

# Kerry on the issues

Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts will battle President George W. Bush on the campaign trail, where they will face off on issues from taxes to gay marriage. Here, we look at where Kerry stands on the major issues facing the nation.

## ABORTION

Kerry opposes legislation that would restrict a woman's access to an abortion and says he would only appoint judges to the federal judiciary who support the landmark Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision that established a woman's right to an abortion. Kerry voted against banning a rare abortion procedure widely known as "partial-birth abortion" because it did not contain an exception to protect the health of the mother.

*"If you believe that choice is a constitutional right, and I do, and if you believe that Roe v. Wade is the embodiment of that right ... I will not appoint a justice to the Supreme Court of the United States who will undo that right." (Portsmouth, N.H. Jan. 26, 2004)*

## DEATH PENALTY

Kerry, a former prosecutor, opposes the death penalty except in cases of terrorism. He argues that 111 people convicted of murder have been released from death row because DNA evidence proved them not guilty.

*"Our system has made mistakes and it's been applied in a way that I think is wrong. Secondly, I don't believe that, in the end, you advance the sort of level of your justice and your system of your civility as a nation. Many other nations in the world — most of the other nations in the world have adopted that idea — that the state should not engage in killing, because they have very bad memories of what happens when the state engages in killing." (Debate, Los Angeles. Feb. 26, 2004)*

## DEFICIT

Kerry says he plans to cut the deficit in half by the end of 2008 by repealing Bush tax cuts for Americans with incomes above \$200,000 and by cutting government administrative costs. He would call a "Balanced Budget Summit" directing both political parties to find cost reductions, even in their top priorities. He wants to reduce government energy costs by 20 percent by 2020, eliminate \$12 billion in "fraud and abuse" in Medicare and save money by improving federal purchasing systems. He often reminds listeners that he was one of the first Democrats to endorse the 1985 Gramm-Rudman-Hollings law that set deficit reduction targets on Congress.

*"I have promised to cut the deficit in half in four years, which is precisely what ... Bill Clinton did. If Americans liked the eight years of Bill Clinton's economy, they're going to love the first four years of John Kerry's." (Milwaukee. Feb. 15, 2004)*

## EDUCATION

Kerry, who has a sister who teaches in Boston, voted for Bush's No Child Left Behind law, but has criticized it on the campaign trail, saying it's poorly financed and improperly applied. Kerry would create a National Education Trust Fund to pay the federal share of education costs and increase government spending on public-school education from \$23.8 billion a year to \$35 billion a year by 2008. Kerry also would use a portion of a two-year, \$50 billion economic stimulus fund to help financially strapped states that are contemplating teacher layoffs, shutting schools or shortening school years.

*"We want to raise accountability in our schools. We want to raise standards. We want teachers to be highly certified. What we don't want is to have it implemented the way it is being implemented by George Bush. He's making it punitive. He's disrespecting teachers. And he's walked away from his own promise to fully fund No Child Left Behind." (Debate, Milwaukee. Feb. 15, 2004)*

## ENVIRONMENT

Along with foreign policy, Kerry's other major legislative interest has been the environment. He has attended international summits on global warming and was one of the main senators to block the Bush administration's efforts to open up the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska to oil drilling. Kerry has angered autoworkers in Michigan for pushing for higher mileage standards — a regulation that favors smaller Asian-made cars. He invokes President Kennedy's vision of putting a man on the moon in calling for equal commitment to developing alternative energy sources to reduce dependence on oil. "We can go to the moon right here on earth," he says frequently.

*"We deserve a president who understands that it is not a choice to America of either protecting the environment or having jobs. False choice, false leadership; the environment is jobs. And if we preserve it properly and set a goal as I will, we will produce 20 percent of America's electricity from alternative and renewable fuels by the year 2020." (Pembroke, N.H. Feb. 20, 2004)*



GRUPE KENNEDY/REUTERS

## GAY MARRIAGE

Kerry believes marriage should be between a man and woman, but advocates civil unions for gays to guarantee gay couples the same rights as married couples. He voted against the Defense of Marriage Act, which permitted states to ignore gay weddings performed in other states. He opposes President Bush's plan for a federal constitutional amendment forbidding same-sex unions. But he says he would not object to a similar state amendment in his home state of Massachusetts, provided that it otherwise gives gay couples the same rights as married couples.

