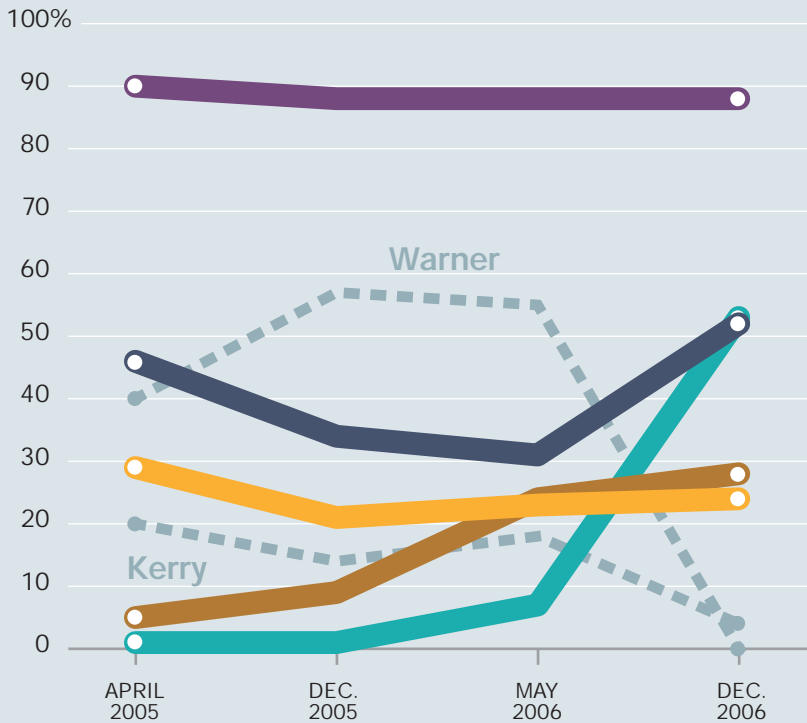
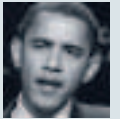
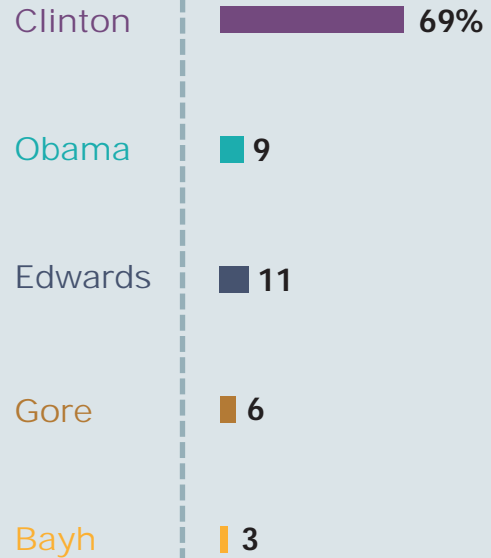


Democratic Insiders: Who Will Be the Nominee?*

Percent of maximum points

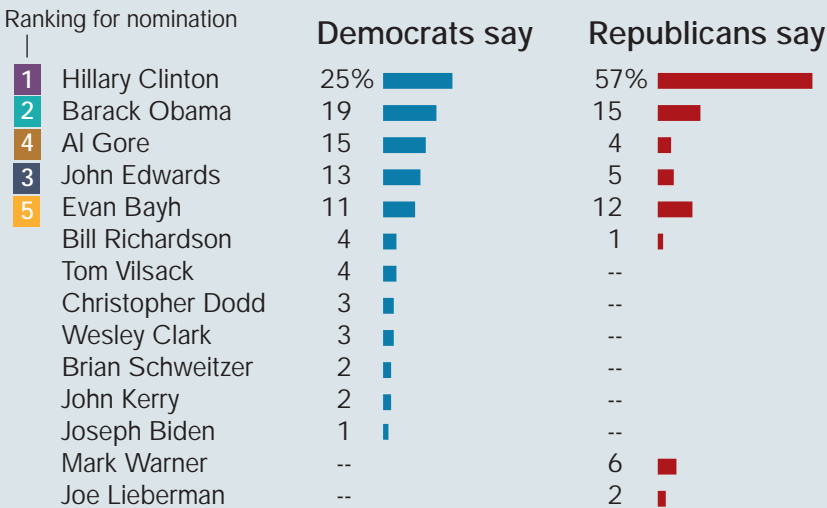


Percent of first-place votes

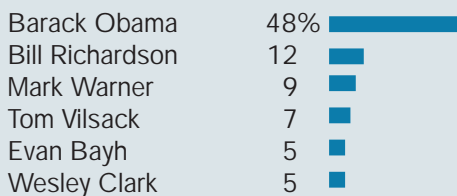


*SCORING: A first-place vote was worth 5 points, a second-place 4 points, and so on through fifth place.

