

Positions Summary:

Background
Civil Rights
Economy
Education
Energy
Ethics
Fiscal
Foreign Policy
Health Care
Immigration
Iraq
Poverty
Rural
Seniors
Service
Veterans

OVERVIEW

1997 Elected to Illinois State Senate

First state Earned Income Tax Credit (\$100M in tax cuts to families)

Death Penalty interrogations must be videotaped (passed 100%, with republicans)

2004 Elected as the third African-American to the US Senate

Passed "Google for Government" with Tom Coburn-R

Lugar-Obama Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act

Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act

Government Ethics Bill of 2007

The Protection Against Excessive Executive Compensation Bill

Experience? Action? He has sponsored over 820 bills:

233 on healthcare reform

125 on poverty

112 on fighting crime

97 on the economy

60 on human rights

21 on ethics reform

15 on gun control

6 on veterans affairs

Under his own call for government transparency, he has disclosed ALL earmarks, and is near the bottom of requestors in the Senate (\$3.3M), and those earmarks are mainly for schools and hospitals. Hillary is in the top 10 Senators with earmarks, and will not disclose what some of them are for (\$340M).

KEY POINTS

- 1961 Born on August 4th in Hawaii. Mom from Kansas, Dad from Kenya. Lived mainly in Hawaii, briefly in Indonesia
- 1983 Received a BA from Columbia University in NY. Went to work as a community organizer and grassroots-politics catalyst in south Chicago, one of the area's poorest. Helped people register to vote, organize, and become involved in change.
- 1991, Graduated Harvard Law, as the first African-American president of the Harvard Law Review.
- Went back to work in south Chicago for \$13,000/year as a community organizer, lecturer on Constitutional Law at University of Chicago, turning down high-paying job offers.
- Lives with wife Michelle and 2 daughters in Chicago's South Side, where they attend Trinity United Church of Christ.
- He has released his tax returns and sources of funding for his campaign. All contributions from suspect sources have been donated to charity.

OVERVIEW

For every \$1.00 earned by a man, the average woman receives only 77 cents, while African American women only get 67 cents and Latinas receive only 57 cents. Hate crimes have increased nearly 8 percent to 7,700 in 2006. There have been numerous organized efforts to intimidate, mislead and suppress minority voters, while disparities continue to plague the criminal justice system: African Americans and Hispanics are more than twice as likely as whites to be searched, arrested, or subdued with force when stopped by police. Disparities in drug sentencing laws, like the differential treatment of crack as opposed to powder cocaine, continue.

KEY POINTS

- Reverse the politicization that has occurred in the Bush Administration's Department of Justice; put an end to ideological litmus tests used to fill positions
- Work to overturn the Supreme Court ruling that curtails racial minorities' and women's ability to challenge pay discrimination.
- Pass the Fair Pay Act to ensure that women receive equal pay for equal work
- Strengthen federal hate crimes legislation and reinvigorate enforcement at the Department of Justice's Criminal Section
- Sign into law his legislation that establishes harsh penalties for those who have engaged in voter fraud
- Ban racial profiling by federal law enforcement agencies and provide federal incentives to state and local police departments to prohibit the practice.
- Give first-time, non-violent offenders a chance to serve their sentence, where appropriate, in the type of drug rehabilitation programs that have proven to work better than a prison term in changing bad behavior
- Continue and expand upon his work in the U.S. Senate, where he 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.

OVERVIEW

While the economy declines toward recession, wages are flat, and the costs of basic necessities increase. 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 the lowest since the Great Depression. The Bush tax cuts were skewed toward the wealthy instead of the middle class, giving 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. Sen. Obama has been a leader in penalizing mortgage fraud, halting predatory lending, and has introduced the Patriot Employer Act of 2007 which would provide a tax credit to companies that support 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.

