

Executive Summary of the Evaluation and Ranking/Grading Document of Five Candidates in the 2008 US Presidential Election

Evaluation and Ranking/Grading Document
Completed by The Foundation for Democratic
Advancement (October, 2008)

Purpose: Determine a ranking and grades for three main candidates for the 2008 US Presidency, in terms of the better representative of the United States as a whole.

This determination is an outside perspective to give the citizens of the American an informed different perspective of three candidates running for the 2008 US Presidency. The views in this Evaluation/Ranking/Grading are the views of the FDA. Also, the Determination is an example of a way to assist in the selection of political candidates--through evaluation and ranking/grading.

The five Main Candidates for the 2008 US Presidency:

John McCain (Republican)

Barack Obama (Democrat)

Ralph Nader (Third Party candidate—independent)

Bob Barr (Third party candidate—Libertarian Party)

Chuck Baldwin (Third Party candidate—The Constitution Party)

* Though Mr. McCain and Mr. Obama are the main presidential candidates, Mr. Baldwin, Mr. Nader, and Mr. Barr were added due to the apparent quality of their candidacies. Mr. Paul was not added, because in September, 2008 he endorsed Mr. Baldwin for president.

The FDA and its members are in no way affiliated with any of the candidates in this study.

The study represents an independent assessment of five US Presidential candidates based on objectivity, transparency, and non-partisanship.

Methodology for Evaluation and Ranking of the US Presidential candidates:

Evaluate the candidates as representatives of the United States—backgrounds and visions.

Evaluate the policies of the respective political parties.

Key policy areas to be evaluated:

Economy: (sound, fiscal management of public revenue and expenditure, and fair distribution of government expenditure to all sectors of America.)

Health: (sound health care policy for Americans, which meets the needs of Americans and makes economic sense)

Environment: (more responsible, sustainable management of the United States environment)

Foreign policy (sound, responsible use of the United States' resources and military personnel outside in foreign lands)

Weighting:

Because the candidates are mere extensions of the parties, and party policies are significant in terms of what the candidate offers for the United States as a whole, policies are given triple the weight over the background of the candidates.

This weighting should not impact the significance of candidates' visions, because vision should be reflected in policies.

Overall: Establish the basic priority of the United States as a whole, and use the basic priority to evaluate and rank the candidates in terms of their backgrounds and visions.

The basic priority of the United States as a whole in terms of presidential representative:

Leadership—identifies issues and act on them, vision, strength to carry through, independent yet team player, and strong communication with public.

The FDA selected leadership because of the 2008 US and world economic troubles, and outstanding US foreign affairs issues including the ongoing occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Methodology for Ranking:

Rank each candidate for the basic priority, and then rank overall based on a combination of the results for each candidate section.

The policy sections to be evaluated correspond to the basic priorities for policy:

1. sound, fiscal management of public revenue and expenditure, and fair distribution of government expenditure to all sectors of the United States
2. sound health care policy for Americans, which meets the needs of Americans and makes economic sense
3. more responsible, sustainable management of the American environment
4. sound, responsible use of American resources and military personnel in foreign lands

Evaluate the policies of the political parties in each policy section based on a comparison of the political parties' policies in light of the basic priorities and comparative soundness.

Chief Evaluator:

Stephen Garvey, President and CEO of the FDA. Mr. Garvey has recent experience working on the Baker Mountain Quality of Life Assessment, Evaluation/Ranking/Garding of the 2008 Canadian Federal Election—Kootenay-Columbia riding, 2008 Alberta Provincial parties in the 2008 Alberta election, and the Alderman candidates in the 2007 Lethbridge Alberta, Municipal election.

Information sources:

Media articles and analysis of candidates.

Political parties policy statements, including policy promises.

Speeches by the candidates.

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Three policy areas:

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Backgrounds

John McCain

Summary:

Political: 25 years experience in US senate and congress

Professional: 27 years in US navy; received 5 navy honors

Barack Obama

Summary:

Political: 4 years in state congress, 4 years in US Senate (junior senator)

Professional: lawyer and lecturer in constitutional law

Ralph Nader

Summary:

Political: ran five times, unsuccessfully for US president; credited for preventing Al Gore from winning the 2000 election, by attracting votes away from Gore. (Never been an elected official.)

