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THE NAACP 2008 PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE CIVIL RIGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Friends;

Beginning in late August, 2007, the NAACP Washington Bureau sent questionnaires to candidates for President of the United States from both parties. It was made clear at the time that the responses received would be reproduced and distributed to the NAACP members and communities so that we could make informed decisions when going to the polls.

The questionnaire contained questions on issues of crucial importance to the NAACP and the communities we serve. The questions, and the topics that were included in the questionnaire, all pertain to the NAACP public policy priorities as adopted by the delegates at our annual National Convention and confirmed by the NAACP National Board of Directors. In each case, we asked the candidates to limit their responses to 200 words or less.

Attached are the responses to the questionnaire, printed verbatim. In no instance did NAACP staff change, alter or attempt to editorialize any responses.

It should be noted that despite repeated calls and requests from the NAACP, Senator McCain's campaign has steadfastly contended that he has chosen not to respond to candidate questionnaires. Therefore we do not have responses from Senator McCain to our questions.

Should you have any questions or comments on the Presidential Candidate questionnaire or on the NAACP position on any of the issues contained within, please feel free to contact the NAACP Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940. We hope that you find this a useful, effective and thoughtful tool.

Sincerely,

Hilary O. Shelton
Director
NAACP Washington Bureau

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NAACP CIVIL RIGHTS QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2008

SECTION I: CIVIL RIGHTS

CR1: AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

- If elected president, what specific actions will you take regarding equal opportunity programs?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

I support affirmative action. When there is strong evidence of prolonged and systemic discrimination by organizations, affirmative action may be the only meaningful remedy available. Affirmative action programs, when properly structured, can open up opportunities otherwise closed to qualified minorities without having an adverse impact on the opportunities for whites. Given the dearth of black and Latino Ph.D. candidates in mathematics and the sciences, for example, a scholarship program for minorities interested in getting advanced degrees in these fields won't keep white students out of such programs, but can broaden the pool of talent that we need to prosper in the new economy. We shouldn't ignore that race continues to matter: To suggest that our racial attitudes play no part in the socio-economic disparities that we often observe turns a blind eye to both our history and our experience – and relieves us of the responsibility to make things right.

The Bush administration has made challenging affirmative action and scholarship programs one of the core missions of the Department of Justice. As president, I will rid the Department of ideologues and political cronies, and for the first time in eight years, the Civil Rights Division will actually be staffed with civil rights lawyers who prosecute civil rights violations, and employment discrimination, and hate crimes. And while I support affirmative action for minorities, I also support efforts to increase opportunities for qualified students from low-income backgrounds to attend colleges and universities – regardless of their race.

**CR2: FEDERAL COMMISSION ON THE EFFECTS OF THE INHUMANITY OF
SLAVERY ON AMERICANS OF AFRICAN DESCENT**

- If elected President, what, if anything, would you do to initiate discussions about race and America's past history of slavery among all Americans, not just people of African ancestry?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>The legacy and stain of slavery are immeasurable; nothing, including reparations, can fully compensate. And though the country has made tremendous progress, we still have so much more to do.</p> <p>I have a lot of respect for Congressman John Conyers and I'm glad the NAACP gave him its highest honor this year. While I know where his heart is at, I fear that reparations would be an excuse for some to say "we've paid our debt" and to avoid the much harder work of enforcing our anti-discrimination laws in employment and housing; the much harder work of making sure that our schools are not separate and unequal; the much harder work of providing job training programs and rehabilitating young men coming out of prison every year; and the much harder work of lifting 37 million Americans of all races out of poverty.</p> <p>These challenges will not go away with reparations. So while I applaud and agree with the underlying sentiment of recognizing the continued legacy of slavery, I would prefer to focus on the issues that will directly address these problems – and building a consensus to do just that.</p>
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CR3: DISCRIMINATION IN "CHARITABLE CHOICE" PROPOSALS

- If elected President, would you pursue initiatives that allow federal dollars to be used to support programs in which individuals are discriminated against based on their religion?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I support government efforts to partner with faith-based organizations. I have said repeatedly that these organizations can be important partners in delivering social services, whether it's helping with prisoner re-entry programs or providing job training skills. However, my administration will not pursue initiatives that permit taxpayer dollars to be used to support programs that practice discrimination in hiring.</p>
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NAACP Civil Rights Presidential Candidate Questionnaire
2008

