

# Ten important questions for the candidates

## Hillary Rodham Clinton

**Party:** Democrat

**Born:** Oct. 26, 1947

**Residence:** New York

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, Wellesley College, 1969; law degree from Yale University, 1973

**Family:** Husband, Bill; daughter Chelsea, 28

**Public office:** U.S. senator from New York, 2000-present

**Web site:** www.hillaryclinton.com



## Barack Obama

**Party:** Democrat

**Born:** Aug. 4, 1961

**Residence:** Chicago.

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, Columbia University, 1983; law degree, Harvard University, 1991

**Family:** Wife, Michelle; two daughters Malia, 9, and Sasha, 6

**Public office:** U.S. senator from Illinois, 2005-present; Illinois state senator, 1996-2004

**Web site:** www.barackobama.com



## Ron Paul

**Party:** Republican

**Born:** Aug. 20, 1935

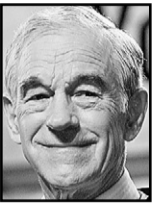
**Residence:** Lake Jackson, Texas

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, Gettysburg College, 1957; medical degree, Duke University, 1961

**Family:** Wife, Carol; five adult children; 17 grandchildren

**Public office:** U.S. representative, 1997-present, 1979-1985 and briefly in 1976; Libertarian Party presidential candidate, 1988

**Web site:** www.ronpaul2008.com



**1** How soon should most U.S. troops be removed from Iraq?

As president, I will end the war swiftly and responsibly. I will begin bringing troops home within the first 60 days of my administration, and move them out at a pace of one to two brigades a month.

I would complete an immediate, responsible, phased withdrawal of combat troops within 16 months. Paired with a U.N.-brokered constitutional convention, this will pressure the Iraqis to resolve the issues at the heart of their civil war.

Immediately. Along with troops in the more than 130 countries we occupy around the globe. By simply bringing our troops home, we can drastically cut defense spending and protect our own borders while making America safer for citizens.

**2** How will you retool the nation's immigration system?

I have called for comprehensive immigration reform that includes greater border security, strict enforcement of our laws, federal assistance to our state and local governments, strict penalties for those who exploit undocumented workers, and a path to earned legal status.

We need comprehensive immigration reform that's fair and compassionate. It should maintain the rule of law and the security of our borders while fixing our broken immigration bureaucracy, and putting the 12 million undocumented on a path to earned legalization.

Physically secure our borders and enforce visa rules. Offer no amnesty or welfare for illegal aliens and end birthright citizenship. The fight against terrorism should be fought at our borders and not by restricting the constitutional liberties of our citizens.

**3** What changes do you propose to ease the problem of overcrowded prisons and jails?

As part of my agenda to reduce crime, I will invest \$1 billion a year to close the prison revolving door. My grant program will help states fund tough but fair diversion programs for non-violent drug offenders, including drug courts.

I will reduce recidivism by increasing ex-offender transitional services, support drug courts that can provide alternatives to jail like rehabilitation and counseling for non-violent offenders, and review mandatory minimum sentences for first-time non-violent offenders.

Ending the Drug War would take care of this. We are the world's No. 1 incarcerator, and a great majority of prisoners are non-violent drug offenders. We need to keep dangerous criminals behind bars and stop locking up non-violent people.

**4** How can the federal government provide more money for the state's road infrastructure, specifically for three new bridges across the Ohio River?

I've proposed a "Rebuild America" plan to fix our nation's crumbling infrastructure and help create at least 3 million good jobs. I will establish and invest in a National Infrastructure Bank, a federally backed bank that will finance large infrastructure projects.

I will create a National Infrastructure Reinvestment Bank to expand federal investment in our nation's most challenging transportation infrastructure needs, including highways, bridges, roads, ports, air, train and intermodal transport systems. This bank will receive \$60 billion over 10 years.

By cutting spending in the many areas that the government has no authority over. There would be plenty of money to take care of infrastructure here at home if it weren't for the vast amount of waste and inefficiency.

