

BARACK OBAMA: RUNNING FOR THE PRESIDENCY

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LECTURE OUTLINE



- IN PREPARATION: LOCAL AND STATE POLITICS
- JETTISONED INTO THE NATIONAL ARENA: THE 2004 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION KEYNOTE SPEECH & THE U.S. SENATE
- DEFINING DEMOCRATIC PARTY CENTRISM
- OVERCOMING THE CLINTON JUGGERNAUT
- A CENTRIST PRESIDENTIAL TICKET: OBAMA/BIDEN IN 2008

IN PREPARATION: LOCAL AND STATE POLITICS



ILLINOIS STATE CAPITOL IN SPRINGFIELD

- Elected to the Illinois state senate and served from 1997 through 2004. Introduced an ill-fated bill as an amendment to the Illinois constitution to guarantee health coverage for all state residents.
- Lost in a Democratic Party primary in District 1 in Chicago to unseat incumbent U. S. Representative Bobby Rush.

JETTISONED INTO THE NATIONAL POLITICAL ARENA



- While still in the Illinois state senate, the 2004 Democratic Party presidential nominee, John Kerry, asked Obama deliver the convention's keynote address.
- In that speech Obama declared that "there's not a black America and white America and Latin America and Asian America; there's the United States of America" He added that there were no red states or blue states, but the United States..."we are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America."
- After Peter Fitzgerald retired from his seat from Illinois in U. S. Senate, Obama, after he defeated Republican Alan Keyes, won the election and served from 2005 to 2008. In the Senate he belonged to the Committees on Foreign Affairs, Veterans Affairs and Environment and Public Works.

DEFINING DEMOCRATIC PARTY CENTRISM

- “I think Democrats are wrong to run away from a debate about values, as wrong as those conservatives who see values only as a wedge to pry loose working-class voters from the Democratic base.”
- “I think we (liberals) make a mistake when we fail to acknowledge the power of faith in the lives of the American people, and so avoid joining a serious debate about how to reconcile faith with a modern pluralistic democracy.”
- “For the African American community, that path means embracing the burdens of our past without becoming victims of our past. It means continuing to insist on a full measure of justice in every aspect of American life. But it also means binding our particular grievances, for better health care and better schools, to the larger aspirations of all Americans—the white woman struggling to break the glass ceiling, the white man’s who’s been laid off, the immigrant trying to feed his family.”

DEFINING DEMOCRATIC PARTY CENTRISM (CONTINUED)



- “I stand before you as someone who is not opposed to war in all circumstances...A dumb war. A rash war. A war not based on reason but on passion, not on principle but on politics.” Obama acknowledged that Saddam Hussein was a brutal despot, he did “pose a direct threat to the United States...”
- “Let’s finish the fight with bin Laden and Al Qaeda through effective, coordinated intelligence, and a shutting down of the financial networks that support terrorism.”
- “Let’s fight to make sure our so-called allies in the Middle East, the Saudis and Egyptians stop oppressing their own people, and suppressing dissent and tolerating corruption and inequality, and mismanaging their economies so that their youth grow up without education, without prospects, without hope, (and become) the ready recruits of terrorist cells.”

OVERCOMING THE CLINTON JUGGERNAUT



- Depending on the state, the Obama coalition mainly consisted of African Americans, college-educated whites, and young voters; while the Clinton coalition principally consisted of Latinos, women, and non-college-educated whites.
- Clinton had early wins in Nevada and New Hampshire, but Obama won 55% of the vote in South Carolina and did better than Clinton in caucus contests.
- The final delegate tally was Obama 2230 and Clinton 1897.

A CENTRIST DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL TICKET IN 2008



- The Obama/Biden ticket competed with the GOP's John McCain/Sarah Palin ticket.
- The “Economic Crash” of 2008 intervened during the campaign and called for a vigorous and interventional federal response that Obama fulsomely embraced.
- The Obama/Biden ticket in 2008 altered the electoral map in such states as North Carolina where McCain/Palin poured paltry resources: Obama 2,142,651 (49.7%); McCain 2,128,474 (49.4%) whereas in 2004 Kerry drew 43.6% and Bush tallied 56.0%. Obama/Biden also won Virginia, and Florida.
- The election returns were: Obama/Biden were 69,498,516 popular votes (52.9%) and 365 electoral votes; McCain/Palin drew 59,948,323 popular votes and 173 electoral votes.
- Obama/Biden won 95% of the black vote to McCain/Palin's 4%; Obama/Biden won 2 to 1 among Hispanics over McCain/Palin; Obama/Biden beat McCain/Palin won among women 56% to 43%.