CR4: ELECTION REFORM

- If elected President, which initiatives would you pursue to ensure that every eligible American is allowed to cast a free and unfettered vote, and to be assured that their vote was counted?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>More than 40 years after the passage of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), there are still numerous obstacles to ensuring that every citizen can vote. As a community organizer, I successfully registered 150,000 new black voters. As a civil rights lawyer, I worked on voting rights cases. In the U.S. Senate, I helped lead the fight in the Senate to reauthorize the VRA and I led the opposition to photo identification requirements for voting. For me, protecting the right to vote has not just been a cause of this campaign; it has been a cause of my career.</p> <p>As president, I will sign into law my Deceptive Practices and Voter Intimidation Prevention Act, a bill that cracks down on insidious misinformation campaigns designed to keep voters – usually racial minorities, the poor, the elderly, and the disabled – from exercising their right to vote.</p> <p>We must also do everything we can to regain the trust and confidence in our electoral system that has been lost in recent years, and voter-verification should be a top priority in that effort. I think we should require the use of accessible paper trail systems at every polling place that uses electronic voting machines. I also believe that a paper trail requirement will be most effective if we combine it with a system of reasonable manual audits. I am cosponsor of legislation in the Senate that would implement these systems within the next few years.</p>
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NAACP Civil Rights Presidential Candidate Questionnaire
2008

CR5: VOTER REENFRANCHISEMENT OF EX-FELONY OFFENDERS

- If elected President what, if anything, would you do to help restore the voting rights of ex-felony offenders?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I support restoration of voting rights for ex-offenders. I am a cosponsor of the Count Every Vote Act, and would sign that legislation into law as president.</p>
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CR6: CONGRESSIONAL VOTING RIGHTS FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

- If elected President, what would you do to promote the rights of the citizens of the District of Columbia?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I am an original cosponsor of the Senate bill that will provide the District of Columbia with voting representation in the House of Representatives. I consider passage of this bill to be an important step toward justice. In our great democracy, it's a shame that residents of the District who pay taxes, fight in wars, and enjoy the same rights as every other American have no voting representation in our nation's capital. I will continue to champion this issue as president.</p>
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CR7: FAIR AND IMPARTIAL FEDERAL JUDGESHIPS

- If elected President, what criteria would you use in determining who to nominate for positions in the federal judiciary?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

As a Senator, I have a track record of opposing nominees on the basis of their record on civil rights issues – a record born out of my own experiences as a civil rights lawyer and constitutional law professor. I opposed the confirmation of Chief Justice John Roberts and Justice Samuel Alito to the Supreme Court in large part because of their records on civil rights and civil liberties. More recently, I led the opposition in the Senate to the nomination of Judge Leslie Southwick to the United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit.

As president, I will select federal judges who are highly-qualified and who have a clear record of public service. And I will select men and women who I think bring a certain empathy to the task of judging – the ability to see themselves in other people’s lives. This is not an insignificant consideration. When I opposed the Roberts and Alito nominations, I gave a speech on the Senate floor about those 5% of cases that often turn on what’s in a judge’s heart. Some may have scoffed at that. But when you have the Supreme Court of the United States doing what we saw last term – equating Jim Crow segregation of schools with efforts to voluntarily diversify K- 12 education – it shows you why you should care about what’s in a judge’s heart. Because what’s in their heart tells you a lot about their judgment.

Chief Justice Roberts likened being a judge to an umpire in his confirmation hearings. But law is not sport; and the art of judging is not the art of calling balls and strikes. I will appoint judges who understand that being a judge is also about empathy and sound judgment – that’s why we call them judges. And that’s what we need to do to make sure our judiciary protects and honors civil rights and civil liberties.

CR8: IMMIGRATION REFORM

- If elected President, what basic elements would you include in any proposal to reform our Nations immigration laws?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

I am committed to fighting for comprehensive immigration reform during my first term as president. As president, I will put comprehensive immigration reform back on the nation's agenda, and I will not rest until it is passed once and for all. We are a nation of laws and a nation of immigrants. We need comprehensive immigration reform that creates a system that is fair, consistent, compassionate, and emphasizes both maintaining the rule of law and the security of our borders while working to keep families together and putting the undocumented on an earned path to citizenship.

In the most recent immigration debate on the U.S. Senate floor, I fought to improve and pass amendments to put greater emphasis on keeping immigrant families together and to revisit a controversial new points system that never received a proper public hearing. On security, comprehensive reform has to mean gaining operational control of our borders by using better technology, improving infrastructure, and making smart choices about where we deploy resources on the Southern and Northern borders. These actions can strengthen our security while discouraging people from taking the risk of crossing the border and a dangerous desert illegally. And at the workplace, we need a simple, but mandatory electronic system that enables employers to verify the legal status of the people they hire. We also need to bring the 12 million undocumented immigrants out of the shadows. We need to be realistic about the fact that they are here, we can't deport them, and they have become an integral part of our society. We need to give this population a chance to pay a fine, to have provisional status in the country, and to get into the back of the line for citizenship.

