

McVAY MEDIA

ELECTION 2008

BY: MIKE GLASS
WWW.GLASSRADIO.COM

The Road to the White House

Democratic Republican

THE DEMOCRATIC CAMPAIGN

BARAK OBAMA AND JOE BIDEN



[Click to Meet Barak](#)

“Our country's greatest military asset is the men and women who wear the uniform of the United States. When we do send our men and women into harm's way, we must also clearly define the mission, prescribe concrete political and military objectives, seek out advice of our military commanders, evaluate the intelligence, plan accordingly, and ensure that our troops have the resources, support, and equipment they need to protect themselves and fulfill their mission.”

— *Barack Obama, Chicago Foreign Affairs Council, April 23, 2007*

Spectacle and History

Speculation and excitement filled the days leading up to the 2008 Democratic Convention. Visible on the horizon was another great landmark in Martin Luther King's dream and a sense that our nation was taking another step away from an awful bit of our history and a step towards something better. No one act, one kind gesture nor one nomination could ever remove the injustice of slavery and racial division, but every step toward that end is worthy of praise and notice. Add to this the interest generated by an uncommon primary season, the charisma of the candidate and the rock show venue for the acceptance speech. It would seem the Democratic Party had reason to be nothing but excited about its nomination of Barack Obama. However, big questions loomed unanswered and with them came uncertainty and endless speculation. Would Barak select his primary rival Hillary Clinton who won almost as much party support as he did? Many saw this as the only way to unite the party after a very tough and sometimes bitter primary. If so, would Clinton be willing to accept the traditional support role of a running mate and, eventually, Vice President? There were some who felt she should not and would not. If he did not select her would her supporters forgive him and support him in the general election? Polling data suggested otherwise. If not Hillary, was there another candidate experienced enough to be accepted as a Vice President, outside of Washington enough to fit with Obama's message of change and who would also be accepted by Clinton supporters as well as the party's liberal core? Over the summer, Democrats had watched as Barak's once eleven-point lead over John McCain evaporated. Along with this, polls began to find some of the golden undecided voters were uneasy about Obama's experience and presidential readiness. What had once seemed like a sure victory had become uncertain at best and possibly heading for the dark abyss of defeat.

Enter Joseph Robinette Biden, Jr.

The very experienced, thirty-five year veteran of the United States Senate and long-time member and current chairman of the [Foreign Relations Committee](#), Joe Biden brought the solid foreign policy and legislative record to

that Obama lacked. In a move very similar to that of the 2000 Bush campaign, Biden, like Dick Cheney, was intended to ease the concerned voter's uneasiness and bring a sense of weight and well seasoned judgment to the otherwise youthful campaign. Though this might not play out in the general election, for the convention the selection served well to this cause. Then Hillary Clinton's sudden announcement that she would not force a public count of the delegate votes, which would have shown how close Barak came to losing the nomination, all but erased the months of Democratic worry. The campaign now had the seasoned experience it wanted and Hillary would cooperate. The stage was set, both literally and figuratively, for the historic nomination.

The Big Show

The convention was well planned and carried out. The convention game is a small part about party business, meetings, taking the vote, and so on, but mostly about introducing the new nominee to America in a new and big way. Fanfare, publicity, flags and a ton of balloons. Many Democrats have complained the Republicans had always seem to outdo them at the conventions and a large effort has been made over the last few elections to reverse that. In 2004 party planners boasted of the military theme and the record number of balloons that would drop after John Kerry's acceptance speech. A great plan, but one that didn't work as well as hoped. Much of the 2004 post-convention talk was that the soldiers on stage and Kerry's salute and "I am reporting for duty" line might have been a bit overboard. Whether it was or not will vary by the person, but the fact that this was even a common analyst conversation took away from the grandeur of the presentation. Also, the huge, record number balloon drop never happened. Like the Dem's 1980 convention balloon problems, technical difficulties left the balloons up in the rafters. The lack of these annoying, colorful things may sound trivial, but this is a big part of the convention finale. It was built up and looked forward to as the biggest ever. In the end it made for a funny [video](#), but instead of the media reveling in the energy of the moment, the talk was of the lack balloons. 2008 convention planners were insistent that these types of distracting issues not happen, and they succeeded.

The main convention stage was nothing short of amazing. The massive, curved video background was unlike any before in convention history and the overall appearance was grand, exciting and very modern. It was an attractive [high-tech experience](#).