Strongest Democratic general election candidate for the 2008 presidential race



Strongest Democratic vice presidential candidate



Ironically, Republican Insiders are much more likely than the Democrats to see Democratic front-runner Hillary Rodham Clinton as the strongest nominee her party could field in 2008.



Democratic Insiders

Q: Who has the best chance to be your party's 2008 presidential nominee?

■ On Clinton

"Another Clinton is irresistible to Democrats, even if she lacks the retail political skills of her spouse."

"Hillary's enormous strengths are well known, as is the conventional wisdom that she is too divisive to win in the general election.... If she can succeed in keeping anyone else from catching [fire], her institutional strengths will become a huge, maybe insurmountable, advantage."

■ On Obama

"Camelot returns. Clinton talked about hope; Obama embodies it."

"If the 'change' mood of voters this past November continues into next year, Obama could be the Democrats' best chance."

■ On Edwards

"Brilliant under-the-radar campaign since '04 puts him in a stronger-than-expected position."

■ On Gore

"He should have excellent Internet fundraising potential. That, along with his revived 'star' status, gets him on equal or better footing with almost everyone, with the possible exceptions of Obama and Clinton."

Q: Democrats' strongest general election candidate?

■ On Clinton

"She's tested; she's tough; she's tenacious."

"Everyone says she can't win, but no one can figure out a way to beat her. And last I looked, if no one can beat you, you win."

■ On Obama

"Few negatives at this stage, though he is the least tested and vetted of the major candidates."

"His candidacy would be about the future of the nation. Senators McCain's and Clinton's would unavoidably be in large part about the past."

■ On Gore

"He has a 'new' or 'star' quality to him now. His experience as V.P. probably makes him stronger than Obama."

"Been through the rigors of national campaigns, fully vetted, can raise money, more comfortable with himself, and has a great story to tell—eight years of peace and prosperity versus the Bush malaise."

■ On Edwards

"Not old enough to be old hat, but not too green that we should be concerned about him being thrown into battle with John McCain."

"Wins all the 'easy' blue states, gives us a chance in Virginia, Arkansas, North Carolina, and Mountain states like Nevada, New Mexico, and Colorado, particularly with a Western V.P."

■ On Bayh

"Will be competitive in states we aren't winning right now, and has the potential to be the best mix of likability, smarts, and toughness."

"He's the best candidate to win Ohio and Indiana. We don't need anything additional."

Q: Strongest vice presidential nominee?

■ On Obama

"He'd bring a lot to the ticket with very little or no downside. Plus, being the V.P. would give him the experience he needs to be president."

"He'll be on the ticket if he runs a decent campaign, and he'll turn out several million additional Democratic voters, especially in states like Ohio and Florida."

"Rock-star status, crowds, huge minority-voter turnout, youth vote, and he's really smart. Only downside is overshadowing the presidential nominee."

■ On Richardson

"Let's see how he does on the national stage during the primaries, if he runs. But he's a great pick for regional, ethnic, and foreign-policy reasons."

"Consolidates the great strides the Democrats made in '06 in securing the Hispanic vote, and also locks down New Mexico, a small but important state."

■ On Vilsack

"Democrats win the East and West coasts. They need to connect the dots across the Midwest."



Bill Richardson

UPI/LANDOW/MICHAEL KENNEDY



Tom Vilsack

AP/IAN LAPRETE

Republican Insiders

Q: The strongest Democratic presidential nominee?

■ On Clinton

"She's capable of beating expectations, raising a ton of money, and has the most-passionate supporters."

"She will run as a moderate, and will unite and mobilize the party's entire base. Moreover, the media will go from being critical in the primaries to polishing her halo in the general election."

"The gender gap will be huge. Do you know how many women would vote for another woman just to make history?"

■ On Obama

"Obama is such a national media darling, and there would be little, if any, real scrutiny of him and his record—meaning his powerful image would be difficult to beat."

■ On Bayh

"Comes from a solid-red state that saw some Republican losses this cycle. Could he upset the electoral map by putting Indiana and some surrounding states in play? Was a successful governor—executive experience—and appears to be squeaky-clean."

■ On Warner

"Democrats haven't won with a non-Southerner since JFK."

■ On Edwards

"He is the best communicator, the smartest operator, and the one most likely to ambush Hillary in Iowa. If he does, he will take off like a rocket."