SECTION II: CRIMINAL JUSTICE

CJ1: RACIAL PROFILING

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to address the problem of racial profiling by law enforcement officials?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>This year, the Department of Justice released a survey that found that blacks and Hispanics are more than twice as likely as whites to be searched, arrested, or threatened or subdued with force when stopped by police. Of those who had force used against them, 83 percent felt that the force was excessive. As a State Senator, I introduced and passed a law requiring the Illinois Department of Transportation to record the race, age, and gender of all drivers stopped for traffic violations so that bias could be detected and addressed. As a United States Senator, I cosponsored federal legislation to ban racial profiling and require federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to take steps to eliminate the practice. As president, I will continue my decades-long fight against racial profiling, and sign legislation that will ban the practice of racial profiling by federal law enforcement agencies and provide federal funding to state and local police departments if they adopt policies to prohibit the practice.</p>
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NAACP Civil Rights Presidential Candidate Questionnaire
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CJ2: POLICE ABUSE, BRUTALITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- If elected President, what, if anything would you do to address the issue of police misconduct?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I will direct my Attorney General to have the Justice Department work closely with state and local law enforcement to ensure the effective implementation of standards for use of force.</p>
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CJ3: EX-OFFENDER RE-ENTRY INTO OUR COMMUNITIES

- If elected President what, if anything, would you do to help reintegrate former felons into society?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>America's urban communities are facing an incarceration and post-incarceration crisis. Up to two-thirds of the 650,000 prisoners released every year are rearrested within three years. Nearly 2 million children have a parent in a correctional facility. It is simply unacceptable to keep ignoring this crisis in American families and communities. In the U.S. Senate, I cosponsored the Second Chance Act and have worked to provide job training, substance abuse and mental health counseling, and employment opportunities to ex-offenders. In addition to signing these important programs into law, I will create a prison-to-work incentive program, modeled on the Welfare-to-Work Partnership, to create ties with employers, third-party agencies that provide training and support services to ex-offenders, and to improve ex-offender employment and job retention rates. I will also reduce bureaucratic barriers at state correctional systems that prevent former inmates from finding and maintaining employment. As a state senator, I fought for and passed legislation to provide ex-offenders with expanded mental health counseling and remove barriers that prevent non-violent offenders from finding and maintaining employment.</p>
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CJ4: MANDATORY MINIMUM SENTENCES

- If elected President, would you work to increase or decrease the number of offenses which trigger a mandatory minimum sentence?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>There are at least 171 mandatory minimum provisions in federal criminal statutes. According to the United States Sentencing Commission, in FY 2006, 33,636 counts of conviction carried a mandatory minimum term of imprisonment, affecting 20,737 offenders. Most of these counts of conviction – 82.9 percent – were for drug offenses. Black and Hispanic offenders make up the overwhelming majority of individuals convicted under a mandatory minimum sentence. A RAND study found that mandatory minimum sentences are less effective than discretionary sentencing and drug treatment in reducing drug-related crime, and every leading expert body in criminal justice has opposed the use of mandatory minimum sentences, including the Sentencing Commission, the Judicial Conference, the American Bar Association, and leading criminal justice scholars. Chief Justice Rehnquist observed that “one of the best arguments against any more mandatory minimums, and perhaps against some of those that we already have, is that they frustrate the careful calibration of sentences.” Justice Kennedy stated that he “can accept neither the necessity nor the wisdom of federal mandatory minimum sentences.” Justice Breyer, one of the architects of the Sentencing Guidelines, noted that “[m]andatory minimum statutes are fundamentally inconsistent with Congress’ simultaneous effort to create a fair, honest, and rational sentencing system through the use of Sentencing Guidelines.” Politicians of both parties have also come out against mandatory minimums. I will immediately review these sentences to see where we can be smarter on crime and reduce the ineffective warehousing of non-violent drug offenders.</p>
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CJ5: GUN SAFETY LEGISLATION

- If elected President, what, if anything, would you do to stem gun violence in our country?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

Every year since coming into office, President Bush has proposed to either eliminate the Community Oriented Policing Services program or to dramatically slash its funding between 80 percent and 90 percent. This is in spite of the fact that violent crime has been on the rise in recent years. As president, my first act on this issue will be the restoration of full funding for COPS.