KEY POINTS

- cut income taxes by \$1,000 for working families to offset the payroll tax they pay, while simplifying tax filings for middle class Americans
- amend the North American Free Trade Agreement to incorporate more stringent labor and environmental protections; insist upon “fair trade” worldwide, rather than so-called “free trade,” which often works to the disadvantage of American workers
- update the existing system of Trade Adjustment Assistance by extending it to service industries, creating flexible education accounts to help workers retrain, and providing retraining assistance for workers in sectors of the economy vulnerable to dislocation before they lose their jobs
- create new jobs by doing the following: double federal funding for research, invest in education, training and workforce development and in U.S. manufacturing to help pioneer the first wave of green technologies including an energy-focused youth jobs program, and make major investments as well as tax credits for renewable energy
- strengthen labor by ensuring freedom to organize, as via the Employee Free Choice Act, supporting the right of workers to strike, and raising the minimum wage
- protect homeownership and personal finances by cracking down on fraudulent brokers and lenders, creating a Universal Mortgage Credit, establishing a fund to avoid foreclosures, addressing predatory credit card practices, reforming bankruptcy laws to protect working people, expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act, the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit, and making the federal government a model employer in many ways, including the adoption of flexible work schedules.
- invest in the U.S. economy instead of in dangerous, wasteful, and counterproductive adventures abroad

For more information, visit <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/economy/>

OVERVIEW

Obama has been a leader on educational issues throughout his career. In the Illinois State Senate, Obama was a leader on early childhood education, helping create the state's Early Learning Council. 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.

KEY POINTS

- Offer a \$4,000 tax credit to college students for working in Americorp or "Greencorp"
- Reform and FUND "No Child Left Behind"
- Quadruple Early Head Start and Head Start programs, expanding programs and giving grants to families and start us moving toward voluntary universal pre-school programs.
- 30% of teachers leave the field within five years. We need to Recruit, Prepare, Retain, and Reward America's teachers
- Make Math and Science education a National Priority, and bring back Music and Art
- America has the highest dropout rate in the industrialized world. Only 70% of students receive a diploma. Address the school dropout crisis with proved intervention strategies
- Expand summer learning opportunities nationwide like he has done in Illinois
- Children's First Agenda providing care, learning and support for kids 0-5
- Wants to sponsor high-quality child care to ease the burden on working families
- Eliminate the confusing college financial aid application process, enabling families to apply by checking a box on their tax returns

OVERVIEW

U.S. dependence on foreign oil currently costs the economy \$1.4 billion a day, and contributes to international stability because of its reliance on Middle East sources. In addition, global warming is a huge, world-wide crisis of unprecedented proportions, and American addiction to oil (as well as to coal and natural gas) adds greatly to this growing environmental problem. Fossil fuels are also non-renewable, and bound to run out eventually. All of this makes it essential – as a matter of basic planetary hygiene as well as national security – for the U.S. to be set on a path to sustainability and energy independence.

KEY POINTS

- employ a Cap and Trade, market-based system to get carbon emissions 80% below 1990 levels by 2050; use proceeds from Cap and Trade auctions to sponsor a Green Jobs Corps
- invest \$10 billion in an energy-focused Clean Technologies Venture Capital Fund
- promote carbon sequestration by providing financial rewards to tree planters and growers
- invest \$150 over the next ten years in clean energy, including biomass, solar and wind
- establish a 25% federal Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to require that 25% of electricity consumed in the U.S. is derived from clean, sustainable energy sources, like solar, wind, and geothermal by 2025
- set explicit and enforceable National Building Efficiency Goals and double fuel economy standards within 18 years
- create a new Global Energy Forum that includes all G-8 members plus Brazil, China, India, Mexico and South Africa, the largest energy consuming nations from both the developed and developing world. Work cooperatively with these countries toward international solutions

OVERVIEW

The problem in Washington is that policies tend to be written by lobbyists, secrecy dominates government actions, and wasteful spending is out of control. Oil & gas lobbyists secretly develop national energy policy, the administration ignores public disclosure rules, and practices favoritism in awarding contracts to political allies, which costs taxpayers billions. Senator Obama has challenged leaders to pass ethics reform both in Washington and Springfield, IL. He has already partnered with Sen. Russ Feingold (D-WI) to pass into law the strongest ethics reforms in U.S. history, and with Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) to pass a law creating an internet search engine allowing regular people to track federal grants, contracts, earmarks, and loans online. He will close the revolving door between the executive branch and K-street lobbyists, increase transparency so citizens can understand and trust their government, and end wasteful, no-bid contracts.

KEY POINTS

- Create an easily accessible database of lobbying reports, ethics records and campaign finance filings
- Establish a “watchdog” agency to oversee the investigation of complaints
- Initiate public financing of political campaigns
- Make any special interest tax breaks and tax earmarks available on the internet
- Make any non-emergency bill available for the American public to review for 5 days before being signed into law
- Bring Americans back into their government by holding fireside chats, making white house communications public, conducting regulatory agency business in public, and releasing Presidential records in a timely fashion
- Prohibit political appointees from working on regulations or contracts related to their prior employer for two years, disallow political favors in hiring, and set higher qualification standards
- Unlike other candidates, Obama’s campaign refuses to accept contributions from Washington lobbyists and PAC’s.

