

THE NEWS & OBSERVER

Raleigh, NC • Tuesday, March 30, 2004

Kerry-Edwards is the ticket; the Internet is the way to get it

By Jim Spencer and Thomas Mills

While two states could hardly be less similar, the political destinies of North Carolina and Massachusetts have wrapped themselves around each other since at least the middle part of the 20th century. In 1960, North Carolina's Terry Sanford became the first Southern governor to endorse a one-term U.S. senator from Massachusetts for president. The move virtually assured John F. Kennedy the Democratic nomination.



From 1972 to 2002, the two states represented ideological bookends in the Senate. North Carolina elected the "arch-conservative" Jesse Helms five times before his retirement in 2002. Ted Kennedy, the "ultra-liberal" of the Senate, still presides as Massachusetts' senior senator. In a twist, the presence of each man in the Senate helped keep the other's campaign coffers full of donations aimed at winning the ideological arms race.

This year, a week before the upstart Carolina Panthers faced the staid New England Patriots in the most exciting Super Bowl in history, the two states again offered our country an historic alliance.

By surging to a surprising win in Iowa, followed by a near sweep of the Democratic primaries, Sen. John Kerry is the presumptive nominee of the Democratic Party and the man we believe will defeat President Bush in this critical election. Sen. John Edwards, who placed an equally surprising second in the Iowa caucuses, and who continued to gain a determined, populist following throughout the primary season, is believed by many to be the man Kerry needs at his side as his running mate.

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As Kerry begins his campaign to unseat the incumbent president, there is only one open question about the ticket Democrats are sending into battle this year – who will be the vice presidential candidate? Never has this second half of a Democratic ticket

seemed so critical.

Most vice presidential possibilities are vetted in the summer and announced at the party's late summer convention. However, this year's convention follows an accelerated primary season and will take place in Boston during the last week of July. The aggressive Kerry campaign has let it be known that the candidate will choose his running mate months earlier than is the norm, making a decision as soon as early April.

As Kerry meets with those under consideration and weighs his choices, there is a way for Democrats to make their preference known for the person we believe is the strongest candidate and the obvious choice: John Edwards.

Since the Iowa caucuses, voters from every region have endorsed the Kerry-Edwards ticket, and for good reason. Kerry and Edwards offer Democrats the ticket they have only dreamed about in recent years. Each provides a yin to the other's yang, making both of them popular among diverse groups of Democratic and independent voters. They offer Democrats an energized and dynamic ticket, one that reaches all sectors and regions of the country. Together, they give the Democrats the Big Tent that they need to win.

Edwards, more than anyone else, is a candidate battle-tested by the recent primary contests and is already known by many inside and outside of the party.

Yet how do we let Kerry know where we stand? Democrats have discovered the Internet as a valuable tool for protesting, organizing, registering voters and raising money for our candidates. We have also learned that we can use the Internet as a way to make our concerns, issues and preferences known by those within our party.

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For years, party bosses and bigwigs have decided running mates behind closed doors. This year, we have created a way for average citizens to use the Internet to make their voices heard and to influence this critical choice. This may be the most literal demonstration of democracy at work – the ability of Democrats to play a direct role in promoting their choice of running mate and creating a ticket that can reclaim the White House.

During these final days as Kerry makes his choice, Democrats can go to draftkerryedwards.com and use this site as a vehicle for expressing support for the ticket that many believe will present the strongest challenge to Bush and Dick Cheney this November. By signing the online petition, they will be speaking out about one of the most important choices Kerry will make this year for himself and for us.

We will forward these petitions to the delegates and the campaigns to ensure that the leaders of the Democratic Party know where their voters stand.