Professional: author on consumer protection; extensive non-profit work including setting up various non-profit organizations; advocate for consumer protection; lawyer

Bob Barr

Summary:

Political: 8 years in US House of Representatives

Professional: lawyer, author, public speaker, various non-profit work dealing with civil liberties in particular privacy, 1986-1990 US Attorney General for the Northern District of Georgia, 1971-1978 official with the CIA.

Chuck Baldwin

Summary

Political: ran as US vice president nominee in 2004

Professional: over 35 years lay preacher in jails, minister, author.

Background Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: Leadership--identifies issues and act on them, vision, strength to carry through, independent yet team player, and strong communication with public.

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	9/10	5/10	8/10	8/10	4/10

Rational: McCain has extensive experience serving America in the Navy and extensive political experience in the US House of Representatives and Senate; Obama has minimal political and professional experience; Nader has extensive experience with consumer protection in other civil areas, and political experience from running in five presidential elections; Barr has political experience in the US House of Representatives, and extensive experience in civil liberties; Baldwin has minimal political experience and professional experience limited to being a preacher and minister.

Vision for America

John McCain

Country first before anything else
Keep nation prosperous, strong and growing
More independence from foreign oil sources
Make health care more accessible
Continue war in Iraq and Afghanistan until successful

Barack Obama

Claimed change in the policies of federal government and politics of Washington
Help the lower income bracket of America—health care reform, tax cuts
Continue war in Afghanistan
Unite America by overcoming divisions like race
Fix the economy
Improve America's reputation abroad with less unilateralism

Change unclear? Political—Obama received millions in donations.

(Policies differ very little from McCain's)

Ralph Nader

Shift the power in America from “corporate interests’ and corporate governments’ autocratic control” to the American people.
National health care
Secure a living wage for workers

Bob Barr

Less government in all
aspects of federal government whether foreign policy or the economy.

Less government from Barr's standpoint translates into a more prosperous, functioning society.

Chuck Baldwin

An independent America from foreign ownership in any form in the US
“a free sovereign, republic”
emphasis on individual liberty, less government

freedom of choice within market
protection of America—America first policy

Vision Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: Leadership--identifies issues and act on them, vision, strength to carry through, independent yet team player, and strong communication with public.

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	5/10	5/10	10/10	6/10	4/10

Rational: Nader's vision for a shift in power from corporate interests to the American people is on target for the source of America's internal problems; McCain and Obama's visions are general and obvious; Barr's vision of less government is sound, but not complete (viz., less government is not the answer to America's problems; Baldwin's protectionism is counter productive to America's interests and the global direction of the world.

Economic

Economic Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: sound, fiscal management of public revenue and expenditure, and fair distribution of government expenditure to all sectors of the United States

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	6/10	5/10	8/10	7/10	2/10

Rational: Baldwin's focus on trade/sovereignty protection is very narrow; Obama's focus on the middle class does not get to the source of America's economic problems; McCain's focus on balanced budget, spending controls, fiscal responsibility, and economic growth do not go far enough; Bar's focus on significant reduction in government spending and tax reform is closer to fixing America's economic problems, but not far enough and too much reliance on the imperfect marketplace; Nader's focus on corporate crime and accountability, reduced government spending in particular the US military complex, and progressive tax system is the closest approach to deal with American's economic problems; though more emphasis on reduced government spending would make Nader's economic policy even more effective.

Health

Health Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: sound health care policy for Americans, which meets the needs of Americans and makes economic sense

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	6/10	5/10	9/10	5/10	5/10

Rational: McCain offers a quick but limited fix for the healthcare system; and Obama offers the same but with less specifics; Nader offers a comprehensive, progressive single-payer health care plan with universal coverage, opposes the corporation of medicine, and allows patient free choice of doctors and hospitals; Barr proposes the privatization of healthcare' Baldwin proposes to US healthcare, basically, as it is via employer plans and insurance coverage. Baldwin and Barr received scores of "5" because there are benefits of private healthcare such as consumer choice and greater incentive on the part of the medical industry to provide. Nader's proposal was only limited by specifics.

