



## IRAQ WAR CENTRAL ISSUE IN 2008 PRIMARY

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*As the 2008 presidential race nears the primary voting stage, candidates from both parties are defining where they stand on one of the biggest issues: the war in Iraq.*

Working the crowds in Iowa and New Hampshire, both Republican and Democratic candidates want to appeal to the solid party supporters.

With minor exceptions, the Republican candidates argue that the United States should stay in Iraq and stabilize the country before withdrawing soldiers.

Democrats, on the other hand, say they would pull at least some of America's forces out of the chaotic country.

Recent history shows that the Iraq war can dictate the outcome of an election.

The Democrats took control of Congress in November 2006 largely because voters were dissatisfied with how President Bush and his Republican supporters in Congress were handling the war.

### **Democrats call for change**

The Democratic field is hoping that anger over the war will help usher one of them into the White House in November 2008.

Among the Democratic presidential candidates, New York Senator Hillary Clinton, followed by Illinois Senator Barack Obama and former Senator from North Carolina John Edwards are the most popular among primary voters, according to polls.

All three have made criticizing President Bush's handling of the war a main component of campaign speeches and debate appearances.

In an ABC News debate in Iowa, all three agreed that the United States should pull its troops out of the country over a period several months.

"George Bush drove the bus into the ditch and there are only so many ways you can pull that bus out of the ditch," Obama said during the debate.

## **Republicans tie Iraq to terrorism**

The Republican front-runners, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, Arizona Senator John McCain and former Tennessee Senator Fred Thompson, who has yet to officially announce his candidacy, are all supportive of the war in Iraq.

Giuliani and Romney, who are leading national and primary state polls, connect keeping American soldiers in Iraq to an international effort to stop terrorism.

While this position isn't popular with the average American, 62 percent of Republicans surveyed in an August CBS News poll said they approved of the way President Bush has handled the war in Iraq.

In order to win the Republican primary, candidates can't afford to criticize Mr. Bush or the war without risking a loss of support.

However, this could put them in a tricky position after the primaries, when the winning candidate must convince anti-war Republicans and independents to vote for him in the general election.

## **Future of the debate**

As the 2008 presidential race continues, the argument over what to do about Iraq is expected to intensify, through political ads playing in early primary states and debates featuring the candidates.

New information about the war comes in every day that politicians use to support their positions. Currently, all eyes are on a Sept. 15 report to Congress from the top military commander in Iraq, Army General David Petraeus, and top U.S. diplomat Ryan Crocker, which will give results of this year's increase in troops in Iraq.

The report is expected to say the troop increase ordered by President Bush earlier this year has brought some improvements in security but that progress toward power-sharing deals among Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds has lagged.

-- *Compiled by Quinn Bowman for NewsHour Extra*

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