OVERVIEW

“The cost of our debt is one of the fastest growing expenses in the federal budget. This rising debt is a hidden domestic enemy, robbing our cities and states of critical investments in infrastructure like bridges, ports, and levees; robbing our families and our children of critical investments in education and health care reform; robbing our seniors of the retirement and health security they have counted on. ... If Washington were serious about honest tax relief in this country, we'd see an effort to reduce our national debt by returning to responsible fiscal policies.”

– Barack Obama, Speech in the U.S. Senate, March 13, 2006

KEY POINTS

- ***Restore Fiscal Discipline in Congress*** Reinstate pay-as-you-go budget rules, so that new spending or tax cuts are paid for by spending cuts or new revenue elsewhere.
- ***Cut Earmarks (Pork Barrel Spending)*** Cut special-interest spending projects by forcing more transparency about who is requesting projects and what the projects would accomplish
- ***Cut Down on Tax Haven and Tax Shelter Abuse*** Build on his bipartisan work to penalize companies that abuse the tax code and stop the use of tax havens
- ***Repeal Bush Tax Cuts for the Wealthy*** Committed to repealing the Bush tax cuts for the wealthiest Americans.
- ***Increasing Debt*** Under Bush, the federal debt has increased from \$5.7 trillion to \$8.8 trillion, an increase of more than 50 percent.
- ***No-Bid Contracts*** Introduced and helped pass bipartisan legislation to limit the abuse of no-bid federal contracts. All contracts over \$25,000 should be competitively bid.
- ***Against Raising the Federal Debt Limit*** In 2006, Obama voted against misguided Republican efforts to raise the statutory debt limit at the same time the Republicans were pushing through massive debt-financed tax cuts for the wealthy.

OVERVIEW

“When I am this party’s nominee, my opponent will not be able to say that I voted for the war in Iraq; or that I gave George Bush the benefit of the doubt on Iran; or that I supported Bush-Cheney policies of not talking to leaders that we don’t like. And he will not be able to say that I wavered on something as fundamental as whether or not it is ok for America to torture – because it is never ok. ... I will end the war in Iraq. ... I will close Guantanamo. I will restore habeas corpus. I will finish the fight against Al Qaeda. And I will lead the world to combat the common threats of the 21st century: nuclear weapons and terrorism; climate change and poverty; genocide and disease. And I will send once more a message to those yearning faces beyond our shores that says, “You matter to us. Your future is our future. And our moment is now.”

-Des Moines, Iowa, November 10, 2007

KEY POINTS

- Only candidate to oppose the Iraq war from the beginning. Will bring our troops home on a schedule that is safe and based on current information, starting in 2009.
- Rebuild trust with, and expand the National Guard, Reserves, and active military by 65,000 Army and 27,000 Marine troops. Fully train them before battle, and make sure they have the armor, training, and skills necessary before deployment.
- Fight terrorism with a strategy of fighting in Afghanistan, removing safe-havens in Pakistan, and developing other international partnerships
- Against war with Iran and the Kyl-Liebermann act. Obama wants tough diplomacy with Iran including international pressure and incentives
- Talk to countries that we don’t like. Talk to our allies, cultivate new allies, and meet with our foes like Nixon did with China and Reagan with Russia.
- Close Guantanamo and other torture prisons. Restore habeas corpus so people cannot be held without charges or representation
- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a key diplomatic priority. We need to work with both sides to achieve the goal of two states living side by side in peace and security.
- Fight global poverty by doubling our foreign assistance aid to the world’s weakest states.
- Joined with Dick Lugar to pass a law to help detect and prevent the smuggling WMD’s.
- Strengthen the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty so that it has international sanctions.

OVERVIEW

Millions of Americans are uninsured or underinsured because of rising medical costs: 47 million Americans — including nearly 9 million children — lack health insurance with no signs of this trend slowing down. Health care costs are skyrocketing: Health insurance premiums have risen four times faster than wages over the past 6 years. Yet less than 4 cents of every health care dollar is spent on prevention and public health, and the U.S., for all its wealth, is the only major industrialized country that doesn't provide health care for all of its citizens. In Illinois, Sen. Obama sponsored and passed legislation that expanded health care coverage to 70,000 kids and 84,000 adults. In the U.S. Senate, he 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.

