

The Road to the White House

A Simulation of the Presidential Election



The Road to the White House: A Simulation of the Presidential Election Process

Critical Engagement Question

How do we select our President?

Overview

The 2008 presidential race promises to be one of the most compelling in recent history due to a number of momentous challenges now confronting the nation: an unpopular war in Iraq, staggering budget deficits, polemics over immigration, social security and health care. Despite pervasive voter cynicism, both public and media attention has been seized by a frontloaded election season and a dynamic field of candidates that, for the first time since 1952, lacks an incumbent president or vice president.

This lesson serves to illuminate the nomination process while promoting media literacy, critical evaluation of candidates, and informed participation in this and future elections.

Objectives

- To improve student understanding of how we as voters in the United States select presidential candidates and the winner of the general election.
- To illuminate the role that individual states play in the presidential nominating process.
- To encourage students to become active participants in the election process.
- To assist students in identifying and transcending political rhetoric employed by candidates and their supporters by applying critical thinking skills such as analysis, evaluation, and inference.
- To engage students in a civil discourse on candidates and their policy positions.

Standards

NCHS: Era 3, Standard 3A; Era 10, Standard 1B

NCSS: Strands 5, 6, and 10

Illinois: Goal 14, Learning Standard A, B, and C; Goal 16, Learning Standard B; Goal 17, Learning Standard A

Student Materials

Item A: Candidate Research Guide

Item B: Caucus and Primary Role Play

Item C: Tsunami Tuesday Simulation

Item D: Tsunami Tuesday Delegate Tallies

Item E: Counting to 270

Appendix: Open and closed Primary Ballots available on the Freedom Museum Web site:

www.FreedomMuseum.US/teachers/elections.htm

Teacher Materials

The Road to the White House Map and Timeline Poster

Time and Grade Level

Two-and-a-half 90-minute or five 45-minute high school class periods with pre- and post-activity homework.

Activities

A Simulation of the Presidential Election Process

- 1) Candidate Research Guide
- 2) Caucus and Primary Role Play
- 3) Tsunami Tuesday Simulation
- 4) Counting to 270

Homework

The Candidate Research Guide and Counting to 270 can be completed at home assuming Internet access is available. The candidate research guide can be supplemented by media coverage of the candidates for president.

Extensions

1. Ask students to track media coverage of their candidate or the entire field. Have them consult a variety of sources including television, newspapers and magazines.
2. Compare the classroom results of the Caucus and Primary Role Play and the Tsunami Tuesday Simulation. Help students clarify the differences between the classroom exercises and the actual process.
3. Ask students to watch a candidate debate and further analyze the connections between the candidates and their personal values and positions on critical issues.

Name

Candidate Research Guide

Party:

Directions

The following exercise will help you identify presidential candidates from each political party who best reflect your personal values and political issue positions. You will complete this form for one candidate of each major party, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party.

1. Looking forward to the 2008 presidential election, what personal qualities should a candidate possess?

2. What type of personal and professional experiences do you look for in a presidential candidate?

3. What issues do you think are most important for a presidential candidate to address in the upcoming election?

4. Now, try to match your values and priorities with the individual candidates running for office. The easiest place to conduct your research is the Internet where non-partisan organizations and media outlets (suggestions listed below) maintain biographies of each candidate. Additionally, a simple Internet search will direct you to the personal Web pages of each candidate identified on these general sites.
 - www.vote-smart.org/election_president.php?type=alpha
 - www.cnn.com/election
 - <http://projects.washingtonpost.com/2008-presidential-candidates>
 - www.chicagotribune.com/news/politics/

Your teacher can help to identify the major candidates in each party. You may already understand your general ideological tendencies, be they liberal, moderate or conservative. Such classifications can help you focus on a smaller list of candidates.

 - a. Based on your research, which candidate possesses the personal qualities that matter most to you?

 - b. Based on the personal and professional experiences of the candidates you examined, what candidate do you consider best qualified to serve as president?

 - c. Based on the issues that matter most to you, what candidate comes closest to matching your personal preferences?

5. Finally, based on your preliminary research, what candidate will you support in the 2008 election? To which party does he/she belong?

