

DO WE MAKE A DIFFERENCE AT ELECTION TIME?

By Tom Hill

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Although the Allamakee County Democrats engage in a variety of useful activities, ranging from highway clean-up to collecting donations for food pantries, the major reason most of us participate is to have an impact on the policies of our local, state, and national governments. The central way we do that is through involvement in elections. Because so many factors affect election results (e.g., the state of the economy, the public's mood, the attractiveness of the candidates, the amount of money spent on advertising), it is difficult to assess our impact on elections.

However, during the 2006 election our group's efforts seemed to have made a difference. Of the registered voters in Allamakee County, only 20% are Democrats, while 40% are Republicans and 40% are Independents. To win elections, not only do we need to turnout out the base, but we must also appeal to a large percentage of Independents (and hopefully, a few Republicans). When we compare the percentage of voters that went for Culver/Judge in 2006 versus the percentage who went for Kerry/Edwards in 2004, in every precinct in Allamakee County we saw an increase (ranging from a low of 2% to a high of 11%). The total increase was 5% (54% for Culver/Judge versus 49% for Kerry/Edwards). In addition, for every Democratic candidate running for state office in 2006, Allamakee County's support surpassed the state's average.

Another measure of effectiveness is how we do with absentee ballots. Culver/Judge won 59% of the absentee vote in 2006, while Kerry/Edwards only captured 54% of the absentee vote in 2004. Although in an off-year election like 2006 we expect a lower turnout across the board, the amount of drop-off can still be compared. When we compare the percentage of absentee votes Culver/Judge got of the Kerry/Edwards absentee vote (68%) to the percentage of absentee votes Nussle/Vander Plaats got of the Bush/Cheney absentee vote (57%), we can see the Republicans lost 11% more relative to the Democrats.

Even in losing races, we can see the impact of our efforts. Dr. Seldon Spencer ran a thoughtful and enthusiastic campaign in 2006 against a well-financed incumbent in District 4. Although Dr. Spencer only won one of the 28 counties composing District 4 (Story County with 51.7% of the vote), Allamakee was able to capture the fifth best spot for him with 46.2% of the vote. Not bad for a supposedly Red County.

So, however fed-up we sometimes get with the political process—and heaven knows there is plenty to be concerned about—it appears that our time, money and hard work can make a significant difference in the outcome of our elections. That is one of the rewards Democracy promises us. Come join us for the next election.

<p><i>Senator Biden Campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact: Ellen Goodman • Tele: 563-556-5106 • Tele: 563-542-6421 • Mailto: ellen@joebiden.com • Http://www.joeboden.com/iowa 	<p><i>Senator Clinton Campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact: Andrew Bray • Tele: 563-663-4877 • Mailto: ebray@hillaryclinton.com • Http://hillaryclinton.com/hq/iowa 	<p><i>Senator Dodd Campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact: Jason Mathews • Tele: 563-588-1146 • Http://www.chrisdodd.com 	<p><i>Senator Edwards Campaign</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact: Frank Holleman • Tele: 864-979-6344 • Tele: 563-556-1629 • Mailto: fholleman@johnedwards.com • Http://www.johnedwards.com/iowa
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Why Democrat Presidential Candidates All Have Plans For Ending the Iraqi War -

Compiled by *Military Spouses for Change, Veterans and Military Families for Progress, Military Families Coordinator Biden Campaign.*

DOD reports 64,000 wounded in Iraq and Afghanistan, but the VA reports treating 250,000 Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

Here are some figures taken from Military.com

- Approximately 16 physically wounded soldiers are saved for every 1 killed
- Approximately 30% of these are seriously wounded (can not return to the battle field).
- These wounded do not include mental anomalies which cause removal from duty.

1. Since September 11, 2001, the Department of Defense has reported more than 64,000 wounded and 4,000 killed in Iraq or Afghanistan. The Department of Veterans Affairs, however, has reported treating 250,000 Iraq and Afghanistan war veterans, including 95,000 for mental health conditions. [\[2\]](#)
2. By 2005, the Army saw the divorce rate for its officers nearly triple from its pre-9/11 rates and nearly double for its enlisted soldiers. [\[3\]](#)
3. The suicide rate in the Army is the highest in 26 years, reaching 17.3 per 100,000 in 2006. The reasons included failed personal relationships, legal and financial problems, and the stress of their jobs (in which deployments certainly played a part) [\[4\]](#)
4. Since 9/11, more than 1.5 million soldiers have been deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. Because of the continued demand on our Armed Forces, Secretary of Defense Gates announced in April 2007 that Army tours in Iraq would be extended from 12 months to 15 months.
5. In 2005, the Army failed to meet its annual recruiting goal by eight percent. [\[5\]](#)
6. Junior Officers and NCOs are leaving the service at the highest rates in 30 years [\[6\]](#) and the propensity to serve is the lowest it has been in 20 years. [\[7\]](#)
7. To maintain the necessary number of service members, the Army has resorted to raising the maximum age, lowering the education standards, increasing cash bonuses, and, most alarming, issuing "moral" waivers for criminal convictions. Almost 12 percent of new Army recruits in 2007 have received these waivers for criminal convictions. [\[8\]](#) Since 2003, 125,000 recruits have received waivers for felonies including crimes such as assault and robbery. [\[9\]](#)

Despite recruitment bonuses as high as \$40,000, the Army again failed to meet its recruiting goals in May and June (usually its best recruiting months) of 2007.

Some specialty MOS are offered \$150,000 to reenlist.



Nurse treating the wounded



Immediate aid



Dragged to safety

