

SPECIAL EDITION: ELECTION 2004

MAJORITY OF STUDENTS SUPPORT BUSH, FACULTY BACK KERRY

51 Percent of Student Body Concerned About Draft, 52 Percent Oppose War in Iraq

By NADINE REITMAN (V)
with JULIA NOSOFSKY (I)

More upper and middle school students support President George W. Bush in the 2004 election than support Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, but only a minority of faculty members back Bush, the Pingry Record's Election 2004 poll shows.

Older students were also more likely to report their vote as still being "undecided."

Of the 298 students in the Upper School who responded to the poll, which was distributed through history classes, 47 percent support Bush and 42 percent support Kerry in the election. In the Middle School, numbers were similar, with 45 percent supporting Bush and 36 percent backing Kerry. However, the 46 out of 104 faculty members who completed their polls are at odds with the student opinion; 78 percent support Kerry while only 17 percent support Bush.

14 percent of the Middle School, 8 percent in the Up-

"We don't need to be in Iraq. We should just finish and get out."
- Cori Hundt (IV)

per School, and 4 percent of faculty are reportedly undecided. The percentage of undecided voters in Forms III through VI decreased as the age and form increased.

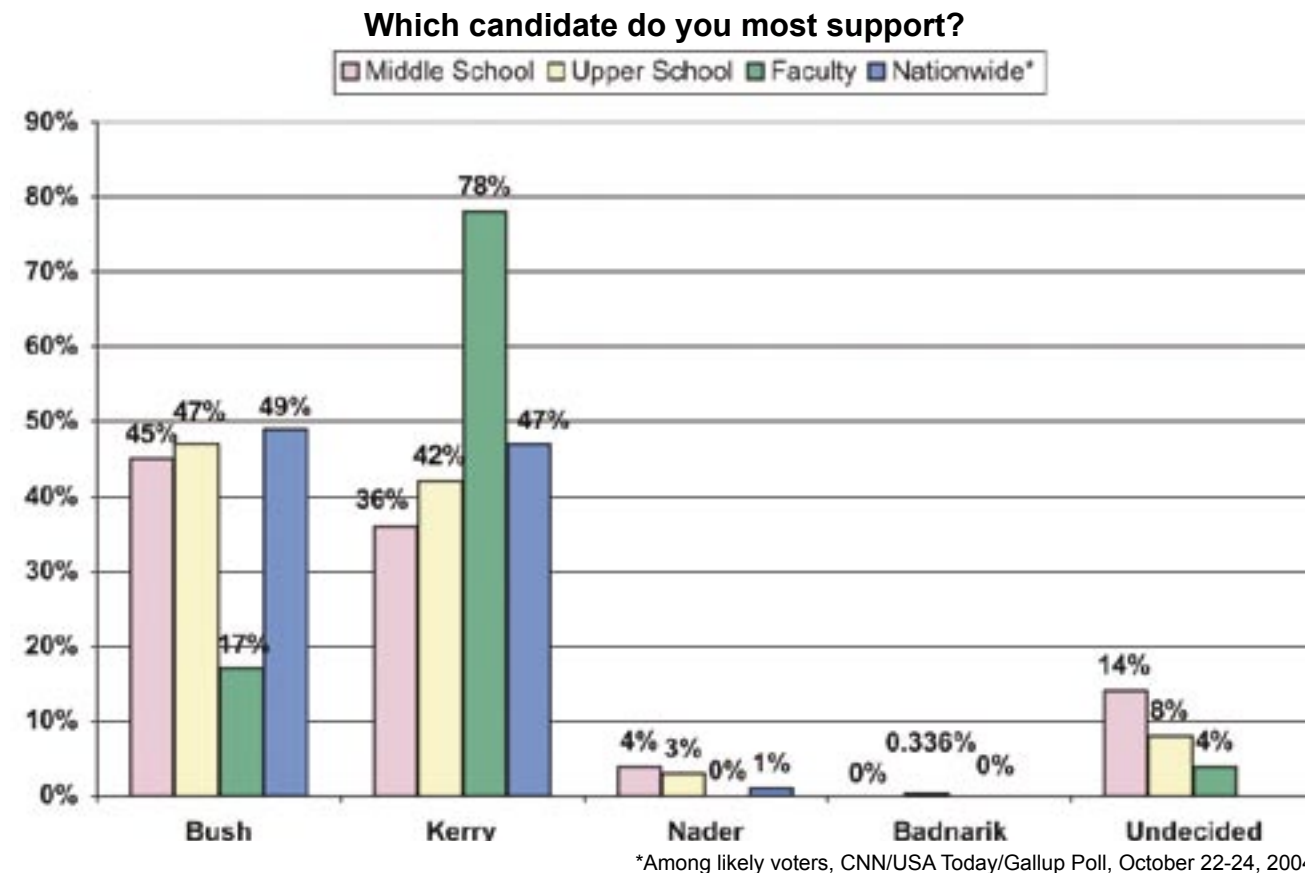
Third-party candidates did not draw overwhelming support from either the student body or the faculty. Three percent of the Upper School and four percent of the Middle School back Reform Party candidate Ralph Nader. No faculty members or upper school females reported to support Nader. Libertarian candidate Michael Badnarik drew one vote from one male senior.

