

BARACK OBAMA'S BLUEPRINT FOR THE CHANGE WE NEED
for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders



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Barack Obama's Plan for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders

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A MESSAGE FROM BARACK:

The time for change has come.

The nearly 13 million Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) across our country have helped build a strong and vibrant America. The AAPI communities represent many ethnicities and languages that span across generations, and their shared achievements are an important part of the American experience, and very personal to me. I was born in Hawaii, a majority Asian American state, where I spent much of my childhood, and I've lived in Indonesia. I had college roommates who were Indian and Pakistani. For most of my adult life, I've lived in Chicago, a city with its own vibrant Asian American communities. My sister is half Indonesian, and she is married to a Chinese Canadian. I have often said that I consider myself to be an honorary AAPI member. So I understand and am committed to the issues that are important to the AAPI communities.

Beyond acknowledging the contributions of the AAPI communities, we also recognize the challenges we still face. Our nation is at war, our planet is in peril, and for increasing numbers of Americans of Asian and Pacific Islander descent, the American dream is in danger of slipping away. As President, I will restore the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and direct that office to work towards the original goal of helping the federal government meet the underserved needs of Asian American and Pacific Islanders. I will work with AAPI communities to ensure that all Americans have access to affordable, accessible health care for all by reducing the language and cultural barriers that limit access to our medical system. We will make sure the global economy works for AAPIs by fixing our public education system, making college affordable through an annual \$4,000 tax credit in exchange for community service, and equipping our workers with the skills and training they need to compete. We will invest in renewable energy, which will ease our high energy costs while also saving our planet. We will do more to support small businesses, including strengthening programs that provide capital to minority-owned businesses. We will develop comprehensive immigration reforms that strengthen our security while affirming our heritage as a nation of immigrants. We will restore our Constitution and the rule of law, including our commitment to human rights abroad and civil liberties at home. Finally, we must forge a more effective regional framework for collective security in Asia and the Pacific to promote political and economic stability, confront transnational threats like terrorism and influenza, and collectively address environmental concerns.

With your support, I am confident that we can address these challenges. I am thankful to the many leaders, campaign organizers and grassroots volunteers of Asian and Pacific Island descent across the country, who have registered thousands of new voters, conducted phone-banking, organized canvassing trips, hosted political events, translated campaign materials into numerous Asian languages, and much more. By reaching out directly to the AAPI communities, we can ensure that AAPIs are well represented in this national conversation about our future and the movement to write our destiny.

The story of the AAPI communities is the quintessential American story about drawing strength from our diversity to achieve extraordinary things.

I will be a president who remembers that our separate struggles are really one. I will never walk away from the tough battles or the difficult work of bringing people together.

With your continued energy, enthusiasm, passion and activism, the change we seek is within reach.

I chose a career in public service almost twenty-five years ago because each night that I tuck my daughters in, I realize that their chances in life depend on our ability to create a country where what they look like and where they come from has no bearing on what they can become. That's what led me to become a community organizer, that's what has guided my life's work, and if you give me the chance, that's exactly the kind of country I will work for as your president.

So we know what we have to do. We know how to solve these problems. What we're lacking is leadership that can get it done. Leadership that can unite people of every race and religion and political party to make sure that in this country — of all countries — a life of hope and opportunity is possible for anyone who's willing to reach for it. That's the America we believe in. And that's the America that I'm running for President to help bring about.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barack Obama', written in a cursive style.

Barack Obama

“There are some who believe that we must try to turn back the clock on this new world; that the only chance to maintain our living standards is to build a fortress around America; to stop trading with other countries, shut down immigration, and rely on old industries. I disagree. Not only is it impossible to turn back the tide of globalization, but efforts to do so can make us worse off. Rather than fear the future, we must embrace it. I have no doubt that America can compete — and succeed — in the 21st century. And I know as well that more than anything else, success will depend not on our government, but on the dynamism, determination, and innovation of the American people.”

- Barack Obama, Flint, Michigan, June 16, 2008



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE ECONOMY AND HELP AAPIS RECLAIM THE AMERICAN DREAM

AT A GLANCE

- *Enact a second stimulus package to inject immediate relief into the economy*
- *Provide meaningful tax relief for middle class families*
- *Make strategic investments in America to create millions of new jobs*

THE PROBLEM

Income Declining as Prices Rise

Household income for AAPI families has dropped by over \$1,000 since 2000, and, over the last seven years, the number of AAPIs living in poverty has grown by over 180,000.

At the same time, the costs of basic necessities are increasing. The cost of in-state college tuition has grown 35 percent over the past five years. Health care costs have risen four times faster than wages over the past six years. And the personal savings rate is now the lowest it has been since the Great Depression.

Tax Cuts for Wealthy Weaken the Economy and Threaten Domestic Programs

The Bush tax cuts give those who earn over \$1 million dollars a tax cut nearly 160 times greater than that received by middle-income Americans. At the same time, this administration has refused to tackle health care, education and housing in a manner that benefits the middle class.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO JUMPSTART THE ECONOMY

PROVIDE A \$1,000 EMERGENCY ENERGY REBATE TO AMERICAN FAMILIES: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will enact a windfall profits tax on excessive oil company profits to give American families an immediate \$1,000 emergency energy rebate to help families pay rising bills. This relief would be a down payment on the Obama-Biden long-term plan to provide middle-class families with at least \$1,000 per year in permanent tax relief.

PROVIDE \$50 BILLION TO JUMPSTART THE ECONOMY AND PREVENT 1 MILLION AMERICANS FROM LOSING THEIR JOBS: This relief would include a \$25 billion State Growth Fund to prevent state and local cuts in health, education, housing, and heating assistance or counterproductive increases in property taxes, tolls or fees. The relief plan will also include \$25 billion in a Jobs and Growth Fund to prevent cutbacks in road and bridge maintenance and fund school repair — all to save more than 1 million jobs in danger of being cut.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO PROVIDE MIDDLE CLASS AMERICANS TAX RELIEF

PROVIDE A TAX CUT FOR WORKING FAMILIES: Obama and Biden will restore fairness to the tax code and provide 150 million workers the tax relief they need. They will create a new “Making Work Pay” tax cut of up to \$500 per worker, or \$1,000 per working family. The “Making Work Pay” tax cut will completely eliminate income taxes for 10 million Americans.

CREATE THE AMERICAN OPPORTUNITY TAX CREDIT: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will make college more affordable for all Americans by creating a new American Opportunity Tax Credit. This fully refundable credit will ensure that the first \$4,000 of a college education is completely free for most Americans and will cover two-thirds the cost of tuition at the average public college or university. Recipients of this credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of public service a year, either during the school year or over the summer months.

EXPAND THE CHILD AND DEPENDENT CARE TAX CREDIT: The current Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit provides too little relief to families that struggle to afford child care expenses. Currently the credit only covers up to 35 percent of the first \$3,000 of child care expenses a family incurs for one child and the first \$6,000 for a family with two or more children. And the credit is not refundable, which means that upper-income families disproportionately benefit while families who make under \$50,000 a year receive less than a third of the tax credit. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will reform the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit by making it refundable and allowing low-income families to receive up to a 50 percent credit for their child care expenses.

- **Simplify Tax Filings for Middle Class Americans:** Obama and Biden will dramatically simplify tax filings so that millions of Americans will be able to do their taxes in less than five minutes. Obama will ensure that the IRS uses the information it already gets from banks and employers to give taxpayers the option of pre-filled tax forms to verify, sign and return. Experts estimate that the Obama proposal will save Americans up to 200 million total hours of work and aggravation and up to \$2 billion in tax preparer fees.
- **Eliminate Income Taxes for Seniors Making Less than \$50,000:** Barack Obama and Joe Biden will eliminate all income taxation of seniors making less than \$50,000 per year. This proposal will eliminate income taxes for 7 million seniors and provide these seniors with an average savings of \$1,400 each year. Under the Obama-Biden plan, 27 million American seniors will also not need to file an income tax return. For many seniors, this will eliminate the need to hire a tax preparer, resulting in even larger savings.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO CREATE GOOD-PAYING JOBS

AAPIs have one of the highest labor force participation rates in the U.S. However, many AAPIs face barriers to good-paying jobs and lack the training necessary to achieve greater job opportunities. Less than half of Cambodian Americans participate in the labor force and less than a third of Hmong Americans do so. Many AAPIs work in sweatshops and other harsh conditions, often in violation of wage, hour, health, safety and other labor laws. On the other end of the labor market, AAPIs often encounter a “glass ceiling” to promotion and professional advancement. AAPIs are less than one percent of all the directors of Fortune 500 companies, are only one percent of higher education administrators and have one of the lowest tenure rates among university faculty.

Invest in the Manufacturing Sector and Create 5 Million New Green Jobs

INVEST IN OUR NEXT GENERATION INNOVATORS AND JOB CREATORS: Obama and Biden will create an Advanced Manufacturing Fund to identify and invest in the most compelling advanced manufacturing strategies. The Fund will have a peer-review selection and award process based on the Michigan 21st Century Jobs Fund, a state-level initiative that has awarded over \$125 million to Michigan businesses with the most innovative proposals to create new products and new jobs in the state.

DOUBLE FUNDING FOR THE MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP: The Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MEP) works with manufacturers across the country to improve efficiency, implement new technology, and strengthen company growth. This highly-successful program has engaged in more than 350,000 projects across the country and in 2006 alone helped create and protect over 50,000 jobs. But despite this success, funding for MEP has been slashed by the Bush administration. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will double funding for the MEP so its training centers can continue to bolster the competitiveness of U.S. manufacturers.

The Obama-Biden comprehensive energy independence and climate change plan will simultaneously boost the economy and address global warming by creating millions of new “green jobs” by investing in the clean energy sector. The plan will also invest in America’s highly-skilled manufacturing workforce and manufacturing centers to ensure that American workers have the skills and tools they need to pioneer the first wave of green technologies that will be in high demand throughout the world. They will also provide assistance to the domestic auto industry to ensure that new fuel-efficient vehicles are built by American workers. Obama’s energy plan will:

CREATE NEW JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR CLEAN TECHNOLOGIES: The Obama-Biden plan will increase funding for federal workforce training programs and direct these programs to incorporate green technologies training, such as advanced manufacturing and weatherization training, into their efforts to help Americans, including millions of AAPIs, find and retain stable, high-paying jobs. Obama will also create an energy-focused youth jobs program to invest in disconnected and disadvantaged youth.

