



Barack Obama (D)

John McCain (R)

Abortion

Obama supports abortion rights. As an Illinois state senator, he voted against a bill banning late-term abortions because, he said, it did not contain a clause to protect the life of the mother. Obama has supported federal funding of contraception and teen pregnancy prevention programs.

McCain advocates overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 Supreme Court decision that protects abortion rights, and banning abortion except for rape, incest or a threat to the life of the mother. On contraception, McCain has opposed federal funding of contraception and teen pregnancy prevention programs.

Affirmative action

Obama, the nation's first African American candidate for president, backs affirmative action. He opposes this year's ballot measures in Colorado and Nebraska to end affirmative action because, he said, they "drive a wedge between people." He suggested that such programs should eventually focus on income, not race.

McCain had supported an initiative in his home state of Arizona that would have ended racial and gender preferences, but the measure failed to make the Nov. 4 ballot because of invalid signatures. The measure, however, appears on the Colorado and Nebraska ballots. Critics have accused McCain of flip-flopping because a decade ago, he said a similar plan in the state Legislature was divisive.

Climate change

Obama embraces cutting greenhouse gases by 80 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. Companies would pay immediately for the pollution they produce. The federal government would auction off credits to allow those polluters to release Co2, with the money going toward promoting renewable energy sources and developing cleaner technology, among other programs. He wants to spend \$150 billion on developing clean-energy technology.

McCain supports a system to require polluters to reduce greenhouse gases by 60 percent of 1990 levels by 2050. Companies could buy and sell pollution credits. McCain has also stressed the need to incorporate clean coal technology and build nuclear power plants. He would award \$300 million to the first company to build a battery that can completely power a car.

Crime

Obama has vowed to boost funding for state and local law enforcement initiatives, including restoring funds to a grant program that helps pay for state and local anti-drug efforts across the country. All 50 governors and state attorneys general have unsuccessfully lobbied the Bush administration and Congress to restore funding for the program, which recently was cut by 67 percent. Obama also has promised to do more to address racial profiling, violence against women and recidivism.

McCain said he could support an increase in federal funding to fight crime as long as it would eliminate what he calls "rampant earmarking," or pork barrel spending. McCain would work to expand penalties for sexual predators, including fully implementing the Adam Walsh Act, a 2006 federal law that states have resisted because of its costs and some of its provisions.

Death penalty

Obama has walked a fine line on the death penalty. He supports executing those who commit the most heinous crimes, and he criticized the Supreme Court for ruling that a handful of states could not execute those who rape, but do not kill, children. At the same time, Obama has expressed concern that capital punishment is administered unfairly and believes it does little to deter crime.

McCain favors the death penalty.

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Economy and taxes

Obama wants a second economic stimulus package; he voted for the first one. He also has proposed an immediate \$50 billion plan to create two million jobs by distributing \$25 billion to fiscally ailing states and another \$25 billion to states for repairs and renovation of highways, roads, bridges, airports and rail systems. He would raise income taxes on the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans to finance new tax cuts for people making under \$250,000 a year.

McCain has said he would consider a second economic stimulus package; he voted for the one earlier this year that resulted in payments of up to \$1,200 for couples who file joint tax returns. He would make the Bush tax cuts permanent after initially opposing them, because he said they would lead to more economic growth and jobs.

Education

Obama supports the goals of No Child Left Behind to raise standards and hold schools accountable, but does not back teachers and students spending most of the year preparing for a single, high-stakes test. He wants to add \$8 billion a year into the law, and would spend \$10 billion more on pre-K programs such as Early Head Start and teacher training and mentoring programs. Obama does not support private school vouchers.

McCain voted for the Bush administration's landmark education reform plan, No Child Left Behind. As a candidate, he has not offered plans for its renewal. He says he believes the program is adequately funded, and that more money should go directly to principals to use, instead of state and local officials. McCain had called for a freeze in federal discretionary spending, which would include education. He endorses charter schools and private school vouchers.