Among Forms, Bush drew more supporters in each in-

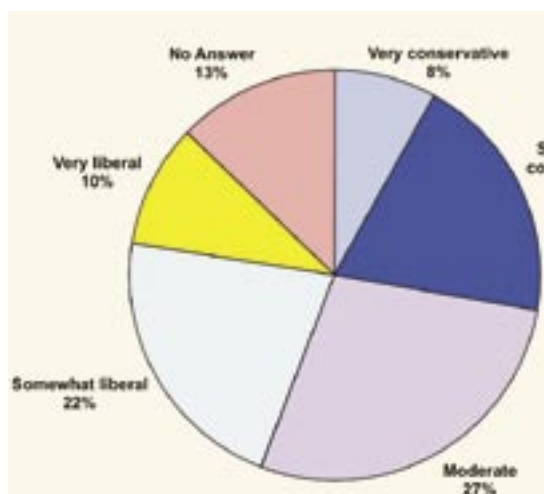
"Under God' does not belong in the Pledge of Allegiance."
- Greg Selover (V)

dividual form except Form IV, which backed Kerry.

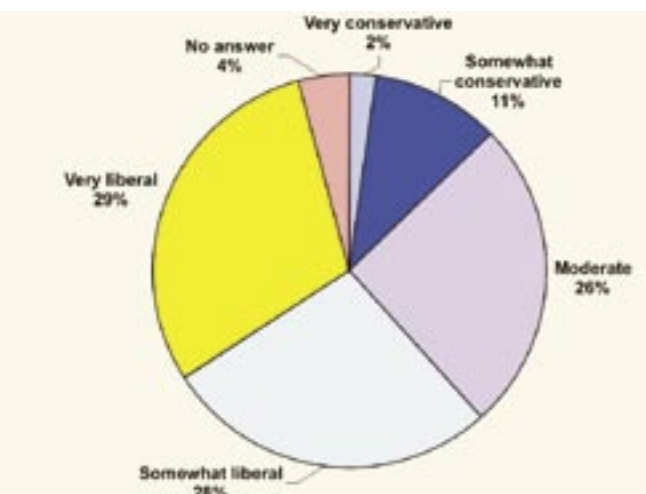
Generally speaking, student responses are more



Upper School - How do you classify yourself politically?



Faculty - How do you classify yourself politically?



analogous to national numbers than teacher responses are. Among likely voters nationwide, the October 22-24 CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll put Bush ahead of Kerry 49 percent to 47 percent. Nader held only one percent. However, the Gallup Poll only polls .000735 percent of Americans age 18 and older.

Student opinions are also closer to national trends on issues than faculty members' are. 61 percent of upper school students and 89 percent of faculty do not support a constitutional amendment limiting marriage to heterosexual couples. According to the National Annenberg Election Survey, only 49 percent of citizens nationwide do not support the proposed amendment.

On the issue of abortion, both upper school students and faculty support a more liberal-minded policy. 56 percent of upper school respondents and 78 percent of faculty agreed that "abortion

should be legal except for in the third trimester of pregnancy," while only 7 percent of upper school students felt that "abortion should

"We can't wait for another attack before we realize a threat and respond to it."
- Bess Rowen (VI)

never be legal." However, more faculty responded that "abortion should never be legal" (11 percent) than agreed "abortion should only be legal in cases of rape, incest, and/or endangerment to the mother's health" (7 percent).

100 percent of the 46 faculty members surveyed are planning to vote on November 2. However, of the 5 percent of the upper school student body that is eligible to vote, only 86 percent plan

to do so. Three-quarters of those seniors voting say they will vote for Bush, and one-quarter will back Kerry. None will support Nader.

78 percent of the faculty plans to vote for Kerry, but of these, only 59 percent profess to be Democrats. 22 percent of teachers and administrators are Independents and 20 percent are Republicans. 69 percent of Kerry backers support him "strongly," while only 50 percent of Bush's supporters feel the same way about their candidate.

59 percent of the faculty said they were "somewhat liberal" or "very liberal," and 26 percent said they were "moderate." 67 percent "strongly disapprove" of Bush's presidency.

Upper school students are nearly split on their approval rating of President Bush - 46 percent "strongly" or "somewhat approve" of President Bush, while 47 percent "strongly" or "somewhat disapprove." Among

those, 14 percent "strongly approve" of Bush's job as president, but a quarter "strongly disapprove."

Most Upper School students, 41 percent, purportedly affiliate with the Republican Party, 32 percent are Democrats and 27 percent are Independents. However, the largest percentage of stu-

dents classified themselves as moderates (28 percent), 32 percent were "somewhat" or "very liberal," and 28 percent were "somewhat" or "very conservative." Only 8 percent were "very conservative" and 10 percent "very

"I thought Bush would win among students 60 percent to 40. I was surprised it was so close."
- Dr. Jim Murray

liberal."

Regarding the campaign issues of terrorism, the war in Iraq, the economy, healthcare, jobs, national security, and the environment, the faculty picked Kerry as the better candidate for the country. The smallest margin of support Kerry enjoyed among the faculty was still a 30 percent difference, in which 54 percent supported Kerry on national defense while 24 percent backed Bush.

Upper school students chose Bush as the better man for terrorism, the war in Iraq, and national security, but picked Kerry as the leader for the economy, jobs, and

"I don't think the election affects me personally."
- Nic Meiring (I)

healthcare.

Comparing these results to national numbers, the student body's stances are once again more in line with responses nationwide. In the previously referenced CNN/USA Today/Gallup Poll, majorities find Bush to

Continued on Page 4

INSIDE



Courtesy of JibJab.com

Students face off on the issues and the election. See pages 2 and 3 to read their political opinions. Also, Danielle Peretore (VI) comments on the culture of the 2004 election. P. 4

EDITORIAL

Going Beyond the Sound Byte

Every major media outlet in the country has covered, surveyed, tracked, polled, analyzed, and editorialized the 2004 presidential election ad nauseam.

That said, the editorial staff of the Record decided that such an opportunity for in-depth political reporting and polling comes along only once every four years, and we anticipated that this special edition issue would yield interesting results.