INVEST IN A CLEAN ENERGY ECONOMY AND CREATE 5 MILLION NEW GREEN JOBS: Obama and Biden will invest \$150 billion over 10 years to advance the next generation of biofuels and fuel infrastructure, accelerate the commercialization of plug-in hybrids, promote development of commercial scale renewable energy, invest in low emissions coal plants, and begin transition to a new digital electricity grid. A principal focus of this fund will be devoted to ensuring that technologies that are developed in the U.S. are rapidly commercialized in the U.S. and deployed around the globe.

BOOST THE RENEWABLE ENERGY SECTOR AND CREATE NEW JOBS: The Obama-Biden plan will create new federal policies, and expand existing ones, that have been proven to create new American jobs. Obama and Biden will create a federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) that will require 10 percent of American electricity be derived from renewable sources by 2012, and 25 percent by 2025, which has the potential to create hundreds of thousands of new jobs on its own. Obama and Biden will also extend the Production Tax Credit, a credit used successfully by American farmers and investors to increase renewable energy production and create new local jobs.

ESTABLISH A NATIONAL LOW CARBON FUEL STANDARD: Obama will establish a National Low Carbon Fuel Standard (LCFS) to reduce the carbon in our fuels 10 percent by 2020. Obama will also require 60 billion gallons of advanced biofuels to be phased into our fuel supply by 2030.

IMPLEMENT A CAP-AND-TRADE SYSTEM: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will implement an economy-wide cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. The Obama-Biden cap-and-trade policy will require all pollution credits to be auctioned, and proceeds will go to investments in a clean energy future and rebates and other transition relief for families.

MAKE THE U.S. A LEADER ON CLIMATE CHANGE: Obama and Biden will re-engage with the U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the main international forum dedicated to addressing the climate problem. They will also create a Global Energy Forum of the world's largest emitters to focus exclusively on global energy and environmental issues.

New Jobs Through National Infrastructure Investment

Barack Obama believes that it is critically important for the United States to rebuild its national transportation infrastructure – its highways, bridges, roads, ports, air, and train systems – to strengthen user safety, bolster our long-term competitiveness and ensure our economy continues to grow.

CREATE A NATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE REINVESTMENT BANK: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will address the infrastructure challenge by creating a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank to expand and enhance, not supplant, existing federal transportation investments. This independent entity will be directed to invest in our nation's most challenging transportation infrastructure needs. The Bank will receive an infusion of federal money, \$60 billion over 10 years, to provide financing to transportation infrastructure projects across the nation. These projects will create up to two million new direct and indirect jobs and stimulate approximately \$35 billion per year in new economic activity.

Technology, Innovation and Creating Jobs

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will increase federal support for research, technology, and innovation for companies and universities so that America can lead the world in creating new advanced jobs and products.

INVEST IN THE SCIENCES: Barack Obama and Joe Biden supports doubling federal funding for basic research and changing the posture of our federal government from being one of the most anti-science administrations in American history to one that embraces science and technology. AAPIs have a proud history of achievements in the sciences and technology innovations. This will foster home-grown innovation, help ensure the competitiveness of US technology-based businesses, and ensure that 21st century jobs can and will grow in America.

MAKE THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT TAX CREDIT PERMANENT: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will make the Research and Development tax credit permanent so that firms can rely on it when making decisions to invest in domestic R&D over multi-year timeframes.

DEPLOY NEXT-GENERATION BROADBAND: Barack Obama believes we can get broadband to every community in America through a combination of reform of the Universal Service Fund, better use of the nation's wireless spectrum, promotion of next-generation facilities, technologies and applications, and new tax and loan incentives. Many AAPIs have among the highest rates of internet access but many low-income, more recent immigrants and more isolated Pacific Islander communities continue to experience a digital divide.

Support Small Business

SUPPORT AAPI SMALL BUSINESS: AAPIs own an estimated 1.1 million small businesses with annual revenues of more than \$326 billion. Those businesses employed over 2 million Americans. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will strengthen Small Business Administration programs that provide capital to minority-owned businesses, support outreach programs that help minority business owners apply for loans, and work to encourage the growth and capacity of minority firms.

PROVIDE TAX RELIEF FOR SMALL BUSINESSES AND START-UP COMPANIES: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will eliminate all capital gains taxes on start-up businesses to encourage innovation and job creation. They will also support small business owners by providing a \$500 "Making Work Pay" tax credit to almost every worker in America. Self-employed small business owners pay both the employee and the employer side of the payroll tax, and this measure will reduce the burdens of this double taxation.

CREATE A NATIONAL NETWORK OF PUBLIC-PRIVATE BUSINESS INCUBATORS: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will support entrepreneurship and spur job growth by creating a national network of public-private business incubators. Business incubators facilitate the critical work of entrepreneurs in creating start-up companies. They will invest \$250 million per year to increase the number and size of incubators in disadvantaged communities throughout the country.

THE OBAMA/BIDEN PLAN TO STRENGTHEN THE HOUSING MARKET

CREATE A UNIVERSAL MORTGAGE CREDIT: Many middle class Americans do not receive the existing mortgage interest tax deduction because they do not itemize their taxes. As a result, primarily wealthy Americans benefit from this homeownership tax incentive. Obama and Biden will ensure that middle-class Americans get the financial assistance they need to purchase or keep their own home by creating a 10 percent universal mortgage credit that gives tax relief to Americans who have a home mortgage. The Obama-Biden proposal will provide 10 million homeowners, most of whom earn under \$50,000 per year, with an average of \$500 in savings. This tax cut will provide direct relief to many homeowners who are struggling to maintain their mortgage payments

CLOSE BANKRUPTCY LOOPHOLE FOR MORTGAGE COMPANIES: While investors who own multiple homes and people with vacation homes can renegotiate those mortgages in bankruptcy, current Chapter 13 law requires ordinary families to stick with the original terms of their home loans—regardless of whether the loan was predatory or unfair. Obama and Biden will repeal this provision so that ordinary families do not suffer this unfair treatment.

Prevent Future Crises in the Housing Market

Barack Obama and Joe Biden's plan will ensure that the conditions that led to the subprime lending crisis are not repeated in the future by cracking down on mortgage fraud and requiring better disclosure and stronger oversight of the mortgage market.

MANDATE ACCURATE LOAN DISCLOSURE: Barack Obama and Joe Biden will enact laws to ensure that all prospective homebuyers have access to accurate and complete information about their mortgage options. They will create a Homeowner Obligation Made Explicit (HOME) score, which will provide potential borrowers with a simplified, standardized borrower metric (similar to APR) for home mortgages. The HOME score will allow Americans to easily compare various mortgage products and understand the full cost of the loan.

COMBAT MORTGAGE FRAUD AND SUBPRIME LOANS: Barack Obama introduced comprehensive legislation nearly two years ago to fight mortgage fraud and protect consumers against abusive lending practices. Obama's STOP FRAUD Act provides the first federal definition of mortgage fraud, increases funding for federal and state law enforcement programs, creates new criminal penalties for mortgage professionals found guilty of fraud, and requires industry insiders to report suspicious activity. This bill also provides counseling to homeowners and tenants to avoid foreclosures. Finally, Obama's bill requires the Government Accountability Office to evaluate and report to Congress on various state lending practices so that state regulations that undermine consumer's rights can be identified and hopefully eliminated.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Tax Relief

In the Illinois State Senate, Barack Obama was the chief cosponsor of Illinois' Earned Income Tax Credit, which provided over \$100 million in tax relief to working families in Illinois.

Housing

In the U.S. Senate, Obama introduced the STOP FRAUD Act to increase penalties for mortgage fraud and provide more protections for low-income homebuyers, well before the current subprime crisis began.

Predatory Lending

In the Illinois State Senate, Obama called attention to predatory lending issues. Obama sponsored legislation to combat predatory payday loans, and he also was credited with encouraging the state to more closely regulate some of the most egregious predatory lending practices.

American Jobs

Barack Obama introduced the Patriot Employer Act of 2007 to provide a tax credit to companies that maintain or increase the number of full-time workers in America relative to those outside the US; maintain their corporate headquarters in America; pay decent wages; prepare workers for retirement; provide health insurance; and support employees who serve in the military.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2008/06/16/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_79.php

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/economy/

“When I’m president, we’ll give our kids everything they need to have a fighting chance... Let’s rebuild our crumbling schools and recruit an army of new teachers because what makes the most difference in any child’s education is the person standing at the front of the classroom. And we also have to make sure that every child who wants to learn English has the resources to learn English. And that any child who comes here and studies here and does well in school has the same chance to attend a public college as anyone else.”

– Barack Obama, Los Angeles, October 20, 2007



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO GIVE EVERY CHILD A WORLD CLASS EDUCATION TO COMPETE IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMY

AT A GLANCE

There are 2.4 million AAPI children enrolled in K-12 schools — and they all deserve access to a high-quality education.

Contrary to popular stereotypes, AAPIs are not universally successful in academics and face unique cultural and linguistic challenges as basic as just learning English. The “model minority” myth about AAPIs is misleading and inaccurate which has resulted in policy makers focusing less attention on their needs and the disparities in the educational services provided to them. AAPIs also confront the same shortcomings in our educational systems as other Americans.

Although a relatively high percentage of AAPIs who are 25 or older hold a bachelor’s degree, certain AAPI ethnic groups are far less successful and attain college degrees at a rate far below the rest of the population.

THE PROBLEM

Barriers to Learning English:

In 2000, just under 5 percent of Americans aged 18-64 spoke English “not very well” or “not at all”, compared to approximately 16 percent of Asian Americans or Pacific Islanders.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers to Parent Engagement

Widely publicized research has shown that students with parents involved in their education achieve more, regardless of socio-economic status, racial or ethnic background, or the parents’ education level. Yet over half of the AAPI population was born outside of the United States, and over half of all AAPI students are non-native English speakers, which for many AAPI families results in cultural and language barriers to parental involvement.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN

Early Childhood Education

HIGH-QUALITY ZERO-TO-FIVE EARLY EDUCATION: Obama and Biden will launch a Children's First Agenda that provides care, learning and support to families with children from birth up to five years old. Unlike other early childhood education plans, their plan places key emphasis on early care and education for infants, which is essential for children to be ready to enter kindergarten. Obama will create Early Learning Challenge Grants to promote state "zero to five" efforts and help states move toward voluntary, universal pre-school.

EXPAND EARLY HEAD START AND HEAD START: Obama and Biden will quadruple Early Head Start, increase Head Start funding and improve the quality of both.

K-12 Education

SUPPORT ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS: Obama supports transitional bilingual education and will help Limited English Proficient students get ahead by holding schools accountable for making sure these students graduate. Obama and Biden will support development of appropriate assessments for English Language Learners and programs that monitor the progress of students learning English and hold schools accountable for making sure these students graduate.

