



WMRC Article

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US Elections 2004: Centrist
Democrat Kerry Leading the
Field as Veteran and
Statesman

United States: US Elections 2004: Centrist Democrat Kerry Leading the Field as Veteran and Statesman

In the second of WMRC's US presidential candidate profiles, the chances of long-standing Democrat front-runner John Kerry staying ahead of the pack are assessed.

WMRC Perspective	
Significance	John Kerry, with a strong reputation among influential Democrats and a large campaign war chest, has been the front-runner since former Vice-President Al Gore announced he was not running for the 2004 Democratic presidential nomination.
Implications	Kerry's status as a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War and his well-known reputation on traditionally Republican issues such as national defence and foreign policy make him the strongest Democratic candidate to challenge President George W Bush in the November 2004 elections.
Outlook	WMRC believes Senator Kerry will maintain his lead, although it has narrowed, and win the New Hampshire Primary, which will give him enough momentum to win the Democratic nomination, setting the stage for a showdown against President Bush.



Between now and Election Day on 2 November 2004, WMRC will provide extensive coverage and in-depth analysis of the 2004 election campaigns in the US. Analyses will be divided into five different series: 1) Major candidate profiles, of which this is the second; 2) key US House races; 3) US Senate races; 4) and 5) domestic and foreign policy issues influencing the election.

Kerry openly hinted at his desire to run for president for much of last year before making his decision official shortly after the midterm elections. His personal wealth would make him a formidable financial challenger to President George W Bush, who will almost certainly reject federal matching funds in the 2004 race. Kerry is also a decorated Vietnam veteran with a respected interest in and knowledge of foreign affairs, an issue that historically plagues Democratic presidential candidates. Kerry is the current favourite to win the Democratic nomination, but it remains to be seen if he could overcome the national electoral stigma of being a liberal Democrat from Massachusetts.



<http://kerry.senate.gov>

Responding to a Call to Higher Duty

Serving with distinction in the US Senate for nearly 20 years, despite working in the shadow of the legendary as well as the dubiously famous Senator Edward Kennedy his entire career, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry finally sees his opportunity to emerge and make a run for the Presidency. Kerry, a decorated veteran of the Vietnam War, is an unabashed Washington 'insider' whose campaign's strength is his experience and formidable reputation on key issues such as national security and foreign affairs. A lawyer by trade and once a young county prosecutor from Boston, Kerry has a strong political career and has always been seen with great expectations. Tapped to be the Lieutenant Governor, a grooming position in Massachusetts, he made the big step to the US Senate without much trouble. The only real challenge to his presidential ambitions came from popular Republican Governor William Weld, who made a strong bid to unseat Kerry in the US Senate in 1994.

Lead, Making Others Follow

Curriculum Vitae	
Hometown	Boston, Massachusetts
Personal	Age: 60 Wife: Theresa Heinz; Children: 2 children and 3 stepchildren
Religion	Roman Catholic
Education	Yale University, 1966; Boston College Law School, 1976
Professional	Lawyer, county prosecutor
Political	Massachusetts Lieutenant Governor, 1983-85 US Senator, 1985-present
Website	www.johnkerry.com

As a respected Senator who enjoys significant personal wealth, most of which comes from his wife, Theresa Heinz, who is the heiress to the Heinz Ketchup Company, Kerry has been defining the tone of the campaign. Although a recent spurt by upstart and previously unknown Howard Dean has knocked the Kerry campaign off balance, it is only temporary. Money will once again define the outcome of the race for the presidential nomination. For Kerry, his and his wife's combined assets total roughly US\$600m and although his campaign has said he would not use his wife's formidable financial resources for his bid, the statement left it open as a possibility under certain circumstances. His early status as a front-runner has allowed him to, thus far, be the most 'presidential' of his fellow challengers, giving him the edge and making him the one to beat.

Thick-Skinned or Blue-Blooded?

Kerry's strength is his weakness. As a veteran, he is seen as tough, but a regal air to match his new-found wealth (he married the Heinz heiress in 1995), and his quiet and calm demeanour is often interpreted as aloofness and wooden - a moniker suffered by losing 2000 Democratic presidential nominee Al Gore. Kerry has a presence of leadership and confidence, but also a discomfort and difficulty in connecting one-on-one with voters.

The Bottom Line

American voters crave leadership, especially in times of uncertainty. People want to have confidence in a leader that will protect American interests. Presence matters more than policy. Actions do speak louder than words. Kerry has a solid record as a statesman, veteran, and a prosecutor and, despite his cold disposition, has proven he can win tough campaigns. Although lately he has been tested as all of the other candidates try to take him off his game plan and slow his momentum, it is still early and Kerry has not yet begun to fight - a fight for the Democratic nomination that he is most likely to win.