The Record created three polls in mid-October – a short, four-question survey for middle school students, a comprehensive 13-question poll for upper school students, and a comparable ten-question poll for the faculty. All polls were voluntary and anonymous. Teachers in the History Department distributed the polls during their middle and upper school classes, while faculty polls were circulated through faculty mailboxes. 65 percent of middle school students, 58 percent of upper school students, and 44 percent of faculty completed the surveys. Based on our sample size, our results reflect a 95 percent accuracy.

The poll's findings suggest the Pingry student body may not be as polarized as the nation is. Needless to say, there has been a great deal of debate over the election throughout the school in recent weeks. 57 percent of faculty respondents said they had alluded to or spent time talking about the election in their classes; these classroom discussions have carried over to the lunchroom and the student couches, and it is encouraging to hear so many students involve themselves in a world outside of Pingry.

However, at a school that rightfully prides and markets itself on the high caliber of instruction and of students, some students' political knowledge and arguments sound as though they have been regurgitated from nightly news broadcasts, morning time radio pundits, their parents' offhand remarks, or – worse yet – the candidates' thirty-second sound bites.

One of the greatest strengths of Pingry's curriculum is its breadth – the school teaches everything from integrity to physics, German to first aid. Yet if the students who emerge from Pingry every year as scholars, leaders, and thinkers are not also educated voters, has the school accomplished all that it can?

The school offers only two courses geared towards politics and current events – an AP U.S. and Comparative Government course and the American Dreams class – both offered primarily to seniors. But beginning in the ninth grade, students have a “free” period for which they typically choose an art, drama, music, or language elective.

Perhaps the school should introduce a civics or current events course into the curriculum. The course could be offered to all students in the upper school as another, non-AP alternative.

Undoubtedly, students and graduates are much better-informed than others in our age group. But there is still a great deal students could learn about their government and the issues that matter.

Even if self-professed political junkies have grown tired of this campaign, there is a difference between the school educating students on the politics of the campaign and the school helping students hold wise and well-developed opinions.

Because once all of this election brouhaha has settled down, hopefully, on November 3, who wouldn't want student interest in the world outside of college applications and the next big sports game to stick around?

Kerry: Where's the Money?

The presidential race is a close one this year, and it seems the country's economy will turn out to be a very large factor in this election. So, the question

is, how does the record of the Bush administration match up to the proposed policies of John Kerry? The answer has been the topic of much heated debate during the final weeks of this presidential race.

George W. Bush came into the Oval Office at an inopportune time economically. The country was just beginning to fall off the back end of the business cycle, coming down out of the popped stock market bubble and peak period of the Clinton years. This set the president up in a bad position, and the subsequent 9/11 terrorist attacks ensured the country's recession.

Subsequent corporate accounting scandals as well as the War on Terror have all been blows to the U.S. economy. President Bush has done a fair job of getting the country out of its recession, and a slowly growing economy and job market indicate the country's recovery. However, critics continue to call attention to the \$413 billion budget deficit that has been accrued while ignoring the economic growth we have accomplished – a 3.3% annual increase in Gross Domestic Product as well as a recovery in the job market, with 1.9 million jobs created in the past year, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Despite this phenomenal growth in the face of a very difficult situation, critics continue to complain about the deficit. However, during wartime, a deficit is expected. This particular deficit is only 3.6 percent of the total economy, as opposed to the high of 6 percent in the 1980s

Hayden Reich (VI)



POINT

according to the Associated Press. Even though there are other policies that might have provided a greater stimulus to the economy, the

president's tax cuts, temporary unemployment benefits, and corporate tax cuts did in fact stimulate the economy significantly.

Without the tangible numbers of President Bush's economic record, it is hard to predict what lies in store for the economy under a Kerry administration. However, the policies that Kerry has proposed are dubious at best without the benefit of a concrete budget. With his contradictory proposals of a centralized health-care system (an additional burden of \$2 trillion to the federal budget), no increase in government spending, and his promise to cut the budget in half while giving a tax cut to the middle class, just how Kerry will pay for his proposed reforms remains to be seen. These reforms seem to be campaign promises that will most likely bear little or no resemblance to actual policy.

Critiques of both candidates vary such that it is difficult to determine the economic future under either candidate. However, with the improving economy of the Bush administration, the current policy looks as though it could continue to benefit the country and ultimately accomplish Bush's goal of cutting the deficit, perhaps not in half, but certainly significantly, especially considering that the composite index of leading indicators is up 3.5%, indicating consistent growth.

Kerry, on the other hand, with contradictory campaign promises and no real budget to base a prediction on, seems to be an unlikely bet for accomplishing his goals.

Bush's Budget Woes

Adam Goldstein (V)



COUNTERPOINT

Although Americans disagree on Iraq, abortion, stem-cell research, and polygamy, most agree on one thing: the government

should spend no more than it earns. Unfortunately, by this measure, George Bush's first term has been a miserable failure.

In order to provide essential services such as education and defense, the government must somehow pay for them. In general, the government looks to tax money as its main source of revenue. Of course, there is disagreement over the balance between taxes and benefits; liberals prefer higher amounts

of both, while conservatives advocate lower doses. What most people from both sides can agree upon, however, is that a balanced budget is strongly in the national interest.

The reasoning is quite simple: when the budget is balanced, the government saves money. If the government has to borrow money to meet its debts – as it does when it runs a deficit – future budgets will be laden with interest payments, weighing down on taxpayers and the economy as a whole.

Moreover, if the government has to borrow money to satisfy its debt, the government must sell its debt to someone. The current administration, in its eagerness to simultaneously cut taxes and raise benefits, has ended up selling U.S. debt to countries in Europe and Asia. The net result is that most of George Bush's new spending

projects (the Medicare drug benefit and the creation of a Department of Homeland security, to name just two examples) are paid

for by foreigners.