I also support reasonable, common-sense measures to limit the occurrence of gun violence that has taken the lives of too many Americans, and that has particularly ravaged black communities. These measures include closing the gun-show loophole and requiring mandatory background checks on purchasers at gun shows. That loophole has been exploited by everyone from foreign terrorists to the Columbine High School shooters. Closing it would not impair the rights of hunters and other lawful gun owners. I also want to make sure the background check system works well so that mentally deranged people, criminals and others who should not have firearms are prevented from purchasing them. I want to make guns in this country child proof. This is, again, a common-sense solution: guns and kids don't mix. And I would make the expired federal Assault Weapons Ban permanent. These weapons, such as AK-47s, belong on foreign battlefields and not on our streets. These are also not weapons that are used by hunters, sportsmen, and sportswomen.

CJ6: THE DEATH PENALTY

- If elected President, how would you work to ensure that as long as we have a death penalty that, at the very least, the color of one's skin or a person's financial status are not determining factors when deciding who should receive the death penalty?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I believe there are a few crimes so heinous that they warrant the ultimate penalty. But the question is whether that sentence can be implemented in a fair and just way.</p> <p>As a member of the Illinois state senate, I led efforts to reform a broken death penalty system that sent 13 innocent people to death row because it was filled with error, questionable police tactics, racial bias, and shoddy legal work. I drafted and passed a law requiring videotaping of interrogations and confessions in capital cases to ensure that prosecutions are fair. As president, Obama I will encourage the states to adopt similar reforms.</p> <p>I also support efforts to ensure that capital defendants receive quality counsel. A big factor in the faulty administration of the death penalty has been the unevenness in the quality of indigent defense counsel. That's why I support loan-forgiveness and similar programs that will encourage the nation's top law students to become public defenders.</p> <p>Finally, I will direct my Justice Department to undertake a comprehensive study of the administration of the federal death penalty and to make recommendations on how to address the problems that have been identified with the system, including racial bias.</p>
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CJ7: REDUCING RECIDIVISM THROUGH IN-PRISON EDUCATION AND JOB TRAINING PROGRAMS

- If elected President, what actions would you take to help reduce recidivism among prisoners?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>In addition to providing more opportunities for rehabilitation programs like substance abuse treatment and education during incarceration, I believe we need to focus on helping ex-offenders successfully transition into society after incarceration. That is why I have been a strong advocate of re-entry programs for prisoners, as described above. Additionally, many faith-based organizations and nonprofits have successfully worked to provide needed programs to prisoners, and I will work with those groups to reduce our high recidivism rate as president.</p>
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CJ8: THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND THE DISPARATE TREATMENT OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to address the numerous disparities that exist in the current juvenile justice system, including disproportionate minority arrest and confinement and the high number of Black youth who are tried as adults?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I believe that the travesty of justice we saw in Jena exposed glaring inequities in our justice system that were around long before that schoolyard fight broke out. And as president, I'll take steps to ensure that our criminal justice system works for everyone.</p> <p>Part of what we saw in Jena was a rush to prosecute and try young men as adults. As president, my Justice Department will work with local law enforcement to strengthen identify and implement strategies that seek to prevent youth crime before it occurs. I will build on my efforts in the Senate to end racial profiling. And I will work to improve the quality of our nation's public defenders by creating loan-forgiveness programs for law students who enter this field. Additionally, I will work to replicate the successful efforts of drug courts across the country by signing a law that would authorize federal magistrates to preside over drug courts and federal probation officers to oversee the offenders' compliance with drug treatment programs. I will ensure that our federal courts and probation offices have adequate resources to deal with this new program. Coupled with the elimination of sentencing disparities and mandatory minimum reform, this will help many of our youth avoid a life of crime.</p>
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SECTION III: ECONOMIC JUSTICE

EJ1: THE FEDERAL BUDGET

- If elected President, what would your priorities be when developing a federal budget?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>Today, our tax and budget system have become increasingly complex and unfair. My top priority for reform is bringing back fairness and responsibility to government tax and budget policy. I will reverse the policies of this Administration which favor the wealthy and well-connected over low and middle-income American families.</p> <p>I will increase federal funding for programs that help working families, including providing universal health care, dramatically improving education opportunities from birth to college, providing a "Marking Work Pay" tax credit to 150 million working Americans, fully funding the CDBG program and other programs that increase the availability of affordable housing, increasing funding for transitional jobs and career pathways programs, and expanding eligibility and increasing the EITC to benefit 12 million Americans.</p>
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EJ2: PREDATORY LENDING