REFORM NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND: Obama and Biden will fund No Child Left Behind and improve its assessments and accountability systems for AAPI children. Obama believes teachers should not be forced to spend the academic year preparing students to fill in bubbles on standardized tests. He will improve the assessments used to track student progress to measure readiness for college and the workplace and improve student learning in a timely, individualized manner. Obama and Biden will also improve NCLB's accountability system so that we are supporting schools that need improvement, rather than punishing them.

RECRUIT, TRAIN, SUPPORT AND REWARD OUR TEACHERS: Obama and Biden will improve our schools by recruiting well-qualified teachers to every classroom in America. Obama and Biden will improve teacher compensation by rewarding expert, accomplished teachers for taking on challenging assignments and helping teachers succeed.

MAKE MATH AND SCIENCE EDUCATION A NATIONAL PRIORITY: Obama and Biden will recruit graduates with degrees in math and science to the teaching profession and will support efforts to help these teachers learn from professionals in the field. They will also work to ensure that all children have access to a strong science curriculum at all grade levels.

Address the Dropout Crisis: Obama also will reduce the high school dropout rate for AAPIs by passing his legislation, the "Success in the Middle Act," to provide funding to school districts to invest in intervention strategies in middle school - strategies such as personal academic plans, teaching teams, parent involvement, mentoring, intensive reading and math instruction, and extended learning time.

EXPAND HIGH-QUALITY AFTERSCHOOL OPPORTUNITIES: Obama and Biden will double funding for the main federal support for afterschool programs, the 21st Century Learning Centers program, to serve one million more children.

Higher Education

MAKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE AND COLLEGE EDUCATION AFFORDABLE: Obama and Biden will create a new American Opportunity Tax Credit that will make tuition at the nation's community colleges completely free and will cover up to two-thirds the cost of tuition at the nation's public colleges and universities. This \$4,000 tax credit will be fully refundable and available at the time of enrollment in college – when families need the money. Recipients of the credit will be required to conduct 100 hours of community service.

SIMPLIFY THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR FINANCIAL AID: Forty percent of Asian American freshman are more likely to come from families with a household income of \$40,000 or less. AAPI families tend to be less informed about financial aid and are likely to overestimate the cost of tuition and underestimate available aid. Obama and Biden will streamline the financial aid process by eliminating the current federal financial aid application and enabling families to apply simply by checking a box on their tax form, authorizing their tax information to be used, and eliminating the need for a separate application.

SUPPORT COLLEGE OUTREACH PROGRAMS: Obama supports outreach programs like GEAR UP, TRIO and Upward Bound to encourage more young people from low-income families to consider and prepare for college.

OBAMA'S RECORD

ILLINOIS ADVOCACY: Obama has been a leader on educational issues throughout his career. As a community organizer, Obama led the fight on behalf of alternative schools for dropouts. In the Illinois State Senate, Obama was a leader on early childhood education, helping create the state's Early Learning Council.

U.S. SENATE: In the U.S. Senate, Obama has been a leader in working to make college more affordable. His very first bill sought to increase the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100. As a member of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions committee, Obama helped pass legislation to achieve that goal in the recent improvements to the Higher Education Act. Obama has also introduced legislation to create Teacher Residency Programs and to increase federal support for summer learning opportunities.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more on Barack Obama and Joe Biden's Education Plan:

www.barackobama.com/issues/education/

Speech on Pre-K to 12 Education:

www.barackobama.com/2007/11/20/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_34.php

Speech on College Affordability:

www.barackobama.com/2007/11/07/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_31.php



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN FOR IMMIGRATION

“The time to fix our broken immigration system is now...We need stronger enforcement on the border and at the workplace...But for reform to work, we also must respond to what pulls people to America... Where we can reunite families, we should. Where we can bring in more foreign-born workers with the skills our economy needs, we should.”

—Barack Obama, Statement on U.S. Senate Floor, May 23, 2007

AT A GLANCE

Comprehensive Reform

Barack Obama has fought for comprehensive immigration reform that secures our border, fixes our broken immigration bureaucracy, promotes family reunification, and honors our global commitments to the world's refugees.

Commitment

Obama will revive immigration reform in the first year of his presidency.

THE PROBLEM

Immigration Bureaucracy is Broken

The immigration bureaucracy is broken and overwhelmed, forcing legal immigrants to wait years for applications. AAPI families suffer some of the worst immigration backlogs.

Immigration Raids are Ineffective

Despite a tenfold increase in recent years, immigration raids only netted 4,600 arrests in 2007 and have placed all the burdens of a broken system onto immigrant families.

BARACK OBAMA'S PLAN

AAPIs constitute a growing and vibrant piece of the American fabric. Currently, approximately 26 percent of the U.S.'s foreign born population is from Asia, and the Asian-born population has one of the highest naturalization rates among foreign-born groups.

Create Secure Borders

Obama and Biden want to preserve the integrity of our borders. They support additional personnel, infrastructure and technology on the border and at our ports of entry.

Improve Our Immigration System

Obama and Biden believe we must fix the dysfunctional immigration bureaucracy and increase the number of legal immigrants to keep families together and meet the demand for jobs that employers cannot fill.

Safeguard and Streamline the Family Reunification Process

Many AAPI families rely on family reunification policies to assist them in building better lives in the United States. However, AAPI families have some of the longest backlogs of any immigrant groups. Barack Obama has introduced measures to put greater emphasis on keeping immigrant families together and to revisit a controversial new points system that would dramatically alter U.S. immigration policy.

Support Citizenship

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will ensure that citizenship application fees are reasonable and fair. They will also expand opportunities to learn English and obtain civic education classes to help immigrants assume all of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Obama joined Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) to introduce the Citizenship Promotion Act of 2007.

Reform the Immigration Bureaucracy

Another key choke point in the process to becoming a legal permanent resident or a U.S. citizen is the F.B.I. name/security check. Many law-abiding legal immigrants see their immigration applications delayed by months and often years as the overwhelmed F.B.I. completes their background checks. Obama introduced legislation, passed by the Senate, to improve the speed and accuracy of these background checks.

Remove Incentives to Enter Illegally

Obama and Biden will remove incentives to enter the country illegally by cracking down on employers who hire undocumented immigrants.

Bring People Out of the Shadows

Obama and Biden support a system that allows undocumented immigrants who are in good standing to pay a fine, learn English, and go to the back of the line for the opportunity to become citizens.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Senate Leadership

During the most recent immigration debate, Obama was a leader in seeking common-sense and balanced immigration reform. He pushed Congress to find common ground, introduced amendments that would have prioritized keeping families together, and would have held employers who hire undocumented immigrants responsible.

Crack Down on Employers

Obama championed a proposal to create a system so employers can verify that their employees are legally eligible to work in the U.S.

Fix the Bureaucracy

Obama joined Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) to introduce the Citizenship Promotion Act to ensure that immigration application fees are both reasonable and fair. Obama also introduced legislation that passed the Senate to improve the speed and accuracy of FBI background checks.

Respect Families

Obama introduced amendments to put greater emphasis on keeping immigrant families together.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT BARACK'S PLAN

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/immigration/



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO IMPROVE ACCESS, AFFORDABILITY, AND QUALITY OF HEALTH CARE FOR AAPIs

“We now face an opportunity – and an obligation – to turn the page on the failed politics of yesterday’s health care debates.... My plan begins by covering every American. If you already have health insurance, the only thing that will change for you under this plan is the amount of money you will spend on premiums. That will be less. If you are one of the 45 million Americans who don’t have health insurance, you will have it after this plan becomes law. No one will be turned away because of a preexisting condition or illness.”

-Barack Obama, Speech in Iowa City, IA, May 29, 2007

AT A GLANCE

Affordable, Accessible Health Coverage for All

Obama will sign a health care reform plan into law by the end of his first term in office that will provide affordable, accessible health coverage for every American.

Reduce Health Care Costs

Obama’s plan will bring down the cost of health care and reduce a typical family’s premiums by as much as \$2,500 per year.

THE PROBLEM

Millions of AAPIs are Uninsured or Underinsured because of Rising Medical Costs

Access to quality, affordable health care is a critical issue for AAPI communities. Currently, there are 2.2 million AAPIs who have no health insurance – which is over 16 percent of the AAPI population.

Serious Health Disparities

AAPIs experience significant and life-threatening disparities in health and healthcare. For example, as many as one out of 10 AAPIs are chronically infected with the Hepatitis B virus. AAPI men are twice as likely as white men to have stomach cancer, and AAPI women are over three times as likely as white women to have stomach cancer. Liver cancer rates among AAPI men are 13 times higher among Vietnamese Americans, eight times higher among Korean Americans, and six times higher among Chinese Americans.

Language Barriers Persist

Linguistically appropriate and culturally competent services are fundamental to the delivery of quality services, but 39 percent of AAPIs were Limited English Proficient (LEP), compared to 8 percent of the overall U.S. population.

Health Care Costs are Skyrocketing

Health insurance premiums have risen four times faster than wages over the past six years.

BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN

Quality, Affordable, Accessible Health Coverage for All

(1) Plan to Cover Uninsured Americans: Obama and Biden will make available a new national health plan to all Americans, including the self-employed and small businesses, to buy affordable health coverage that is similar to the plan available to members of Congress.

The Obama Plan will have the Following Features:

- **Guaranteed Eligibility:** No American will be turned away from any insurance plan because of illness or pre-existing conditions.
- **Comprehensive Benefits:** The benefit package will be similar to that offered through Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHBP), the plan members of Congress have. The plan will cover all essential medical services, including preventive, maternity, and mental health care.
- **Affordable Premiums, Co-Pays and Deductibles.**
- **Subsidies:** Individuals and families who do not qualify for Medicaid or SCHIP but still need financial assistance will receive an income-related federal subsidy to buy into the new public plan or purchase a private health care plan.
- **Simplified Paperwork and Reined in Health Costs.**
- **Easy Enrollment:** The new public plan will be simple to enroll in and provide ready access to coverage.
- **Portability and Choice:** Participants in the new public plan and the National Health Insurance Exchange (see below) will be able to move from job to job without changing or jeopardizing their health care coverage.
- **Quality and Efficiency:** Participating insurance companies in the new public program will be required to report data to ensure that standards for quality, health information technology and administration are being met.

(2) National Health Insurance Exchange: The Obama and Biden plan will create a National Health Insurance Exchange to help individuals who wish to purchase a private insurance plan. The Exchange will act as a watchdog group and help reform the private insurance market by creating rules and standards for participating insurance plans to ensure fairness and to make individual coverage more affordable and accessible. Insurers would have to issue every applicant a policy and charge fair and stable premiums that will not depend on how healthy you are. The Exchange will require that all the plans offered are at least as generous as the new public plan and have the same standards for quality and efficiency. The Exchange would evaluate plans and make the differences among the plans, including cost of services, public.