Why is this a problem? It means that the U.S. under George Bush no longer controls its own programs. If the United States cannot afford its essential programs in the future – an increasingly likely scenario given the exploding deficit and forthcoming retirement boom – foreign investors will hold the only key to our government's solvency.

Not only that, the current deficit will have to be paid for by tomorrow's taxpayers. By the time current Pingry seniors turn 40, they will have had to pay higher taxes, receive fewer benefits, and undergo more economic turmoil than their parents did – solely because of the deficit.

George Bush's excuse for all this, of course, is that 9/11 required an influx of government money to pay for domestic security and two foreign wars. What this excuse doesn't explain, however, is that the majority of new spending since September 11 has been for non-national security causes, including new Medicare benefits, massive amounts of pork, and so on.

Some Republicans wonder whether John Kerry would handle the deficit any better, considering some of his costly new proposals. The reality, however, is that John Kerry would be unable to pass many of his new proposals in a Republican-dominated Congress, automatically reducing spending. Strange as it may seem, conflict between the executive and legislative branches is an effective way to balance the budget, as Bill Clinton proved in his final years in office.

Just as someone who refuses to face his credit card payments, George Bush is taking the country dangerously close to bankruptcy. Despite the proposals and attacks from both sides, John Kerry will do better – if only because it is impossible to do worse.

The big deficit means that the U.S. under George Bush no longer controls its own programs.

Gay Marriage: It's About Rights, Not Family Values

Nadine Reitman (V)



Neither candidate most likely to become president on January 20, 2005 is a self-professed proponent of gay marriage. George Bush, however, wants to go a step further and make a constitutional amendment banning marriages and civil unions of homosexual couples.

John Kerry lies in the middle of the spectrum. He is not in favor of allowing same-sex marriages, nor does he support a constitutional amendment against them. In fact, Kerry calls himself “champion of gay rights.” There's one problem with his statement, however: he doesn't include marriage in those rights.

The most popular argument against gay marriage and civil unions is that homosexuality is a sin in most religions. Allowing gay marriage will supposedly open a Pandora's box of other marriage issues, and, as Bush has said, same-sex marriage will lead to the

destruction of the “institution of marriage” and traditional family values.

First of all, gluttony, adultery, and greed are sins, but those aren't unconstitutional. What makes homosexuality different? But there is also a difference between a legal marriage and a religious marriage. Religious organizations such as churches may continue to refuse to perform same-sex marriages in the church, even if legal marriage licenses are available to these couples. Remember separation of church and state?

Secondly, though some opponents say that after same-sex marriages, “marrying an object could be next,” I do not think people will be streaming into county offices to obtain marriage licenses with their favorite pairs of underwear, but that's just my opinion.

And finally, since when have “traditional family values” been so stable in this country? According to the US Census Bureau, 50% of couples who marry will get a divorce. That certainly doesn't send a good message to the kids. A family should be bound by love, and allowing gay marriages will let gay couples

teach their kids that value. Also, permitting homosexuals to marry won't forbid heterosexuals from keeping their own beliefs. There will just be another version of good family values available.

Also, the “institution of marriage” will certainly not break down because a few more people are allowed to participate in it, nor will it hurt anyone. In fact, banning couples from marriage is actually a form of discrimination and is no different from banning interracial marriages.

Yet being prevented from marrying hinders gay couples in infinite ways. For example, it bars homosexuals from trivial financial and other opportunities enjoyed by married couples. If one member of a married couple fell critically ill and was admitted to the hospital, the other spouse would have the right to visit that person.

This is not so, however, with the current status of homosexual partnerships, even if they had been together for over 20 years. They are also denied insurance benefits, certain tax breaks, and joint property ownership.

Besides being harmless to

family values and “marriage as an institution,” gay marriage actually encourages behavior beneficial to society. AIDS and other STDs are spread when sexual promiscuity is practiced with many partners. Encouraging marriage of heterosexuals and homosexuals alike will cut down on that type of lifestyle.

And if you're still not convinced, just listen to Dick Cheney. At a rally in Iowa

Cheney said, “With the respect to the question of relationships, my general view is freedom means freedom for everyone [. . .] People ought to be free to enter into any kind of relationship they want to.” He believes the issue should be decided by the states, not the federal government. And just for the record, he has flip-flopped on his opinion of gay marriage since the 2000 campaign.

VOLUME CXXXI
SPECIAL EDITION

Editor in Chief
Caroline Savello

Managing Editor
Danielle Peretore
Nadine Reitman

Production Assistant
Adam Goldstein

Copy Editors
Josh Freedman

Staff Writers
Hadley Johnson
Melissa Loewinger

Technical Adviser
Mr. Dean Sluyter

Assistant Editors
Chantal Berman

Faculty Adviser
Dr. Susan Dineen

All rights reserved. All contents © 2004 The Pingry Record. Printed on recycled paper. Please recycle after use.

President Bush: Choosing to Ignore Us

The possible reinstatement of a military draft is only the latest consequence of the war in Iraq. The United States military is spread extremely thin all over the world, and troops have had to pull out of other countries in order to combat the growing problems in Iraq. In retrospect, it is simple to see the reasons why the U.S. should not have invaded Iraq. However, even at the time of the invasion, it was clear that the U.S. should not have pursued military operations in Iraq.

On November 3, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld said that "war is always a last choice, for with war comes the cost of human life and financial sacrifice for our country." The invasion of Iraq, however, was not the last resort, as the U.S. had not exhausted all the diplomatic options available. Weapons inspectors were sent into Iraq; however, they were not utilized to their full potential and were clearly a way for the Bush administration to say they had used diplomacy before invasion. Hans Blix, chief weapons inspector at the U.N., said the Bush administration "chose to ignore us."

