

US Election Topics

Selected by Students at Kettle Moraine High School

Topic 1: Federal Marriage Amendment (by Erik Helwig)

An issue that is greatly debated in politics today is the issue of same-sex marriage. Since the founding of the United States, the licensing of marriage has been left to the states to decide. Much debate has reached the federal level, however, after the Massachusetts Supreme Court allowed gay marriages earlier this year. This would mean all the states would have to honor any same-sex couple's marriage status and they would have equal rights under the law.

Another form of bonding in the US is to form a civil union. This is a union recognized by the government that grants some but not all of the rights of a marriage. This is the stem of the debate.

President George W. Bush, and much of the Republican Party, has expressed their views on gay-marriage since the Massachusetts Supreme Court's decision. He is totally opposed to same-sex marriage. He has said many times that he will call for a constitutional amendment protecting marriage if it is necessary. "Marriage is a sacred institution between a man and a woman," says Bush and he will fight to protect his opinion by supporting a change to the US Constitution protecting traditional marriage.

Presidential candidate Senator John Kerry does also oppose the decision of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. However, he will not support a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage. He believes all people are entitled to civil unions.

Gays and lesbians across the nation are calling for equal rights. They believe they are entitled to the rights protected under marriage just like everyone else. They want the government to recognize fully their relationships. These citizens are most affected by the issue.

The issues seems to be related to ideas of religion. Many people oppose gay marriage in the US because their religion disapproves of it. Also, tradition speaks for many people as this issue is very new. Not many people have had to think about same-sex marriage and don't see why there needs to be a change. It is not easy to tell who is on which side of the debate, because the decision is based mostly on personal morals.

This debate deals heavily with equal rights of citizens. The main argument of the supporters is that all US citizens should be treated equally. It is clear that the American Government still has to deal with ideas written out more than 200 years ago. People from other countries can see how US citizens have an active role in their government. The politicians listen to the people and changes can be made if there is enough support.

Search these sites to learn more about political issues:

GeorgeWBush.com

JohnKerry.com

FOXNews.com

CNN.com

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Topic 2: Health Care & the 2004 Presidential Election

(By: Kelly Meidenbauer)

Health care is a common issue brought up both President Bush and Senator John Kerry. Both candidates feel that health care should be more affordable and should be higher quality for Americans.

President Bush wants to give a tax credit to low-income families and individuals for health insurance, a low-premium, high deductible health plan and an Health Savings Account (H.S.A.). Also Bush proposes a tax credit for H.S.A. contributions to aide families and individuals who work for small businesses fund their H.S.A. To help smaller employers with purchasing power, the President will allow small businesses to group together and negotiate for their employees and their families. Also Bush want to expand Association Health Plans (AHP). He supports this so individuals can buy health insurance from a group other than an employer. This would mean that charitable and civic groups, churches, and other organizations could give health insurance to their members. Bush also wants people to be able to shop for health coverage across state lines. He also wants to open and expand health centers to more American people. He wants to make sure that even the poorest communities have health centers to go to. As for the costs of health care he has plans to lower costs. Bush promotes health information technology. He fights for medical liability reforms and against health care fraud and waste.

Senator John Kerry also has plans to improve health care in America. Kerry wants to cut premiums. He plans to cut family premiums by up to \$1,000. He also plans to cover all Americans with quality health care. Kerry plans to give every American access to high-quality and affordable plans that are available to Congress; broaden coverage to 95% of Americans, that's including every American child. He also wants to cut the cost of prescription drugs. He plans to do this by allowing re-importation of dependable prescription drugs from Canada, repairing the Medicare plan, giving low cost drugs, and ending false barriers to drug competition. Kerry also wants to do away with waste and inefficiency. He plans to cut paperwork and administrative processing, this is about 25% of cost.

