

Questions to ask the Candidates in the 2008 elections.



Friends Committee on
National Legislation

www.fcnl.org

The future of democracy in the U.S. depends upon your informed, active participation. Well-informed voters, high voter participation, and elected officials who feel a strong sense of accountability to voters are key components of a healthy political system. You can help to re-energize democracy in the U.S. by being an informed, active participant in the upcoming national elections. Political candidates—whether incumbent or new—“listen louder” during campaigns than at any other times in their careers. Don’t miss this opportunity to speak your mind!

We encourage you to engage in open and constructive dialogue with the candidates for the 2008 elections. Pencil in a few events where you can meet your candidates face to face—a town hall meeting, a shopping mall meet-and-greet, an in-home visit with a few potential supporters. Ask questions that reach past the rhetoric to get at the candidates’ perspectives on issues. And most importantly, ask how they will bring those perspectives to bear on legislation if they get the chance to represent you and your concerns in Washington. Below, FCNL offers a few good questions to ask. Check our website at www.fcnl.org for more resources and questions.

Iraq: Support U.S. Troops by Bringing Them Home

The U.S. needs a new policy in Iraq. The bipartisan Iraq Study Group chaired by former Rep. Lee Hamilton and former Secretary of State James Baker recommended a new U.S. policy based on negotiations with all of Iraq’s neighbors, support for reconciliation inside Iraq, and a clear commitment to a complete withdrawal in consultation with Iraqis and the neighboring states. **Will you support legislation to make these recommendations U.S. policy?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: Congress is not supporting U.S. troops in Iraq by simply endorsing the failed occupation of that country. U.S. soldiers returning from Iraq, retired U.S. generals, and others argue the U.S. occupation of Iraq is helping to recruit anti-U.S. extremists around the world. The U.S. needs a new policy in Iraq and in the Middle East. FCNL does not agree with all of the points of the Iraq Study Group, but the diplomacy in the study group recommendations provides a good basis for a new, nonpartisan strategy in Iraq.

Time to Invest in Peace

A huge portion, about 95 percent, of what the U.S. spends to engage with the rest of the world is allocated to the military budget. A tiny amount, about five percent, is devoted to diplomacy, development, and supporting international institutions that can help to solve problems before they turn into deadly conflict. **Will you support the U.S. paying its full, fair share of United Nations dues and commit to increasing funding for the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: The president and members of Congress publicly assert that military force should be the choice of “last resort,” that other options should be developed and pursued first. Yet, the federal budget consistently allocates hundreds of billions of dollars for current military spending while providing only minuscule amounts for the development of U.S. diplomatic infrastructure, peaceful solutions to crises in other countries, contributions to international organizations, and humanitarian and development assistance.

Ban the Bombs that Keep on Killing

Cluster bombs disperse smaller “bomblets” that can kill all living creatures within a specific area often as large as several football fields. In the last 10 years, the U.S. has used cluster bombs in civilian-populated areas of the former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq. **Will you support legislation in the House (H.R. 1755) and the Senate (S. 594) that would ban the use of cluster bombs in civilian populated areas?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: The basic rules of war (Geneva Conventions and associated protocols) outlaw military attacks targeting civilians. Yet the U.S. has a pattern and practice of both using these weapons in civilian populated areas and providing them to other countries that use these weapons in civilian areas. The U.S. should heed the call of the growing number of organizations calling for a ban on the use of cluster bombs.

End the Word Games, Ban Torture

The U.S. Army has established firm policies—written into the Army Field Manual—that prohibit torture. Yet the Justice Department insists the CIA should be exempt from these Army requirements and have the right to torture some prisoners. **Would you support legislation requiring all U.S. government personnel—including the CIA—to ban torture and abide by the definitions in the U.S. Army Field Manual?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: Torture should be abolished now, with no exceptions. Yet the Justice Department, in a 2005 secret legal opinion that still defines government practice, said that painful physical abuse—including head-slapping, simulated drowning and frigid temperatures—is not cruel, inhumane, or degrading treatment and isn’t torture. Congress needs to ban all torture and restore the right of people detained by the U.S. government to have a court consider why they are in prison and how they are being treated.

Reduce the Risk of Nuclear Weapons

As president, will you make it a priority to pursue the goal of a “world free of nuclear weapons,” as was envisioned by former Secretaries of State Shultz and Kissinger, former Senator Nunn, and former Defense Secretary Perry? **How would you work towards this goal?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: Former Secretaries of State George P. Shultz and Henry A. Kissinger have joined with former Senator Sam Nunn and former Defense Secretary William J. Perry in calling on the U.S. to work toward total nuclear disarmament. The U.S. has a nuclear arsenal of more than 6,000 weapons, enough to blow up any potential adversary many times over. Yet the administration continues to develop billion dollar proposals to build new nuclear weapons.

Climate, Energy, and Human Security

As the leading global greenhouse gas emitter over the last century, the U.S. has a special responsibility to substantially reduce its emissions and help developing countries reduce their emissions and adapt to the harmful effects of climate change caused in large part by past U.S. emissions.

What specific policies will you support to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions quickly, deeply, and fairly and to help poor communities at home and abroad adapt to the harmful effects of climate change now?

FCNL’s view of the issue: The climate is changing rapidly, mainly because of human activities. The harmful effects of climate change are already being felt in communities around the world. Poor communities and countries are least able to adapt. Scientists predict much greater harm from climate change in the decades ahead if governments do not reduce greenhouse gas emissions quickly and deeply.

Printed on 100% (pcw) recycled paper (processed chlorine free) using low-volatility, oil-based ink in a 100% wind power, carbon-neutral process.



Support Safe, Legal Immigration

The U.S. spends billions each year to enforce a set of immigration laws and procedures that are fundamentally broken. **What will you do to make our immigration system function as it ought to, to provide a safe, legal and orderly system to welcome new people to our country?**

FCNL’s view of the issue: The U.S. immigration system is failing its core purpose. The complexity of immigration laws and the lack of support for the agencies that process immigration applications create Byzantine barriers for people who try to enter the country legally. Families are unable to enter together, employers in need of workers circumvent the law and their recruits are often then subject to harsh conditions, long hours, and low pay. Responses should include ways to regularize the situation of those who arrived in the U.S. illegally, and all immigration options should leave open a path to citizenship. All should be treated with justice and equity.

The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) is a Quaker lobby in the public interest. FCNL is the oldest registered religious lobby in Washington. FCNL staff and volunteers work with a nationwide network of tens of thousands of people from many different races, religions, and cultures to advocate for social and economic justice, peace, and protection of the earth. Our mission statement reads:

*We seek a world free of war and the threat of war
We seek a society with equity and justice for all
We seek a community where every person’s
potential may be fulfilled
We seek an earth restored.*



For more information, please contact FCNL at:
245 Second St., NE
Washington, DC 20002
1-800-630-1330
www.fcnl.org

Learn More



- ____ **Yes**, I’d like to receive more information on how I can work to change U.S. government policy in Washington. Please send me three free issues of the *FCNL Washington Newsletter*.
- ____ **Yes**, I’d like to receive regular email updates on what I can do to change U.S. government policy in Washington. (You can also sign up online at www.fcnl.org.)
- ____ **Yes**, I’d like to contribute to the work of FCNL. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____. (You can also make a secure donation online at www.fcnl.org.)
- ____ Please send me _____ more copies of this brochure. (Feel free to make your own copies.)

Please note that our mailing list is never traded, rented, or sold.

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Email Address _____

Questions? Call 1-800-630-1330

Please mail this form, with your contribution, to:

Friends Committee on National Legislation
245 Second St., NE, Washington, DC 20002