Caucus and Primary Role Plays

Name

Directions

This simulation occurs in two parts and is meant to illustrate the differences between a caucus and a primary, the two means by which political parties select their nominees for president. You will support the candidates you selected through your research.

A caucus is a meeting of party members to select candidates and elect delegates to party conventions.

Part 1: Caucus Role Play

The caucus format is perhaps most famously employed in the state of Iowa, which holds the first-in-the-nation nominating event. On a cold night in January, Iowans from both parties' caucuses begin the process of selecting a presidential candidate for their party. In the following steps, your class will simulate the process that occurs in Iowa and a handful of other states.

(1) Republican Party Caucus

The Republican Party caucus is quite simple. As party faithful assemble on caucus night, a straw poll is taken at the outset to gauge support for Republican presidential candidates. Our class will now replicate a straw poll. As your teacher lists off the candidates, raise your hand for the one you support. Record the number of caucus-goers supporting each candidate. Divide this number by the total number of caucus-goers to determine the percentage of the vote awarded to each candidate. Record the results in the space below.

(2) Democratic Party Caucus

The Democratic Party caucus is more complicated. Caucus-goers are to assemble in groups throughout the room by joining classmates who support the same Democratic candidate for president.

The Democratic Party requires that all candidates have at least 15% of the vote in a given caucus. Record the number of caucus-goers supporting each candidate. Divide this number by the total number of caucus-goers to determine the percentage of the vote awarded to each candidate. For candidates with less than 15% of

the caucus vote, their supporters must choose a different candidate. Hint: Other members of the caucus may use subtle and not-so-subtle forms of persuasion. Repeat the process until all represented candidates have at least 15% of the vote. Record the final results in the space below.

Caucus members first assemble at the precinct level, electing delegates for later countywide and congressional district caucuses. Representatives from each level (precinct/county/congressional district) support the candidates through votes registered at the previous level. Delegates supporting individual candidates are ultimately awarded at a statewide convention. They will later travel to the national party convention to nominate a candidate for president. Share the results of your party caucus with the class at large so that all members are familiar with the outcome.

Part 2: Primary Role Play

A primary is much like any other election where voters go to the polls on the day of the election and cast ballots for the candidate(s) of their choice. The state primary results determine which candidates are awarded delegates at the national party conventions. Some primaries, like the first-in-the-nation New Hampshire Primary, are considered *open*, meaning voters are given a single ballot with candidates listed from both parties. Other primaries, like the *closed* Illinois Primary, require voters to declare a party. Then, they are given a ballot listing only candidates from the party they selected.

(1) Your teacher will provide you with ballots reflective of both open and closed primaries. You will be required to select either a Democratic or Republican ballot in the second case. Your vote need not be identical in both instances. Your teacher or selected class representatives will tally and report the results.

What is the outcome?

(2) Finally, examine the results of the Democratic Caucus, Republican Caucus, open primary and closed primary. How are they similar? How do they differ? Is one system better than the other? Is the process fool proof? Did you find it helpful to talk about the candidates with fellow voters?

Tsunami Tuesday Simulation

Name _____

Directions

Instead of acting as individual voters as we did in the simulation of the caucus and primary process, you will act as voters of an entire state in this exercise. This exercise is meant to reflect the high stakes of so-called "Tsunami Tuesday."

1. Each class member will be assigned a state scheduled to vote on February 5, 2008. Based on the number of students in your class, your teacher may assign more than one student to the larger states with more delegates (one of you will represent the Democratic Party, the other the Republican Party). You will pledge your state's delegates to the candidate of your choice in both parties unless otherwise instructed. Please write the names of the candidates that you select for your assigned state in the spaces provided below.