- If elected President, what would you do to address the problems of predatory lending?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I have proposed a robust agenda to cut down on predatory lending, and ensure that communities have access to affordable lending products. I introduced the STOP FRAUD Act, nearly two years ago to address the subprime problem and crack down on fraud, and in wake of reports that African Americans were being unfairly steered to high-risk subprime loans, I called on the Federal Trade Commission to immediately investigate these disturbing reports.</p> <p>I have also called to put an end to the most unscrupulous payday lending and credit card practices, which disproportionately affect urban minorities. I will extend the 36 percent interest cap on payday loans that applies to U.S. service members to all Americans. I will sign into law a Credit Card Bill of Rights that bans the most egregious credit card activities. And I will work with my Secretary of Treasury and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation to encourage banks, credit unions and CDFIs to provide affordable short-term and small dollar loans – and to drive the sharks out of business. Finally, I will fight to ensure that more Americans are empowered in the fight against predatory lending by supporting initiatives to improve financial literacy and financial planning.</p>
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EJ3: PUBLIC FINANCING OF HOUSE AND SENATE CAMPAIGNS

- If elected President, what would you do to promote public financing of campaigns?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I support public financing of campaigns combined with free television and radio time as a way to reduce the influence of moneyed special interests. I introduced public financing legislation in the Illinois State Senate, and am the only 2008 candidate to have sponsored Senator Russ Feingold's (D-WI) bill to reform the presidential public financing system. In February 2007, I proposed a novel way to preserve the strength of the public financing system in the 2008 election. My plan requires both major party candidates to agree on a fundraising truce, return excess money from donors, and stay within the public financing system for the general election. The proposal followed announcements by some presidential candidates that they would forgo public financing so they could raise unlimited funds in the general election. The Federal Election Commission ruled my proposal legal, and Senator John McCain (R-AZ) has already pledged to accept this fundraising pledge.</p>
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SECTION IV: EDUCATION

ED1: EDUCATIONAL EQUITY

- If elected President, what would you do to ensure that all American children have equal access to a high quality public education?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

I've introduced a comprehensive plan to give every American child the chance to receive the best education America has to offer.

The **first** part of my plan focuses on providing quality, affordable early childhood education to every American child. I will launch a Children's First Agenda that provides care, learning and support to families with children ages zero to five. I will create Early Learning Grants to help states create a system of high-quality early care and education for all young children and their families, so that children are prepared and ready to succeed before they enter kindergarten. I will increase Head Start funding and quadruple Early Start to include a quarter of a million at-risk children.

The **second** part of my education plan is to recruit, support, and reward teachers and principals to ensure that every school in America is filled with outstanding educators. I will create a new Service Scholarship program to recruit top talent into the profession, and place these teachers in our highest-need classrooms.

The **third** part of my plan is to work with our nation's governors and educators to create and use assessments that can improve achievement in school districts all across America by including the kinds of research, scientific investigation, and problem-solving that our children will need to compete in a 21st century knowledge economy.

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ED2: FEDERAL FUNDING FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION

- If elected President, please describe some of the initiatives your Administration would undertake to increase funding for public education.

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I share the NAACP's concerns about No Child Left Behind (NCLB). I believe that the overall goal of the NCLB is the right one – ensuring that all children can meet high standards – but the law has significant flaws that need to be addressed, including the lack of necessary resources to fully implement the plan. We have simply failed to provide high-quality teachers in every classroom and failed to support and pay for those teachers. That's why I have introduced will increase federal public education spending by about \$18 billion per year to ensure that all of America's children – no matter where they are located – have meaningful access to a high-quality public education.</p>
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NAACP Civil Rights Presidential Candidate Questionnaire
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ED3: SCHOOL VOUCHERS

- If elected President, what if any steps would you take regarding publicly funded vouchers to allow students to attend private school?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>We need to invest in our public schools and strengthen them, not drain their fiscal support. And for this reason I do not support vouchers. In the end, vouchers would reduce the options available to children in need. I fear these children would truly be left behind in a private market system.</p>
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ED4: MAKING COLLEGE MORE AFFORDABLE

- If elected President, please describe initiatives that you would promote to make college more affordable.