(3) Employer Contribution: Employers that do not offer or make a meaningful contribution to the cost of quality health coverage for their employees will be required to contribute a percentage of payroll toward the costs of the national plan. Small employers that meet certain revenue thresholds will be exempt.

(4) Support for Small Businesses: Barack Obama and Joe Biden understand that the skyrocketing cost of healthcare poses a serious competitive threat to America's small businesses. Obama and Biden will create a Small Business Health Tax Credit to provide small businesses with a refundable tax credit of up to 50 percent on premiums paid by small businesses on behalf of their employees. To be eligible for the credit, small businesses will have to offer a quality health plan to all of their employees, and cover a meaningful share of the cost of employee health premiums.

(5) Mandatory Coverage of Children: Nearly 12 percent of AAPI children are uninsured. Obama and Biden will require that all children have health care coverage. They will expand the number of options for young adults to get coverage, including allowing young people up to age 25 to continue coverage through their parents' plans.

(6) Expansion of Medicaid and SCHIP: Obama and Biden will expand eligibility for the Medicaid and SCHIP programs and ensure that these programs continue to serve as a critical safety net.

(7) Flexibility for State Plans: Due to federal inaction, some states have taken the lead in health care reform. The Obama and Biden plan builds on these efforts and does not replace what states are doing. States can continue to experiment, provided they meet the minimum standards of the national plan.

Lower Costs by Modernizing the U.S. Health Care System

(1) Reducing Costs of Catastrophic Illnesses for Employers and Their Employees. Catastrophic health expenditures account for a high percentage of medical expenses for private insurers. The Obama-Biden plan would reimburse employer health plans for a portion of the catastrophic costs they incur above a threshold if they guarantee such savings are used to reduce the cost of workers' premiums.

(2) Lowering Costs by Ensuring Patients Receive and Providers Deliver Quality Care:

SUPPORT DISEASE MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS: Seventy five percent of total health care dollars are spent on patients with one or more chronic conditions, such as diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure. Obama and Biden will require that providers that participate in the new public plan, Medicare, or the Federal Employee Health Benefits Program (FEHBP) utilize proven disease management programs. This will improve quality of care, give doctors better information and lower costs.

COORDINATE AND INTEGRATE CARE: Over 133 million Americans have at least one chronic disease, and these chronic conditions cost a staggering \$1.7 trillion yearly. Obama and Biden will improve coordination and integration of care of those with chronic conditions by making sure programs are fully implemented and encouraging team care.

REQUIRE FULL TRANSPARENCY ABOUT QUALITY AND COSTS: Obama and Biden will require hospitals and providers to collect and publicly report measures of health care costs and quality, including data on preventable medical errors, nurse staffing ratios, hospital-acquired infections, and disparities in care. Health plans will also be required to disclose the percentage of premiums that go to patient care as opposed to administrative costs.

Ensuring Providers Deliver Quality Care

TACKLE DISPARITIES IN HEALTH CARE: Obama and Biden will tackle the root causes of health disparities by addressing differences in access to health coverage and promoting prevention and public health, both of which play a major role in addressing disparities. He will also challenge the medical system to eliminate inequities in health care through quality measurement and reporting, implementation of effective interventions such as patient navigation programs, and making the health workforce more diverse.

INCREASE THE CULTURAL COMPETENCY OF HEALTH CARE WORKERS: More AAPIs are less English proficient than other groups. As a state senator, Barack Obama helped pass a law to make language assistance mandatory in Illinois health care facilities. Obama and Biden support efforts to get more people to enter into the medical profession and will expand outreach and educational efforts to improve the language and cultural skills of hospitals and provide more tools such as bilingual hotlines to help rural hospitals treat patients who do not speak English.

PROMOTE PATIENT SAFETY: Obama and Biden will require providers to report preventable medical errors and support hospital and physician practice improvement to prevent future occurrences.

ALIGN INCENTIVES FOR EXCELLENCE: Both public and private insurers tend to pay providers based on the volume of services provided, rather than the quality or effectiveness of care. Providers who see patients enrolled in the new public plan, the National Health Insurance Exchange, Medicare and FEHBP will be rewarded based on how effectively they treat patients.

COMPARATIVE EFFECTIVENESS RESEARCH: Obama and Biden will establish an independent institute to guide reviews and research on comparative effectiveness, so that Americans and their doctors will have the accurate and objective information they need to make the best decisions for their health and well-being.

REFORM MEDICAL MALPRACTICE: Obama and Biden will strengthen antitrust laws to prevent insurers

from overcharging physicians for their malpractice insurance and will promote new models for addressing errors that improve patient safety, strengthen the doctor-patient relationship and reduce the need for malpractice suits.

(3) Lowering Costs through Investment in Electronic Health Information Technology Systems: Most medical records are still stored on paper, which makes it hard to coordinate care, measure quality or reduce medical errors and which costs twice as much as electronic claims. Obama and Biden will invest \$10 billion a year over the next five years to move the U.S. health care system to broad adoption of standards-based electronic health information systems, including electronic health records, and will phase in requirements for full implementation of health IT. Obama and Biden will ensure that patients' privacy is protected.

(4) Lowering Costs by Increasing Competition in the Insurance and Drug Markets:

INCREASE COMPETITION: The insurance business today is dominated by a small group of large companies that has been gobbling up their rivals. There have been over 400 health care mergers in the last 10 years, and just two companies dominate a full third of the national market. These changes were supposed to make the industry more efficient, but instead premiums have skyrocketed by over 87 percent.

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will prevent companies from abusing their monopoly power through unjustified price increases. Their plan will force insurers to pay out a reasonable share of their premiums for patient care instead of keeping exorbitant amounts for profits and administration. Their new National Health Exchange will help increase competition by insurers.

LOWER PRESCRIPTION DRUG COSTS: The second-fastest growing type of health expenses is prescription drugs. Pharmaceutical companies are selling the exact same drugs in Europe and Canada but charging Americans more than double the price. Obama and Biden will allow Americans to buy their medicines from other developed countries if the drugs are safe and prices are lower outside the U.S. They will also repeal the ban that prevents the government from negotiating with drug companies, which could result in savings as high as \$30 billion. Finally, Obama and Biden will work to increase the use of generic drugs in Medicare, Medicaid, and FEHBP and prohibit big name drug companies from keeping generics out of markets.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Health Insurance

In 2003, Barack Obama sponsored and passed legislation that expanded health care coverage to 70,000 kids and 84,000 adults. In the U.S. Senate, Obama cosponsored the Healthy Kids Act of 2007 and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) Reauthorization Act of 2007 to ensure that more American children have affordable health care coverage.

Minority Health

In the U.S. Senate, Obama helped write the Kennedy-Cochran-Obama Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity Elimination Act. This bill puts new emphasis on disparity research by directing the Department of Health and Human Services to collect and report health care data by race and ethnicity, as well as geographic and socioeconomic status and level of health literacy.

Women's Health

Obama worked to pass a number of laws in Illinois and Washington to improve the health of women. His accomplishments include creating a task force on cervical cancer, providing greater access to breast and cervical cancer screenings, and helping improve prenatal and premature birth services.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/05/29/cutting_costs_and_covering_ame.php

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/pdf/HealthCareFullPlan.pdf

“We have an obligation to protect Social Security and ensure that it’s a safety net the American people can count on today, tomorrow and forever. Social Security is the cornerstone of the social compact in this country. Coming together to meet this challenge won’t be easy. It will take restoring a sense of shared purpose in Washington and across this country. But if you put your trust in me — if you give me ‘your hand and your heart’ — then that’s exactly what I intend to do as your next president.”

—Barack Obama, Speech in Des Moines, IA, October 27, 2007



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO PRESERVE SOCIAL SECURITY AND STRENGTHEN RETIREMENT SECURITY FOR AAPIS

AT A GLANCE

Commitment

As someone who was largely raised by his grandparents, Obama has first-hand knowledge of how hard America's seniors have worked to defend our country, teach our children, and grow our economy. He will honor their lifetime of work.

Protect Social Security

Obama will preserve Social Security by stopping any efforts to privatize it and working in a bipartisan way to preserve it for future generations.

Secure Hard-Earned Pensions

Obama will fight to ensure that companies don't dump their pension obligations. One-quarter of AAPIs receive pension benefits.

Help Americans Save More

Obama will make retirement savings automatic.

THE PROBLEM

Insecure Retirement Savings

Retirement savings are near a historic low and 75 million working Americans lack employer-based retirement plans. Too many companies have dumped their pension obligations, leaving workers in the cold.

With skyrocketing health care, energy and housing costs, and the risk of being defrauded by insurance companies, too many seniors do not have the resources to live comfortably.

BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN

Protect Social Security

Obama and Biden are committed to ensuring Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people, now and in the future. Over half of elderly, unmarried AAPIs rely on monthly Social Security benefits for 90 percent or more of their income and nearly one-third of married AAPI couples rely principally on their Social Security income. Obama will be honest with the American people about the long-term solvency of Social Security and the ways we can address the shortfall. Obama will protect Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries alike. And he does not believe it is necessary or fair to hardworking seniors to raise the retirement age. Obama is strongly opposed to privatizing Social Security.

Barack Obama believes that the first place to look to strengthen Social Security is the payroll tax system. Obama believes that one strong option is increasing the maximum amount of earnings covered by Social Security by lifting the payroll tax cap only on earnings above \$250,000.

Strengthen Retirement Savings

REFORM CORPORATE BANKRUPTCY LAWS TO PROTECT WORKERS AND RETIREES: Current bankruptcy laws protect banks before workers. Obama and Biden will protect pensions by promising to put workers higher on the list of debts that companies cannot shed; ensuring that the bankruptcy courts do not demand more sacrifice from workers than executives; telling companies that they cannot issue executive bonuses while cutting worker pensions; increasing the amount of unpaid wages and benefits workers can claim in court; and limiting the circumstances under which retiree benefits can be reduced.

REQUIRE FULL DISCLOSURE OF COMPANY PENSION INVESTMENTS: Even when companies fund their pensions, many do not disclose their investments with the employee's pension dollars. Obama and Biden will ensure that all employees who have company pensions receive detailed annual disclosures about their pension fund's investments. This will provide retirees important resources to make their pension fund more secure.

ELIMINATE INCOME TAXES FOR SENIORS MAKING LESS THAN \$50,000: Obama and Biden will eliminate all income taxation of seniors making less than \$50,000 per year. This will provide an immediate tax cut averaging \$1,400 to 7 million seniors and relieve millions from the burden of filing tax returns.