State:	Democrats (delegates)	Republican (delegates)
Alabama	_____ (60)	_____ (48)
Alaska	_____ (18)	_____ (29)
Arkansas	_____ (47)	_____ (34)
Arizona	_____ (67)	_____ (53)
California	_____ (441)	_____ (173)
Colorado	_____ (71)	_____ (46)
Connecticut	_____ (61)	_____ (30)
Delaware	_____ (23)	_____ (18)
Georgia	_____ (104)	_____ (72)
Idaho	_____ (23)	_____ (32)
Illinois	_____ (185)	_____ (70)
Missouri	_____ (88)	_____ (58)
New Jersey	_____ (127)	_____ (52)
New Mexico	_____ (38)	_____ (32)
New York	_____ (280)	_____ (101)
North Carolina	_____ (110)	_____ (69)
North Dakota	_____ (21)	_____ (26)
Oklahoma	_____ (47)	_____ (42)
Pennsylvania	_____ (181)	_____ (74)
Tennessee	_____ (85)	_____ (55)
Utah	_____ (29)	_____ (32)

2. Next, report the winner of each state and write in the names of the candidates selected in other states as reported by your classmates.
3. Then, use the boxes provided in Item D (Tsunami Tuesday Delegate Tallies) to summarize the overall delegate accumulations of each candidate by party. Delegate totals are listed above, by party, in each state. Delegates are allotted to states by the parties reflective of the strength of each party in the state. Overall, Democrats award more delegates than Republicans, thus the smaller number of delegates for Republicans in most states.

4. Party nominations: Both parties will meet at conventions late in the summer of 2008 to formally nominate their candidate for President. The Democrats will meet in Denver, CO, and the Republicans in St. Paul, MN. Both locations were selected strategically as the Democrats hope to find success in a state previously leaning Republican, Colorado, and vice versa for the Republicans in Minnesota. The Democratic candidate will need an estimated 2,181 delegates to capture the nomination and the Republican counterpart roughly 1,259. Both figures represent a majority of delegate votes. Based on our simulation of Tsunami Tuesday, does any candidate of either party have the required number of delegates? If yes, who?

5. If no candidate has enough delegates to secure the nomination outright, the party conventions will be asked to select the candidates through a series of votes. Such an outcome was common before the rise of the current primary process, but with a frontloaded process this is unlikely in 2008.

As many as 22 states may flock to the polls on the same day, February 5, 2008, and the massive number of delegates (a majority of those available nationally) awarded on this day could go a long way in selecting the presidential nominee for both parties.

Tsunami Tuesday Delegate Tallies

Name

Democratic Party Delegate Tally

State	Candidates							
AL								
AK								
AR								
AZ								
CA								
CO								
CT								
DE								
GA								
ID								
IL								
MO								
NJ								
NM								
NY								
NC								
ND								
OK								
PA								
TN								
UT								

Republican Party Delegate Tally

State	Candidates							
AL								
AK								
AR								
AZ								
CA								
CO								
CT								
DE								
GA								
ID								
IL								
MO								
NJ								
NM								
NY								
NC								
ND								
OK								
PA								
TN								
UT								

Counting to 270

Name

Directions

After the primary process and the party conventions conclude, the general election begins. What transpires is a state-by-state campaign where the party nominees attempt to win the 270 electoral votes necessary to be elected president.

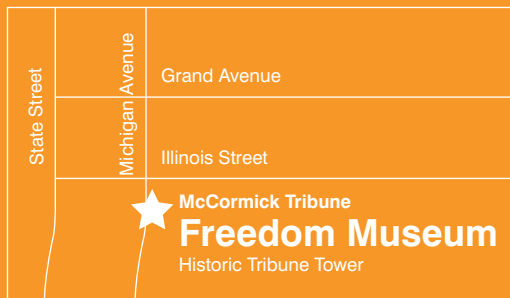
Here's how it works.
Each state receives two electoral votes for their U.S. Senators, and one additional electoral vote for each member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

For example, Illinois has two senators and 19 house members, giving it 21 electoral votes. The minimum number of electoral votes any state can hold is three, and the District of Columbia can have no more electoral votes than the smallest state (currently three).

Electoral votes are awarded in a winner-takes-all fashion; meaning the winner of a statewide popular vote is awarded all of the state's electoral votes. There are, however, two exceptions, Maine and Nebraska, who allocate votes by congressional district.

538 electoral votes are allotted to the states every ten years as part of the census to reflect relative changes in state populations (435 members of the house + 100 senators + 3 D.C. electors). In order to win the White House, a candidate must win half of these votes plus one ($538/2 = 269 + 1$), or 270.

