

KERRY VS. BUSH

The presidential candidates are duking it out over Iraq, terrorism, health care, and the economy.

But what about the issues affecting you?

Once every four years, the District of Columbia actually has something in common with such real states as California, New York, and Texas. Yes, we too are ignored by the presidential candidates. The scene in Kingman Park isn't much different from the scene in Fresno, Schenectady, or Lubbock: In D.C.'s heartland, there are no political ads, no meet-and-greets with the candidates at the VFW hall, no photo-ops at the local greasy spoon.

On one level, it's empowering to be in such good company. After all, there are more than 30 states just like D.C., where the candidates stump only on layovers.

But apathy has never befitted the District and its three electoral votes. How hard would it be for D.C. to join the presidential elite?

It doesn't look too tough from here. New Hampshire, with its pathetic allotment of four electoral votes, has somehow become a battleground state. Those pinko, flower-power hippies in Hawaii? Yup, they're swing voters, too. Even Minnesota has somehow managed to transform itself from a bastion of bleeding-heart Midwestern liberalism to a potential Republican sleeper cell.

Minnesota?

Yes. After years of suckling on the Democratic teat, this new, more wishy-washy Minnesota is getting the attention that every state craves. As of the first week of October, Bush had hit the state five times and Kerry six times during the campaign. Every Minnesotan can now redeem his or her inalienable right to hear a refried stump speech and have his or her baby handled by a man in a navy suit.

How did this happen? In 1984, Minnesota was the only state to give its electoral votes to Walter Mondale. The other contributor? Us.

What do they have that we don't? Minnesota and the District both look as if they'd had giant bites taken out of them. It snows here sometimes. Minnesota even has our old baseball team.

Al Gore got 85 percent of the vote here in 2000, you might say. D.C.'s not even a state, you might protest. Doesn't matter. If Minnesota can do it, so can we. The District deserves to be a battleground state, and the District will be a battleground state, but only if we're brave enough to follow the Gopher State's example.

The key question is how Minnesotans were able to shake off their long-held faith in the Democratic party. They were obviously emboldened by their squirrely animal mascot, also known as the ground squirrel. It's impossible to pin a gopher down. What the District needs is an equally cunning, yet unclaimed faunal representative, a creature that will inspire us to abandon our collective conscience with its conniving, two-timing ways.

But even after we put a gigantic, fang-baring weasel in the middle of the D.C. flag, we'll still come up

far short in an aquatic face-off with the Land of 10,000 Lakes. Remember, if we want to be a coveted prize like Minnesota, we have to vote like Minnesota, and to vote like Minnesota, we have to look like Minnesota. It's time to band together and turn every pathetic backyard pond, pothole, and sewer into a battleground lake. Reclassification does not equal cheating. I mean, really, how many of those 10,000 Minnesota lakes do you think are real? Eight, maybe nine at the most.

The next step: retail. Convinced that the Target that's supposed to alight in Columbia Heights is never gonna come? Check your attitude, because if it doesn't come, then we'll never have a chance to be Minnesota. The Minnesota Timberwolves play in the Target Center. Target Corp. world headquarters is in Minneapolis. Crappy, mass-produced consumer goods are what they're all about up there. We must chain ourselves to the Columbia Heights Metro station until that Target gets built. Failing that, maybe we can get a Costco. Bargains are very Midwestern.

How about demographics? As Chris Rock once said, "the only black people in Minnesota are Prince and Kirby Puckett," and Prince is usually on tour. The District is 60 percent African-American. Hmm.

And how about that crazy cold weather they've got up there? There's nothing more Minnesota than reindeer, igloos, and ice-fishing. This is a tough one. Should we all just stick our heads in the freezer for a month? Go out and buy armfuls of mukluks? Walk around with popsicles under our armpits?

Once we nail those fine points, the District should get all the campaign-trail attention that George W. Bush and John Kerry have been foisting on the Gopher State. And issues like Klingle Road and the parking crisis in Adams Morgan will, at long last, reach the national stage. —**Josh Levin**

All Politics Is Local and National

Abridging the presidential choice for D.C. voters

Iraq	
Bush Position	Kerry Position
Kill!	Kill only if others help.

Klingle Road—Open or Closed?	
Bush Position	Kerry Position
Open: See Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.	Closed: Goose-hunting opportunities abound.

Jobs	
Bush Position	Kerry Position
No Child Left Behind Act!	Shut outsourcing—encouraging tax loophole.

Adams Morgan Parking	
Bush Position	Kerry Position
Small-business tax cuts	Go Metro, not retro.

Health Care	
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Bush Position	Kerry Position
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Tax cuts

Huge, non-government-run plan

Rat Abatement

Bush Position	Kerry Position
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"Hunt down" enemies wherever they are.

"Hunt down" enemies wherever they are.

Affirmative Action

Bush Position	Kerry Position
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Ummm...

Well...

D.C. Voting Rights

Bush Position	Kerry Position
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Stick to the Plan.

Democracy now. Or eventually.