KEY POINTS

- establish a new national health care system allowing all Americans to buy affordable health coverage similar that available to members of Congress: no one would be turned away because of inability to pay or pre-existing conditions; preventive, maternity and mental health care will be included, as well as simplified paperwork, easy enrollment, portability and choice
- create a watchdog National Health Insurance Exchange to help individuals who wish to purchase a private insurance plan. The NHIE will create rules and standards for insurance plans to ensure fairness and to make coverage affordable and accessible. Insurers would have to issue every applicant a policy, and charge fair premiums independent of health status
- make coverage of children mandatory; expand eligibility for the Medicaid and SCHIP
- require that employers who do not offer or contribute meaningfully to quality health coverage contribute a percentage of payroll toward costs of the national plan
- lower costs by increasing competition in the insurance and drug markets, prohibiting “big pharma” from keeping generics out of markets, investing in electronic health information technology systems, preventing insurers from overcharging physicians for malpractice insurance, and establishing an independent institute to guide reviews and research on comparative effectiveness
- increase funding for biomedical research, especially in the areas of chronic diseases and preventive medicine
- tackle disparities in health care, whether resulting from income differences, exposure to mercury or lead pollution, disabilities, etc.

OVERVIEW

“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

KEY POINTS

- Fighting for reform that secures our borders and fixes immigration bureaucracy, which takes years for even a legal immigrant's application to become processed
- 12 Million undocumented workers need a responsible path to citizenship a country-of-origin background check
- Invest in additional personnel, infrastructure, and technology on the border and at ports
- Punish employers who employ and exploit undocumented workers
- Co-Sponsored the Citizenship Promotion Act with Luis Guterrez (D-IL), to ensure that immigration application fees are both reasonable and fair
- Work with Mexico to promote economic development in Mexico and decrease illegal immigration
- Work for 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.

OVERVIEW

Barack Obama opposed the war from the beginning, when it was unpopular to do so. In 2002, as the conventional thinking in Washington lined up for war, Obama had the judgment and courage to speak out against it. In January 2007, Sen. Obama introduced legislation to responsibly end the war in Iraq, with a phased withdrawal of troops engaged in combat operations. The current surge was intended to create space for Iraq's political leaders to reach an agreement to end Iraq's civil war. But although violence has been reduced in some areas, it still remains above the unsustainable levels of mid-2006. Moreover, Iraq's political leaders have made no progress in resolving the political differences at the heart of their civil war. At the same time, our military is being severely strained by repeated and lengthy deployments. The Army and Marine Corps are in crisis as 40% of their equipment is either in Iraq or being repaired. This has led many generals to conclude that current demands threaten to make our forces unable to respond to future crises.

KEY POINTS

- Immediately begin withdrawing our troops engaged in combat operations at a pace of one to two brigades every month, to be completed within 16 months
- Demand a new constitutional convention in Iraq, convened with the United Nations, which would not adjourn until Iraq's leaders reach a new accord on reconciliation, including federalism and oil-revenue sharing
- Use presidential leadership to surge our diplomacy with all of the nations of the region – including Iran and Syria - on behalf of a new regional security compact
- Take immediate steps to confront the ongoing humanitarian disaster in Iraq
- Make it clear that the U.S., seeks no permanent bases in Iraq
- Spoken by Sen. Obama during a debate with Sen. Clinton, in 2007: “... conventional thinking in Washington lined up for war. The pundits judged the political winds to be blowing in the direction of the President. Despite - or perhaps because of how much experience they had in Washington, too many politicians feared looking weak and failed to ask hard questions. Too many took the President at his word instead of reading the intelligence for themselves. Congress gave the President the authority to go to war. Our only opportunity to stop the war was lost. I made a different judgment. I thought our priority had to be finishing the fight in Afghanistan. I spoke out against what I called 'a rash war' in Iraq.”

OVERVIEW

There are nearly 37 million poor Americans. Although most Americans living in poverty work, many still cannot afford to make ends meet. Even when parents work full-time, earning minimum wage and with food stamps factored into their income, such families are still \$1,550 below the federal poverty line. The richest country in the world can do better. Sen. 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. This law provided about \$105 million in tax relief over three years. He has also championed multiple pieces of legislation to help low-income families find adequate affordable housing. As president, Obama will fight hard to end poverty in America.