1. Access the Web site www.270toWin.com. Notice the large number of states identified in red. These states traditionally vote for Republican presidential candidates. Turn next to the blue states. These states traditionally lean Democratic. Altogether, this leaves roughly a dozen states that are truly competitive for candidates of each party. These states are colored tan. Note the tally beneath the map. What are the electoral vote totals by party? Does either party have enough electoral votes to win the White House?
2. Place your cursor on one of the tan states. Notice that by clicking on this state and others you can change its color and add to the electoral vote tally of each respective party nominee. Make all of the tan states red. What is the outcome?
3. Refresh the screen, and then make all of the tan states blue by clicking twice. Does the outcome change? How?
4. Refresh the screen once again. Color the following tan states red: Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, Iowa and Florida. Color these tan states blue: Oregon, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and New Hampshire. This should leave only Ohio tan. Notice how the tally beneath the map fails to give either party nominee enough votes to become president. George Bush won this state by a mere 2% of the vote (51%-49%) in 2004, giving him enough electoral votes to win reelection. Make Ohio red and observe the winning tally.
5. Refresh the screen one final time. Let's assume that the Democratic candidate wins Ohio in 2008. Changing only the color of the tan states, under what scenarios can the Republican candidate still win the 270 electoral votes required to become president? Find at least three outcomes favorable to the Republican candidate.



LOCATION

445 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
312 222 4860
www.FreedomMuseum.US

MUSEUM HOURS

General:

Wednesday – Monday
10 am – 6 pm
(*subject to change*)

Closed:

Tuesdays, Thanksgiving Day,
Christmas Day and New Year's Day

Note:

*The museum will have special hours
from Memorial Day through Labor Day
and November through December
(please call or visit our Web site for times).*

McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum

*Your educational resource on freedom and the
First Amendment*

The Freedom Museum offers a wealth of information and teaching tools to aid educators in helping students better understand their freedoms. Enhance your classroom experience by leveraging the Freedom Museum's educational resources, including:

- Special Teacher Programs and Seminars
- Educator Bulletins
- Free Field Trips
- Bus Scholarships
- Curricula
- Lesson Plans
- Online Tools

To learn more about the Freedom Museum education program and to sign up for our mailing list, please visit

www.FreedomMuseum.US

The McCormick Tribune Freedom Museum is part of the McCormick Tribune Foundation team. We encourage teachers to take advantage of the Foundation's additional educational resources at Cantigny in Wheaton, Illinois:

- First Division Museum at Cantigny
- Robert R. McCormick Research Center
- Robert R. McCormick Museum

To learn more, please visit, www.McCormickTribune.org.

THE ROAD TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Electoral Votes Tallied and Inauguration Day

January 20: Inauguration Day
January 6: Electoral Votes Tallied

JANUARY 2009

Electoral College Votes

Electoral votes are distributed on the basis of state populations. They range in size from California's 55 to the three held by Alaska, Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Delaware and the District of Columbia. In general, the winner of a state's popular vote clinches all of its Electoral Votes. Maine and Nebraska are the two exceptions.



Election Day

NOVEMBER 4

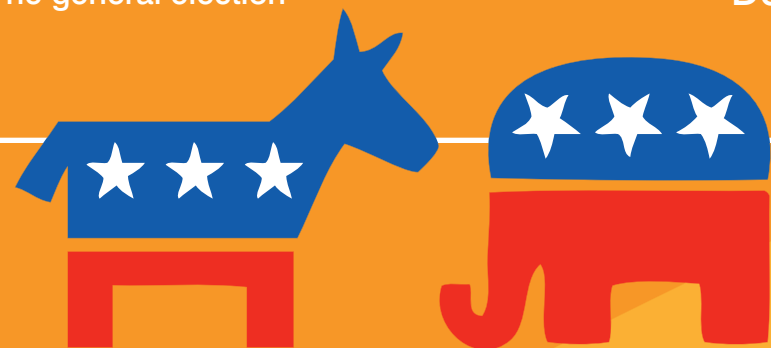


National Conventions

Delegates from both parties meet at week-long conventions to determine their platforms and nominate presidential and vice presidential candidates. The general election campaign begins here.