Almost all Americans are effected by health care. By the candidates plans it seems that small businesses and children are a main factor in health care reforms. They seem to want to make sure that the all "little guys" in America will be insured. Both President Bush and Senator Kerry have also said that they want to insure American children. I believe that both candidates have effective ways to help with health care. The most important thing for them to do is to make health care affordable to all Americans, as it is now not available to all.

Sites that give information on Health Care and how the candidates stand on the issues are:

<http://www.georgewbush.com/HealthCare/>

<http://www.georgewbush.com/agneda/chapter.aspx?ID=2>

http://www.johnkerry.com/issues/health_care/

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Topic 3: Military Draft (by Jaclyn Ramm)

For young people today, it's a foreign concept, but the draft was used to forcibly recruit soldiers in every major US war from the Civil War to Vietnam. Before the draft was suspended in 1973, more than 1.8 million men were drafted for Vietnam.

Reinstatement of the draft today seems like a possibility given the current military actions in the Middle East. Two bills are in Congress seeking to reinstate the draft, and make it valid to draft both genders. Bush administration has repeatedly denied there is any need for a new draft.

Under the bills, both men and women from 18 to 25 years old could be drafted for two-year stints until military needs were met, with the remainder serving some type of civilian service. Draftees couldn't hide out in college the way thousands of men did during Vietnam, including Vice President Dick Cheney. Rescheduling only would be allowed until a draftee graduated from high school or for extreme hardship or physical or mental disability.

During Vietnam, more than 1.8 million men were drafted, but most of the National Guard stayed home. The situation has been reversed in Iraq. There is no draft now, but approximately 40 percent of the more than 140,000 US troops in Iraq and Kuwait are National Guard or Reserve units.

Democratic presidential candidate John Kerry, a Vietnam veteran who opposes reinstatement of the draft, has called the stop-loss order "a backdoor draft" because "people serving beyond the time of their voluntary service are no longer volunteers." If elected, Kerry wants to add 40,000 more full-time soldiers to the military and expand the role of allied forces in Iraq.

Since 1980, all 18- to 25-year-old men in America have been required to register with the Selective Service in case the draft is reinstated. Failure to register is a felony punishable by up to five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine.

For more information, look at:

<http://www.alternet.org/election04nm/19376/>

<http://www.issues2000.org/default.htm>

<http://www.commondreams.org/headlines03/0123-04.htm>

Topic 4: Education (by Valera Smokvin)

Education in the US is a right guaranteed by laws and government policies. Parents want their children to gain a good education to prepare them for college and career. Students want a good education and opportunity to participate in a variety of school-sponsored activities like athletics, music, theater and more. The community and businesses want a workforce with the skills and knowledge to do jobs well. Yet, US students' grades in math and science are falling behind the achievements of students in other countries around the world. All of these issues center on one thing...public education.

In this election, some of the basic issues of education revolve around how much the president will contribute to the cost of schools and their programs. Public schools are funded by taxes paid by property owners. Local or state governments collect the property taxes and then distribute portions of it to schools throughout the state. The Federal Government provides some of the funds needed for large programs provided by public schools like lunch programs, transportation, early childhood education (for children ages 3-5) and education for students with mental, physical or emotional disabilities.

John Kerry plans on spending \$30 billion over 10 years to boost teacher quality. His belief is that if teachers are well-trained and knowledgeable, they will be more successful helping students learn. John Kerry also plans to help students pay for college with a program called the College Opportunity Tax Credit.

George Bush has given \$412 million to 20 states to improve reading in elementary and secondary schools. His hope is that improving reading in the earlier grades will allow students to be more successful later in life. Bush also supports early learning programs and regular testing of student performance.

Students and teachers will be affected by the outcome of the US Presidential election. Both men are planning on doing a lot and hopefully both of them will increase the resources dedicated to education through out America. There is no simple solution to the challenges facing US education.

To find out more about how the US Presidential candidates feel about education, check out these great resources:

http://www.issues2000.org/Celeb/George_W_Bush_Education.htm

<http://www.johnkerry.com/issues/education/>