to become the next president of the United States and why

After each of the groups has reported, stage a mock debate among the candidates with one person from each group representing one of the candidates.

The following Web sites should be consulted for this activity:

- John McCain: www.johnmccain.com
- Barack Obama: www.barackobama.com
- Hillary Clinton: <http://hillaryclinton.com>

In addition, the following Web sites contain useful information about the candidates, parties, issues, and important events:

- CNN election site: www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/
- *The New York Times* election site: www.nytimes.com/pages/politics/index.html