EXPAND RETIREMENT SAVINGS INCENTIVES FOR WORKING FAMILIES: Obama and Biden will ensure savings incentives are fair to all workers by creating a generous savings match for low and middle-income Americans. AAPIs are less likely to save for retirement than white Americans. Their plan will match 50 percent of the first \$1,000 of savings for families that earn less than \$75,000. The savings match will be automatically deposited into designated personal accounts. Over 80 percent of these savings incentives will go to new savers.

CREATE AUTOMATIC WORKPLACE PENSIONS: The Obama-Biden retirement security plan will automatically enroll workers in a workplace pension plan. Under their plan, employers who do not currently offer a retirement plan will be required to enroll their employees in a direct-deposit IRA account that is compatible to existing direct-deposit payroll systems. Employees may opt-out if they choose. Experts estimate that this program will increase the savings participation rate for low and middle-income workers from its current 15 percent level to around 80 percent.

PREVENT AGE DISCRIMINATION: Obama and Biden will fight job discrimination for aging employees by strengthening the Age Discrimination in Employment Act and empowering the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission to prevent all forms of discrimination.

Affordable Health Care for America's Seniors

PROVIDE CHEAPER PRESCRIPTION DRUGS: Our seniors pay the highest prices in the world for brand-name drugs. To lower drug costs, Obama and Biden will allow the federal government to negotiate for lower drug prices for the Medicare program, just as it does to lower prices for our veterans. They also support allowing seniors to import safe prescription drugs from overseas and will prevent pharmaceutical companies from blocking cheap and safe generic drugs from the market.

PROTECT AND STRENGTHEN MEDICARE: Obama and Biden are committed to the long-term strength of the Medicare program. They will reduce waste in the Medicare system, including eliminating subsidies to the private insurance Medicare Advantage program, and tackle fundamental health care reform to improve the quality and efficiency of our healthcare system. They support closing the “doughnut hole” in the Medicare Part D prescription drug program.

PROVIDE TRANSPARENCY TO MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG PLANS: Many seniors are enrolled in Medicare prescription drug plans that are actually more expensive for them than other available plans. Obama and Biden will require companies to send Medicare beneficiaries a full list of the drugs and fees they paid the previous year to help seniors determine which plans can better reduce their out-of-pocket costs and improve their health.

STRENGTHEN LONG-TERM CARE OPTIONS: As president, Obama and Biden will work to give seniors choices about their care, consistent with their needs and not biased towards institutional care. Over 40 percent of middle-aged AAPIs provide caregiving or financial support to their elderly relatives. They will work to reform the financing of long-term care to protect seniors and families. They will work to improve the quality of elder care, including by training more nurses and health care workers.

Protect and Honor Seniors

ENSURE HEATING ASSISTANCE: Obama and Biden will increase funding for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) which helps low-income citizens – many of them seniors – pay their winter heating and summer cooling bills.

SUPPORT SENIOR VOLUNTEER EFFORTS: Retired Americans have a wide range of skills and knowledge to contribute to local and national public service efforts. Obama and Biden will engage more interested seniors into public service opportunities by expanding and improving programs like Senior Corps to connect seniors with quality volunteer opportunities.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Social Security and Pensions

In the midst of the 2005 debate over Social Security privatization, Obama gave a major speech at the National Press Club forcefully arguing against privatization. He also repeatedly voted against Republican amendments that aimed to privatize Social Security or cut benefits. Obama has also voted to force companies to properly fund their pension plans so taxpayers don't end up footing the bill.

Medicare

Obama has supported a number of efforts to strengthen Medicare, including voting for legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate for cheaper prescription drug prices and to extend the enrollment period for low-income beneficiaries.

Protecting Seniors

After reports that lobbyists, but not the American people, received information about the most unsafe nursing homes in the country, Barack Obama demanded the Department of Health and Human Services release that information. Following Obama's letter, the names of the four Iowa care facilities cited for unsafe care were released to the public. Obama's efforts follow his successful efforts in Illinois to make nursing home information public and strengthen elder abuse laws.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/11/07/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_31.php

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/socialsecurity/

“We also need to change a system that is stacked against women. Forty percent of working women do not have a single paid sick day. More and more women are denied jobs or promotions because they’ve got kids at home. As the son of a single mother, that is not the America that I believe in. I’ll be a president who stands up for working parents. We’ll require employers to provide seven paid sick days each year. We’ll enforce laws that prohibit caregiver discrimination. And we’ll encourage flexible work schedules to better balance work and parenting for mothers and fathers. That’s the change that working families need.”

—Barack Obama, Speech in Bettendorf, Iowa, November 7, 2007



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO RECLAIM THE AMERICAN DREAM FOR AAPI WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

AT A GLANCE

Pay Equity

Barack Obama will better enforce the Equal Pay Act, fight job discrimination, and improve child care options and family medical leave to give AAPI women equal footing in the workplace.

Reproductive Choice

Obama has been a consistent champion of reproductive choice and will make preserving a women's right to choose under *Roe v. Wade* a priority as president. Obama also supports expanded access to contraception, health information and preventive services to reduce unintended pregnancies.

Health Care

Obama will tackle diseases and illnesses that disproportionately affect AAPI women.

Domestic Violence

Obama introduced legislation to combat domestic violence and cosponsored and helped reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

THE PROBLEM

Discrimination at the Job

For every \$1.00 earned by a man, the average woman receives only 77 cents. A recent study estimates it will take another 47 years for women to close the wage gap with men at Fortune 500 corporate offices.

Need for Paid Leave

The 78 percent of employees covered by the Family Medical Leave Act who have needed leave but have not taken it report that it is because they could not afford to take unpaid leave. Furthermore, low-income families are less likely to have the resources or savings to compensate for time off.

Violence Against Women Continues

One in four of all women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime. Family violence accounted for 11 percent of all violence between 1998 and 2002. Between 40 and 60 percent of AAPI women have reported physical and/or sexual violence during their lifetime. Thousands of women from Asia and the Pacific are also trafficked into the U.S. annually.

Women's Health

Heart disease is the leading cause of death among women, accounting for nearly 39 percent of all female deaths. Studies show that after a first heart attack, women are less likely than men to receive follow-up care and are more likely to have a second heart attack. Women are also more likely than men to report having arthritis, asthma, autoimmune diseases, and depression. Health care disparities among minority and poor women are especially pervasive.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN

Fight for Pay Equity

Obama and Biden believe the government needs to take steps to better enforce the Equal Pay Act, fight job discrimination, and improve child care options and family medical leave to give women equal footing in the workplace.

Expand High-Quality Afterschool Opportunities

Obama and Biden will double funding for the main federal support for afterschool programs, the 21st Century Learning Centers program, to serve one million more children.

Expand the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

Obama and Biden will reform the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit by making it refundable and allowing low-income families to receive up to a 50 percent credit for their child care expenses. Coupled with Obama's "Making Work Pay" tax credit, this proposal will help put more money directly in the pockets of hardworking low and middle-income parents.

Paid Sick Days

Obama will require that employers provide seven paid sick days per year to their employees.

Encourage States to Adopt Paid Leave

Obama and Biden will initiate a strategy to encourage all 50 states to adopt paid-leave systems. They will provide a \$1.5 billion fund to help states jump start paid-leave programs consistent with their local needs.

Expand Flexible Work Arrangements

Obama and Biden will create a program to inform businesses about the benefits of flexible work schedules; help businesses create flexible work opportunities; and increase federal incentives for telecommuting. Obama and Biden will also make the federal government a model employer in terms of adopting flexible work schedules.

Protecting a Women's Right to Choose

Obama and Biden will make safeguarding women's rights under *Roe v. Wade* a priority. They oppose any constitutional amendment to overturn that decision.

Reducing Unintended Pregnancy

Obama and Biden will work to reduce unintended pregnancy by guaranteeing equity in contraceptive coverage, providing sex education, and offering rape victims accurate information about emergency contraception.

Ending Health Care Disparities

Obama and Biden will invest in research to examine gender and health disparities. Obama will also establish community outreach programs in underserved areas to help make sure women have health care and maintain healthy lifestyles.

Ending Violence Against Women

Obama will appoint a special advisor who will report to him regularly on issues related to violence against women. They will also pass legislation that provides job security to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Record of Advocacy

Barack Obama has a long record of standing up for women. In Illinois, he helped pass the Equal Pay Act to give 330,000 more women protection from pay discrimination and passed another law that ensured victims of domestic violence could seek treatment without losing their jobs. In the U.S. Senate, he introduced and cosponsored legislation to reduce unintended teen pregnancy, strengthen families by supporting fathers who are doing the right thing and cracking down on those who are not, guarantee workers paid sick leave, and ensure that women are not receiving less pay than men for comparable work. And throughout his career, in both the Illinois Senate and the U.S. Senate, Obama has stood up for a women's right to choose, consistently earning 100 percent ratings from pro-choice groups.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Plan

my.barackobama.com/page/content/womenissues

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/11/07/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_31.php

Read the Op-Ed

www.barackobama.com/2007/10/31/violence_against_women_at_home.php



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO STRENGTHEN CIVIL RIGHTS

AT A GLANCE

Strengthen Civil Rights Enforcement

Obama and Biden will staff the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department with lawyers who prosecute civil rights violations, employment discrimination, and hate crimes, instead of political cronies.

Protect the Right to Vote

Obama and Biden will remove discriminatory barriers to the right to vote and protect the right to vote for AAPIs.

Promote Fairness in the Criminal and Juvenile Justice Systems

Obama and Biden will work to ban racial profiling, eliminate disparities in criminal sentencing, and encourage the criminal justice system to be free of racially discriminatory laws so that it works for all, regardless of race, wealth, or other circumstances.

Restore White House Initiative on AAPIs

Obama and Biden will restore the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and direct that office to work towards the original goal of helping the federal government meet the underserved needs of Asian American and Pacific Islanders.

THE PROBLEM

Pay Inequity Continues

For every \$1.00 earned by a man, the average woman receives only 77 cents.

Hate Crimes on the Rise

The number of hate crimes increased nearly 8 percent to 7,700 incidents in 2006. Bias-motivated hate crimes against AAPIs, particularly against South Asians who are or perceived to be Arab or Middle Eastern after September 11, 2001, continue to be both persistent and underreported.

