



WMRC Article

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Conservative Democrat
Lieberman Leads in National
Polls, But Popularity is
Slipping

United States: US Elections 2004: Conservative Democrat Lieberman Leads in National Polls, But Popularity is Slipping

In the third of WMRC's US presidential candidate profiles, former Democratic Vice-Presidential candidate (2000) and current US Senator Joseph Lieberman's bid for the nomination in 2004 is examined.

WMRC Perspective	
Significance	Joe Lieberman has led all other Democratic presidential hopefuls in national polls for more than a year. He enjoys a national profile as a result of his candidacy for the Vice-Presidency in 2000 as former Clinton Vice-President Al Gore's running mate, but in recent months has had difficulty raising money and has slipped in the polls in key states.
Implications	Lieberman's position in the US Senate has been greatly enhanced following his run for the Vice-Presidency in the last presidential election. This has given him a platform to maintain his profile by leading the charge to improve homeland security and root out corporate malfeasance. However, despite his name recognition nationally, his campaign has failed to catch fire or gain any momentum.
Outlook	WMRC believes Senator Lieberman's more conservative message will continue to lose him ground in key states such as Iowa, New Hampshire and California - adding to his difficulty raising funds - and that his poor showings in early primaries will force him from the race well before the Democratic Convention in July 2004.



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 third; 2) key US House races; 3) US Senate races; 4) and 5) domestic and foreign policy issues influencing the election.

Lieberman shot into the national spotlight as Al Gore's Vice-Presidential running mate in 2000, and he has been holding onto the attention ever since in order to keep his 'Lieberman for President' effort alive for 2004. Since the 2000 defeat in the closest presidential election in US history, Lieberman has re-established his stance as a centre-conservative Democrat, even describing himself as ideologically similar to a 'Republican moderate'. National polls place Lieberman in first place for the nomination - but not first in the polls in any key early contest states. Lieberman raised just US\$3 million as of the close of the 31 March 2003 federal reporting period - a lacklustre total (and only the fourth best among the Democratic candidates) considering his high profile. Is Lieberman's status in national polls an endorsement of his centrist political platform or the result of his comparatively higher name recognition as a result of the 2000 election? Whatever the case, can Lieberman translate that into another run for the White House?



www.joe2004.com

Don't Cry for Me Al Gore

Once former Vice-President Al Gore announced that he had decided not to attempt another bid for the Presidency, the path for Lieberman had been cleared. He was instantly the front-runner due to nationwide name recognition, with which none of his rivals could readily contend. He rose through the ranks of the Connecticut political hierarchy, first as a member of the state legislator and then, after having been defeated in a race for Congress, his ambition brought him back into politics when he ran for Attorney General and won. After a few years in what was considered a fairly low-profile political post, Lieberman had raised the public's awareness of the Attorney General's office as

Curriculum Vitae	
Hometown	New Haven, Connecticut
Personal	Age: 61 Wife: Hadassah Lieberman; Children: 4
Religion	Jewish
Education	Yale University, 1964; Yale Law School, 1967
Professional	Lawyer

well as himself. Known more for his ambition than his policies, Lieberman ran for the US Senate at the peak of his popularity in Connecticut, having launched his well-timed bid after careful consideration of the political climate, and was successful.

Political	Connecticut State Senate, 1971-81 (majority leader, 1975-81) Connecticut Attorney General, 1983-89 US Senator, 1989-present
Website	www.joe2004.com

Capture the Centre

Lieberman began his political career registering black voters in Alabama and espousing liberal values and ideals while a student at Yale University. However, as he progressed in his career, he defined himself first as a centrist Democrat and then as a conservative Democrat in the US Senate. From the beginning of his tenure in Washington, Lieberman was somewhat of a maverick in his policies, having broken with his Democratic colleagues in 1991 to support the first Gulf War, tax cuts, and the welfare-to-work programme championed by Clinton in 1996. Lieberman has also differentiated himself as an outspoken critic of the entertainment industry, campaigning against sex and violence on television, in movies and in music lyrics - a typically conservative viewpoint. One of the most controversial splits from his Democratic colleagues came in 1998 when Lieberman criticised the then President Bill Clinton on the Senate floor for his inappropriate behaviour with White House intern Monica Lewinsky.

Centrist or Opportunist?