Blix was only one of many experts on the nuclear situation in Iraq who opposed the war. The director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) told CNN he was "pretty convinced" Iraq had not restarted its nuclear program that had been dormant since 1997. Clearly, if weapons inspectors and nuclear weapons experts were less than sure that Saddam Hussein had weapons, the U.S. could not have been 100 percent certain. In that case, the war in Iraq was not Rumsfeld's

Josh Freedman (IV)



POINT

"last choice" for dealing with the situation in Iraq.

As we now know, Iraq did not have nuclear weapons and was not a threat to the world. However, the government's focus on Iraq has allowed other countries to become legitimate threats with dangerous nuclear weapons or weapons programs. In January 2003, before the U.S.-led invasion, the Center for Defense Information wrote "nuclear production could give North Korea enough plutonium for a nuclear weapon within a few months and five to seven nuclear weapons by mid-2003." While North Korea was an obvious threat that admitted openly to having a nuclear program and nuclear weapons, the evidence against Iraq was shaky at best.

Today, North Korea is an even bigger threat, and due to troop shortages caused by the war in Iraq, the U.S. has been forced to "reassign some troops from South Korea to Afghanistan and Iraq and shift most of the 7,000 people in its headquarters in Seoul out of the capital beginning within a year" (Washington Times 2003). Troop placement in South Korea is the best way of monitoring North Korea. Without troops there, the U.S. is in even greater danger of being attacked.

Along with North Korea, Iran was also shown to have nuclear weapons programs

before the U.S. attacked Iraq. On March 8, 2003, just days before U.S. troops invaded Iraq, the IAEA reported to Time Magazine that in Iran, the nuclear plant is "extremely advanced" and involves "hundreds" of gas centrifuges ready to produce enriched uranium and "the parts for a thousand others ready to be assembled." With irrefutable evidence of nuclear weapons programs in Iran and North Korea before the U.S. invasion of Iraq, the Bush administration made the wrong decision to pursue military operations in Iraq.

In addition, the war in Iraq has made America less safe by encouraging terrorism around the world. A western nation attacking an Arab nation, with no legitimate reason for war, will obviously enrage Islamic fundamentalists and make them more likely to attack. The 2003 State Department Terrorism Report supports this point: the number of significant international terrorism episodes rose slightly and the number injured went up by over 50 percent in 2003, after U.S. involvement in Iraq began. While it cannot be concluded that the war in Iraq was the reason for this increase, it can be shown that war did not stop terror in any way and therefore was detrimental to the United States.

Over 1,000 coalition casualties have already been lost and tens of thousands of Iraqi citizens have been killed in a year and a half of fighting. The U.S. has lost many of its trusted allies and much respect from around the world that could hurt us in the future. Going to war against Iraq and Saddam Hussein was a terrible idea that has made the U.S. less safe.

Freedom's Security, Not U.N.'s Approval

America has always stood as a beacon for freedom. As a country, we have protected our own freedom by fighting to defeat terror and tyranny wherever they pose threats to the world. However, for years America lived in ignorance of the ability of our unseen enemies. But after the tragic events of September 11, 2001, occurred, our enemies awoke a sleeping giant, just as Hirohito and Hitler did in World War II. America became vigilant, looking always for threats on the horizon. While the war against Al-Qaeda was the priority, one of these threats was Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

For the eighteen years prior to September 11, Hussein had been committing war crimes according to the standards set by the United Nations. Though Iraq was not tied to Al-Qaeda, Iraq encouraged terrorism because it was a destabilizing force against human rights and political order in the very region that housed and supported the 9/11 attackers. The fact that America ignored the threat posed by Iraq before 9/11, with the exception of the Gulf War, is discouraging. If the U.S. had not retaliated after having suffered an attack on American soil, Americans would have been alarmed.

Iraq's war crimes began long before America recognized that the country was a threat in 2001. David J. Scheffer, Ambassador-at-Large for War Crimes Issues in a speech at the National Press Club in 2000, compiled a list of abuses of international laws committed by Hussein. Beginning in 1983, Hussein led a war against Iran in which 5,000 Iranians were killed by chemical weapons.

From 1987 through early 1988, Hussein, with the help of his cousin Ali Hassan alMajid, "Chemical Ali," led an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Kurds. It is estimated

Hadley Johnson (IV)



COUNTERPOINT

that anywhere from 50,000 to 100,000 civilians were killed. The abuses continued through 1988, when Hussein dropped chemical weapons on Kurdish cities.

Then, in 1990, Iraq invaded the oil-rich country of Kuwait, leading to the Persian Gulf War in which the international community came to Kuwait's aid and forced Iraq out of the country. Throughout the 1990s, Hussein suppressed political opponents through violence, torture, and murder. In 2003, coalition forces discovered mass graves of hundreds of

thousands of Iraqi Kurds.

Critics of Operation Iraqi Freedom argue that America disregarded international law by invading Iraq. Yet Saddam Hussein, not America or George W. Bush, is guilty of committing at least a score of war crimes. The United Nations has witnessed these atrocities since 1983, and the fact that the organization did not demand a change of regime in Iraq is reprehensible. The United Nations passed 17 resolutions against Hussein over 13 years, but they were never enforced. The U.S. and its 31 allies, as cited by President George W. Bush in his 2004 State of the Union Address, used their moral clarity and backbone to defend freedom and human rights in a country that has been thirsty for such rights ever since Hussein came to power.

A Student's Right to Choose

When companies fail to provide a product that satisfies their customers, they eventually lose money and go out of business.

