

Study on democratic debates to jan. 2008

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Jan. 19, 2008

2008 PRimary Debates:

15 Debates

352 Questions

29 Gotcha Questions

33 Puff Questions

7 Governance Questions

Not a single question about a federal department or agency and its condition under bush

Type of question unasked:

After Hurricane Katrina, FEMA was revealed as incompetent. How would you reform FEMA?

The Bush administration has pressured the intelligence community to produce certain analytical results in order to justify the Iraq War. How would you reform the intelligence process?

The Deputy Secretary of the Interior Stephen Griles is imprisoned for perjury and obstruction of justice and the department has become the plaything of special interests. How would you revive the Department of the Interior?

How would you reorganize and reform the Pentagon? After the US attorneys scandal, how would you fix the Justice Department?

(1) April 26, 2007 – Orangeburg, South Carolina (MSNBC)

Moderators: (1) Brian Williams, NBC News; (2) David Stanton, WIS News

Total Qs: ~60

I. Gotcha Qs

1. Senator [Obama], thanks. I'll give you a follow-up. I didn't hear you mention Israel, and I ask because there is a quote attributed to your name. You said recently, "No one is suffering more than the Palestinian people." Do you stand by that remark? (Q43)

- Respondents: BHO

II. Puff Qs

1. The question is your model Supreme Court justice? (Q26)
 - Respondents: All
2. And because our producers are learning about the consumption of time, we have our first "show of hands" question tonight. (Laughter) How many of you, in your adult lifetime, have had a gun in the house? (Q29)
 - Respondents: All
3. This is from Paula in Conway, South Carolina: "What is the most significant political or professional mistake you have made in the past four years? And what, if anything, did you learn from this mistake which makes you a better candidate?" (Q35)
 - Respondents: All
4. Stanton: Thank you, sir. And this, again, for all of us, one sentence, and the question is this: "While sitting in the Oval Office on the first day of your administration, name the first thing that you want accomplished by the end of that first day."
 - Respondents: All
5. Second "show of hands" question: Do you believe there is such a thing as a global war on terror? (Q49)
 - Respondents: All
6. Staying on the notion of the environment, which somewhat unbelievably is where that question started, what in your personal life, Senator Obama, have you done personally to make for a better environment? (Q57)
 - Respondents: BHO
7. Senator Edwards, who do you consider to be your moral leader? (Q58)
 - Respondents: JRE
8. Senator Clinton, overall, is Wal-Mart a good thing or a bad thing for the United States of America? (Q60)

III. Governance Qs

1. Senator Clinton, a question for you: Did the government -- did any role that federal government plays fail those students at Virginia Tech? (Q27)
 - Respondents: HRC

(2) June 3, 2007 – Manchester, New Hampshire

Moderators: (1) Wolf Blitzer, CNN; Scott Spradling, WMUR

Total Qs: ~46

I. Gotcha Qs

1. Senator Clinton, you voted in favor of every funding for the U.S. troops since the start of the war until now. And some are accusing you and some others of playing politics with the lives of the troops. What is your response? (Q7)
 - Respondents: HRC
2. Senator Obama, you did the same thing. Since you came into the Senate, you voted for the funding for the troops for this war until now. What's your answer? (Q8)

- Respondents: BHO
- 3. Senator Clinton, do you regret voting the authorize the president to use force against Saddam Hussein in Iraq without actually reading the national intelligence estimate, the classified document laying out the best U.S. intelligence at that time? (Q14)
 - Respondents: HRC
- 4. This is my voice. Senator Clinton, you've said that it's time to allow gays and lesbians to serve openly in the U.S. military and end the "don't ask/don't tell" policy that was implemented when your husband was president. Was President Clinton's policy of "don't ask/don't tell" a mistake? (Q25) (From audience)
 - Respondents: HRC

II. Puff Qs

1. Congressman Kucinich, if you were president of the United States and the intelligence community said to you, "We know where Osama bin Laden is. He's in Pakistan. We've got the specific target. But he's only going to be there for 20 minutes," you've got to give the order yes or no to take him out with a Hellfire missile, but it's going to kill some innocent civilians at the same time: What would be your decision? (Q39)
 - Respondents: Kucinich
2. Raise your hand if you agree with Senator Biden that the United States should use military force to stop the genocide in Darfur. (Q41)
 - Respondents: All

III. Governance Qs

1. Senator Dodd, are there relics of the Cold War, big- ticket military items that you would cut? (Q31)
 - Respondents: Dodd
2. How do you reconcile our security interests with Pakistan with our interest in promoting liberal democracy? Pakistan is not a democratic country. (Q38)
 - Respondents: HRC
3. Our country's now running huge federal deficits again. I'm wondering, one, do the candidates have a problem with that? And if they do, what policies would they pursue, if they became president, to alleviate that problem? And if you could be somewhat specific. Would you be looking for the income side, and what would those policies be, or would you be looking to the spending side, and talk a little bit about those policies. Thank you. (Q45) (From audience)
 - Respondents: Richardson

(3) June 28, 2007 – Washington, D.C.