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>The very first bill I introduced in the United States Senate sought to increase the maximum Pell Grant award to \$5,100. As part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act that was signed into law in September, we moved one step closer toward reaching that goal by increasing the current maximum to \$4,310 in 2007 and to \$5,400 by 2012. The Act also mandates that interest rates on subsidized student loans are cut in half over four years. I sat on the Conference Committee that won these improvements in the bill.</p> <p>But there is more we can do. That is why, as president, I will create a new American Opportunity Tax Credit to help American families who are struggling to send their children to college. This fully refundable \$4,000 tax credit will be provided to students before they have to pay their tuition bills. I will also simplify the financial aid application process by eliminating the current student aid form altogether.</p> <p>I will also seek to free up money for student aid by reforming the federal student loan program. Currently, there are two basic federal loan programs. The Direct Loan system allows students to borrow from the government through their schools. The Federal Family Education Loan Program (FFEL) instead gives private banks federal subsidies to make government-backed student loans. FFEL guaranteed loans cost about \$6 more per \$100 loan than direct loans. As president, I will eliminate wasteful subsidies for banks under FFEL and mandate that all federal student loans be provided through the direct loan program. By switching to the direct lending system, we can save taxpayers billions of dollars a year – money that can and should be directed to making college more affordable for Americans.</p>
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SECTION 5: HEALTH CARE

HE1: UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to ensure that all Americans have access to comprehensive, high quality and affordable quality health care?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I will sign a universal health bill into law by the end of my first term in office. My plan will ensure that all Americans have health care coverage through their employers, private health plans, the federal government, or the states. My plan builds on and improves our current insurance system, which most Americans continue to rely upon, and creates a new public health plan for those currently without coverage. Under my plan, Americans will be able to choose to maintain their current coverage if they choose to. For those without health insurance I will establish a new public insurance program, and provide subsidies to afford care for those who need them. My plan includes a mandate that all children have health care coverage and I will expand eligibility for the Medicaid and SCHIP programs to help ensure we cover all kids. My plan requires all employers to contribute towards health coverage for their employees or towards the cost of the public plan.</p> <p>Under my plan a typical family will save up to \$2,500 each year. We will realize tremendous savings within the health care system from improving efficiency and quality and reducing wasted expenditures system-wide. Specifically, these savings will result from investments in health information technology, improvements in prevention and management of chronic conditions, increased insurance industry competition and reduced industry overhead, the provision of federal reinsurance for catastrophic coverage, and reduced spending on uncompensated care.</p>
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HE2: SOCIAL SECURITY

- Do you have a specific plan to reform the current Social Security system? If so, what are the major provisions?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

As someone who was largely raised by my grandparents, I recognize that Social Security is indispensable to workers and seniors, and it is probably the most important and most successful programs that our country has ever created. I remain committed to making sure Social Security is solvent and viable for the American people, now and in the future.

The underlying Social Security system remains strong, but the projected long-term cash flow of the program needs to be addressed. This is a real but manageable problem. But the longer we wait to solve the problem, the bigger it grows.

I will be honest with the American people about the long-term solvency of Social Security and the ways we can fix the problem. I believe that benefits should not be cut and the retirement age should not be raised. I also believe that privatization of Social Security, which I have long opposed, is not a valid option for us to consider because it tears the fabric of Social Security – the idea of mutual responsibility – by subjecting a secure retirement to the whims of the market, and that is not an acceptable way to strengthen this program. I believe that the first place to look for ways to strengthen Social Security is the payroll tax system. Currently, the Social Security payroll tax applies to only the first \$97,500 a worker makes. I support increasing the maximum amount of earnings covered by Social Security and I will work with Congress and the American people to choose a payroll tax reform package that will keep Social Security completely solvent for at least the next half century.

HE3: MEDICARE & MEDICAID

- Do you have specific plans to reauthorize or reform the current Medicare, Medicaid or S-CHIP programs? If so, what are the major provisions?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I have long supported efforts to expand the Medicaid and SCHIP programs, and reform these programs to ensure that beneficiaries receive high-quality care. In the Illinois State Senate, I expanded Illinois' version of SCHIP to cover 150,000 children and parents. I have continually opposed President Bush's efforts to undermine these programs.</p> <p>My universal health care reform plan will expand eligibility for Medicaid and SCHIP, and my health care quality initiatives will place a greater emphasis on prevention, chronic disease management and other measures that have been proven to improve patient health outcomes.</p>
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HE4: HEALTH CARE DISPARITIES

- If elected President, what if anything would you do to reduce or eliminate the disparities that currently exist in the health care problems that affect racial and ethnic minorities in the United States?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>Tackling minority health disparities is a top priority for me. My universal health care plan expands coverage to all Americans, addressing a major cause of health disparities for minorities: health insurance coverage. My plan promotes research into combating health care disparities, conducts educational and health outreach to minorities, increases the diversity of healthcare professionals, and improves the delivery of health care to minorities. Finally, my plan also requires health providers to inform the public about disparities and take steps to reduce those disparities. In the U.S. Senate, I helped write the Kennedy-Cochran-Obama <i>Minority Health Improvement and Health Disparity Elimination Act</i>. This bill puts new emphasis on disparity research by directing the Department of Health and Human Services to collect and report health care data by race and ethnicity, as well as geographic and socioeconomic status and level of health literacy.</p>
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SECTION VI: HOUSING