But when government programs fail, the government often grants the programs more money. Nowhere is this more evident than in the public school system. Leaders of both parties agree that the public education system is broken and desperately needs repair. However, America's worst school districts generally have the highest per capita spending. For example, in Washington, D.C., the yearly average per capita spending is \$10,000; yet students in Washington consistently rank near the bottom in standardized test scores and assessments of student performance.

One solution to this problem, supported by the Bush administration, is school choice vouchers. In a nation devoted to free enterprise and consumer choice, it seems surprising that school choice is not routine. Capitalism has taught us that free-market competition yields a better product, a principle that should be applied to education; parents who can afford to send their children to private schools often do, while those who cannot must make do with the local public school.

If parents want to send their children to a different school, it must be because they find fault with the original public school. Under the principles of capitalism, this would force the public school to shape up or risk "going out of business." Contrary to popular arguments against school choice, the school voucher program would not force students out of the public schools. Instead, it would raise the standards for all students, especially those in failing public schools that, for the first time, would

Jenna Devine (III)



COUNTERPOINT

have to face real pressure to correct their flaws.

Another huge benefit of school vouchers is that they would help

those who need it most. In November 1998, the Supreme Court decided to allow the Wisconsin school choice program to use state funds for private and parochial schools. Each year, this program benefits up to 15,000 students from the poorest Milwaukee families by providing them with up to \$5,000 per student in vouchers. This money comes out of the public school budget. This decision levels the playing field for the most underprivileged children in the state, giving them access to a better education. If school vouchers were legalized nationwide, for the first time in history, poor – and often minority – children would be given the same educational choices that their wealthier counterparts have. They would have the freedom to attend the best schools their money could buy.

An argument many have against school choice is that our country needs public schools to give minority children a chance. However, they are missing the key point of school choice: vouchers would allow poor minorities a chance to place their children in better schools. In fact, 70 percent of African-American parents who earn less than \$15,000 a year support school vouchers. What does it say about an argument when those it most affects do not even support it?

Why should American tax dollars be spent on failing schools? School choice forces public schools to shape up and provide a better education for children. It is capitalism in action; by allowing school vouchers, schools are forced to compete, and competition means better schools at a lower price for everyone.

School Choice Is Not a Good Choice

Josh Freedman (IV)



POINT

In all elections, education is an important issue, no matter which side the candidate is on. All can agree that education should be improved, but Democrats and Republicans disagree on school voucher programs. A school voucher is money, taken from the original school's budget, that a parent can use as tuition to send their child to a different school. School vouchers are a bad idea for America's educational policy because they jeopardize the public school system and do not necessarily work for many students.

While the educational policies of America need to be reformed, vouchers are not the answer. Voucher proponents argue that free-market competition will be the impetus for improvement in a public school. However, this theory has not been completely tested, and current findings of

voucher programs indicate that not all public schools in the voucher system improve due to competition.

Vouchers hurt the public school system because they remove money from the budget of the school. When a school voucher is given, the per-pupil funding that the government normally gives is not being paid to the school. The Democratic Policy Committee reports that already "many public schools receive inadequate funding, particularly those serving high proportions of disadvantaged children, and would be expected to do more with less." Schools that have more federal funding taken away from their budget will certainly not be able to improve their educational quality. The many expenses that come from running a public school, such as books, teacher's salary, building maintenance, and more, are all taken from the same budget that voucher systems would reduce. The anti-voucher group Rethinking Choices says a "lack of money is one of the biggest problems facing urban public schools. Vouchers make this problem worse." School vouchers take away necessary funding

from the public school budget and thus will further decrease the quality of public education.

Vouchers should also not be instituted simply because they don't work. Private schools are not required to accept voucher applicants, just as they do not have to accept any other applicant. According to the Democratic Policy Committee, "parents may select either to send their child to public school, or to apply to the private school of their choice." Because vouchers do not guarantee that the student is accepted at the school of his or her choice, in many cases they are useless.

The Milwaukee voucher program, one of the first ones to be instituted in the United States, gives evidence that vouchers are not always successful. In the Milwaukee voucher program, 40 percent of the children who wanted to participate in the voucher program could not find schools that would take them. Another 40 percent who attended private schools on vouchers did not return to the private school the following year. These results indicate that vouchers systems do not necessarily work because schoolchildren cannot

find a school or fit into one.

Vouchers also do not work because the government cannot regulate private schools. Public schools must follow certain state mandates such as state-wide testing and teacher hiring policies. Private schools do not have to follow these mandates and, more importantly, "private schools are not required to provide the same level of special educational services as public schools." Because private schools do not have to accept all students that apply, they are able to discriminate against those who have learning disabilities or are disadvantaged. These students, who require more money than regular students, are not able to go to private schools with a voucher because the private schools will not accept the additional costs. This leaves the public school with more students with higher costs and a lower budget.

With public schools in horrendous shape, America is clearly in need of some educational reform. Vouchers, however, would make public schools worse than they already are and hurt the students of America who are entitled to a good education.



School Liberal on Social Issues, But Divide Seen in Political Support

Continued From Page 1

be the stronger candidate on the issues of terrorism and the war in Iraq, but Kerry still leads in the economy and healthcare.