Moderators: Tavis Smiley, PBS.

Total Qs: 8

I. Gotcha Qs

II. Puffs Qs

III. Governance Qs

July 12, 2007 – Detroit, Michigan (NAACP)

(4) July 23, 2007 – Charleston, South Carolina

Moderators: Anderson Cooper, CNN (YouTube Debate)

Total Qs: ~37

I. Gotcha Qs

II. Puffs Qs

1. Mrs. Clinton, how would you define the word "liberal?" And would you use this word to describe yourself? (Q2)
 - Respondents: HRC
2. Senator, I have to ask, what's with the white hair? (Q4)
 - Respondents: Dodd
3. This question is to Senator Hillary Clinton. The Arab states, Muslim nations, believe it's women as being second-class citizens. If you're president of the United States, how do you feel that you would even be taken seriously by these states in any kind of talks, negotiations, or any other diplomatic relations? I feel that is a legitimate question. (Q15)
 - Respondents: HRC
4. My question is: Who was your favorite teacher and why? (Q18)
 - Respondents: All
5. Hey, I'm Mike Green from Lexington, South Carolina. And I was wanting to ask all the nominees whether they would send their kids to public school or private school. (Q19)
 - Respondents: All
6. My question is, we here at Planned Parenthood support comprehensive sex education and I'd like to know if any of you as candidates have talked to your children about sex and used medically accurate and age-appropriate information? (Q20)
 - Respondents: All
7. This here question's for all you candidates. Mainstream media seems awfully interested in old Al Gore these days. Is he losing weight? What's it say in his book? Is he still worried about all the ice? They interpret all these as signs that he may or may not run. They really want to know if Al Gore's going to run again. Yes. Well, what we want to know is does that hurt you-all's feelings? (Q21)
 - Respondents: All
8. Hi, I'm Zenne Abraham in Oakland, California. The cathedral behind me is the perfect backdrop for this question. This quarter reads "United States of America." And when I turn it over, you find that it reads "liberty, in God we trust." What do those words mean to you? Thank you? (Q39)
 - Respondents: Biden, JRE, BHO, Richardson
9. My name is Jason Koop, and I am from Colorado Springs, Colorado. And my question is for all of the candidates, and it is intended to lighten up the mood a little bit. I would like

for each of you to look at the candidate to your left and tell the audience one thing you like and one thing you dislike about that particular candidate. And remember, be honest. (Q37)

- Respondents: All

III. **Governance Qs**

1. So my question is: We have a bunch of leaders who can't seem to do their job. And we pick people based on the issues they that they represent, but then they get in power and they don't do anything about it anyway. You're going to spend this whole night talking about your views on issues, but the issues don't matter if when you get in power nothing's going to get done. We have a Congress and a president with, like, a 30 percent approval rating, so clearly we don't think they're doing a good job. What's going to make you any more effectual, beyond all the platitudes and the stuff we're used to hearing? I mean, be honest with us. How are you going to be any different? (Q1)
 - Dodd; BHO; Kucinich

(5) August 7, 2007 – Chicago, Illinois

Moderators: Keith Olbermann, MSNBC

Total Qs: ~39

I. **Gotcha Qs**

II. **Puff Qs**

1. Senator Dodd, there have been no terrorist attacks on U.S. soil since 9/11. Does that mean that the creation of the Department of Homeland Security was a good idea? (Q32)
 - Respondents: Dodd
2. Senator Obama, were you president of the United States today, would you honor Barry Bonds at the White House? (Laughter, booing.) (Q34)
 - Respondents: BHO

• **Governance Qs**

1. Senator Clinton, by lot, the second question is yours and it pertains to the same subject. 9/11 obviously made us plan for terror prevention; Hurricane Katrina made us prepare for natural disaster prevention and preparation; now this tragedy in Minneapolis is putting infrastructure into the news. In the wake of that tragedy, we already know that you've co-sponsored legislation to establish a national commission on infrastructure. But without benefit of hindsight, is our government actually doing anything better at making us collectively safer?
 - Respondents: HRC

August 9, 2007 – Los Angeles (LGBT)