HO1: HOMELESSNESS IN AMERICA

- If elected President, what steps would you take to eliminate homelessness in the United States?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I will implement a multi-prong strategy to address homelessness in the United States, building off of my record in the Senate to tackle homelessness with our nation's veteran population. First, I will work to increase the availability of affordable housing in the U.S. by creating an Affordable Housing Trust Fund, reversing the Bush cuts to the CDBG program and ensuring that public housing operates by a one-by-one replacement rule. Second, I will work to engage more chronically unemployed Americans into the workforce by investing \$1 billion over 5 years into transitional jobs and career pathways programs. Third, I will increase and expand eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) benefits so that more working Americans, including childless working Americans, have access to more economic supports. Fourth, I will also expand resources for ex-offender job training and support services, as well as substance abuse programs to help more disengaged Americans rebuild their lives.</p>
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HO2: DECENT AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- If you are elected President what areas, if any, would your administration focus on in the housing field?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>Throughout my career as a community organizer, civil rights lawyer, and elected advocate, I have worked to increase the availability of safe affordable housing. As President, I will fully fund the Community Development Block Grant program and create an Affordable Housing Trust Fund to build thousands of new affordable housing units each year. I will also making buying a home more affordable by creating a new mortgage interest tax credit, which will predominantly benefit families making under \$50,000 per year.</p>
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SECTION VII: INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

IA1: DARFUR, SUDAN

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to end the genocide in Darfur Sudan?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

The U.S. needs urgently to change the calculus in Khartoum and stop the genocide. Therefore, the Administration should immediately implement the oil sanctions it threatened last year and still failed to impose last May. I worked with Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) on the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, a version of which was signed into law, to impose targeted sanctions on the leading perpetrators of the genocide.

With our allies and our partners in Africa, we need to take immediate steps – economic and military – to let Khartoum know we will not tolerate continued genocide. These steps should include more effective sanctions by the U.S., the EU and the UNSC. We also need to establish a no-fly zone to protect civilians and increase pressure on Khartoum to halt the killing and consent to the robust international force.

In addition to taking immediate steps to protect civilians and end the genocide, the U.S. should step up its diplomatic efforts to negotiate a lasting peace among the Darfur rebel groups and the Sudanese Government.

IA2: U.S. RELATIONS WITH CUBA

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to improve the United States' relations with Cuba?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I understand that after nearly 50 years of failure, we must turn the page and begin to write a new chapter in U.S.-Cuba policy to help advance the cause of freedom and democracy in Cuba. To write this new chapter, I will keep U.S. national interests, and not partisan or electoral interests, at the forefront. I will strive to empower the Cuban people and aim to position the United States to help foster a stable and peaceful transition in Cuba to avoid potential disasters that could result in mass migration, internal violence, or the perpetuation of the Cuban dictatorship. A democratic opening in Cuba is, and should be, the foremost objective of our policy. I believe we need a clear strategy to achieve this objective – one that takes some limited steps now to spread the message of freedom on the island, but preserves our ability to bargain on behalf of democracy with a post-Fidel government. As president, I will grant Cuban Americans unrestricted rights to visit family and send remittances to the island. I will also take steps to liberalize relations with Cuba now while holding back important incentives such as relaxation of the trade embargo and greater foreign aid so that we can encourage change in a post-Fidel government.</p>
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IA3: DEBT RELIEF

- If elected President, what steps would you take to support developing nations struggling to improve their situation?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>The poorest countries in the world suffer under the weight of an enormous burden of external debt. Resources are flowing out of the least developed countries to creditors in the rich world, when these resources are desperately needed for health care, education, and infrastructure. We have seen that multilateral debt relief can be effective – 30 countries have seen their debt stocks reduced by almost 90 percent – but more relief is needed. I want to see 100 percent debt cancellation for the world’s heavily-indebted poor countries. I am committed to living up to the promise to fully fund debt cancellation for Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). My administration will also dedicate itself to preventing a future in which poor countries face pressing debt burdens again. I will press for reforms at the World Bank to ensure that poor countries receive grants rather than loans, and that countries have the resources they need to respond to the external shocks that threaten to derail economic progress. And as president, I will lead a multilateral effort to address the issue of “odious debt” by investigating ways in which “loan sanctions” might be employed to create disincentives for private creditors to lend money to repressive, authoritarian regimes.</p>
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IA4: FIGHTING GLOBAL DISEASE AND EXTREME POVERTY

