

**The**  
**Wonk Room** THINK PROGRESS

**NATIONAL** **THE DEBATE**  
**SECURITY EDITION** **STUDY GUIDE**



# KNOW YOUR DEBATE STATE MISSISSIPPI

**H**ere is a by-the-numbers examination of what a third term of the Bush-McCain-Palin agenda would mean for the people of Mississippi.

## HEALTH CARE

- There are 545,000 people without health insurance in Mississippi. This is 19 percent of the population, up from 13 percent (360,00 people) in 2000.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.3 million people in Mississippi, including approximately 490,000 women, have employer-based health insurance and are at risk of losing it under John McCain's plan.<sup>2</sup>
- 460,000 people in Mississippi with pre-existing conditions currently covered by their employer, including around 250,000 women, would find it particularly expensive or even impossible to get coverage under John McCain's plan.<sup>3</sup>
- A Mississippi couple making \$60,000 a year will see their taxes go up by \$630 by 2013 under John McCain's health plan.<sup>4</sup>

## ECONOMY

- The average Mississippi worker has seen their real wages decrease by \$1,400 since 2000. From 1992 to 1999 real median family income rose \$7,800 across the South. (Mississippi-only data unavailable.)<sup>5</sup>
- There are 300,000 more people living in poverty in Mississippi than there were in 2000, up from 13 percent of Mississippi's population in 2000 to 23 percent of Mississippi's population in 2007.<sup>6</sup>
- In Mississippi, one house in every 1,800 has gone into foreclosure in the second quarter of 2008.<sup>7a</sup>
- Mississippi taxpayers will spend \$190 million on subsidies for big oil and gas

companies under John McCain over the next five years.<sup>8</sup>

- Mississippi has lost over 14,000 jobs from 2000 to 2006 (most recent data) under the economic stewardship of George W. Bush.<sup>9</sup>
- Mississippi's unemployment rate is 8 percent, up from 5 percent in January 2001.<sup>10</sup>

## THE IRAQ WAR

- Mississippi taxpayers are paying approximately \$48 million a month for the war in Iraq.<sup>11</sup>
- Since 2003, Mississippi taxpayers have paid \$3.1 billion for the Iraq war.<sup>12</sup>

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## Endnotes

- 1 U.S. Census Bureau.
- 2 Center for American Progress Action Fund, "McCain's Radical Health Care Plan: State-by-State Analysis," August 2008; Center for American Progress Action Fund and Planned Parenthood, "Worse for Women: An Analysis of the Effects Senator McCain's Health Plan Would Have On Women," September, 2008.
- 3 Ibid.
- 4 Center for American Progress Action Fund, "McCain's Radical Health Care Plan: State-by-State Analysis," August 2008.
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau.
- 6 Center for American Progress Action Fund analysis of U.S. Census Bureau data.
- 7 RealtyTrac, "Foreclosure Activity Up 14 Percent In Second Quarter," July 2008.
- 8 Center for American Progress Action Fund, "The True Cost of McCain's Oil Industry Subsidies for Every State," August, 2008.
- 9 Bureau of Economic Analysis.
- 10 Bureau of Labor Statistics.
- 11 Based on a Center for American Progress Action Fund analysis of a Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation study of Congressional Research Service data.
- 12 Ibid.

# Sen. McCain vs. REALITY Eleven Things McCain Gets Wrong

## 1 McCain frequently insists “the surge has worked.”

[*The Wall Street Journal*, 1/10/08; *The Washington Post*, 5/30/08]

### **REALITY** The goal of the “surge” was to create space for Iraqi political reconciliation, which has yet to occur.

The “surge” did not deliver on its central objective: achieving a sustainable power consolidation among Iraq’s different political forces. The surge froze into place the accelerated fragmentation that Iraq underwent in 2006 and 2007, and created disincentives to bridge central divisions between Iraqi factions. These factions remain at loggerheads over extremely significant issues such as the oil law, constitutional reform, and the status of the city of Kirkuk, to name only the most contentious. [“Iraq’s Political Transition After the Surge,” Center for American Progress, 9/10/08]