(6) August 19, 2007 – Des Moines, Iowa

Moderators: George Stephanopoulos, ABC News; David Yepsen, DM Register

Total Qs: ~25

I. Gotcha Qs

II. Puff Qs

1. And he said, "My question is to understand each candidates' view of a personal God. Do they believe that, through the power of prayer, disasters like Hurricane Katrina or the Minnesota bridge collapse could have been prevented or lessened?" (Q18)
 - Respondents: All
 2. Unlike many others, I think that candidates may tell the truth, just not the whole truth and nothing but the truth. For example, when advocating a position or action, candidates downplay or simply ignore the likely negative side effects. Can you name a major issue where you didn't tell the whole truth and describe what you left out? (Q22)
 - Respondents: All
- **Governance Qs**

September 9, 2007 – Coral Gables, Florida (Univision)

(7) September 26, 2007 – Hanover, New Hampshire

Moderators: Tim Russert, MSNBC

Total Qs: ~51

I. Gotcha Qs

1. Senator Clinton, in 1981 the Israelis took out a nuclear reactor in Iraq. On September 6th, to the best of our information, Israel attacked Syria because there was suspicion that perhaps North Korea had put some nuclear materials in Syria. If Israel concluded that Iran's nuclear capability threatened Israel's security, would Israel be justified in launching an attack on Iran? (Q6/Q8/Q10/Q12)
 - Respondents: HRC; BHO; JRE; Richardson
2. Would you make a promise as a potential commander in chief that you will not allow Iran to become a nuclear power and will use any means to stop it? (Q7/Q9/ Q11)
 - Respondents: HRC; BHO; Richardson
3. Experience and judgment have been two issues that have been raised in this campaign. Senator Clinton, as first lady, your major initiative was health care. You acknowledge that you did some things wrong in that. Democrats and Republicans both rejected your proposal. You said that the most important vote you cast in the Senate was on the Iraq war. You voted for it. If, in fact, you made fundamental misjudgments on health care as first lady and the war as senator, why shouldn't Democratic voters say, "She doesn't have the judgment to be president"? (Q16)
 - Respondents: HRC
4. Could the scaled bill down -- scaled-down bill that you have now, which is very similar to what Senator Chafee, a Republican, had back in 1993 -- your bill today could have passed back then, but you refused to compromise. (Q17)
 - Respondents: HRC

5. Senator Biden, you said the other day, quote, "Do you really believe that Senator Clinton can get more than 15 percent of Republicans to vote for health care?" What does that mean? (Q18)
 - Respondents: Biden
6. Well, Senator, I want to ask you this because in 2004 when you ran for president, you said we could not afford universal health care, it was not achievable, and it was not responsible. You've changed dramatically on this issue. (Q20)
 - Respondents: Edwards
7. Senator Obama, I asked Senator Clinton about experience in judgment. You have served in the U.S. Senate about 33 months. You have no landmark legislation as such that you have offered. When you were elected back in 2004, you said, quote, "The notion that somehow I am going to start running for higher office, it just doesn't make sense." If it didn't make sense in 2004, why does it make sense now? (Q21)
 - Respondents: BHP
8. I want to ask Senator Gravel. You talk about running for president of the United States. In 1980 your condo business went bankrupt. (Q22)
 - Respondents: Gravel
9. Congressman Kucinich, when you were mayor of Cleveland, you let Cleveland go into bankruptcy, the first time that happened since the Depression. The voters of Cleveland rewarded you by throwing you out of office and electing a Republican mayor of Cleveland. How can you claim that you have the ability to manage the United States of America, when you let Cleveland go bankrupt? (Q23)
 - Respondents: Kucinich
10. Governor Richardson, you talk about your experience, and yet when you were the secretary of Energy, there was security breaches at Los Alamos. You talked about Justice White being your favorite Supreme Court justice, someone who voted against Roe v. Wade. New Mexico ranks 48 in terms of people below the poverty line, 48th in children below the poverty line. You said that being gay is a choice. Based on those kinds of comments and that record of performance or questionable activities, how can you tell people you have the experience to be president? (Q24)
 - Respondents: Richardson
11. Now, there are a lot of other things that we need to be doing that I wish we were: better intelligence; making, you know, our country better respected around the world; working to have more allies. But these hypotheticals are very dangerous because they open a great big hole in what should be an attitude that our country and our president takes toward the appropriate treatment of everyone. And I think it's dangerous to go down this path. RUSSERT: The guest who laid out this scenario for me with that proposed solution was William Jefferson Clinton last year. So he disagrees with you. (Q46)
 - Respondents: HRC
12. I want to turn to politics and money. Senator Clinton, as you all know, you had to turn back \$850,000 in contributions from Norman Hsu because of his rather checkered past. Again, President Clinton said this, Now, we don't have to publish all our donors for the Clinton Foundation, but if Hillary became president, I think there would questions about whether people would try to win favor by giving money to me. In light of that, do you

believe that the Clinton Foundation and the Clinton library should publish all the donors who give contributions to those two entities? (Q48)