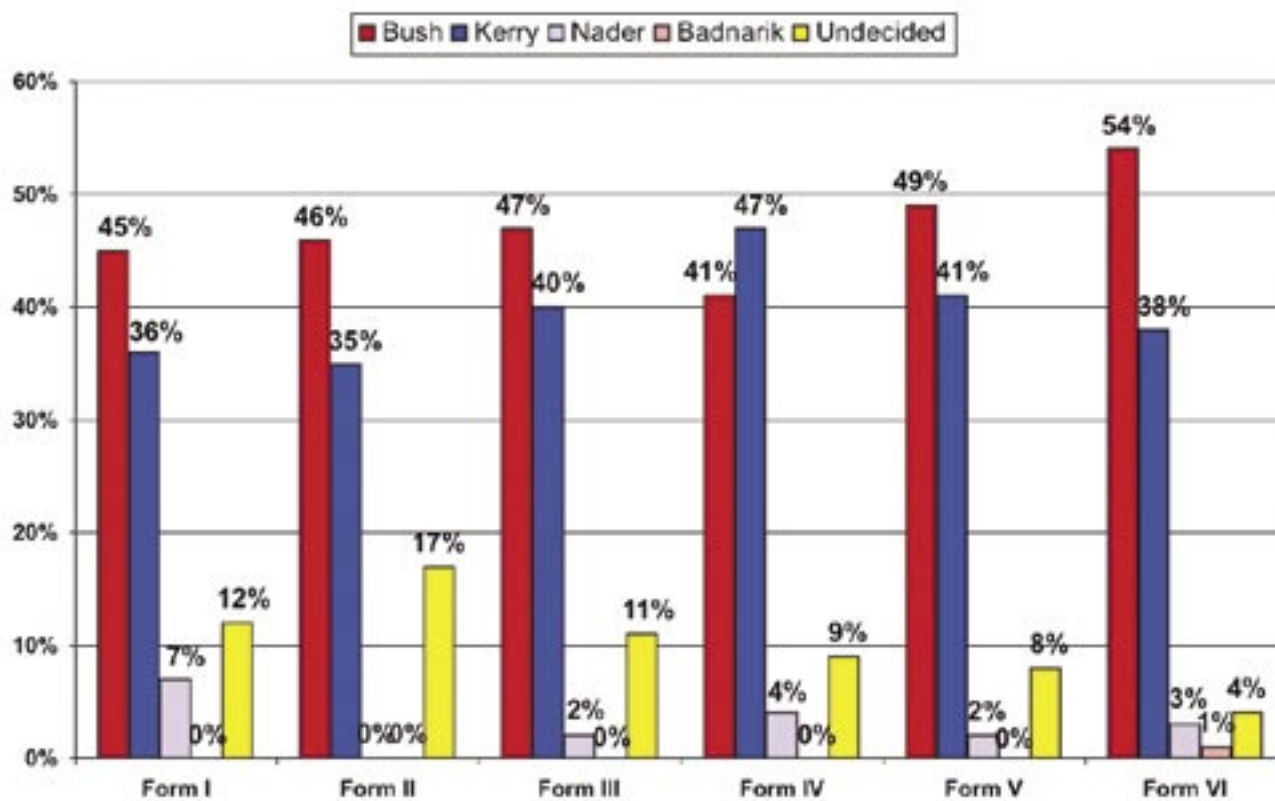
In both the Gallup poll and the Record's poll, the most dividing issue was terrorism.

In keeping with their trend, 87 percent of faculty responded that the war in Iraq was "not worth it," but only 52 percent of Upper School students agreed. Both groups are at odds with national sentiment; according to an October 9-10 Gallup poll, a minority of 48 percent do not support the war in Iraq.

Regarding the war in Iraq, 51 percent of Upper School students said they were "concerned" about the possibility of a draft, while 38 percent were not concerned, and 11 percent gave no answer.

Upper school students also appear to be well in-

Student Support for Presidential Candidates by Form
Bush enjoyed the majority of student support in every form except Form IV, where Kerry took the lead by 6 percentage points. Form I students are the greatest supporters of Nader.

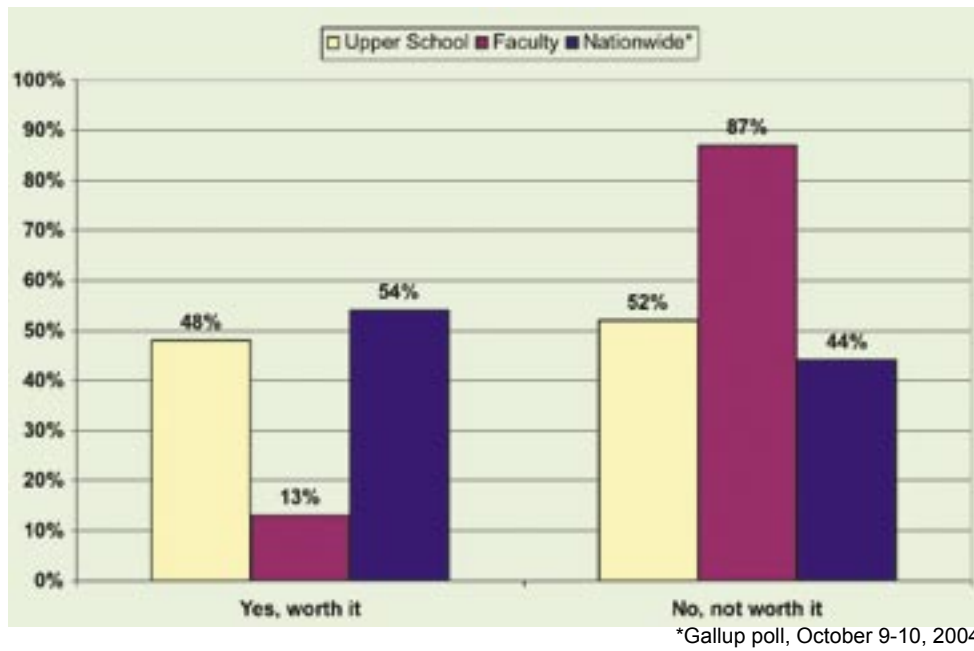


formed, with 76 percent responding that they get their news from major newspapers. However, only one-third of the student body admits to watching "parody news TV programs" such as the Daily Show, even though that genre's biggest market is the 18 to 35 age group.