McCain also demonstrates repeatedly that he does not understand the various factors that have contributed to the drop in violence, incorrectly stating that the surge “began the Anbar awakening. I mean, that’s just a matter of history.” The Anbar awakening began in September 2006, long before the surge was planned or announced. Military leaders in Iraq recognize that it was the prospect of a U.S. military withdrawal, not the surge, which initially prompted the Sunni insurgents to change sides. [CBS

News, 7/22/08; *Military Review*, March/April 2008 (pdf); Salon, 7/25/08]

A broad array of national security analysts also recognize that the 2007 troop “surge” was just one of several factors contributing to the reduction in violence. Other factors were the revolt of Sunni tribal leaders against Al Qaeda, the decision by Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr to “freeze” his powerful Mahdi Army militia in August 2007, the completion of large-scale cleansing of neighborhoods by sectarian militias, and the separation of Sunni and Shia into heavily guarded enclaves separated by concrete barriers. [The American Prospect, 7/28/08; Wonk Room, 4/3/08]

## 2 McCain says that debating his support for the Iraq invasion is a “job for historians,” suggesting that his support for the surge is all that really counts. McCain also says that, even knowing that Saddam had no WMD and no connections to Al Qaeda, “there’s no question” he would still have voted to authorize the war.

[ABC This Week, 7/27/08; CNN Late Edition, 7/27/08; The Intelligencer, 7/1/08]

### **REALITY** A surge of 30,000 troops wouldn’t have been necessary were it not for the disastrous decision to invade Iraq in the first place.

The Iraq war has resulted in the deaths of over 4,000 American servicemen and women, over 30,000 seriously wounded, and over 60,000 suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. [CNN, 9/15/08; Associated Press, 4/17/08]. The war has also resulted in the deaths of an estimated 150,000 Iraqis, with many more wounded and maimed, and over 4 million displaced, both within and without the country. [Guardian, 3/19/08; Center for American Progress, 4/30/08] Economist Joseph Stiglitz of Columbia University and Linda Bilmes of Harvard University estimate the total cost of the Iraq war to U.S. taxpayers at around \$3 trillion. [*The Washington Post*, 3/9/08]

**3 Demonstrating his simplistic division of the world into “free” and “authoritarian,” McCain wants to throw Russia out of the G8. Stating that the G8 “should exclude Russia,” McCain insists that Western nations should not “tolerate Russia’s nuclear blackmail.”** [*The New York Times*, 3/26/08; ThinkProgress, 5/2/08]

**REALITY** Russia must be incorporated into the global system, not isolated. Writer Fareed Zakaria calls McCain’s proposal “the most radical idea put forward by a major candidate for the presidency in 25 years.” Zakaria calls it “a policy that would alienate many countries in Europe and Asia who would see it as an attempt by Washington to begin a new cold war.” A senior U.S. official, who requested anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to speak publicly, said “It’s not even a theoretical discussion. It’s

an impossible discussion...It’s just a dumb thing.” [*Newsweek*, 5/5/08; ThinkProgress, 5/2/08]

McCain’s anti-Russia stance also boasts disastrous implications for efforts to partner with Russia in containing Iran’s nuclear ambitions. Many of America’s allies, including the Israelis, believe that “Russia’s cooperation is essential” for dealing with the Iranian nuclear program. The policy of confrontation that McCain promises against Russia will make an Iranian bomb more likely. [*Time*, 8/21/08]

**4 McCain opposes talks with Iran, and condemns Barack Obama as “naïve” for wanting to negotiate with Iran “without conditions.”** [CNN, 6/2/08]