Leading up to the war against Iraq in 2003, Lieberman was one of the most outspoken advocates, supporting President Bush's call for pre-emptive military intervention to remove Saddam Hussein from power. Even as the furor over the yet-to-be-found weapons of mass destruction and the use of bogus intelligence leading up to the war begins to chip away at Bush's record-setting popularity, Lieberman defends his support of the war. However, he has assailed Bush for failing to immediately take responsibility for the intelligence dispute. He also warns his Democratic rivals on the presidential campaign trail and in Congress that being overly critical of Bush will make the Democrats look soft on national security at a time when they need to take a stronger stand. Lieberman has been able to reinvent his political self over the course of his political career. When confronted with this as a criticism, he does not deny his positions have changed, sometimes back and forth, and says that his positions reflect changing times and priorities rather than a strategy that allows him to shift with the political winds. However it is explained, American voters have been unforgiving of politicians that seem to waver between opposing positions on an issue, preferring politicians who take a stand, even if voters disagree with their position.

The Bottom Line

Lieberman is pursuing a strategy that is geared toward primaries in big states, rather than trying to compete for attention in Iowa and New Hampshire, where he lags far behind in the polls despite his national recognition. He fancies himself to be in the Bill Clinton mould as a centrist Democrat, demonstrated by his six-year tenure as Chairman of the middle-of-the-road Democratic Leadership Council led by Bill Clinton when he was Governor of Arkansas. Clinton was the first president on record who was ultimately elected in spite of not winning the New Hampshire primary, and Lieberman hopes to be the second. In order to execute this strategy, Lieberman will need comparatively more campaign funding and would need to maintain his lead in national polls, but both of those indicators show Lieberman is losing ground. Lieberman insists that the campaign has yet to begin in an effort to keep the supporters he's already got, but his firing of several key campaign staffers signals that the campaign is in the midst of an overhaul in order to respond to lack of interest it has been able to generate thus far. Having lost the upper hand and with little hope of gaining it back (or perhaps never really having had it), Lieberman's campaign will not break into the top tier that includes Kerry, Gephardt and Dean, and will fade away following poor showings in the 'Super Tuesday' primaries on 2 March 2004.

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: Lieberman front-runner with 20%, Gephardt (15%), Kerry 13%, Sharpton and Edwards (7%), and Dean 6%.</p>
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<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\$3m (ranked 3rd out of 9)</p> <p>Second Quarter 2003: US\$5 million (estimate) (tied for 2nd out of 9)</p>
<p>Supporters</p> <p>Who the typical backers of the candidate are.</p>	<p>Lieberman has aggressively recruited 'new Democrats' whose beliefs are a mix of traditional liberal causes such as greater access to health insurance, increased spending for social programmes, and protection of workers' rights, and typically conservative causes such as tight budget controls, tough stands on foreign policy and defence, support for corporate tax breaks, and reform of social programmes such as the institution of a work requirement for welfare recipients. Lieberman's early funders are wealthy business people in Connecticut and New York and a host of the usual special interest groups in Washington, DC.</p>
<p>Domestic Agenda</p> <p>Highlights from the candidate's stated domestic policy goals (only issues that are expected to be frequently discussed during the campaign are mentioned).</p>	<p>Economy: Supports increasing worker productivity by 50% through a 20% Investment Tax Credit, making the tax credit for private sector Research & Development permanent, and exempting long-term investments in businesses worth less than US\$300 million from the capital gains tax; he would rescind some unimplemented parts of the 2001 Bush tax cut and postpone other Bush tax cuts, such as the estate tax elimination; and would end tariffs on hi-tech products and make cyberspace a 'duty-free zone'.</p> <p>Gay Rights: Opposes gay marriage but supports consideration of an extension of certain marriage benefits to same-sex couples; supported the Defence of Marriage Act that allowed each state to decide its position on the issue.</p> <p>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, although he has been criticised by minority rights groups for his support of a ballot initiative in California in 1996 that would have banned all forms of affirmative action in that state.</p> <p>Education: Supports adding more flexibility to federal education standards and greater accountability for schools' and teachers' performance.</p> <p>Health Care: Supports developing an American Center for Cure, focusing on treatments for cancer, Parkinson's, and other diseases, centralising projects currently spread out among the National Institutes of Health, the Food and Drug Administration and other agencies, and would allocate US\$150 billion over 10 years for the centre; opposed 'big spending' healthcare plans.</p> <p>Environment: Supports imposing a collective rather than individual fuel efficiency standard, allowing carmakers to produce vehicles with sub-par fuel efficiency, as long as they produced enough hyper-efficient vehicles to pick up the slack, granting consumers who bought hyper-efficient cars a tax cut of at least US\$1,000; he would allocate US\$7 billion for fuel-cell development and US\$15 billion for low-pollution coal technologies; opposes drilling for oil in Alaska or along the Florida coast.</p> <p>Homeland Security: Supports investing US\$16 billion more than the administration's proposed homeland security spending of US\$41.3 billion in fiscal 2004, with more funds for first responders and creation of a National Homeland Security Academy at West Point for domestic defence.</p>

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: Strongly supported the resolution in favour of the war, but has since been very critical of the Bush administration for a lack of post-war preparation and what he described as misleading information regarding the intelligence on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. Has criticised fellow Democratic contenders for 'not knowing a just war when they see one.'