Efforts Continue to Suppress the Vote

A recent report by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund about the 2006 elections discovered numerous organized efforts to intimidate, mislead and suppress minority voters, including inadequacy of translated materials and hostility of poll workers, errors on voter lists, improper and excessive demands for identification and inadequate notice about and signage at poll sites. Violations of the Voting Rights Act and Help America Vote Act also were reported in the 2004 national elections by the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium, including unavailability of required translated materials, hostility of poll workers.

Disparities Continue to Plague Criminal Justice System

Racial minorities are more than twice as likely as whites to be searched, arrested, or subdued with force when stopped by police. Minority youth are also more likely to be arrested, detained, waived to criminal court, and incarcerated for longer periods. Disparities in drug sentencing laws, like the differential treatment of crack as opposed to powder cocaine, are unfair.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN

While great strides have been made in advancing and protecting the civil rights of AAPIs, much work remains to be done in the areas of equal opportunity, voting rights, racial profiling, hate crimes, language access, and sufficient and accurate data collection.

Strengthen Language Access

Obama and Biden will support efforts that help prevent discrimination against language minorities and that ensure that language minorities have access to critical governmental services, such as post-disaster relief services. They will vigorously enforce laws requiring federal agencies to ensure language access for all Americans they serve, and will ensure Title VI requirements ensuring language access are implemented across the federal government.

Equal Opportunity

To ensure equal opportunities for AAPIs and all Americans, Obama and Biden will support and protect constitutional programs to ensure equal opportunity in education, employment, and government contracting. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has had to pursue cases involving glass ceilings, English-only workplace rules, accent bias and other unequal treatment faced by AAPIs in the workplace.

Improve Census Data Collection

Obama and Biden are dedicated to advocating for increased data collection, analyses, and dissemination of information about AAPIs; and working to ensure that the Census Bureau has the resources necessary to conduct an accurate count of the AAPI population in the 2010 Census.

Strengthen Civil Rights Enforcement

Obama and Biden will reverse the politicization that has occurred in the Bush Administration's Department of Justice. They will put an end to the ideological litmus tests used to fill positions within the Civil Rights Division.

Combat Employment Discrimination

Obama and Biden will work to overturn the Supreme Court's recent ruling that curtails racial minorities' and women's ability to challenge pay discrimination. They will also pass the Fair Pay Act to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work.

Expand Hate Crimes Statutes

Obama and Biden will strengthen federal hate crimes legislation and reinvigorate enforcement at the Department of Justice's Criminal Section.

End Deceptive Voting Practices and Expand Voting Protections

Obama and Biden will sign into law legislation that establishes harsh penalties for those who have engaged in voter fraud and provides voters who have been misinformed with accurate and full information so they can vote. Obama and Biden will also ensure that the Helping Americans Vote Act (HAVA) is fully funded.

End Racial Profiling

Obama and Biden will ban racial profiling by federal law enforcement agencies and provide federal incentives to state and local police departments to prohibit the practice.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Record of Advocacy

Obama has worked to promote civil rights and fairness in the criminal justice system throughout his career. As a community organizer, Obama helped 150,000 individuals register to vote. As a civil rights lawyer, Obama litigated employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and voting rights cases. As a state senator, Obama passed one of the country's first racial profiling laws and helped reform a broken death penalty system. And in the U.S. Senate, Obama has been a leading advocate for protecting the right to vote, helping to reauthorize the Voting Rights Act and leading the opposition against discriminatory barriers to voting.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/civilrights/

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/09/28/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_26.php

“I’m in this race for the same reason that I fought for jobs for the jobless and hope for the hopeless on the streets of Chicago; for the same reason I fought for justice and equality as a civil rights lawyer; for the same reason that I fought for Illinois families for over a decade...That’s why I’m running, Democrats – to keep the American Dream alive for those who still hunger for opportunity, who still thirst for equality.”

– Barack Obama, Speech in Des Moines, IA, November 10, 2007



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO COMBAT POVERTY

AT A GLANCE

Help More Americans Climb the Job Ladder

Obama and Biden will help AAPIs enter the workplace and move up the career ladder.

Expand the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

Obama and Biden will increase benefits and expand the number of individuals eligible for EITC, one of the most successful antipoverty programs in history.

Establish Promise Neighborhoods to Combat Chronic Urban Poverty

Obama and Biden will create Promise Neighborhoods to provide comprehensive services in impoverished areas in 20 American cities.

Support Economic Development in Low-Income Communities

Obama and Biden will help local entrepreneurs revitalize inner cities. 1.25 million AAPIs live below the poverty level.

Increase Affordable Housing

Obama and Biden will increase the supply of affordable housing across the U.S. Less than half of Pacific Islanders own their own homes. [Census Bureau, 2004]

THE PROBLEM

Poverty Rising

There are nearly 37 million poor Americans. Two-thirds of Laotian and Hmong Americans, nearly half of Cambodian Americans and one-third of Vietnamese Americans live in poverty. One of every Samoan and one of every five Tongan families live below the poverty level. Most Americans living in poverty work, but still cannot afford to make ends meet.

Minimum Wage is Not Enough

Even when a parent works full-time earning minimum wage and EITC and food stamps are factored into their income, families are still \$1,550 below the federal poverty line because of the flat-lined minimum wage.

BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN

Expand Access to Jobs

HELP AMERICANS GRAB A HOLD OF AND CLIMB THE JOB LADDER: Obama and Biden will invest \$1 billion over five years in transitional jobs and career pathway programs that implement proven methods of helping AAPIs succeed in the workforce.

INCREASE ACCESS TO CAPITAL: AAPIs are entering the entrepreneurial market in record numbers. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will strengthen Small Business Administration programs that provide capital to minority-owned businesses, support outreach programs that help minority business owners apply for loans, and work to encourage the growth and capacity of minority firms.

CREATE A GREEN JOBS CORPS: Obama and Biden will create a program to directly engage disadvantaged youth in energy efficiency opportunities to strengthen their communities, while also providing them with practical skills in this important high-growth career field.

IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION ACCESS TO JOBS: Obama and Biden will work to ensure that low-income Americans have transportation to their jobs. They will double the federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute program to ensure that additional federal public transportation dollars flow to the highest-need communities and that urban planning initiatives take this aspect of transportation policy into account.

REDUCE CRIME RECIDIVISM BY PROVIDING EX-OFFENDER SUPPORT: Obama and Biden will work to ensure that ex-offenders have access to job training, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and employment opportunities. Obama and Biden will also create a prison-to-work incentive program and reduce barriers to employment.

Make Work Pay for All Americans

EXPAND THE EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT: Obama and Biden will increase the number of working parents eligible for EITC benefits, increase the benefits available to parents who support their children through child support payments, increase benefits for families with three or more children, and reduce the EITC marriage penalty, which hurts low-income families.

CREATE A LIVING WAGE: Obama and Biden will raise the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour by 2011 and index it to inflation to make sure that full-time workers can earn a living wage that allows them to raise their families and pay for basic needs such as food, transportation, and housing.

PROVIDE TAX RELIEF: Obama and Biden will provide all low and middle-income workers a \$500 Making Work Pay tax credit to offset the payroll tax those workers pay in every paycheck. They will also eliminate taxes for seniors making under \$50,000 per year.

Strengthen Families

PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE FATHERHOOD: Obama will sign into law his Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act to remove some of the government penalties on married families, crack down on men avoiding child support payments, and ensure that payments go to families instead of state bureaucracies.

SUPPORT PARENTS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: Obama and Biden will expand the highly-successful Nurse-Family Partnership to all 570,000 low-income, first-time mothers each year. The Nurse-Family Partnership provides home visits by trained registered nurses to low-income expectant mothers and their families.

EXPAND PAID SICK DAYS: Today, three out of four low-wage workers have no paid sick days. Obama and Biden support guaranteeing workers seven paid sick days per year.

Increase the Supply of Affordable Housing

Obama and Biden will fully fund the Community Development Block Grant program and engage urban leaders across the country to increase resources to the highest-need Americans.

Tackle Concentrated Poverty

ESTABLISH 20 PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS: Obama and Biden will create 20 Promise Neighborhoods in cities that have high levels of poverty and crime and low levels of student academic achievement. The Promise Neighborhoods will be modeled after the Harlem Children's Zone, which provides a full network of services, including early childhood education, youth violence prevention efforts and after-school activities, to an entire neighborhood from birth to college.

ENSURE COMMUNITY-BASED INVESTMENT RESOURCES IN EVERY URBAN COMMUNITY: Obama and Biden will work with community and business leaders to identify and address the unique economic development barriers of every major metropolitan area. They will provide additional resources to the federal Community Development Financial Institution Fund, the Small Business Administration and other federal agencies, especially to their local branch offices, to address community needs.

INVEST IN RURAL AREAS: Obama and Biden will invest in rural small businesses and fight to expand high-speed Internet access. They will improve rural schools and attract more doctors to rural areas.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Tax Relief for Low-Income Working Families

Obama created the Illinois Earned Income Tax Credit for low-income working families in 2000 and successfully sponsored a measure to make the credit permanent in 2003. The law offered about \$105 million in tax relief over three years.

Housing

In the Illinois State Senate, Obama championed multiple pieces of legislation to help low-income families find adequate affordable housing.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/poverty/

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/07/18/remarks_of_senator_barack_obam_19.php

“And as we strengthen NATO, we should also seek to build new alliances and relationships in other regions important to our interests in the 21st century. In Asia, the emergence of an economically vibrant, more politically active China offers new opportunities for prosperity and cooperation, but also poses new challenges for the United States and our partners in the region. It is time for the United States to take a more active role here — to build on our strong bilateral relations and informal arrangements like the Six Party talks. As president, I intend to forge a more effective regional framework in Asia that will promote stability, prosperity and help us confront common transnational threats such as tracking down terrorists and responding to global health problems like avian flu.”

- Barack Obama Speech at The Council on Global Affairs, Chicago, April 23, 2007



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO RENEW U.S. LEADERSHIP IN ASIA

AT A GLANCE

Barack Obama and Joe Biden recognize that America's future security and prosperity is linked to Asia, and they will work to forge security, diplomatic, political and economic arrangements that go beyond traditional bilateral agreements, occasional summits, and ad-hoc arrangements. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will:

Enhance Regional Stability and Prosperity

Obama and Biden will develop more effective mechanisms to combat the shared threats to peace and prosperity, including a more collaborative approach on terrorism, pandemic disease, energy security and climate change.

Invigorate Alliances and Seek New Partnerships

Obama and Biden will work to strengthen ties with long-standing allies, notably Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand, and the Philippines as the pillars of America's engagement in Asia, while building an infrastructure with countries in Asia that can promote broader stability and prosperity.