**REALITY** Even the Bush administration now recognizes the necessity of talking with Iran, “abandon[ing] its longstanding position that it would meet face to face with Iran only after the country suspended its uranium enrichment,” and sending Undersecretary of State William Burns to accompany an E. U. delegation during a meeting with Iran’s top nuclear official. At a CNN forum on September 15, five former U.S. secretaries of state—Colin Powell, Madeleine Albright, Warren Christopher, James Baker, and Henry Kissinger—all said they favored talking to Iran as part of a strategy to stop Tehran’s development of a nuclear weapons program. Henry Kissinger specifically advocated negotiating with Iran “without conditions.” [*The New York Times*, 7/17/08; CNN, 7/16/08; Reuters, 9/16/08; ABC, 9/16/08]

## **5 McCain repeatedly asserts that Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad “is the leader of Iran,” and criticizes those who support engagement with Iran as wanting to “sit down...with Ahmadinejad.”**

[*Time*, 5/19/08; *The Atlantic Monthly*, 5/30/08]

### **REALITY Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei is the leader of Iran.**

Khamenei formulates Iranian foreign policy, along with Iran’s National Security Council. Though Ahmadinejad exerts significant influence within the regime, he would likely play a relatively minor role in any talks between the United States and Iran. [Wonk Room, 5/20/08; Council on Foreign Relations, 4/7/06]

## **6 McCain says that Iraq is the “central front” in the war on terror, citing the release of a tape by Osama bin Laden as proof.**

[ABC News, 3/24/08]

### **REALITY It’s not smart to allow our enemies to dictate our strategy.**

There was no Al Qaeda in Iraq before there was America in Iraq. Invading Iraq has radicalized scores of young Muslims, who have traveled to Iraq and learned terrorist tactics, which they have now begun to bring back to their home countries. The September 17, 2008 attack on the U.S. embassy in Sanaa, Yemen, was the work of terrorists who had fought in Iraq, using tactics developed in Iraq. [*Christian Science Monitor*, 7/18/05; *The Washington Post*, 9/18/08]

Bin Laden himself says that “targeting America in Iraq in terms of economy and losses in life is a golden and unique opportunity.” Osama bin Laden considers the high price of oil resulting from the destabilization caused by the Iraq invasion—and the huge costs to the U.S. economy—as a strategic success for Al Qaeda. [BBC, 12/16/04; *Terrorism Monitor*, 9/4/08]

## **7 In remarks to the Council on Foreign Relations on November 5, 2003, McCain responded to a question on whether the United States would “finish the job” in Afghanistan: “I’m not as concerned as I am about Iraq, obviously, or otherwise I’d be talking about Afghanistan, but I believe that if Karzai can make the progress that he is making then in the long term we may muddle through in Afghanistan.”**

[ThinkProgress, 7/17/08]

**REALITY “Muddling through” is unfortunately what we’ve been doing—barely.** As a result of the diversion of resources and attention to an unnecessary war in Iraq—which was not a front in the war on terror before the Iraq invasion—Al Qaeda and the Taliban have regrouped in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border areas and waged an increasingly lethal insurgency. Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently told the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee: “I’m not convinced we are winning it in Afghanistan...Frankly, we’re running out of time.”

The Karzai government now controls less than one-third of the country. The other two-thirds is either uncontrolled, in the hands of the Taliban, or in the hands of warlords. As of September 11, 2008, more U.S. troops have been killed in Afghanistan in 2008 than in any year since the 2001 invasion. According to analyst Caroline Wadhams, "U.S. involvement in Iraq has meant less attention and resources for meeting important objectives in Afghanistan. Until U.S. leadership turns its attention and resources to the Afghan theater and the region, it will continue to play defense against a strengthening enemy." [*The Washington Post*, 9/11/08; Center for American Progress, 7/18/08; icasualties.org, 9/17/08; Huffington Post, 7/4/08]

**8** McCain belatedly advocated "surging" troops to Afghanistan to confront the reinvigorated Taliban/Al Qaeda insurgency there. [*New York Sun*, 7/15/08; Salon, 7/16/08]