Environment

Environment Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: more responsible, sustainable management of the American environment

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	6/10	8/10	7/10	1/10	1/10

Rational: Baldwin and Barr only environmental policies are the free market, and therefore they are very limited. McCain's policy lacks the broadness and specificity of Obama's policy, and it is less progressive in deal with Climate Change than Obama's; Nader's policy is less broad than Obama's policy, but it deals with some critical issues in a more thorough way than Obama such as Mountain Top Mining, Off-shore drilling, and protection of oceans. Overall, Obama has the most broad, comprehensive environmental policy.

Foreign Affairs

Foreign Policy Evaluation:

Basis for evaluation: sound, responsible use of American resources and military personnel in foreign lands

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
	5/10	5/10	7/10	7/10	7/10

Rational: Obama and McCain propose to continue the aggressive US military policy. In essence, there is very little separating their policies. Though Obama proposes a more multilateral approach.

Nader's policy lacks comprehensiveness and broadness. Barr's and Baldwin's emphasis on defense is attractive, but their policies lack comprehensiveness.

Issue: Should the US be a world's policeman and/or strive to influence the world through diplomacy and military might?

Aggression versus defensiveness.

Defensive approach is the more responsible use of America's resources and military personnel. McCain and Obama would continue the huge military drain on the US economy.

Overall Results

Score	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
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Candidates:

Background	9/10	5/10	8/10	8/10	4/10
Vision	5/10	5/10	10/10	6/10	4/10

Totals for

Candidates: 14/20 (70%) 10/20 (50%) 18/20 (90%) 14/20 (70%) 8/20 (40%)

Policies:

Economic	6/10	5/10	8/10	7/10	2/10
Health	6/10	5/10	9/10	5/10	5/10
Environment	6/10	8/10	7/10	1/10	1/10
Foreign Affairs	5/10	5/10	7/10	7/10	7/10

Totals for

Policies: 23/40 (57.5%) 23/40 (57.5%) 31/40 (77.5%) 20/40 (50%) 15/40 (37.5%)

Adjustment of

Policies score: 34.5/60 34.5/60 46.5/60 30/60 22.5/60

Overall Total

Scores:	McCain	Obama	Nader	Barr	Baldwin
Candidates	14/20	10/20	18/20	14/20	8/20
Policies	34.5/60	34.5/60	46.5/60	30/60	22.5/60
Totals:	48.5/80 60.6%	44.5/80 55.6%	64.5/80 80.6%	44/80 55%	28.5/80 36.6%

Overall Ranking:

1. Nader 64.5/80 (80.6%)
2. McCain 48.5/80 (60.6%)
3. Obama 44.5/80 (55.6%)
4. Barr 44/80 (55%)
5. Baldwin 28.5/80 (36.6%)

* Scores for policies of the candidates' political parties are given three times more weight over scores for candidates' backgrounds and visions. The rationale is that candidates are extensions of their political parties, and policies are what the candidates will do if elected.

Analysis

Ralph Nader has a very high ranking--20% higher than next candidate.

Obama and Barr separated by .6% or .5 out of 80.

McCain's separation from Obama, (60.6% to 55.6%), is based on McCain and Obama's scores for Background (9/10 versus 5/10).

Nader has highest candidate grade for any FDA evaluation.

McCain's score for Republican policies, 56.6% corresponds to the score the Conservative Party of Canada received for policies, 57.5%. (2008 Evaluation of the Kootenay-Columbia Riding)

Conclusion

Clearly, with a 20% margin of over the nearest opponent, Ralph Nader is the presidential candidate better in America's interest. However, due to the dominance of the Republican and Democrats, in which Nader is expected to receive 1% or less of the US vote. This is sad reality due to what Nader offers the American people. Instead the American people will be settling for a distant second or third best.

Will democracy been served in the United States on November 4, 2008? We say no, because of the tyranny of the US two party system. Unfortunately, the better interest of the American people is not being served.

Regarding Obama, the FDA recommends that people look beyond the smile, speaking ability, new face, and party slogans, and at what the candidate actually offers. The FDA found little difference overall between the policies of Obama and McCain, and this "change" which Obama keeps referring to was found wanting. An Obama administration, based on our policy evaluation, will do very little to solve the problems of American society. In fact, we think an Obama or McCain administration will worsen the American problems. We can see this in the foreign policies of both Obama and McCain in which there is little restraint in the foreign intervention.