88 percent of upper school students and 85 percent of middle school students watched "any or all" of the presidential or vice-presidential debates. However, 79 percent of middle schoolers say they hold the same political views as their parents.

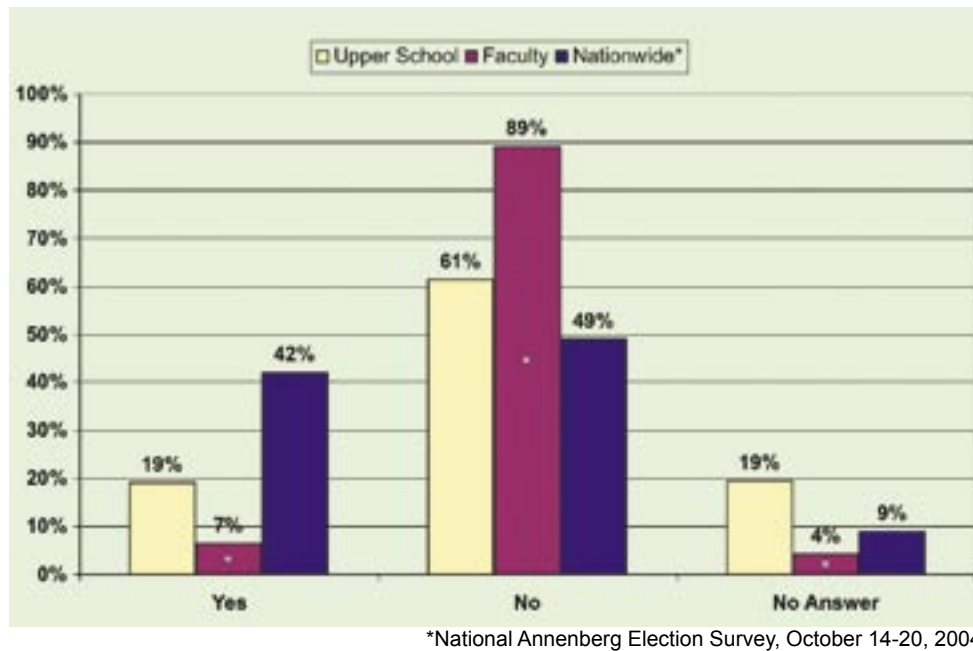
Rating the importance of the election in their lives on a scale from one to five, with five signifying "very important" and one signifying "very unimportant," a majority of middle schoolers rated the election as a 4 or a 5. The previously mentioned Gallup Poll has also found that 70 percent of Americans believe the stakes in this election to be higher than in past years.

All in all, do you think the situation in Iraq was worth going to war over, or not?



*Gallup poll, October 9-10, 2004

Do you support a constitutional amendment limiting marriage to heterosexual couples?



*National Annenberg Election Survey, October 14-20, 2004

Which One Gets Your Vote – Botox, Fake Tans, or Cowboy Hats?

Danielle Peretore (VI)



Picture Bush and Kerry singing the following to the tune of "This Land is Your Land":

Bush: "You get that Botox!"

Kerry: "But I still won three purple hearts!"

Perhaps the animated cartoon at jibjab.com, which features Kerry in a hot dog suit, Bush in a dunce cap, and both candidates with greatly oversized heads and ventriloquist mouths, is slightly exaggerated. But the point made throughout the short film by Kerry's retorts – "You're a right-wing nut job!" – to Bush's attacks – "You're a

liberal sissy!" – is clear: today's media have provided the presidential candidates with the opportunity to launch opposing smear campaigns.

The cartoon also points a finger at the preposterous aesthetic lengths, completely unrelated to their proposed policies, to which candidates feel they must go to impress the public. Kerry gets Botox injections, and Bush drags his two pretty, young daughters on the campaign trail with him. Bush dons a cowboy hat when politicking in Texas, and Kerry fake-bakes.

For the presidential debates, both men had special advisors whose jobs dealt solely with what should be worn. Yes, we're talking tie color. Bush's advisors also asked the Kerry campaign to agree that each candidate not be allowed to cross an

invisible line between their debate podiums, for fear that Bush's smaller stature would lead swing voters to the Kerry camp.

What kind of a society do we live in if our presidential candidates firmly believe we will make our decision

on who is best to lead our country on the basis of skin tone or number of wrinkles? Or even worse, whose tie is prettier?

Anna Quindlen recently ranted in Newsweek about Americans' depressing voter turnout, contrasting our par-



Courtesy of jibjab.com

icipation with that of the Australians, who are fined for failing to show up at the polls on election day. But if our citizens are going to cast their votes based on whose skin is tanner, I'm not so sure I want everyone to vote.

Such behavior can only be a result of the media culture in which we live. Before the Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960, voters rarely had a chance to see their candidates in action, never mind focus on their aesthetic qualities. And in 1960, who won? Kennedy: the younger, more attractive, and certainly tanner candidate. Perhaps, then, Kerry does know what he is doing on his regular trips to the salon.

But certainly we can do better than vote for a candidate based on his appearance, or even his theatrical

performance in a debate. Certainly we can aim to vote for a candidate based on his beliefs and goals, rather than any of the superficial aspects of a media campaign.

Had the current opportunities of a media campaign existed in the Civil War era, would we have elected Abraham Lincoln, with his awkward features and weak voice? Or how about George Washington, with his wooden teeth? Yet surely the loss of these men as leaders would have had a great impact on the very existence of our nation.

And therein lies our most delicate problem. A great leader is not always the tanner one, or the taller one, or the more attractive one. A great leader is someone whose vision, like Washington's and Lincoln's, will impart a gift to our nation's future.