**REALITY** With whose army? Without withdrawing a significant number of troops from Iraq—something McCain consistently opposed—there are no troops to send for an Afghanistan surge. In July, Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters, "I don't have troops I can reach for, brigades I can reach to send into Afghanistan, until I have a reduced requirement in Iraq." Journalist Fred Kaplan wrote "there is *no* way to put more boots

in Afghanistan without taking boots out of Iraq. As one senior Army officer put it to me, having it both ways is, 'in a word, impossible,' and anyone who thinks otherwise, he added, is 'dreaming.'" [ThinkProgress, 7/2/08; Salon, 7/16/08; Slate, 5/5/08]

**9** John McCain advocates a hard line against North Korea, and disagrees with the Bush administration's policy of diplomatic engagement with the country. McCain insists that "we must never squander the trust of our allies and the respect for our highest office by promising that the president will embark on an open-ended, unconditional personal negotiation with a dictator responsible for running an international criminal enterprise." [*The New York Times*, 5/27/08; *The Washington Post*, 5/26/08; *The Wall Street Journal*, 5/27/08]

**REALITY** Unlike President Bush's first-term policy, which resulted in North Korea developing a nuclear weapon, Bush's new approach (which is actually a return to President Clinton's approach to the problem) is actually producing good results. North Korea provided greater disclosure of its nuclear activities, and destroyed part of its weapons-building reactor, steps President

**"...there is *no* way to put more boots in Afghanistan without taking boots out of Iraq."** – Fred Kaplan, Slate.com

Bush recognized as important first steps toward the goal of a nuclear weapon-free Korean peninsula. *The Washington Post* called McCain's "language [on North Korea] remarkably similar to President Bush's first-term rhetoric." [*The Washington Post*, 5/26/08; *Chicago Tribune*, 7/26/08]

**10** John McCain was a strong supporter of Pakistan strongman Pervez Musharraf, right up to the moment he was ousted earlier this year. After the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto prompted calls for the Bush administration to rethink its relationship with Musharraf, "McCain rose to Musharraf's defense," hailing him for having "done a pretty good job" and lauding him as "personally scrupulously honest." [*The Washington Post*, 12/28/07, 12/29/07; *The New Republic*, 8/18/08]

**REALITY** The Bush administration, with its overreliance on Musharraf, did not do enough to reach out to Pakistan's political and civil society leaders or provide significant support to Pakistan's democratic institutions, its education, or its economy.

Analyst Brian Katulis writes, "Pakistan remains at the nexus of the most pressing global security challenges: nuclear weapons, international terrorism, religious extremism, and endemic poverty. Stability and security in Pakistan are directly tied to international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan, since the Taliban have used the lawless border region as a safe haven to stage attacks. U.S. intelligence agencies repeatedly

issued intelligence estimates over the past year warning about the threat posed by Al Qaeda safe havens in Pakistan. Under Musharraf, Pakistan achieved little progress on these vital issues, and the United States was getting little in return for its strong support of Musharraf." [Center for American Progress, 8/18/08; *Guardian*, 8/21/08]

**11** In a recent interview, McCain refused to commit to a meeting with Spanish Prime Minister Jose Luis Zapatero, seeming to "lump... Zapatero in the same category as the anti-American leaders of Venezuela, Bolivia and Cuba during in an interview with Miami-based Union Radio." McCain stated "I can assure you I will establish closer relations with our friends and I will stand up to those who want to do harm to the United States of America."

[*The Washington Post*, 9/18/08]

**REALITY** Spain is an important ally, and has more than 700 troops in Afghanistan as part of the NATO effort there. McCain says that as president he would seek to repair relations that have been badly frayed in Europe during Bush's tenure, and insists that "our allies [must] make a bigger commitment, both in personnel and other ways" to the effort in Afghanistan. It's unclear how refusing to meet with the prime minister of one of America's closest European allies would serve either of these goals. [Matthew Yglesias, 9/18/08; Afghanistan Conflict Monitor, 1/03/08; CBS News, 7/9/08; *The Washington Post*, 9/18/08]

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