Campaign Summary

<p>Standing/Poll</p> <p>How the candidate holds up against other candidates, according to the latest poll.</p>	<p>Gallup Organization Poll, 26 June 2003: Kerry 13%, behind Lieberman (20%) and Gephardt (15%), with Sharpton and Edwards at 7% and Dean at 6%.</p> <p>The poll is out-dated as Dean has surged since his formal announcement, but it represents Kerry's long-standing position as the presumed Democratic nominee that will face Bush in the general election. However, since this poll, Kerry has lost support, mostly to Dean.</p>
<p>Fundraising</p> <p>How much the candidate has raised to date, based on quarterly reports filed with the Federal Elections Commission.</p>	<p>First Quarter 2003: US\$7 million (ranked 2nd out of 9)</p> <p>Second Quarter 2003: US\$5 million (estimate) (tied for 2nd out of 9)</p> <p>Although his campaign did not raise as much in the second quarter as expected, Kerry leads the Democratic field in total funds on hand, helped by a transfer of US\$2.6m from his Senate campaign account in the first quarter.</p>

Supporters

Who the typical backers of the candidate are.

Building on his status as a decorated Vietnam veteran who came home and opposed the war, Kerry is courting middle-income, centrist Democrats who are highly patriotic and supportive of a strong defence, yet who oppose the Bush doctrine of pre-emption and unilateralism. His long-standing progressive stance on the environment appeals to the more liberal of Democrats, but his affluence and aloofness has made it difficult for him to connect with the blue-collar union workers who are the foot soldiers of the Democratic party.

Domestic Agenda

Highlights from the candidate's stated domestic policy goals (only issues that are expected to be frequently discussed during the campaign are mentioned).

Economy: Created legislation on targeted capital gains tax cuts and tax breaks for research and development, and pushed reductions in the tax on stock dividends, to spur the growth of new, hi-tech computer and biotechnology firms, many of which are in Massachusetts.

Gay Rights: Stopped short of supporting 'gay marriage' - instead he opted to support 'civil unions', a parallel system for legal conjoining of same-sex couples. He voted against the Defence of Marriage Act, which defined that marriage can only exist between a man and a woman.

Affirmative Action: Supports the recent US Supreme Court decision upholding affirmative action programmes and would nominate justices that would uphold such programmes in the future.

Education: Supports the 'Leave No Child Behind' programme but has called for increased funding. He would increase funding for special education, and opposes vouchers that would allow students to use public funds to attend private school.

Healthcare: Kerry's plan will cost taxpayers roughly US\$100 billion annually, which would provide government coverage of children, allow Americans to buy into the same healthcare plan that members of Congress have, and offer tax incentives that would help workers and businesses more easily afford health insurance. Kerry estimated that 95% of Americans could be covered under his plan. It would be paid for by scaling back Bush's tax cuts directed at wealthier Americans.

Environment: Emerged as one of the Senate's premier leaders on such environmental issues as air and water quality, global warming, and the protection of fisheries and wildlife and wilderness areas. He led the opposition to drilling for oil in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Homeland Security: Kerry's plan includes creation of a huge core of volunteers to train to respond in the event of an attack, and more funding to train local 'first responders', improve port security, and to allow more ready use of the National Guard in the event of an emergency as a result of a terrorist attack, and greater co-ordination of the private sector in the protection of 'critical infrastructure'.

Foreign Agenda

Highlights from the candidate's stated objectives for foreign policy (only issues that are expected to be frequently discussed during the campaign are mentioned).

War in Iraq: Supported the resolution in favour of the war, but has since been very critical of the Bush administration's post-war preparation and the absence of WMD in Iraq thus far. He has called for Bush to withdraw all troops immediately because of the controversy over bogus intelligence reports used by the Bush administration to justify the war.

North Korea and Iran: Supports more aggressive engagement of Japan and China to compel them to participate with the US and Russia to negotiate a diplomatic solution to the nuclear weapons programmes in both countries.

Afghanistan: Supported US-led intervention, but critical of the Bush strategy of using local warlords in the fight against the Taliban and Al-Qaida, blaming this method for allowing Osama bin Laden to slip away.

Pre-Emptive Strikes: Wary of pre-emptive actions against rogue states, but supports a strong proactive national defence strategy that may include such actions when

warranted, although advocates stronger effort towards multilateral interventions.

War on Terrorism: Supports a broad focus on preventing terrorism including aggressive strategies to tackle international crime, narco-terrorism and the illegal trading of arms.