September 1-4: Republican National Convention
Saint Paul, MN
August 25-28: Democratic National Convention
Denver, CO

AUGUST/SEPTEMBER



Primary Season concludes

Remaining states vote February through June.

Shown in gray on map

Tsunami Tuesday

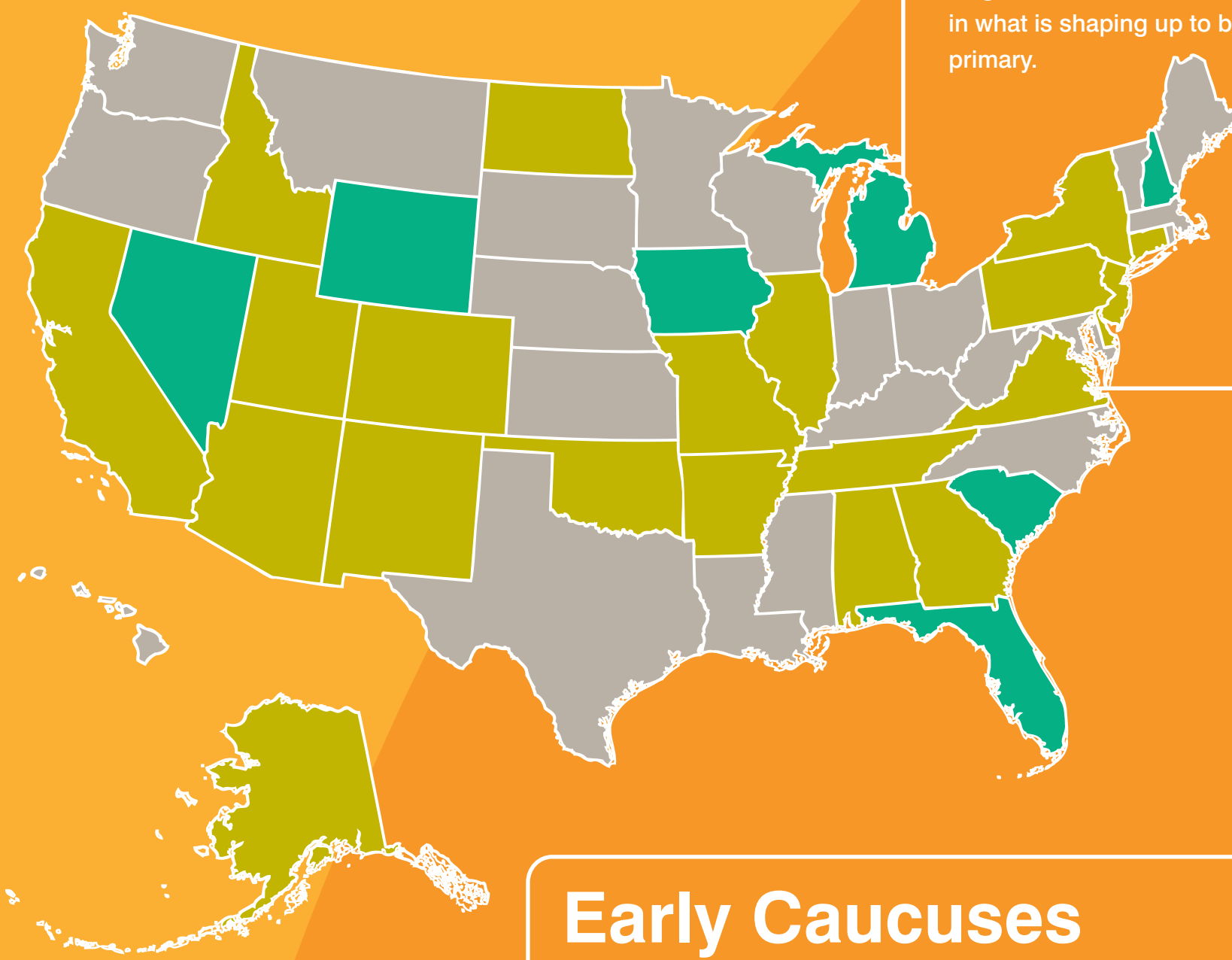


As many as 22 states may end up voting on February 5 with more than half of available delegates at risk. A solid performance by a single candidate could clinch the nomination in what is shaping up to be a national primary.