**5** What is the first step you'd take as president to try to reduce gas prices?

I will provide immediate relief by freezing additions to the Strategic Petroleum Reserve and imposing a windfall profits tax on oil companies in order to pay for a suspension of the federal gas tax over the summer months.

I'll implement a windfall profits tax on oil companies and enact middle-class tax relief to help people reduce energy costs. I will put America on the path of energy independence by investing \$15 billion a year into renewable technologies.

We must reassess our foreign policy. Since 2002 oil production in Iraq has dropped 50 percent. Soaring gasoline prices are a giant unintended consequence of our invasion. Eliminating federal gas taxes at the pump would save Americans 18.4 cents per gallon.

**6** What role should coal play in the future of U.S. energy policy?

My plan to bring energy independence and curb climate change includes investing in 10 large-scale clean coal projects. I will also move quickly to develop the regulatory framework to ensure that carbon sequestration can be done safely and reliably.

Reducing carbon emissions from coal, a cheap and plentiful resource, is a critical component of creating an international solution to the climate problem. I will invest in clean coal technology that the U.S. can export to other nations.

Free markets should shape U.S. energy policy. Free markets ensure that supply and demand are evenly matched. Conservation and less pollution are achieved by market rates that are set by the laws of supply and demand.

**7** What regulatory changes, if any, should be applied to mountaintop removal mining?

Mountaintop mining has significant environmental and health impacts, and the Bush administration has gone too far in allowing harm to the land and waterways of Appalachia. We should strengthen Clean Water Act protections while maintaining the vitality of mining communities.

I believe that we must find new ways to engage in mining that have minimal effects on the environment. That means investing in new technology and addressing these questions now.

In a free market, if your property is damaged, you can sue the polluter. This makes it unprofitable for a polluter to continue doing business the same way. Regulations favor the wealthy, and property owners rarely receive resolution.

**8** What should Social Security look like when today's young workers retire?

I will protect and preserve Social Security against privatization and address its long-term challenges without hurting hard-working families or seniors. I'll make sure that Social Security is strong and solvent and remains a bedrock guarantee for generations to come.

I'll ensure that benefits aren't cut, the retirement age isn't raised and that Social Security remains financially secure for generations to come. I will be honest with the American people about the long-term fiscal health of Social Security.

We must honor our obligations to those who have paid into the system while letting young people opt out. This can only be accomplished through drastically curtailing the federal government in programs and spending. We must live within our means.

**9** What is the first action that must be taken to address issues of affordability and access to quality health care?

Passing a universal health care bill that ensures Americans have quality, affordable health care will be my top domestic priority as president. Everyone will be able to choose from the hundreds of plans available to members of Congress.

We must provide affordable and quality universal health care options to every American. By implementing strong quality and efficiency standards in new public and private health plans, we can start to fundamentally change and improve our national health care system.

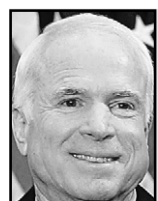
Forty years ago, patients paid cash for ordinary services and had inexpensive catastrophic insurance for serious injuries or illnesses. Freed from bureaucracy, doctors can focus on medicine rather than billing, substantially reducing overhead and charge a lower fee.

**10** What changes do you propose to alleviate the problem of prescription drug abuse?

I'll expand treatment services by increasing funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's prescription drug abuse efforts. I will work to better coordinate care so we can better reduce the number of people who are "doctor shopping."

I am extremely concerned about the growth in prescription drug abuse, especially among our nation's teens. As president, I will expand federal resources for proven drug abuse prevention programs that help youth and adults alike.

Less government intervention in health care would allow people and physicians to use alternative measures that could cause a healthier population less dependent on the drug industry. Ending the Drug War would go far to fix this problem as well.



## John McCain

**Party:** Republican **Born:** Aug. 29, 1936

**Residence:** Arizona

**Education:** Bachelor's degree, U.S. Naval Academy, 1958; National War College, 1974

**Family:** Wife, Cindy; five children

**Public office:** U.S. Senator, 1987-present; U.S. representative, 1983-1987

**Web site:** www.johnmccain.com

**John McCain did not respond to our request for answers.**