Klinge Road

THE ISSUE

In 1991, the D.C. government prohibited car traffic on a stretch of Klinge Road, a short, winding east-west thoroughfare, after it got washed out and the city didn't have the money to repair it. In the past few years, a vocal group of residents has advocated repairing Klinge Road. The opposition prefers to think of the pockmarked street and surrounding trees as a park.

THE STAKES

Reopening the roadway would cut crucial minutes off the commute to the private schools in Cleveland Park and Tenleytown. Keeping the road closed gives *Meet the Press* anchor Tim Russert and former mayoral spokesperson Tony Bullock, both neighbors, a chance for sylvan Sunday strolls.

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: After an October campaign stop in New Hampshire, Kerry said, "I wish I could spend the day and go up in the mountains," according to the *Washington Post*.

BUSH POSITION: Recently Bush has opted to scuttle the "roadless rule," allowing states to decide whether to blaze commerce-carrying thoroughfares into some of America's most remote wilderness areas. How much interest do you think Weyerhaeuser has in Northwest D.C.?

THE SKINNY

As Kerry pointed out in the debates, Bush is part owner of a lumber company. Now that's a conflict of interest.

ADVANTAGE: KERRY

Liquor Laws

THE ISSUE

Thanks to Alcoholic Beverage Control restrictions, D.C. residents are prohibited from buying beer, wine, and liquor after 10 p.m. Outgoing At-Large Councilmember Harold Brazil attempted to get the ban lifted in March, but he withdrew the measure after constituents raised a fuss.

THE STAKES

The ability to buy a bottle of beer wherever and whenever you please ought to be an inalienable right of citizens in a republic, just like being able to vote for senators and congressional representatives. Oh, wait.

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: Although Massachusetts recently lifted a 200-year-old ban on Sunday sales of alcohol, the state's liquor laws are still among the strictest in the nation.

BUSH POSITION: The GOP platform extols the virtues of "democracy, development, free markets, and free trade," which would seem to bode well for the city's enterprising liquor salesmen. And while Bush himself does not drink, he's never been one to let his personal beliefs interfere with making sound policy decisions. Oh, wait.

THE SKINNY

Bush is a teetotaler, which should keep the neo-Prohibitionists happy, and he believes in minimal governmental regulation, which will please the all-night alkies. He can strike the balance necessary to solve this problem.

ADVANTAGE: BUSH

Traffic Cameras

THE ISSUE

Quietly over the past few years, traffic cameras have been going up at selected intersections in Washington, snapping pictures of speeders and red-light runners. Tickets arrive later, in the mail. While drivers bitch about Big Brother tactics, D.C. officials maintain that the cameras keep the roads safer—and quietly count the millions of dollars in additional ticket revenue they bring in.

THE STAKES

Coming soon: PedestrianVision! Go ahead and jaywalk. We'll be watching.

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: Kerry claims that he will balance security issues with civil-liberty concerns. But he also says that he intends to "invest in research for the industries of the future." Industries such as, say, the traffic-camera industry? You can't have it both ways, flip-flopper!

BUSH POSITION: Although Bush has neatly sidestepped the traffic-camera issue, it's worthwhile to remember that, until recently, the logo of the government's Information Awareness Office—a national surveillance and data-gathering program—was a gigantic, all-seeing eyeball looking down on the Earth. So when you look at it that way, traffic cameras don't seem like such a big deal.

THE SKINNY

Yeah, maybe traffic cameras are an unfair encroachment on personal freedom. Then again, maybe you should just slow down and stop at red lights, jackass.

ADVANTAGE: THE STATE

Rat Abatement

THE ISSUE

The next time you hear someone talking about "those dirty rats in Washington," consider the possibility that he might be speaking literally. D.C.'s streets are overrun with rodents feasting on restaurant garbage, spreading disease, and frightening wealthy dowagers. Mayor Anthony A. Williams' 1999 "Rat Summit" failed to make much headway into the issue, but, as they say, rat-fightin' ain't beanbag.

THE STAKES

Ever read the book *The Plague*? Quarantine, fever pustules, existential dread? Yeah, you might say this isn't North Africa—it's North Africa, only with Dumpsters

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: The senator speaks of Americans' "right to live in communities free of toxins." That's bad news for urban dwellers who rely on poison to combat vermin.

BUSH POSITION: Bush's political operatives are accused of having ratlike cunning, so he's got that whole think-like-the-enemy thing going for him.

THE SKINNY

Kerry says he will "hunt down" enemies of the U.S. "wherever they are." Bush says the same thing. It could be a tough four years for D.C. rats.

ADVANTAGE: TIE

Water Quality

THE ISSUE

In February, news leaked out that, in thousands of homes, D.C.'s tap water was harboring uncomfortably high levels of lead. This came as no surprise to residents, who have long been accustomed to filtering their water to avoid its unpleasant taste and questionable content. Chemical treatment was prescribed to fix the problem, but the D.C. Water and Sewer Authority's opaque response has left many residents with a bad taste in their mouths.

THE STAKES

Why bother vacationing in Mexico?

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: The Democratic presidential hopeful has pledged to "make the health and safety of our families priority number one," and he therefore plans to "create a Toxics Task Force at EPA to identify, evaluate, and prevent exposures to toxics," and "move forward with a major 'Restore America's Waters' campaign that will...take an integrated approach to protecting America's...water resources."