*"Are we prepared to provide rights to all Americans, so that they share the same rights as other people, not the same terminology or status? I believe that the right, the spousal rights, the right of inheritance, the right with respect to taxes, the right with respect to visitation in a hospital, there are a whole series of rights. I'm for those rights being afforded to every single American." (New York. Feb. 29, 2004)*

## HEALTH CARE

Kerry would provide tax breaks to employers and tax credits to individuals to ensure access to the same health-care program available to members of Congress and federal employees. Under his plan, the federal government would pay 75 percent of catastrophic health costs — illnesses that cost more than \$50,000 — thus reducing the cost of health insurance for employers. Kerry estimates the plan would cost an average of \$72 billion a year for the first five years and cover about three-quarters of currently uninsured Americans.

*"Just one year ago, I was diagnosed with prostate cancer. I stand before you 100 percent cured now, but I was lucky. As a U.S. senator, I could get the best health care in the world. Most people aren't so lucky, and we need to change that. That's why my plan gives every American access to the same kind of health care that members of Congress give themselves. We will cover 96 percent of all Americans, and 99 percent of our children." (Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Dec. 14, 2003)*

## IMMIGRATION

Kerry opposes Bush's "guest-worker" immigration plan, but supports similar goals of giving immigrants in the United States illegally a chance to legalize their status. He would permit young undocumented foreigners to attend college in the United States provided they graduated from high school here.

*"The president's plan is really a plan to exploit workers in America. It's not a real immigration reform plan. What I want to do is have a full immigration reform plan that involves earned legalization; involves the technology and support we need on the border; work with (Mexican) President (Vicente) Fox in order to have a legitimate guest worker program; and, finally, we need to crack down on those people in America who hire people illegally and exploit workers in the United States. It makes more sense to bring them out of the shadows and start working them toward citizenship." (Debate, Los Angeles. Feb. 26, 2004)*

## IRAQ

Kerry voted to authorize war, but says Bush should have created a larger coalition and should have turned to war only as a last resort. He voted against \$87 billion in reconstruction money for Iraq and Afghanistan, saying Bush should have paid for the amount by eliminating some of his tax cuts. He says he would internationalize reconstruction with help of U.N. allies.

*"I voted not specifically to go to war. I voted for a process. ... The process that we got out of the president by standing up to him was that he was going to go to the U.N., and build an international coalition, a true international coalition. Going to war was a last resort. If I had been president I would have wanted that authority. It was the only way to hold (Saddam Hussein) accountable. But if you believe I would have used that authority and gone to war the way George Bush did, then you should not vote for me." (Portsmouth, N.H. Jan. 26, 2004)*

## ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Kerry says the Bush administration has not been engaged in the peace process. But he has sent conflicting signals to Arab Americans and to the Jewish community about how he would become more active. At first he suggested that former President Jimmy Carter would be his special envoy, but when Jewish leaders objected, he then mentioned former President Bill Clinton. He has described Israel's security fence as a "barrier to peace," but later said Israel is entitled to secure its border. In June 2002, he said Bush's decision not to press Israel to negotiate with Palestinians was a "catastrophic mistake."

*"A good president has always been capable of being able to act as an honest broker, nudging our friends, leveraging when we need to, respecting the notion that it's not up to us to define the peace. It's up to the parties to negotiate the peace, and no peace that isn't properly negotiated by the parties can be a peace that holds." (Des Moines. Nov. 16, 2003)*

## JOBS

Kerry has a multifaceted plan to boost the economy that includes repealing tax cuts for taxpayers with incomes over \$200,000 and using the extra money to pay for expanded health care and college assistance; creating a two-year, \$50 billion economic-stimulus fund; and reducing the deficit. Kerry says he would also eliminate tax incentives that encourage companies to go overseas and would enforce labor provisions in trade agreements. He also would provide manufacturing incentives to businesses that create jobs. Kerry says his plan to seek alternative sources of energy would create jobs, as would a renewed focus by his administration on science and technology.

