

# National issues in election 2008

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The five most important issues of Election 2008 (in no particular order) are:

1. The economy: How will the United States correct the recession and what can be done to protect Americans from a recession in the future?
2. The war in Iraq: How will America extract itself from Iraq? Can America extract itself from Iraq?
3. Immigration: Immigrants, primarily in the form of unskilled workers from Mexico, are arriving in the United States in unprecedented numbers. There are now over 10 million unauthorized immigrants living in the United States (Passel, 2005, pp. 4-5). How will America address the problem of illegal immigration and the need for guest workers?
4. Education: American high school students ranked 25th out of 30 nations in recent comparisons of math and science skills (Glod, 2007). Many American students graduate from high school without being able to read, and many others drop out of school altogether. How can America fix its broken educational system?
5. Energy policy: Rising oil prices have underscored America's dependency on foreign oil, raising economic concerns and concerns about security. Energy is also closely related to the environment. Can the United States find sustainable and affordable sources of environmentally friendly energy?

What should be the government's role in solving these problems? The answer depends on your political perspective.

The economy

Political Left: America's economic problems are the result of the natural

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tendency of corporations to put their own interests ahead of what is best for the country. This problem can be solved if the government did a better job of regulating businesses and financial institutions.

Political Right: Recessions are part of a natural cycle of economic activity, as the economy makes necessary corrections. Economic problems can be solved by encouraging investment through lower tax rates, less government intrusion, and the creation of new markets for goods and services. In a capitalistic economy, jobs are created by businesses, not by governments.

Political Center: Some government regulation of business practices is necessary to protect American jobs and incomes. Government and private business must work together to create jobs for American workers.

The War

Political Left: Can't we all just get along? International disputes are best handled through diplomatic means. America should withdraw as quickly as possible from Iraq and should avoid similar conflicts with other nations in the future.

Political Right: The Homeland must be defended! Backing down sends the wrong message to terrorists and to our allies. America must be strong if we are to be respected.

Political Center: War is a necessary evil, but should not be a first response. America should conclude its business in Iraq as quickly as possible, and then leave. Other nations should know that America has the capacity and will to protect itself, but will do so only if necessary.

## Immigration

Political Left: America is a nation of immigrants. Rejecting immigrants now is hypocritical and racist. Immigrants should have the same rights as anyone else in the country and should not live in fear of being deported. Government should make it easier for immigrants to be documented.

Political Right: The Right seems to be divided on this issue. On one hand, conservatives want the cheap labor that is provided by undocumented workers. On the other hand, conservatives fear that immigration is changing the culture and - let's be honest - the complexion of the United States. The Right argues that immigrants are taking jobs away from Americans, yet they continue to employ undocumented immigrants to do jobs that Americans will not do. These conflicts probably explain why the Right has such a hard time articulating any type of coherent policy on immigration and cannot seem to decide what the role of government should be on this issue.

Political Center: Immigrants, a. k. a., guest workers, are an important part of the American economy; however, once they come to the United States, immigrants need to learn English and make show proper respect for American culture. This is the United States, not the Estados Unidos. It is the responsibility of government to help assimilate immigrants and to ensure that no terrorists cross the border masquerading as a guest worker.

## Education

The Right: Government should not have a monopoly on education. American students are failing because schools have no motivation to improve. Privatizing education would create competition and improve the quality of schools.

The Left: Schools are failing because they are underfunded. It is the role of government to invest in the future of this country, which includes investing in schools.

The Center: Public schools deserve public support. The role of government is to provide funding for public education. In cases where schools are failing to teach, it is the role of government to ensure that every child has opportunity to learn, which may mean sending some children to private schools.

### Energy policy

The Left: Green is good! It is the role of government to regulate and, if necessary, control energy production and distribution. Extreme Left would probably advocate for public ownership of all energy companies.

The Right: Energy production reflects consumer demands. When people want greener fuels, companies will provide them. Government should support research on energy sources, but it is not the place of government to control prices or distribution of gasoline and other energy sources.

The Center: Government should allow free markets for gasoline and other energy sources, but should intervene when profits reach extortion levels and people cannot afford to buy gasoline. Government should support research on alternative fuels.

### Reference

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