BUSH POSITION: The president once called environmentalists "green green lima beans" and signed off on a measure increasing acceptable arsenic levels in drinking water.

THE SKINNY

Under the Bush plan, there'll be plenty of water for everyone. Just don't drink it or use it to bathe your children.

ADVANTAGE: KERRY

Adams Morgan Parking

THE ISSUE

Adams Morgan residents have long suffered from a lack of parking in their neighborhood—a problem exacerbated by the thousands of drunks who crowd the streets every weekend. Solutions have ranged from the pragmatic, such as promoting Metro use and shared-car services, to the fantastical, such as building a huge garage underneath the playing fields of the Marie Reed Learning Center. The gridlock remains.

THE STAKES

Think parking's bad now? Just wait 10 years, until Adams Morgan's condofication is complete and the number of junior partners angrily idling in their Jettas reaches critical mass.

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: The candidate promises that

BUSH POSITION: The GOP platform

"[f]ederal transportation policies, federal housing incentives, federal employment opportunities...will be coordinated in a manner that addresses traffic congestion and fights destructive sprawl." So more people having jobs and houses will cut down on parking troubles? Typical Democratic doublethink.

comes out against parking troubles, contending that "[C]ongestion and delay not only waste our time as individuals, they also burden businesses and our entire economy with inefficiency and higher costs."

THE SKINNY

Bush must be getting an earful from the Secret Service agents who've had to double-park their black SUVs outside Madam's Organ while waiting for Jenna and Barbara to finish their Rolling Rocks and stagger out. He's got the inside info necessary to fix the problem.

ADVANTAGE: BUSH

Metro

THE ISSUE

Everyone wants a piece of Metrorail. Suburbs demand line extensions, commuters demand longer, more-frequent trains, and neighborhood gadflies demand paragraph-long all-inclusive station names. Yet all these improvements cost money—and to judge by the harsh reception that greeted this summer's 15-cent base-fare increase, such money might end up being rather hard to find.

THE STAKES

In 2020, we could be taking the monorail out to the robot repairman in Bethesda—or we could be waiting to pay \$12 to take the bus.

THE CHOICE

BUSH POSITION: When the Transportation Equity Act came up for renewal this spring, Bush claimed that it was too expensive and demanded that Congress cut several key provisions, including funding for Metro.

KERRY POSITION: Here, the Democratic hopeful plays Rich Uncle Pennybags with an in-depth mass-transit plan, claiming that under his administration, "billions will be available to states and localities to improve infrastructure without forcing them to raise taxes." He justifies the expense by saying that "[m]ass transit projects trigger capital investment, sound planning, environmental awareness, energy efficiency, and decent union wages to thousands of workers."

THE SKINNY

Bush, they say, is retro. Kerry is Metro. That settles it.

ADVANTAGE: KERRY

D.C. Voting Rights

THE ISSUE

Approximately 560,000 residents of the United States of America who just happen to live within the borders of the District of Columbia—the nation's capital—are denied voting representatives in Congress.

THE STAKES

D.C. residents pay federal taxes, serve in the armed forces, and provide services such as police and fire departments that protect federal-government agencies and their workers. Congress approves our budget, looks over our laws, and generally pokes around local affairs when it wants, so we should at least get a vote in the House of Representatives.

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: "It is wrong, and also ironic, that the residents of Washington, D.C., who live in the hub of our nation's democracy, are denied full-voting representation in Congress," wrote in Kerry in response to a D.C. First voters'-guide question. Kerry remains vague on what representation he supports for D.C.

BUSH POSITION: The Bush administration has gone to war to restore voting rights to a nation's capital—Baghdad. But Bush has said that he's against voting rights in our own nation's capital. The Bush administration even removed all "Taxation Without Representation" license plates from the president's motorcade.

THE SKINNY

Despite D.C.'s automatically giving the Democratic presidential nominee—even if he's Walter Mondale—three Electoral College votes, the party never returns the favor. Yet the Republicans have remained hostile to our quest for representation, have prevented us from counting our own ballots, and have imposed school vouchers on us.

ADVANTAGE: KERRY

Tenleytown

THE ISSUE

The border between Friendship Heights and Tenleytown used to be strong. Now, condos and shopping malls are creeping southward across the Maryland line. Which candidate will step up to protect Wisconsin Avenue?

THE STAKES

Preserve the area's historic old houses and low-end, low-rise retail or allow the marauding, shiny high-rise condos and high-end shops coming from Friendship Heights?

THE CHOICE

KERRY POSITION: The Democratic nominee "will use technology and work with Canada and Mexico to improve border security while speeding up legal and secure passages across our border."

BUSH POSITION: The president vows to "tighten border security by hiring additional border patrol agents, increasing unmanned aerial vehicle flights and remote video surveillance."

THE SKINNY

Work with Canada and Mexico to improve our border security? We shouldn't give other countries a vote when developers try to sneak a nine-story building into upper Northwest.

ADVANTAGE: BUSH

Except where noted, candidate's statements have been taken from their Web sites and their public speeches.

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