- If elected President, what steps would you take to address global disease and extreme poverty throughout the world?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>As president, I will double our annual investments in foreign assistance to \$50 billion by 2012 and ensure that these new resources are invested wisely with strong accountability measures and directed towards strategic goals. I will work to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals and will target new U.S. assistance to help the world's weakest states to build healthy and educated communities, reduce poverty, develop markets, and generate wealth. I will also increase U.S. commitments to fighting the global HIV/AIDS pandemic, as well as malaria and tuberculosis. The first priority should be to reauthorize the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) when it expires in 2008, but also to rewrite much of the bill to allow best practices – not ideology – to drive funding for HIV/AIDS programs. In that context, I will commit \$50 billion over five years to strengthen the existing program and expand it to new regions of the world, including Southeast Asia, India, and parts of Europe, where the HIV/AIDS burden is growing. My administration will also increase U.S. contributions to the Global Fund to ensure that global efforts to fight endemic disease continue to move ahead.</p>
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IA5: AFRICAN AND CARIBBEAN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT

- If elected President, what steps, if any, would you take to promote increased trade and development with Africa and the Caribbean?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>To achieve sustainable growth, Africa needs to participate fully in the global economy. Eliminating barriers to trade, enhancing regional integration and promoting American investment are essential to achieving high growth rates and broad scale development. To ensure that these goals are achieved, as president, I will seek to: expand the African Growth and Opportunity Act, which provides incentives for African countries to build free markets and eases them into the global trading community, and work to ensure that Africa's key exports gain greater access to the American market.</p>
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SECTION VIII: LABOR

LA1: MINIMUM WAGE

- If elected President, what steps would you take to ensure that the federal minimum wage was consistently a fair living wage throughout our Nation?

Senator McCain

DID NOT RESPOND TO
NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE

Senator Obama:

This past summer, America's lowest paid workers received their first raise in ten years. This increase was long overdue. We stood up to corporate special interests that wanted to deny hard working Americans the basic dignity of a small increase in pay. Americans are rightly cynical about a Congress that fails to increase pay at the bottom of the wage ladder even as it raises its own pay and cuts taxes for the wealthy.

As president, I will work to make sure Washington represents the national interest instead of the special interests. We must increase the minimum wage to \$9.50 an hour and tie future increases in the minimum wage to inflation so that it grows along with the costs American workers face. And we need to make the minimum wage a living wage that helps American families not just survive, but succeed.

LA2: THE EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION ACT

- If elected President, what actions, if any, would you take to ensure that people are not discriminated against because of their sexual orientation?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>I have been a long-time advocate for LGBT rights. I believe the Employment Non-Discrimination Act should be expanded to include sexual orientation and gender identity. I co-sponsored legislation in the Illinois State Senate that would ban discrimination in employment and housing on the basis of sexual orientation. I am a co-sponsor of the Local Law Enforcement Enhancement Act, which would expand federal jurisdiction to reach violent hate crimes perpetrated because of the race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or physical disability of the victim. And I believe that we should repeal the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy, which has prevented from serving brave men and women who are able and willing to serve.</p>
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LA3: THE RIGHT TO FORM AND JOIN A UNION

- If elected President, what actions would you take to ensure that labor unions were able to continue to support workers in their efforts to form and be represented by a union?

<p><u>Senator McCain</u></p> <p>DID NOT RESPOND TO NAACP QUESTIONNAIRE</p>	<p><u>Senator Obama:</u></p> <p>Unions give workers a voice in the workplace, our political process, and our public policy debates. Simply, unions give workers a voice in deciding their future. For these reasons, they are essential to our democracy and our economy.</p> <p>I am a co-sponsor of and for passage of the Employee Free Choice Act because I firmly believe that workers should choose whether they want to join a union without fear of intimidation, coercion, or threats to their livelihoods. I am convinced that millions of Americans would join a union if given a fair opportunity, but the National Labor Relations Act in its current form too often allows employers to violate workers' rights with impunity. The Employee Free Choice Act will make the process of organizing less vulnerable to employer lawbreaking by requiring card-check recognition and increasing penalties on employers that violate the law. I support it, will continue to advocate for it, voted for it as a Senator, and would fight for its passage and sign it into law as President.</p> <p>EFCA is a starting point, but there is more to do. I will use the bully pulpit of the presidency to educate our country about the important role of unions. And I will use the power of the office to appoint members of the National Labor Relations Board and the Labor Department who understand the situation of working families and respect their desire to organize and I will work to ban the permanent replacement of striking workers.</p>
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