

Memorandum

RE: VOTUS 2008: Five Factors to Help You Decide Better

To: Obama for America Vice Presidential Search Team (Eric Holder, Caroline Kennedy); John McCain 2008 Vice Presidential Search Team (Arthur Culvahouse, Rick Davis)

CC: Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid; Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell; Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi; House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer; House Minority Leader John Boehner

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VOTUS 2008: Five Factors to Help You Decide Better

As you know, the decision about who to choose as a running mate for the Presidential ticket is the most important public decision made up until this point by both the Democratic and Republican nominees. As the campaigns transition into full-blown general election mode, the public will use the candidates' decisions regarding which person to select as a running mate to analyze each candidate's decision-making abilities. Moreover, this decision will help the public to better understand whether the candidates will make decisions for political reasons or for the good of the American people.

There are many factors to consider as you make your recommendations on who the nominees should select as their running mates. The following is a brief overview of the decision process and my recommendation for how you can approach this important decision effectively. It does not have any hidden messages and makes no judgment about which individuals to consider. This guidance is designed to assist your approach to the process by taking into account each of the factors involved and weighing these factors at the appropriate level.

Five Categories to Consider

The following are the 5 categories of factors that you will likely include in your assessment of potential running mates:

1. Suitability to be the President of the United States

There is no doubt that one of the most important factors that you will include in your assessment of each potential running mate is the suitability of the person to serve as the successor as the President of the United States. This is likely the most important factor that the majority of voters throughout the country will take into account when analyzing the nominees' choices of a vice presidential running mate. In the history of the United States, 14 Vice Presidents have become President (meaning that the Vice President has a 33.33% chance of serving as President.) More importantly, however, 9 Vice Presidents have become President without being elected, either through the natural death, assassination, or resignation of a President. This means that, statistically, the Vice President has greater than a 20% chance – one out of five – of becoming President without ever being elected to that office by the public. It is thus important, obviously, to consider whether the running mate is Presidential material – does he/she have the required political, military, economic, or governing experience that will ensure their abilities to serve in this position?

2. Suitability to be the Vice President of the United States

In addition to considering the suitability to be the President, another important quality that you will be assessing when considering candidates to be the running mate is to what extent they will be able to fulfill the important role of being the Vice President of the United States. This includes their ability to achieve political and policy goals of the administration by working with congressional lawmakers, as well as serving as a de facto ambassador of the United States to all other nations throughout the world. Of course, it also includes the requirement for the Vice President to cast any tie-breaking votes in the United States Senate in his/her official duty as President of the Senate.

3. Chemistry with the Presidential Nominee

If your candidate wins the general election, the choice of who will serve as the Vice President of the United States will have to work closely with the President for a minimum of four years, and possibly for eight. The Vice President has to be prepared to support the agenda of the President, both on issues they agree with, as well as issues they disagree with. In addition, prior to winning the election, the candidate and his running mate will also need to work closely together on overall campaign strategy and on all of the major and minor decisions that need to be made in the course of the long upcoming general election. Because of these reasons, the chemistry and general fit of the running mate with the candidate is one of the most important factors to consider.

4. Electability and Assistance with Electoral College Strategy

Another important factor that you will certainly consider in your assessment of potential Vice Presidential running mates will be the level to which they will be able to assist your campaign with winning the election. Some running mate options may assist you with victory in one particular state or one particular region of the country, and this may add a significant amount of weight to that candidate in your assessment. This

factor is quite often cited as the number one factor considered by campaigns, and while it is arguably important, you need to determine how important you are going to take this factor into account.

5. Grooming to be the Next President of the United States

Historically, the position of Vice President was considered to be a figurehead position with very little influence in the administration as well as very little likelihood for moving on to become a candidate for President. In the 19th Century, for example, only one Vice President out of 21 (Martin Van Buren) was elected as President (with four others who became President upon the death of the President, none of whom was elected President in a subsequent election). In fact, Theodore Roosevelt was pushed very hard to be the Vice President to become the running mate for William McKinley in 1900, despite not wanting to take the position. He referred to the position of Vice President as “a stepping stone to ... oblivion,” because of the fact that Vice Presidents virtually never became Presidents after their terms. Of course, when McKinley was assassinated in 1901, Roosevelt became President and then was elected to two terms in his own right – the first person in American history who inherited the Presidency and went on to win subsequent Presidential elections.

The vast majority of Vice Presidents in the *recent history* of the United States, however, have ended up either running for election as President or becoming the President because of one or another reason. That being the case, it is therefore important to consider if the person chosen will be groomed to become the next President or not. Particularly since Dwight D. Eisenhower, when Presidential candidates largely took over the process of selecting a running mate from the national political parties, Vice Presidents have been chosen because they would make good candidates for the Presidency themselves. Not including Spiro Agnew, who resigned during his term as Vice President, eight out of the ten Vice Presidents since 1953 have been their party’s nominee for President in subsequent terms. (The two who did not run for President after their terms as Vice President included Nelson Rockefeller, who had previously run for President three times in 1960, 1964, and 1968; and, Dick Cheney.)

Weighting the Factors and Approaching the Decision

The first step in approaching this decision is to agree on what factors are important to each nominee and determine exactly how important each factor is to the decision. All of the potential running mates bring their own strengths and weaknesses to the table, and it can seem like comparing apples and oranges. My suggestion to you is that you approach the decision by assigning a numerical value to each category of your decision, as well as to each of the candidates you are considering for the position. This will help you compare these different strengths and weaknesses in a way you may not have thought possible. For example, you could assign a percentage to each of the five categories of factors based on the importance of that category to your decision. The following can be seen as a sample breakdown (though not necessarily how I would choose to assign the values) of how you may choose to assign percentages to each category:

Category	% Importance
Suitability to be President	30%
Suitability to be Vice President	15%
Chemistry with Presidential Nominee	15%
Electability	25%
Grooming to be Next President	15%

You would then assess each possible running mate and assign a value to how well each one fits what you envision as being a perfect fit for each of the five categories of factors. You can choose how to rank them all, but ranking them on a scale of 0 – 5 may be a good place to start, with a score of zero meaning that the person doesn't meet your needs in a particular category and a score of five meaning that the person meets your needs completely in that category. You can then simply multiply the percentage you have assigned to a category by the value you have assigned to each person in that category and arrive at a total number of points. If you prefer round numbers, divide each total by 5 (or whatever the high end of the points you assign to each candidate) and you will get a number that provides you with a how close to 100% of your needs each candidate gets. An example of how you would do this may be the following:

Category	% Importance	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Suitability to be President	30%	5	4	3
Suitability to be Vice President	15%	5	4	4
Chemistry with Presidential Nominee	15%	2	5	4
Electability	25%	2	5	5
Grooming to be Next President	15%	4	5	4
Total Points		415	455	395
Total Out of 100%		83%	91%	79%

Conclusion

It cannot be overstated how important the decision of who the Vice Presidential running mates will be is to illustrate the decision-making capabilities of each major party nominee. This will be the first major decision that the American public will view to help them understand what type of President each candidate would be, and how you weight each of the characteristics that make a great running mate will determine how good or bad of a decision each candidate will make. Many disastrous running mate decisions have been made in the past; and many extraordinary running mate decisions have been made. Approaching this decision in a structured way will help ensure that the final choice of running mates in 2008 will fall into the latter category.