- Respondents: HRC
13. Senator Edwards, you mentioned candor with the candidate -- president with the American people. Your campaign has hit some obstacles with revelations about \$400 haircuts, \$500,000 for working for a hedge fund, \$800,000 from Rupert Murdoch. Do you wish you hadn't taken money in all those cases or hadn't made that kind of expenditure for a haircut? (Q49)
- Respondents: JRE

II. Puff Qs

1. Would you allow these cities to ignore the federal law regarding the reporting of illegal immigrants and, in fact, provide sanctuary to these immigrants? (Allison King, NECN, Q13)
 - Respondents: Richardson; Biden
2. Quickly, have you sat down with your daughters to talk about same-sex marriage? (Allison King, NECN, Q27)
 - Respondents: BHO
3. Before we go, there's been a lot of discussion about the Democrats and the issue of faith and values. I want to ask you a simple question. Senator Obama, what is your favorite Bible verse? Q50
 - Respondents: All
4. Red Sox or Yankees? (Q51)
 - Respondents: All

III. Governance Qs

(8) October 30, 2007 – Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Moderators: Tim Russert, Brian Williams, NBC News

Total Qs: ~39

I. Gotcha Qs

1. Senator Obama, let's get at this another way. Red line is the current expression of the moment where Iran is concerned in Washington. What would your red line be concerning when to, if to attack Iran? What would make it crystal clear in your mind that the United States should attack Iran? (Q6)
 - Respondents: BHO; HRC; JRE
2. Senator Clinton, I'd like to follow up because, in terms of your experience as first lady, in order to give the American people an opportunity to make a judgment about your experience, would you allow the National Archives to release the documents about your communications with the president, the advice you gave, because, as you well know, President Clinton has asked the National Archives not to do anything until 2012? ... But there was a letter written by President Clinton specifically asking that any

communication between you and the president not be made available to the public until 2012. Would you lift that ban? (Q13)

- Respondents: HRC
3. Senator Clinton, I want to clear something up, which goes to the issue of credibility. You were asked at the AARP debate whether or not you would consider taxing -- lifting the cap from 97,500, taxing that, raising more money for Social Security. You said, quote, "It's a no." I asked you the same question in New Hampshire. You said no. Then you went to Iowa and you went up to Tod Bowman, a teacher, and had a conversation with him, saying, I would consider a -- lifting the cap perhaps above 200,000. You were overheard by an Associated Press reporter saying that. Why do you have one public position and one private position? (Q22)
 - Respondents: HRC
 4. You called it a Republican talking point. Georgetown University, February 9th, 1998: We are in a -- you're heading to a looming fiscal crisis in Social Security. If nothing is done, it will require a huge tax increase in the payroll tax or 25 percent in Social Security benefits, Bill Clinton, 1998. That's recent history, only two years to go in his term. Is that a Republican talking point? (Q23)
 - Respondents: HRC
 5. Senator Obama, you said in May that, quote, "Everything is on the table" when it comes to Social Security. You now have an ad up in Iowa which says that any benefit cuts are off, and raising retirement age are off. Why have you changed your mind? (Q24)
 - Respondents: BHO
 6. Senator Clinton, Governor of New York Eliot Spitzer has proposed giving driver's licenses to illegal immigrants. You told the Nashua, New Hampshire editorial board it makes a lot of sense. Why does it make a lot of sense to give an illegal immigrant a driver's license? ... Senator Clinton, I just want to make sure what I heard. Do you, the New York Senator Hillary Clinton, support the New York governor's plan to give illegal immigrants a driver's license? You told the Nashua, New Hampshire, paper it made a lot of sense. (Q32)
 - Respondents: HRC

II. Puff Qs

1. Senator Clinton, would you pledge to the American people that Iran will not develop a nuclear bomb while you are president? (Q9)
 - Respondents: All
2. Now, did you see a UFO? (Q34)
 - Respondents: Kucinich
3. The three astronauts of Apollo 11 who went to the moon back in 1969 all said that they believe there is life beyond Earth. Do you agree? (Q35)
 - Respondents: BHO
4. This is what happens late at night in a hot room. (Laughter.) Senator Obama, we started with you. Let's take a stab at this one. Tomorrow, of course, is Halloween. (Laughter.) You will go as what? (Laughter.) (Q39)
 - Respondents: BHO