KEY POINTS

- Invest \$1 billion over five years in transitional jobs and career pathway programs that implement proven methods of helping low-income Americans succeed in the workforce
- Create a Green Jobs Corps program to engage disadvantaged youth in energy efficiency opportunities; this will strengthen their communities, while conveying practical skills
- Work to ensure that low-income Americans have transportation access to jobs, by doubling the federal Jobs Access and Reverse Commute Program
- Create a prison-to-work incentive program and reduce barriers to employment for ex-offenders; this will include access to job training, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and employment opportunities
- Increase the number of working parents eligible for EITC benefits, increase the benefits available to parents who pay child support, increase benefits for families with three or more children, and reduce the tax marriage penalty, which hurts low-income families
- Raise the minimum wage and index it to inflation so that full-time workers can earn a living wage
- Provide all low and middle-income workers a \$500 Making Work Pay tax credit; also eliminate taxes for seniors making under \$50,000 per year
- Sign into law Sen. Obama's Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act
- Expand the Nurse-Family Partnership to all low-income, first-time mothers
- Fully Fund the Community Development Block Grant Program
- Create a much-needed Affordable Housing Trust Fund

For more information, visit <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/poverty/>

OVERVIEW

A Record on Rural Issues In 2006, Obama supported legislation that would have reversed \$2 billion in cuts for U.S. Department of Agriculture programs including conservation, rural development, nutrition, and forestry programs that are vitally important to our rural communities. In addition, he supported legislation providing full funding for agricultural programs that were authorized by Congress in the 2002 Farm Bill. Obama has supported funding for Illinois communities through the Rural Community Empowerment Program, which includes the establishment of rural Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities, as well as other federal programs that maintain and build upon the assets of rural communities. Obama has worked on numerous efforts in the U.S. Senate to increase access to and use of renewable fuels, including corn-based and cellulosic ethanol. He cosponsored legislation to investigate the root causes of health disparities including for rural areas and to start addressing them. He cosponsored legislation that became law to combat the scourge of methamphetamines. Obama also introduced legislation to remedy years of discrimination against black farmers by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

KEY POINTS

- Obama supports immediate implementation of this Labeling law so that Americans can distinguish American products from imported ones
- Ensure that our rural areas continue their leadership in the renewable fuels movement. This will transform the economy, especially in rural America, which is poised to produce and refine more American biofuels and provide more wind power than ever before, and create millions of new jobs across the country.
- Fight for farm programs that provide family farmers with stability and predictability and Prevent Anticompetitive Behavior
- Increase incentives for farmers and private landowners to conduct sustainable agriculture and protect wetlands, grasslands, and forests
- Support Small Business Development, communications capabilities, rural education, and infrastructure
- Methamphetamine use has increased 156 percent nationwide since 1996. Obama has a long record of fighting the meth epidemic
- Establish a new program to identify and train the next generation of farmers. He will also provide tax incentives to make it easier for new farmers to afford their first farm

OVERVIEW

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.

KEY POINTS

- protect Social Security benefits for current and future beneficiaries alike, but without privatizing it, without raising the retirement age and without reducing benefits
- achieve this by increasing the maximum amount of earnings covered by Social Security (the current cap is \$97,500, which means that the wealthiest earners are not taxed on the upper parts of their income), and by working with Congress and the American people to choose a payroll tax reform package that will keep Social Security solvent for at least the next half century
- strengthen Medicare, including supporting legislation to allow Medicare to negotiate for cheaper prescription drug prices and to extend the enrollment period for low-income beneficiaries
- reform corporate bankruptcy laws to protect workers and retirees instead of banks and corporations, by prohibiting companies from issuing executive bonuses while cutting worker benefits and pensions, increasing the amount of unpaid wages and benefits workers can legally claim, and limiting circumstances under which retiree benefits can be reduced
- require full annual disclosure of company pension investments and provide choice and oversight for workers who are involved
- 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

automatically enroll workers in a new Workplace Pension Plan. Under his plan, employers who do not currently offer a retirement plan will be required to enroll their employees in a direct-deposit IRA account compatible with existing direct-deposit payroll systems. Employees may opt-out if they choose. This program is estimated to increase the savings participation rate for low and middle-income workers from its current 15 percent level to around 80 percent