Sustainable Development: Helped pass legislation to increase research and development of vaccines for AIDS, tuberculosis and malarial diseases, which are devastating Africa and many developing nations.

Foreign Trade: Supports increasing ties with trading partners, but is sensitive to allowing unfettered access to the likes of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), since it has been highly criticised by major labour unions in the US - a key constituency.

Campaign Strategy

The candidate's strategy for the Primary campaign.

The four-term US senator is casting himself as the front-runner in an effort to get his Democratic opponents to react to his moves, rather than the other way around. He hopes his strong experience on foreign policy will elevate him to 'Presidential material' - an aura of confidence and leadership - that would give him credibility. To stay presidential, he will attempt to remain above the fray and out of scuffles with other candidates. As the front-runner, whenever he engages or responds to another candidate, he only succeeds in raising their stature. Traditionally a favourite among liberal Democrats, Kerry's support for the war in Iraq has hurt him, but he is attempting to regain their support by turning up the heat on the Bush administration over the controversy regarding intelligence leading up to the war by calling for a withdrawal of US troops from the country. In the primaries, Kerry hopes to knock Richard Gephardt from the race in Iowa and storm into New Hampshire, a state that shares a media market with the senator's native Massachusetts, in order to finish off Howard Dean. If he can win both early primaries, it will confirm what the party machine has thought all along: that Kerry is the only heavyweight in the race and the only one with a credible chance of beating Bush.

Strengths

Best attributes of the candidate.

Kerry is a polished, careful and thoughtful politician who measures his words, addressing a group of young volunteers or fellow senators in the same, calm manner. He has a presence that exudes leadership and confidence, an air that appears 'Presidential'. Part of the Washington establishment for nearly 20 years, Kerry possesses the experience, particularly in the realm of foreign policy, to confidently speak on most issues and carry himself well opposite world leaders. His record as a decorated Vietnam veteran who came home and opposed the war because of the lack of leadership behind it has earned him respect from veterans and conservative patriots as well as the peace-mongering left. The personal experience he has with war will be a significant asset, as he will be seen as someone who could easily take over the reins of the most powerful military on the planet - especially important during this time of great uncertainty in the US and the world. As the perceived front-runner among the Washington, DC, press corps and many of the Democratic elite, he *is* the front-runner until told otherwise, perception being reality in American politics.

Weaknesses

Potential pitfalls facing the candidate.

As is so often the case, Kerry's strengths are also his weaknesses: polished can mean aloof; careful can be stilted; thoughtful seen as being pensive; and his strength in foreign policy has resulted in his weakness on domestic issues. However, his biggest vulnerability is his affluence, and the perception that he is part of an elite who enjoys the trappings of power, money and influence, so much so that the 'average voter' can not associate with whatever challenges the likes of Senator John Kerry may happen to face in everyday life, and vice versa. The fickle American voter wants a leader to look up to, but not one that looks down on them. Thus, Kerry is benefiting from appearing presidential, but is suffering from appearing regal. His campaign organisation has attracted the usual gaggle of high-paid, well-seasoned Democratic consultants, rainmakers and pollsters, but these are the same experts that ran Vice-President's Al Gore campaign and the 2002 Congressional campaigns - both bad showings for the Democrats. With old hands steering this ship, his campaign is running by the book and is well scripted, making it nearly impossible to respond to the unexpected surge of the likes of Dean or the other

inevitable surprises in the rough-and-tumble of a long national campaign.

Outlook and Implications

Presidential campaigns are defined by key moments throughout the race. As the situation stands, this is how WMRC expects events to unfold for John Kerry at each stage of the primaries.

WMRC Predictions

Iowa Caucuses 19 January 2004	Kerry will come in a close third, behind Congressman Richard Gephardt who has too strong a lead and too loyal a base in Iowa to be beaten, and just behind Dean who has spent a significant amount of critical 'early time' in the state. It will only be a three-candidate race.
New Hampshire Primary 27 January 2004	Kerry will win New Hampshire, but not by enough to knock out Gephardt, who will be coming in with a moderate bounce from an Iowa victory, but Dean's distant third will put Kerry out of his reach. The second-tier candidacies of Edwards, Lieberman and Graham will go largely unnoticed.
Overall Primary June 2004	Hitting his stride and taking full advantage of the ever-important New Hampshire Primary victory, Kerry will hold his own against his only remaining challenger, Gephardt in the southern primaries, and then pull far ahead in the Midwestern states, making him the de facto Democratic nominee by late March or early April.

WMRC's Ongoing US Elections 2004 Analysis

To view the first Candidate Profile, Howard Dean, see: **United States: 8 July 2003: US Elections 2004 - Liberal Howard Dean Thrives on Novelty.**

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