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, and has called for Bush to commit more troops and resources to bring stability to the country more rapidly.

Pre-Emptive Strikes: Opposes pre-emptive war policies, stating that they 'provoke the world', although he is a strong supporter of more spending on defence and the proposed missile defence shield.

War on Terrorism: Supports an aggressive campaign to root out terrorists, but also supports a long-term geopolitical and ideological initiative - akin to the great campaign that won the Cold War - to combat the despotism, poverty and isolation that terrorists exploit.

Foreign Trade: Supports increasing ties with trading partners (strongly supported US trade relations with China) but supports a federal buy-American policy to protect American workers; supports an expanded manufacturing tax credit and government-sponsored access to capital for small manufacturers; and supports job re-training for displaced workers.

Campaign Strategy

The candidate's strategy for the Primary campaign.

Lieberman is fashioning himself to be the alternative to George W Bush, as opposed to the alternative to Kerry, Dean or Gephardt, the other three 'first tier' Democratic candidates. While his three peers are running more to the left of Bush and attacking all of his foreign and domestic policies, Lieberman is offering himself to be the better, Democratic version of Bush. Having been unable to gain popularity on a unique proposal or position thus far, Lieberman is counting on his high level of name recognition and his comparatively tough stance on the use of US military forces, increased defence spending, and strong support of the war on terror to make him appear 'Presidential'. Having given up on the Iowa caucuses and without spending much time in New Hampshire campaigning for the ever-important first-in-the-nation presidential primary, Lieberman is hoping to capitalise on his status as a former Vice-Presidential candidate and his more national profile in the bigger key primary states such as New York, Connecticut, Florida, South Carolina and California.

Strengths

Best attributes of the candidate.

Lieberman is an adroit politician. He is smart, personable and humorous, and the ability to connect with voters comes with great ease. He is well respected among his colleagues in both parties in the US Senate, having made himself stand out after a relatively short tenure of 12 years. Lieberman lived in the shadow of fellow Democratic Connecticut Senator Christopher Dodd until he was plucked from obscurity to be Gore's running mate in 2000. Lieberman took it in his stride and arguably made a solid Vice-Presidential candidate, receiving high marks during the campaign for his intellect and warmth, and for making Al Gore look less wooden. He is not the strongest candidate on foreign policy, but his moderate, populist views, coupled with his highly valued national profile, have kept him in first tier status.

Weaknesses

Potential pitfalls facing the candidate.

Senator Lieberman has been faulted for his willingness to compromise easily, and his moderate positions have made him appear weak and without strong convictions. The more liberal of Democratic activists - a critical constituency especially in a primary fight - have criticised Lieberman openly as a wolf in sheep's clothing, citing his self-imposed moniker as a 'moderate Republican'. His ambition has been viewed as the driving force behind his 'desire to serve' in the public realm, creating some cynicism about his candidacy. Lieberman is enjoying solid numbers in national polls, but with his support being drained away by Kerry, Dean and Edwards, his former association with Al Gore may hurt him as the aforementioned candidates make traction as 'new faces' in the Presidential race. Lieberman is Jewish, and although his religion is likely to hurt him in certain states, the impact is not the primary factor that would prevent him from gaining the Democratic nomination.

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 Joe Lieberman at each stage of the primaries.

WMRC Predictions

Iowa Caucuses 19 January 2004	Lieberman has stated publicly that he expects to do poorly in Iowa - a political contest that typically attracts more liberal, activist Democrats - and he will do just that given his more conservative positions, finishing 5th or even 6th behind Gephardt, Kerry, Dean and Edwards.
New Hampshire Primary 27 January 2004	After a poor showing in Iowa, poor showing in the fundraising race, poor polling in other key states including New Hampshire, and lagging in national polls, Democratic voters in New Hampshire will abandon Lieberman in droves. He will finish a distant 4th, going virtually unnoticed in the three-way race between Kerry, Gephardt and Dean.
Overall Primary June 2004	Poor results in the two early primaries along with fundraising troubles will force Lieberman from the race later than the other distant finishers as he holds out hope for strong to moderate showings in key states following Iowa and New Hampshire. Nonetheless, with a campaign that never caught fire, few endorsements and little money, Lieberman will withdraw well before the Democratic Convention in July 2004.

WMRC's Ongoing US Elections 2004 Analysis

United States: 8 July 2003: US Elections 2004 - Liberal Howard Dean Thrives on Novelty

United States: 17 July 2003: US Elections 2004 - Centrist Democrat Kerry Leading the Field as Veteran and Statesman

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