- Create a generous savings match for low and middle income Americans, which will match 50% of the first \$1,000 in savings for families earning less than \$75,000

For more information, visit <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/seniors/>

OVERVIEW

George Bush squandered an opportunity to mobilize the American people following 9/11 when he asked Americans only to go shopping. Although more than 500,000 people have served in AmeriCorps, this program turns away tens of thousands of applicants a year because of limited funding. Research and development in the nonprofit sector is limited and there is a disconnect between charitable foundations that can fund innovation and the organizations on the ground that test new concepts and bring them to scale. Sen. Obama has a personal history of service: he began his career by moving to the South Side of Chicago to direct the Developing Communities Project. Together with a coalition of ministers, he set out to improve living conditions in poor neighborhoods plagued by crime and high unemployment. After graduating from law school, he passed up lucrative law firm jobs to head Project Vote, which helped register 150,000 new African American voters in Chicago, the most ever registered in a single local effort. Michelle Obama was founding executive director of Public Allies Chicago, a leadership development program that identifies and prepares talented young adults for careers serving the public good.

KEY POINTS

- enable all Americans to serve by expanding AmeriCorps from 75,000 to 250,000 and focus on addressing this country's challenges: establish a Classroom Corps with emphasis on underserved schools, a Health Corps to improve public health outreach, a Clean Energy Corps to conduct weatherization and renewable energy projects; a Veterans Corps to assist veterans at hospitals, nursing homes and homeless shelters; and a Homeland Security Corps to help communities respond to emergencies
- expand and improve programs that connect individuals over the age of 55 to quality volunteer opportunities, thus engaging retiring Americans in service on a large scale
- double the Peace Corps to 16,000 by 2011 and work with the leaders of other countries to build an international network of overseas volunteers so that Americans work side-by-side with volunteers from other countries
- set up an America's Voice Initiative to send Americans who are fluent speakers of local languages to expand our public diplomacy, while also extending opportunities for older individuals such as teachers, engineers, and doctors to serve overseas
- establish a new American Opportunity Tax Credit that is worth \$4,000 a year in exchange for 100 hours of public service, and grow the YouthBuild Program so that 50,000 low-income young people a year can learn construction job skills and complete high school.
- create a Social Investment Fund Network to use federal seed money to leverage private sector funding to improve local innovation, test the impact of new ideas and expand successful programs to scale; also develop an agency within the Corporation for National and Community Service dedicated to building the capacity and effectiveness of the nonprofit sector

For more information, visit <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/service/>

OVERVIEW

America owes more than gratitude to its veterans: we owe them the best possible care and benefits. Tragically and unforgivably, the Walter Reed scandal showed that returning service members often don't receive the care they deserve. The VA has experienced a multi-billion dollar shortfall, as the Bush Administration has been eager to initiate wars but reluctant to meet the country's responsibilities toward those who serve in them. There are currently more than 400,000 claims pending with the Veterans Benefits Administration, with VA error rates having grown to more than 100,000 cases per year, while veterans return home with record levels of combat injuries, including PTSD, which are not treated adequately or in a timely fashion. 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, to help homeless veterans, and he has led a bipartisan effort in the Senate to try to halt the military's unfair practice of discharging service members for having a service-connected psychological injury.

KEY POINTS

- reverse the 2003 ban on enrolling modest-income veterans, which has callously denied care to a million veterans
- make the VA a leader in national health care reform, including improvements in polytrauma vision impairment, brain and spinal cord injury, aging, and women's health
- establish a national "zero tolerance" policy for veterans falling into homelessness by expanding proven programs and launching innovative services, including counseling
- demand that the military and the VA coordinate to provide a seamless transition from active duty to civilian life
- fully fund VA medical care so that it can adequately serve all veterans who need it
- establish a world-class, VA Planning Division to avoid future budget shortfalls, and hire additional claims workers and improve accountability so that VA benefit decisions are made fairly and consistently
- improve mental health care at every stage of military service, by recruiting more health professionals, upgrading screening, offering more support to families and making PTSD benefit claims fairer
- establish standards of care for Traumatic Brain Injury, the signature injury of the Iraq War
- expand and strengthen Vet Centers to provide better care for vets and their families

For more information, visit <http://www.barackobama.com/issues/veterans/>