Advance Opportunity from the Bottom-up

Obama and Biden will substantially increase our commitment to our world partners, and embrace the Millennium Development Goal of cutting extreme poverty around the world in half by 2015, and they will double our foreign assistance to \$50 billion to achieve that goal.

THE PROBLEM

Disengagement from the Region

The preoccupation with the war in Iraq has left a leadership vacuum in Asia, undermining the war effort in Afghanistan, harming the effort to address North Korean nuclear proliferation and constraining opportunities to forge a more effective regional security architecture.

Climate and Energy

The three largest oil importers and energy consumers in the world are the U.S., Japan, and China, and half of the growth in oil consumption between now and 2020 will come from Asia, notably China and India.

North Korean Nuclear Proliferation

President Bush claimed he would not tolerate a nuclear North Korea, but in the past 7 years North Korea has reportedly quadrupled its nuclear arsenal, carried out a nuclear test, and resumed testing intercontinental ballistic missiles.

Deteriorating Conditions in Afghanistan

Almost 7 years after 9/11, the terrorists who attacked us – including Osama bin Laden – are still at large. Al Qaeda is gaining ground, and the Taliban is resurgent with a safe-haven along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. U.S. casualties in Afghanistan now exceed those in Iraq, yet today, the U.S. has five times more troops in Iraq than Afghanistan.

THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN

Focus on the True Battleground in the War Against Terror

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will end the war in Iraq, redeploy at least two combat brigades to Afghanistan, and work toward political and non-military solutions to finish the job in Afghanistan. In getting strategic priorities right, they will use this additional commitment to seek greater contributions – with fewer restrictions – from NATO allies as well as our friends and allies in Asia. The Obama-Biden plan will focus on training Afghan security forces and contributing an additional \$1 billion in non-military assistance yearly, with meaningful safeguards to ensure funds are spent effectively. To prevail, the Afghan people must believe that our commitment to their future is enduring, because the security of Afghanistan and the United States is shared.

Enhance U.S. Focus on Asia

Obama and Biden have long recognized that Asia is critical to U.S. security and prosperity in the 21st century and will focus on developing mechanisms to tackle shared challenges. They will assure that the United States is fully and appropriately engaged in current institutions, such as ASEAN and APEC, and explore enhanced collaboration to respond to new and non-traditional threats.

Transform our Alliance with Japan

Obama and Biden understand that our alliance with Japan is the cornerstone of American policy in the Asia-Pacific region and of a peaceful, prosperous Asia. We have an opportunity to deepen and widen cooperation to resolve global challenges from climate change to combating chronic poverty.

Invigorate our Partnership with Korea

Obama and Biden understand the U.S. and South Korea are bound together by common adversaries, but also by our shared values and mutual interests. We need to develop a common vision for the alliance to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Strengthen U.S. Relations with India

Obama and Biden believe in strengthening U.S. relations with India because, as the world's largest democracy and a growing economic power, India is a natural strategic partner of the U.S. The India civilian nuclear accord is one new component of an enhanced relationship. That partnership should also extend to cooperation on alternative energy and commercial engagement.

Enhance Cooperation with Pakistan

Obama and Biden recognize that our effort in Afghanistan is inextricably linked to Pakistan, and that we must empower Pakistan's moderate majority, and strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Pakistan, in order to prevail against extremism. In addition to working with Pakistan to do more to crack down on terrorist sanctuaries along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, they will broaden U.S. aid and engagement with Pakistan on critical challenges like illiteracy, poverty, and civil society. Our Pakistan policy should emphasize support for democracy and social and economic development, not only counter-terrorism.

Advance American Interests and Values with China

Obama and Biden see elements of cooperation and competition in our relationship with China, and understand we must enhance areas for collaboration while strengthening the ability of American workers and companies to compete. We must be vigilant about China's military modernization, recognizing the best way to manage our relationship with China is to draw it further into the international system.

Complete and Verifiable Elimination of North Korea's Nuclear Weapons Programs

Obama and Biden understand that tough and direct diplomacy is necessary to assure the complete and verifiable elimination of all of North Korea's nuclear weapons programs, as well as its past proliferation activities, including with Syria. They will not cede our leverage, and will tie sanctions relief to North Korea's performance.

Work to Eliminate the Education Deficit

Education is a critical component for economic advancement and empowerment, yet an estimated 100 million children are not attending school. Obama and Biden plan to establish a \$2 billion Global Education Fund to increase the scope and quality of education worldwide, while also supporting an increase in the intensity of educational exchange.

Renew American Diplomacy

Obama and Biden will rebuild the diplomatic links to Asia that have been allowed to wither under President Bush. They are willing to meet with the leaders of all nations, friend and foe, if it will advance U.S. interests to do so. They will lay the groundwork carefully for such interactions, but believe it is important to signal that America is ready to come to the table, and is willing to lead. At home, Obama and Biden will restore America's standing, reputation, and authority in the world by leading by example and respecting civil liberties, ending torture, and restoring habeas corpus.

Work Towards Energy Security

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will embrace the global effort to forge a path toward sustainable growth and clean energy. They will increase investments in alternative energy resources like wind and solar, biofuels, and clean coal, and will allow industrial carbon emitters to offset some of their costs under their cap-and-trade system by investing in low carbon energy projects. They will share technology, enforce environmental standards in our trade deals, and work with institutions like the World Bank to support this effort. Crucial to this effort will be the delicate diplomacy with India and China necessary to make meaningful inroads to reduce worldwide emission levels.

Advance Opportunity from the Bottom-up

Obama and Biden will substantially increase our commitment to our world partners, and embrace the Millennium Development Goal of cutting extreme poverty around the world in half by 2015, and they will double our foreign assistance to \$50 billion to achieve that goal. They will help the world's weakest states to build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth. They also would help weak states to fight terrorism, halt the spread of deadly weapons, and build the health care infrastructure needed to prevent and treat HIV/AIDS, outbreaks of avian influenza and other pandemics.

Trade Policy That Works for All

Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe that strengthening economic ties across Asia while ensuring increased living standards for workers throughout the region enhances both American security and prosperity. Obama and Biden will use all tools at their disposal to end unfair trade practices in Asia, such as intellectual property infringement and currency manipulation, and to ensure that imports into the United States are safe.

Protect the Environment

Global climate change threatens disastrous consequences to the fragile and unique ecosystems of the Pacific. Barack Obama and Joe Biden will address manmade contributions to global climate change by cutting greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. The cap-and-trade system will include an initial partial auction of pollution credits to raise money that would be invested to upgrade our energy infrastructure; create hundreds of thousands of new, high-wage jobs; reinvest in environmental protection efforts; and make America truly energy independent.

Safeguard the Pacific Islands from Disasters

Barack Obama and Joe Biden support efforts to strengthen the federal government's Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. They also has been a vigorous advocates of bolstering our nation's ability to respond to acts of terrorism and natural disasters in a swift and effective manner. They will work to ensure that the Pacific Islands are adequately prepared for disasters.

OBAMA RECORD

Effective Approach Towards Pakistan

Obama co-sponsored legislation with Senators Biden and Lugar to triple non-military assistance to Pakistan and sustain it for the next decade, while also requiring that continued military aid is used far more effectively to fight al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Support for U.S.-India Nuclear Energy Cooperation

Obama voted for the U.S.-India nuclear agreement in 2006, despite concerns about the non-proliferation aspects of initial versions of the agreement. He will continue to make sure that our respective strategic, non-proliferation, and energy and environment interests are all advanced by the ultimate deal.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/04/23/the_american_moment_remarks_to.php

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/foreignpolicy/

“Here is the truth: fighting a war without end will not force the Iraqis to take responsibility for their own future. And fighting in a war without end will not make the American people safer.

So when I am Commander-in-Chief, I will set a new goal on day one: I will end this war. Not because politics compels it. Not because our troops cannot bear the burden- as heavy as it is. But because it is the right thing to do for our national security, and it will ultimately make us safer.”

- Barack Obama, Fayetteville, North Carolina, March 19, 2008



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO END THE WAR IN IRAQ

AT A GLANCE

The War in Iraq

There are more than 321,000 veterans of AAPI descent and the more than 48,000 AAPI men and women who have served their country in Afghanistan and Iraq since 2001. There are over 62,000 AAPI men and women on active duty in the U.S. military around the world, including nearly 8,000 currently deployed in the global war on terrorism.

Obama is the only major candidate who had the judgment to oppose the Iraq War from the beginning. He will end the war responsibly by bringing our troops home within 16 months, pressing for a political solution to Iraq's civil war, and launching the diplomatic and humanitarian initiatives that are needed to bring stability to Iraq.

THE PROBLEM

Inadequate Security and Political Progress in Iraq

Since the surge began, more than 1,000 American troops have died, and despite the improved security situation, the Iraqi government has not stepped forward to lead the Iraqi people and to reach the genuine political accommodation that was the stated purpose of the surge. Our troops have heroically helped reduce civilian casualties in Iraq to early 2006 levels. This is a testament to our military's hard work, improved counterinsurgency tactics, and enormous sacrifice by our troops and military families. It is also a consequence of the decision of many Sunnis to turn against al Qaeda in Iraq, and a lull in Shia militia activity. But the absence of genuine political accommodation in Iraq is a direct result of President Bush's failure to hold the Iraqi government accountable.

Strains on the Military

More than 1.75 million servicemen and women have served in Iraq or Afghanistan; more than 620,000 troops have completed multiple deployments. Military members have endured multiple deployments taxing both them and their families. Additionally, military equipment is wearing out at nine times the normal rate after years of constant use in Iraq's harsh environment. As Army Chief of Staff General George Casey said in April 2008, "Today's Army is out of balance. The current demand for our forces in Iraq and Afghanistan exceeds the sustainable supply and limits our ability to provide ready forces for other contingencies."

Resurgent Al Qaeda in Afghanistan

The decision to invade Iraq diverted resources from the war in Afghanistan, making it harder for us to kill or capture Osama Bin Laden and others involved in the 9/11 attacks. Nearly seven years later, the Taliban has reemerged in southern Afghanistan while al Qaeda has used the space provided by the Iraq war to regroup, train and plan for another attack on the United States. 2007 was the most violent year in Afghanistan since the invasion in 2001. The scale of our deployments in Iraq continues to set back our ability to finish the fight in Afghanistan, producing unacceptable strategic risks.

A New Strategy Needed

The Iraq war has lasted longer than World War I, World War II, and the Civil War. More than 4,000 Americans have died. More than 60,000 have been injured and wounded. The United States may spend \$2.7 trillion on this war and its aftermath, yet we are less safe around the globe and more divided at home. With determined ingenuity and at great personal cost, American troops have found the right tactics to contain the violence in Iraq, but we still have the wrong strategy to press Iraqis to take responsibility at home, and restore America's security and standing in the world.

BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN

Judgment You Can Trust

In 2002, as the conventional thinking in Washington lined up with President Bush for war, Obama had the judgment and courage to speak out against going to war, and to warn of “an occupation of undetermined length, with undetermined costs, and undetermined consequences.” He is fully committed to ending the war in Iraq as president.

A Responsible, Phased Withdrawal

Barack Obama believes we must be as careful getting out of Iraq as we were careless getting in. Immediately upon taking office, Obama will give his Secretary of Defense and military commanders a new mission in Iraq: ending the war. The removal of our troops will be responsible and phased, directed by military commanders on the ground and done in consultation with the Iraqi government. Military experts believe we can safely redeploy combat brigades from Iraq at a pace of 1 to 2 brigades a month that would remove them in 16 months. That would be the summer of 2010 – more than 7 years after the war began.

Under the Obama plan, a residual force will remain in Iraq and in the region to conduct targeted counterterrorism missions against al Qaeda in Iraq and to protect American diplomatic and civilian personnel. He will not build permanent bases in Iraq, but will continue efforts to train and support the Iraqi security forces as long as Iraqi leaders move toward political reconciliation and away from sectarianism.

Encouraging Political Accommodation

Barack Obama believes that the U.S. must apply pressure on the Iraqi government to work toward real political accommodation. There is no military solution to Iraq's political differences, but the Bush administration's blank check approach has failed to press Iraq's leaders to take responsibility for their future or to substantially spend their oil revenues on their own reconstruction.

Obama's plan offers the best prospect for lasting stability in Iraq. A phased withdrawal will encourage Iraqis to take the lead in securing their own country and making political compromises, while the responsible pace of redeployment called for by Obama's plan offers more than enough time for Iraqi leaders to get their own house in order. As our forces redeploy, Obama will make sure we engage representatives from all levels of Iraqi society—in and out of government—to forge compromises on oil revenue sharing, the equitable provision of services, federalism, the status of disputed territories, new elections, aid to displaced Iraqis, and the reform of Iraqi security forces.

Surging Diplomacy

Barack Obama will launch an aggressive diplomatic effort to reach a comprehensive compact on the stability of Iraq and the region. This effort will include all of Iraq's neighbors—including Iran and Syria, as suggested by the bi-partisan The Iraq Study Group Report. This compact will aim to secure Iraq's borders; keep neighboring countries from meddling inside Iraq; isolate al Qaeda; support reconciliation among Iraq's sectarian groups; and provide financial support for Iraq's reconstruction and development.

Preventing Humanitarian Crisis

Barack Obama believes that America has both a moral obligation and a responsibility for security that demands we confront Iraq's humanitarian crisis—more than four million Iraqis are refugees or are displaced inside their own country. Obama will form an international working group to address this crisis. He will provide at least \$2 billion to expand services to Iraqi refugees in neighboring countries, and ensure that Iraqis inside their own country can find sanctuary. Obama would also work with Iraqi authorities and the international community to hold the perpetrators of potential war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide accountable. He would reserve the right to intervene militarily, with our international partners, to suppress potential genocidal violence within Iraq.

The Status-of-Forces-Agreement

Obama believes any Status of Forces Agreement, or any strategic framework agreement, should be negotiated in the context of a broader commitment by the U.S. to begin withdrawing its troops and forswearing permanent bases. Obama also believes that any security accord must be subject to Congressional approval. It is unacceptable that the Iraqi government will present the agreement to the Iraqi parliament for approval—yet the Bush administration will not do the same with the U.S. Congress. The Bush administration must submit the agreement to Congress or allow the next administration to negotiate an agreement that has bipartisan support here at home and makes absolutely clear that the U.S. will not maintain permanent bases in Iraq.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Barack Obama opposed the war in Iraq from the beginning. In 2002, as the conventional thinking in Washington lined up for war, Obama had the judgment and courage to speak out against the war. He said the war would lead to “an occupation of undetermined length, with undetermined costs and undetermined consequences.” In January 2007, Obama introduced legislation to responsibly end the war in Iraq, with a phased withdrawal of troops engaged in combat operations.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/issues/iraq/

Read Barack's Op-Ed article in the New York Times

nytimes.com/2008/07/14/opinion/14obama.html

“Keeping faith with those who serve must always be a core American value and a cornerstone of American patriotism. Because America’s commitment to its servicemen and women begins at enlistment, and it must never end.”

– Barack Obama, Speech in Kansas City, MO, August 21, 2007.



THE OBAMA-BIDEN PLAN TO KEEP OUR SACRED TRUST WITH AAPI VETERANS

AT A GLANCE

A Sacred Trust

There are more than 300,000 AAPI veterans who have bravely served our country. Barack Obama and Joe Biden believe America has a sacred trust with our veterans. They are committed to creating a 21st Century Department of Veterans' Affairs that provides the care and benefits our nation's veterans deserve.

Help for Returning Service Members

Obama and Biden will improve the quality of health care for veterans, rebuild the VA's broken benefits system, and combat homelessness among veterans.

Improved Mental Health Treatment

Obama and Biden will improve mental health treatment for troops and veterans suffering from combat-related psychological injuries.

THE PROBLEM

Wounded Troops Suffer

The Walter Reed scandal showed that we don't always provide returning service members with the care they deserve.

Veterans Budget Shortfalls

In 2005, a multi-billion dollar VA funding shortfall required Congress to step in and bail out the system.

Benefits Bureaucracy is Broken

There are currently more than 400,000 claims pending with the Veterans Benefits Administration. VA error rates have grown to more than 100,000 cases a year.

There is a Shortage of Care for PTSD

Veterans are coming home with record levels of combat stress, but we are not adequately providing for them.

BARACK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN'S PLAN

Ensure a Seamless Transition

Obama and Biden will demand that the military and the VA coordinate to provide a seamless transition from active duty to civilian life.

Fully Fund VA Medical Care

Barack Obama and Joe Biden will fully fund the VA so it has all the resources it needs to serve the veterans who need it, when they need it. Obama and Biden will establish a world-class VA Planning Division to avoid future budget shortfalls.

Allow All Veterans Back into the VA

One of Obama's first acts will be reversing the 2003 ban on enrolling modest-income veterans, which has denied care to a million veterans.

Strengthen VA Care

Obama and Biden will make the VA a leader of national health care reform so that veterans get the best care possible. They will improve care for polytrauma vision impairment, prosthetics, spinal cord injury, aging, and women's health.

Improve Mental Health Treatment

Obama and Biden will improve mental health care at every stage of military service. They will recruit more health professionals, improve screening, offer more support to families, and make PTSD benefits claims fairer.

Improve Care for Traumatic Brain Injury

Obama and Biden will establish standards of care for Traumatic Brain Injury, the signature injury of the Iraq war.

Expand Vet Centers

Obama and Biden will expand and strengthen Vet Centers to provide more counseling for vets and their families.

Fix the Benefits Bureaucracy

Obama and Biden will hire additional claims workers, and improve training and accountability so that VA benefit decisions are rated fairly and consistently. They will make the paper benefit claims process an electronic one to reduce errors and improve timeliness.

Combat Homelessness among Our Nation's Veterans

Obama and Biden will establish a national "zero tolerance" policy for veterans falling into homelessness by expanding proven programs and launching innovative services to prevent veterans from falling into homelessness.

Fight Veterans Employment Discrimination

Obama and Biden will crack down on employers who commit job discrimination against guardsmen and reservists.

OBAMA'S RECORD

Record of Advocacy

As a member of the U.S. Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs, Obama passed legislation to improve care and slash red tape for our wounded warriors recovering at places like Walter Reed. He passed laws to help homeless veterans and offered an innovative solution to prevent at-risk veterans from falling into homelessness. Obama led a bipartisan effort in the Senate to halt the military's unfair practice of discharging service members for having a service-connected psychological injury. He cosponsored the Filipino Veterans Equity Act of 2007, which will fulfill America's promise to support and recognize these brave veterans. He fought for fair treatment of Illinois veterans' claims and forced the VA to conduct an unprecedented outreach campaign to disabled veterans with lower than-average benefits. Obama passed legislation to stop a VA review of closed PTSD cases that could have led to a reduction in veterans' benefits. He passed an amendment to ensure that all service members returning from Iraq are properly screened for traumatic brain injuries. He introduced legislation to direct the VA and Pentagon to fix disjointed records systems and improve outreach to members of the National Guard and Reserves.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2007/08/21/remarks_of_senator_obama_a_sac.php

Read the Plan

www.barackobama.com/pdf/VeteransFactSheet.pdf

Join Veterans for Obama

my.barackobama.com/page/content/vetshome

“And that night...I said a prayer of my own.
It’s a prayer I think I share with a lot of
Americans...A hope that we can live with
one another in a way that reconciles the
beliefs of each with the good of all.”

-Barack Obama, Call to Renewal Keynote Address, June 28, 2006



BARACK OBAMA ON FAITH

AT A GLANCE

Barack Obama is a committed Christian and his faith informs his values. Barack believes that people of all faiths should come together to put their faith into action to change this country for the better.

Reconcile Faith and Politics

In June of 2006, Obama delivered what Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne called perhaps the most important speech on religion and politics in 40 years. Speaking before an evangelical audience, Senator Obama candidly discussed his own religious conversion and doubts, and the need for a deeper, more substantive discussion about the role of faith in American life. In December of 2006, Obama joined Pastor Rick Warren to discuss moral leadership and Global AIDS. And in June of 2007, Obama challenged Americans to come together around a 'Politics of Conscience' to move our nation forward.

Moral Leadership

Obama's faith shapes his values, as it does for millions of Americans. As he said in a recent speech on faith and politics:

"...[O]ur values should express themselves not just through our churches or synagogues, temples or mosques; they should express themselves through our government. Because whether it's poverty or racism, the uninsured or the unemployed, war or peace, the challenges we face today are not simply technical problems in search of the perfect ten-point plan. They are moral problems, rooted in both societal indifference and individual callousness - in the imperfections of man. And so long as we're not doing everything in our personal and collective power to solve them, we know the conscience of our nation cannot rest."

OBAMA'S RECORD

Obama has a record of engaging people of faith on all aspects of his public service. His first job out of college was bringing churches together to help the poorest Chicago neighborhoods' pressing problems. After Hurricane Katrina, Obama united relief organizations and churches to discuss rebuilding the Gulf Coast. Obama also passed legislation that saved tithing from bankruptcy courts.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Read the Speech

www.barackobama.com/2006/06/28/call_to_renewal_keynote_address.php

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
WWW.BARACKOBAMA.COM

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