Energy

Obama also changed his mind when gasoline prices went about \$4 a gallon, saying in August that he would be open to a deal that allowed more off-shore drilling in exchange for other major concessions. Neither he nor McCain back oil drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska.

McCain in June dropped his long opposition to off-shore drilling and said the matter should be left to the states.

Gun control

Obama has said he supports "sensible" gun control. Though his campaign has avoided specifics on what kinds of gun restrictions he approves, Obama has voiced support for a national ban on concealed weapons that would nullify individual state "concealed carry" provisions — a position many pro-gun advocates consider extreme. Obama also supports a permanent, nationwide ban on assault weapons.

McCain, unlike President Bush, opposes a nationwide ban on assault weapons.

Health care

Obama wants to guarantee universal access to health insurance by making employers share costs. He supports mandatory health coverage for children but not adults. As a state and U.S. senator, Obama has consistently voted for expansions of SCHIP. He has also called for an expansion of eligibility for Medicaid, the state-administered insurance program for low-income people.

McCain's health care plan focuses on lowering costs, offering tax breaks to people to buy insurance and including state-based initiatives to cover the medically needy. He voted against the Democratic-led initiative to renew and expand the state health insurance program for children, also known as SCHIP. He told CNN his main objection to the bill was the "phony smoke and mirrors way of paying for it." But, he added, "If they can find a legitimate way to pay for it, I would consider it."

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Immigration

Obama voted for comprehensive immigration reform, which offered legal status to illegal immigrants who learn English, pay fines and back taxes and pass a background check. He also voted for building a border fence. As a state senator, he voted to give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, and supported in-state tuition for undocumented students. He also favors allowing states to issue driver's licenses to illegal immigrants and giving grants to states to help promote citizenship.

McCain was a lead Senate negotiator in 2005 and 2007 of comprehensive immigration reform proposals that included allowing illegal immigrants to stay in the U.S. and giving them an opportunity to earn citizenship. After last year's effort failed, McCain promoted tough enforcement proposals, such as securing borders first before considering comprehensive reform.

National Guard

Obama has said he would address equipment shortages — a persistent problem for the state-run militia — and wants to expand National Guard and Reserve benefits. Obama supports making the National Guard's commander a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving him a more prominent seat at the negotiating table with other Pentagon leaders.

McCain wants to expand federal benefits for National Guard and Reserve members to bring the benefits more fully in line with those of their active-duty counterparts. He supports an expansion in retirement and health care benefits for members of the Guard and Reserves, as well as granting benefits to family members of those killed in training.

Real ID

Obama opposes the Real ID program, because he said it was imposed on states without federal money to pay for it.

McCain backs a 2005 federal law — called Real ID — to make driver's licenses more secure, an outgrowth of the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks. He has said he understands that "states need to be given enough time and funding to implement the requirements."

Same-sex marriage

Obama has said he personally believes that marriage is between a man and a woman, but fully supports marriage equality for gay and lesbian Americans. He is opposed to state constitutional bans and supports state efforts to allow marriage equivalents such as civil unions and domestic partnerships.

McCain says marriage should be between a man and a woman and should be regulated by the states. He opposed a federal constitutional amendment to ban gay marriage. McCain also has endorsed a California ballot measure that would amend the state constitution to limit marriage to be between a man and a woman, effectively undoing the state's recent high court decision legalizing same-sex marriage. In 2006, McCain endorsed a similar measure in Arizona -- the only gay marriage ban to be rejected by voters. This year, Arizona will vote on a similar ban.

Transportation

Obama supports a one-time \$25 billion expenditure that would be distributed to the states through the Federal Highway Trust Fund to spend quickly on transportation projects that would jump-start the economy. He also advocates a 10-year, \$60 billion national infrastructure fund for repairing and rebuilding highways, bridges, roads, ports, airports and rail systems in every state.

McCain opposes the pork-barrel spending for other programs that is contained in the four-year federal highway bill up for reauthorization next year. The highway bill is the main source of federal transportation money for states. "We are actually funding museums and other pork-barrel projects out of the highway trust fund," McCain said.