Much was made of the possibility that Hillary Clinton or her husband might try to take over the convention or use their speech time in ways non-productive or even harmful to the nominee. This was all an absurd attempt to create drama as there would be nothing to gain for the Clintons by sabotaging Barak's party. In the end, though Hillary's speech made almost no reference to her previous claims of Obama not being ready for the presidency nor that she now believes him to be, she did give a very good speech that provided her followers reasons to support the nominee. Bill Clinton was as good as ever and proclaimed many times and very emphatically that Obama was ready to lead. So, overall, the Clintons together did much of what their party needed. Joe Biden is known for his raw and passion-filled speeches and his VP speech was as animated ever. Overall, it was effective, though his impassioned delivery and frequent pointing at the camera, though typical for Biden, leads the new listener away from the image of the experienced elder statesman the campaign was hoping for. Instead, he came off as the intelligent, raucous policy wonk that he is. The big event, Barak Obama's historic acceptance speech, was set to play out in a rock star atmosphere: A stadium packed with screaming fans. After a summer where Obama's opposition successfully made his rock star persona more of a negative, the campaign went with a very plain, almost Roman, stage set. His speech was, as always with Barak, well delivered. Not his best speech, but very big and very effective. It is common, almost expected, that the candidate should get a bump in the polls. In 2000 Bush and Gore each received about a ten-point boost. Throughout the first few days of the convention the Democratic campaign had seen almost no movement. However, after Barak's speech alone, they enjoyed about a six-point gain, which broke the tied race and seemed to reposition Obama as the clear favorite. That is, until a day later when an almost unknown Alaskan took the stage.

Obama's First Decision

Joe Biden was not on my previous list, nor should he have been on any list. Especially Barak Obama's. Senator Biden would make an outstanding presidential nominee, and probably a good president as well. In this election, with this specific nominee, with this specific democratic campaign against this specific Republican, Joe Biden was at best a risky choice. The campaign had spent the summer trying to paint John McCain as a typical, long-time Washington politician. More of the same, to borrow the recent Democratic slogan. This set Obama up as the only true option for change in an election, like most presidential elections, where people wanted something new, inspiring and better. Barak then chose one of the few people more entrenched in Washington bureaucracy than McCain. He also chose someone who had recently said that Obama did not have enough experience to be president and that John McCain could be a good president. Welcome to Political Campaigns 101. Section One: Do Not Choose a Running Mate that Completely Undermines Your Entire Campaign Strategy...Duh. The thought that people would reason "I didn't think Obama was ready, but as long as he has a McCain-like guy with him I'll choose him over McCain" is ludicrous. If anybody was truly undecided that means they can see themselves voting for either candidate. If that person liked Obama as an agent of change, but was not choosing Barak because of experience, Barak still has the same experience and is now showing to be less of an agent of change by picking a long-time bureaucrat. Dick Cheney worked for Bush in 2000 not just because he brought weight and experience to the ticket, but because he brought these features while solidifying the conservative base. Since the selection of Biden, he has been almost non-existent in the media, except the widely reported statements that he thinks he may not have been the best selection. Barak Obama has probably made a bad choice in his selection of Joe Biden. Not in any way because Joe Biden is a bad guy or candidate, but because he doesn't fit into a campaign of "Change" from what Joe Biden has been a part of for decades. To be fair, it is possible that the Democratic campaign has internal polling to suggest the race was not as close as public polling shows. It could be that the campaign was in more of a desperate situation and thought Biden could shore up a needed voting bloc. Otherwise, the Four-Star General and ardent Democrat Wesley Clark would have been, by far, the best choice.

The Road to the White House

Democratic Republican

THE REPUBLICAN CAMPAIGN JOHN MCCAIN AND SARAH PALIN



[Click to Meet John](#)

“I’m going to fight to make sure every American has every reason to thank God, as I thank Him: that I’m an American, a proud citizen of the greatest country on earth, and with hard work, strong faith and a little courage, great things are always within our reach. Fight with me. Fight with me. Fight for what’s right for our country. Fight for the ideals and character of a free people. Fight for our children’s future. Fight for justice and opportunity for all. Stand up to defend our country from its enemies. Stand up for each other; for beautiful, blessed, bountiful America. Stand up, stand up, stand up and fight. Nothing is inevitable here. We’re Americans, and we never give up. We never quit. We never hide from history. We make history.”

- Senator John McCain, September 5th, 2008

Shock and Awe

On the heels of a successful Democratic convention, an historic nomination and a huge rock-show-like speech, Barack Obama was on his way to erasing the entire summer of work by the McCain team and recapturing the hearts and minds of an American majority. His eleven point lead in the polls had been disappearing all summer, but was back and looked ready to hang out until November 4th. A party usually gets much attention in the week leading up to their convention. The condensed convention schedule eliminated that week of buildup as the nation’s and the media’s spotlight was focused on the big Dem bash in Denver. Then, when the spotlight was beginning its slow turn toward Minnesota, it stopped on the Gulf of Mexico and Hurricane Ike. Ready to cause Katrina-like damage the storm was barreling forward and was expected to hit right at the start of John McCain’s convention. The Republican’s have managed to outdo their long time rival party in production and ceremonial awe for many years. A big, memorable show was needed this year more than previous elections and it all looked to be unraveling before it even started. One of the big highlights of the show was to be the speech of rising star and very popular Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal. His life is a very special story and he was going to introduce this story, and himself, to the world. It was not to be, as Ike’s path of destruction looked like it was headed right through Jindal’s state and he had to cancel. Then, the GOP was talking about the probability of having to cancel most of the convention and strip down whatever remained. This series of events would be one of the darkest, most depressing situations for any political party. But not for the Republicans; not this year.