*"We put people back to work by being fair, by closing loopholes, by investing in education, by investing in job training, by investing in manufacturing, all choices that the Bush administration doesn't want to talk about, hasn't talked about and chooses to ignore." (Washington. March 11, 2004)*

## SOCIAL SECURITY

Kerry opposes plans to let individuals invest portions of their Social Security taxes in the stock market and opposes moves to cut back benefits. He has argued that an improved economy will help put Social Security on sound financial footing, but has not offered any specific plan to address the pressure on Social Security placed by retiring baby boomers.

*"No matter what was said in Washington ... the wrong way to cut the deficit is to cut Social Security benefits. If I am president, we're simply not going to do it. And if I am the Democratic nominee, I welcome this debate. This is a debate that I will win and we will win and we will restore our economy in a way that is fair to Americans without destroying the solemn contract of Social Security in this nation." (Los Angeles. Feb. 25, 2004)*

## TAXES

Kerry voted against Bush's tax cuts in 2001 and 2003. He would repeal President Bush's tax cuts for those earning more than \$200,000. He would retain tax breaks aimed at the middle class, such as the child tax credit, the reduction in the so-called marriage penalty and lower tax rates. He also would lower capital gains and dividend taxes for the middle class. Kerry would use tax credits to help people obtain health care and a college education. Businesses would get tax incentives to create jobs, but he would eliminate other corporate tax breaks.

*"It's wrong when companies turn their backs on the country, their community and their workers to chase tax loopholes and tax avoidance. It's time we had an economy that's run not just by the values of our stocks but the values of our families." (Bedford, N.H. Jan. 7, 2004)*

## TRADE

Kerry has a long record of voting for liberalized trade — from the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement to the 2002 legislation that gave the president greater powers to negotiate trade deals. Kerry has adjusted on the campaign trail; he says existing trade agreements will undergo a 120-day review to ensure that trading partners are living up to the pacts. He opposes the pending Central American Free Trade Agreement and the Free Trade Area for the Americas, saying they lack adequate labor and environmental enforcement provisions.

*"There's been a dramatic shift in the world and what has happened to jobs over the course of the last few years. Perhaps three or four years ago, I began talking about how it is critical that in any trade agreement, we now need to negotiate labor and trade, labor and environment standards." (Milwaukee. Feb. 15, 2004)*

## VETERANS

Kerry, a Vietnam War combat veteran, has portrayed himself on the stump as the reluctant warrior — the decorated Navy swift boat skipper who then protested the war. He says he would improve veterans' health care and resolve one of the bitterest disputes between disabled veterans and the federal government — the inability of many disabled veterans to receive the full amount of their retirement pay while receiving the full amount of their disability compensation. Kerry said he would support increasing the combat-death benefit to families from \$6,000 to \$12,000.

*"Today, 90,000 veterans are waiting for care at VA hospitals, and 41,000 veterans are waiting for their first doctors' visits. We shouldn't be neglecting the care for our troops and their families before, during and after war." (Des Moines, Iowa. Nov. 10, 2003)*

— James Kuhnheim, Knight Ridder Washington correspondent

Five significant achievements in the Senate

**1 Relations with Vietnam.** In 1995 Kerry worked in partnership with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., in helping to achieve normalizing relations with Vietnam.

**2 POWs in Southeast Asia.** In 1991-92 Kerry chaired a 15-month investigation into POWs and MIAs in Southeast Asia, concluding, along with McCain, that there was "no compelling evidence" that American prisoners were still alive in Vietnam or elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

**3 Drug trafficking investigation.** From 1987 to 1992 a subcommittee Kerry chaired examined drug smuggling allegations against Panama's Gen. Manuel Antonio Noriega, discovering that U.S. officials overlooked Noriega's role in trafficking to protect U.S. interests in Panama. The investigation also led to an examination of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

**4 Report on Contras.** In 1985-86 Kerry investigated claims that Nicaraguan Contras were running guns and smuggling guns. His 1986 report alleged that the Reagan administration had illegal links to the Contras — a claim later upheld amid findings that administration officials had diverted Iranian arm sales proceeds to the Contras.

**5 Repeal of PAC money.** In his four elections to the Senate, Kerry has refused money from Political Action Committees, a rarity in the Senate. He makes up for it by being a prolific fund-raiser of individual donations.

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