THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2008

A Newspaper In Education Series

THE DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE:
BARACK OBAMA

Barack Obama was born in Hawaii in 1961. His father was from Kenya in Africa and his mother was from Kansas. They met while they were both at the University of Hawaii. When they later divorced, Obama's father returned to Kenya so young Barack was raised much of the time by his mother in Hawaii and later in Indonesia. Eventually, Obama moved to New York and attended Columbia University, graduating in 1983.

After college Obama moved to Chicago. He worked with people who wanted to improve the lives of poor people. He decided that the best way to effect this kind of change was to work toward changing laws and politics. He headed to Harvard Law School where he was the first African American president of the Harvard Law Review. Later he served eight years in the Illinois State Senate and in 2004 he became the third African American elected to the U.S. Senate, as the junior senator from Illinois.

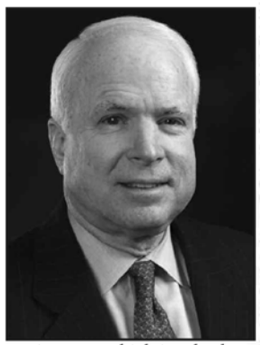
Obama came to national attention when he gave a powerful keynote speech at the 2004 Democratic National Convention. He talked about the importance of unity and about how much all Americans share, regardless of their religion, race or beliefs.

During his time in the Senate, Obama has worked on a bill to destroy weapons of mass destruction in Eastern Europe and Russia. He created a website that tracks federal spending, he spoke out for victims of Hurricane Katrina, pushed for development of alternative energy, and worked hard to improve benefits for veterans.

Win or lose, Obama's candidacy will go down in history because he is the first African American to become a presidential nominee for a major U.S. political party.

He is married to Michelle, who is also a lawyer with a career in public service. They have two daughters, ages 9 and 6.

THE REPUBLICAN CANDIDATE:
JOHN MCCAIN



John McCain was born in 1936 into a family that had a long tradition of serving in the U.S. Navy. As a young boy, he moved with his family from naval base to naval base. He graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis in 1958, following the path set by his father and grandfather.

McCain volunteered to fight in the Vietnam War. He was trained as a pilot so his assignment was to fly attack planes on bombing runs. On one run his plane was shot down. McCain was captured and taken prisoner by the Vietnamese. They kept him in prison camp for five and a half years where he was beaten and tortured. When they found out he was the son of a high-ranking officer in the U.S. Navy, they offered to let him go but McCain refused because he thought accepting release was against the military code of conduct. He was finally released in March 1973.

McCain stayed in the Navy, although no longer as a pilot. In 1977 he got a Navy assignment which involved working with the U.S. Senate. That was his introduction to politics. After marrying for the second time, he decided to run for office. He won a seat in the House of Representatives in 1982 and in 1986, he won election to the U.S. Senate which he's now won three times.

In 2000, he began his first race for president but lost the nomination to George W. Bush. He began another run for president in April 2007 and this time he won the Republican nomination.

Sen. McCain married for the first time in 1965. His wife had two children from her previous marriage. McCain adopted them and the couple also had a child together. They divorced in April 1980. In May 1980, he married his current wife Cindy. They have four children.

WHERE DO THE CANDIDATES STAND?

Do some research to find out where each candidate stands on these issues. On a sheet of paper, summarize each one's stand and tell if you agree or disagree. For a comparison of the candidates' views, check their websites, www.barackobama.com and www.johnmccain.com.

ISSUES	SUMMARY & OPINION
TAXES	
HEALTH CARE	
IMMIGRATION	
THE ENVIRONMENT	
THE ECONOMY	
FIGHTING TERRORISM	
IRAQ	
EDUCATION	
ABORTION/GAY MARRIAGE	

OTHER CANDIDATES

Consumer advocate and lawyer Ralph Nader is running for president again. When he ran in 2000, it is widely believed that his candidacy did have a big impact on the outcome of that election. This year Ron Paul's candidacy may have an effect on the race. And Bob Barr is running as the Libertarian candidate. Look through the news for mention of some of these other candidates and their parties – Green, Libertarian, Natural Law and Reform.

AFTER YOU HAVE READ ABOUT THE CANDIDATES, WRITE ABOUT WHICH ONE YOU WOULD VOTE FOR AND TELL WHY.

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