Enter Sarah Louise Heath Palin

With the hangover still fresh from the bash in Denver, Democrats got a swift smack to the head and Conservatives received blast of adrenalin. John McCain shocked the world by announcing his selection for running mate to be the almost unknown, but very conservative, Governor of Alaska Sarah Palin. This would be the first Republican woman and only the second major party woman ever to appear on a presidential ticket. The fact that she is a woman made the initial splash, but after her speech the punditry was abuzz with how intelligent, well spoken and heartfelt she seemed. While she is a huge and probably unnecessary risk, her entrance to the national scene managed to get

the big media spotlight to focus on the Republican Convention. Though it was a bad storm, Ike was nothing near Katrina and less than expected. Still, the first day of the convention was cancelled except for necessary procedural events. This turned out not to be an entirely bad situation. The President was scheduled to speak that night, but cancelled to monitor the storm. His poll numbers are low with many, including conservatives, so his presence may have been distraction. The rest of the convention continued with just minor adjustments. Not wanting to appear too opulent with the possibility the show would be broadcast side-by-side with video of storm damage, the stage was stripped of all but the podium, a gavel on a stand and large square video screen. The bottom of the screen was directly behind the speaker which enabled the party planners to change the speaker's background color for the camera. However, this was often black which gave much of the convention somewhat of a low budget school board meeting feel. Though not as grand as the previous week's display, there was a simple elegance to proceedings. Overall, the speeches were decent, though the only real memorable monologue was that of Palin. Her presentation seems to have convinced many that she is capable of the position she had been chosen for and tough enough to weather the scrutiny and pressure of the campaign. The bounce in the polls from her speech was the largest of the convention. John McCain delivered a thoughtful and meaningful speech, but his delivery was, as he is, somewhat plain and simple. By the end of the convention, despite all of the obstacles, the Republicans were able to erase the Democratic lead and grab a temporary lead for themselves.

McCain's First Decision

Yes, Sarah Palin has become a major political force. Yes, Sarah Palin has given a few very good speeches and passed the first test of the campaign. This does not automatically validate her selection for running mate. It is amazing how both campaigns made completely opposite moves with the VP selection, but in the same risky and destructive way. So much so that I will just copy and paste the next two lines from earlier in this writing: Welcome to Political Campaigns 101. Section One: Do Not Choose a Running Mate that Completely Undermines Your Entire Campaign Strategy...Duh. After a very productive summer for the McCain campaign, polls showed that many in the country were just starting to think that experience did matter and Barak's small time in national government as a Junior Senator might not be enough. Along with this, other polling data revealed that Obama's very liberal past along with McCain's new push for lower taxes and performance at the [Saddleback Church interview](#) had brought the conservative base to finally support the Republican candidate. So, the selection of Palin, who's biggest job has been a few years as governor, almost completely removes the question of experience. How can John McCain say experience is important and Barak Obama does not have enough, then say Sarah Palin's lack of experience doesn't matter? He basically picked her to be President of the United States of America. Almost directly, since she will do almost nothing else unless he dies in office. I mean to make no assumptions of Barak's or Sarah's worthiness to be president based on experience, but those who think Barak is not experienced enough to vote for, now have the same reason not to vote for the McCain team. I thought campaigns were about getting people to cast votes for you or against your opponent. The selection of Palin does neither. The bounce from the campaign, about an 8 point bounce, has disappeared as the shock of the selection has faded and the media attack machine has harpooned their third victim of the campaign. After tearing apart Obama and McCain for months, much of the media seems to have focused almost solely on Palin. That said, she could bring votes eventually. The many that flocked to Republican support after Palin's two speeches now seem unsure if she is the strong, smart and capable reformer they witnessed or if she is really the calculating, dishonest manipulator that most of the news seems to suggest. McCain's entire campaign might rest on her shoulders. If she campaigns well, responds well to criticism and questions and then holds her own against the very smart and quick Joe Biden in their one debate, she could re-win the support of those who came to her initially. If she at any time falters, appears unsure or makes even the slightest mistake she will be labeled too inexperienced or worse. Overall, John McCain's decision to select Sarah Palin looks to be a risky long-shot by a team down a lot of points late in the game. This, by a team that was tied with plenty of time on the clock. John Thune, Rob Portman or Rudy Guiliani would have likely been a better choice and created a clearly strong and productive team. Given Barak's pick of the unexciting Joe Biden and the current twisted loan company failures, even Mitt Romney, with his track record for economic turnaround, might have been a better pick than Palin. To give the McCain team the benefit of doubt, internal polling may have exposed a weakness that put them in a position of believing they needed long shot. They made the shot, the ball is in the air and...it could land anywhere.

Mike Glass

Writer/Anchor/Reporter

Website: www.GlassRadio.com

Email: mike@glassradio.com

- The photos used in this article were gathered from the campaign or personal websites of the person or party. The noted exceptions credit the source.