Alaska	Illinois
Arizona	Tennessee
California	Alabama
Utah	Georgia
Idaho	North Carolina
Colorado	Delaware
New Mexico	Connecticut
North Dakota	New Jersey
Oklahoma	Pennsylvania
Missouri	New York
Arkansas	

Shown in lime on map

FEBRUARY 5



Early Caucuses and Primaries

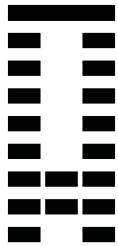
The Iowa Caucuses and the New Hampshire Primary are traditionally the first electoral tests of the presidential nomination process. Nevada and South Carolina were inserted shortly thereafter to add racial diversity to the mix of early voters, with large populations of Latinos and African-Americans respectively. Michigan and Florida stand as the first big state tests. Momentum means everything at this stage of the process.

Iowa	Wyoming
New Hampshire	Florida
Michigan	
Nevada	
South Carolina	

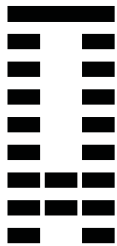
Shown in green on map





JANUARY 2008





OPEN PRIMARY BALLOT

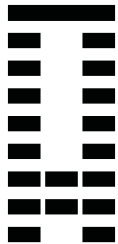


TO VOTE: Complete the arrows   pointing to the choice with a single bold line, as shown  

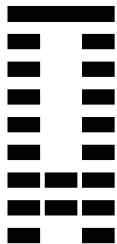
DO NOT vote for more than one candidate




WRITE-IN CANDIDATES: To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write or place the name of that person in the blank space provided and complete the arrow.

DEMOCRATIC	REPUBLICAN
JOSEPH R. BIDEN Democratic	SAMUEL D. BROWNBACK Republican
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON Democratic	RUDOLPH W. GIULIANI Republican
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD Democratic	MICHAEL D. HUCKABEE Republican
JOHN REID EDWARDS Democratic	DUNCAN L. HUNTER Republican
MAURICE ROBERT GRAVEL Democratic	JOHN SIDNEY MCCAIN Republican
DENNIS J. KUCINICH Democratic	RONALD ERNEST PAUL Republican
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA Democratic	WILLARD MITT ROMNEY Republican
BILL RICHARDSON Democratic	TOM GERALD TANCREDO Republican
	FRED DALTON THOMPSON Republican





















CLOSED PRIMARY BALLOT—DEMOCRATIC

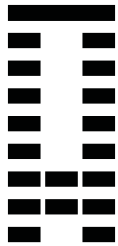


TO VOTE: Complete the arrows   pointing to the choice with a single bold line, as shown 

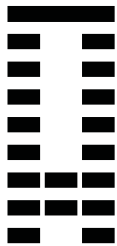
DO NOT vote for more than one candidate




WRITE-IN CANDIDATES: To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write or place the name of that person in the blank space provided and complete the arrow.

DEMOCRATIC	
JOSEPH R. BIDEN Democratic	 
HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON Democratic	 
CHRISTOPHER J. DODD Democratic	 
JOHN REID EDWARDS Democratic	 
MAURICE ROBERT GRAVEL Democratic	 
DENNIS J. KUCINICH Democratic	 
BARACK HUSSEIN OBAMA Democratic	 
BILL RICHARDSON Democratic	 
	 



















CLOSED PRIMARY BALLOT—REPUBLICAN



TO VOTE: Complete the arrows   pointing to the choice with a single bold line, as shown 

DO NOT vote for more than one candidate

WRITE-IN CANDIDATES: To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write or place the name of that person in the blank space provided and complete the arrow.

REPUBLICAN	
SAMUEL D. BROWNBACK Republican	 
RUDOLPH W. GIULIANI Republican	 
MICHAEL D. HUCKABEE Republican	 
DUNCAN L. HUNTER Republican	 
JOHN SIDNEY MCCAIN Republican	 
RONALD ERNEST PAUL Republican	 
WILLARD MITT ROMNEY Republican	 
TOM GERALD TANCREDO Republican	 
FRED DALTON THOMPSON Republican	