III. Governance Qs

(9) November 15, 2007 – Las Vegas, Nevada

Moderators: Wolf Blitzer, CNN; Campbell Brown, CNN; Suzanne Malveaux, CNN; John Roberts, Cnn

Total Qs: ~25

I. **Gotcha Qs**

1. Senator Clinton, recently in an interview on CNN, you said of the last debate that you weren't at your best that day. You stumbled on an important question involving illegal immigration. But your opponents are saying that that's really part of a larger pattern with you, that you often avoid taking firm positions on controversial issues. And one of your opponents on this stage calls this the politics of parsing. How do you respond to that? (Q1)
 - Respondents: HRC
2. Senator Clinton, all of us remember the big NAFTA debate when your husband was president of the United States, and a lot of us remember the debate between Al Gore, who was then vice president, and Ross Perot. Ross Perot was fiercely against NAFTA. Knowing what we know now, was Ross Perot right? (Laughter.) (Q12)
 - Respondents: HRC
3. Senator Clinton, you went to your alma mater recently, Wellesley College, and you said there that your tenure had prepared you to compete in the all boys club of presidential politics. At the same time, your campaign has accused this all boys club surrounding you on stage of piling on with their attacks against you. And then your husband recently came to your defense by saying that these, quote, "boys," had been getting rough with you -- (light laughter) -- and some have suggested that you, that your campaign, that your husband are exploiting gender as a political issue during this campaign. What's really going on here? (Q14)
 - Respondents: HRC
4. Senator, I want to go back to Suzanne Malveaux, but this was an important vote, and you missed that vote. You weren't present in the Senate when that vote occurred. (Q17)
 - Respondents: BHO
5. I'd like to refer that to Senator Obama. Senator Obama, you said on a TV interview just this past weekend, you didn't believe that Senator Clinton was able to unite this country. Why do you believe she can't? (Q24)
 - Respondents: BHO

II. **Puff Qs**

1. Do any of you believe that Senator Clinton is playing the so-called gender card? (Q15)
 - Respondents: All
2. And my question is for Senator Clinton. This is a fun question for you. Do you prefer diamonds or pearls? (Laughter.) (Q25)

- Respondents: HRC

III. Governance Qs

1. All of you on the stage have either -- I'm sorry -- have formal political power or significant informal power, and have the ability to stop the rush to war. Please tell me, how are you going to show us your leadership so -- on this issue now so I can decide who I think would be the best leader for tomorrow? (Audience Member) (Q15)
 - Respondents: Biden

December 4, 2007 – Des Moines, IA (NPR)

December 10, 2007 – Los Angeles CANCELLED

(10) December 13, 2007 – Johnston, Iowa

Moderators: Carolyn Washburn, DM Register

Total Qs: 22

I. Gotcha Qs

II. Puff Qs

1. Tell us your new year's resolution for 2008. We're going to start with Senator Clinton and just go down the line, and you have 30 seconds. (Q21)
 - Respondents: All

III. Governance Qs

1. Thank you. Time is getting a little short, now, so the answers to these questions will need to be 30 seconds or less. As president would you use signing statements to assert that certain acts of congress conflict with your interpretation of the constitution and your obligation to enforce those laws? Senator Clinton, 30 seconds. (Q20)
 - Respondent: HRC; JRE

(11) January 5, 2008 – Manchester, New Hampshire

(12) January 15, 2008 – Las Vegas, Nevada

(13) January 21, 2008 - Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

(14) January 31, 2008 – Los Angeles, California

2004 Primary Debates:

1. May 5, 2003: South Carolina
2. Sept. 4, 2003:
3. October 9, 2003: Democratic Presidential Debate. Aired
4. December 9, 2003: Democratic Presidential Debate in Durham, N.H.
5. Jan. 6: NPR News and The WOI Radio Group Democratic presidential candidates debate, Des Moines, Iowa
6. Jan. 22: Democratic presidential candidates debate, WMUR-TV, Manchester, N.H.
7. Jan. 29: Democratic 2004 primary Debate in Greenville South Carolina,
8. Feb. 26: Democratic debate in Los Angeles, sponsored by CNN and The Los Angeles Times

1992 Primary Debates:

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League of Conservation Voters counted every question asked in debates and on Sunday Talk Shows -- 2275 total. Only 3 mentioned "global warming."

<http://www.whataretheywaitingfor.com/>