



How You Can Participate in the 2008 Campaign

Thank you for your support of Elect to End Torture '08. If you're ready to expand your activism to the campaign trail, here are some tips for making the candidates aware of your opposition to torture.

1 Candidate Forums

One of the most effective ways to gain attention to our cause is to press presidential and congressional candidates to discuss their positions on torture and human rights on the campaign trail. This year, presidential candidates are holding public forums across the country in unprecedented numbers, Senators are organizing town hall forums with constituents throughout their respective states, and members of the U.S. House are preparing for debates and other forums with challengers across their districts. Asking questions of the candidates at these public forums is a perfect opportunity to learn the nuanced differences in their positions and to create a public record of where they stand.

Here's a straightforward how-to guide to learn what public events candidates are organizing in your community, how to gain admission to these events, how to increase your chances of asking a question, how to ask the question, and what to do to maximize press coverage of the issue of torture at these forums.

How to Find Out

■ **Read Your Newspaper and Watch Your Local News:** The number one source for information on public campaign events, debates, and candidate forums are your local newspapers, television news, and radio broadcasts.

■ **Sign-Up for the Candidates' Campaign Updates:** Candidates want to show their level of support in the community, so each campaign will use its e-newsletters, mailing lists, campaign updates, and general supporters lists to inform supporters of upcoming events. Log onto candidates' websites to sign up.

■ **Traditional Advertising:** Look for posters, advertising, and announcements in popular hang-outs, publications, and areas with high pedestrian traffic.

■ **Be Proactive:** Call the local campaign office or party headquarters to learn when candidates will hold public forums.

How to Get In

■ **Get Tickets:** Determine through news reports, advertising and inquiries of the candidates or parties if tickets are needed for admittance or if the event is first-come, first-serve.

■ **If You Need Tickets:** Follow directions from the forum's advertising. A good ad or flyer will tell you how and where to obtain tickets.

■ **Coordinating with Local Campaign Offices:** Coordinating with local campaign offices can help increase your chances of getting in. Candidates will want to have as many of their supporters as possible at a forum or debate and, as a result, will reserve a number of seats for supporters upfront, in areas ideal for asking a question.

■ **Arrive Early:** Most candidate forums are general admission. Regardless of whether the forum requires tickets or is first-come, first-serve, arrive at the event as early as possible.

How to Get Your Question Asked

■ **Come Prepared:** There are a number of different question-and-answer formats used in candidate forums, debates, and town-hall meetings. Arrive early enough to scope out the set-up and to discern how questions will be asked in order to best position yourself. For instance, if questions are to be submitted by the audience in advance, hand in as many questions on the topic of torture as the organizers will allow, even if the questions are similar to one another. Bear in mind that there will be some events where the audience will not be allowed to ask questions; this situation is unavoidable and often difficult to determine in advance.

■ **Arrive Early and Choose Your Seat Strategically:** Never sit in the front row - Examine the room and identify seating that is:

- In the sightline of the moderator and candidates
- Near the microphones set-up for audience questions
- Close to the inside aisle

■ **Attend with Friends and Spread Out:** Attend with friends and others who advocate an end to government-sanctioned torture, but spread out throughout the auditorium or event location to maximize the chances that one of you will be called on.

■ **Stick to One Question:** Coordinate with your friends to ask the same question. The more people willing to ask the same question, the greater the chance that it will be asked during the forum.

■ **Write Legibly:** When given an opportunity to submit questions on a note card: a) write legibly, and b) submit similar questions at the beginning and during the debate.

■ **Make Eye Contact with Moderator:** Making eye contact with the moderator or individual passing the microphone through the audience increases the opportunity that you or one of your friends will be chosen.

■ **Remember Elementary School:** Raise your hand! Some casual forums will choose questions randomly from the audience through this simple method.

■ **Coordinate with the Campaign:** Many forums have questions that were pre-determined and agreed upon by the campaign. Coordinate with the campaign and encourage a discussion of the candidate's position on torture.

■ **Coordinate with Media Sponsors/Event Organizers:** Let the event organizers know you want the candidate to discuss his or her stance on torture in the upcoming debate or forum. Give members of the media covering the event your questions in advance and talk to them about why the candidates must take a stance.

■ **Ask a Question:** Most importantly, ask a question. This is not an opportunity to deliver a speech. Make sure that you leave something for the candidate to answer.

■ **Practice Asking Your Question:** Before you go, practice out loud alone or with a friend.

How to Get Media Coverage

■ **Seek Out the Press:** Talk to members of the media before and after the event. You may be able to identify them by their press credentials or because they are seated in an area reserved for the press. If your question was asked, remind them, and give them your thoughts on how each candidate responded. If your question was not asked, remind the reporters why it is important that each candidate discuss his or her position on torture.

■ **Be Respectful of the Candidate and Avoid Partisanship:** Emphasize that torture is not a partisan issue. Torture undermines our moral authority and jeopardizes our national security.

■ **Be Concise:** Make a concerted effort to speak in simple short sentences. This will make your statement quotable by members of the press and lessen the chances that it can be taken out of context.

② What To Ask

Just as important as getting your question asked is formulating the right question. Here are some sample questions and talking points that will help.

Sample Questions

- If you're elected, will you renounce torture in your inaugural address?
- How will you ensure that all U.S. agencies abide by a single standard of humane treatment?
- Will you end the CIA practice of incommunicado detention in secret prisons?
- Do you consider waterboarding to be a form of torture?

Talking Points

■ **Torture is un-American.** Torture is not who we are as a nation and as a people. Humane standards of prisoner treatment, the rule of law, and human rights are at the heart of American ideals.

■ **Torture is illegal.** Any practice of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by United States officials violates international human rights standards to which the United States is a party, including under the Convention Against Torture, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The use of torture also violates U.S. law. In the past, the U.S. government prosecuted the technique known as waterboarding as a war crime.

■ **Torture harms our national security:**

• **The information produced through torture or cruel treatment generally is unreliable.** Information obtained using official cruelty often yields misleading intelligence. Acting on such bad intelligence harms our national security.

• **The use of torture or cruel treatment by the U.S. has helped galvanize public opinion against the United States, including among extremist groups.** Torture turns the hearts and minds of foreign civilian populations against us. Rights-respecting interrogation policies and strong national security go hand in hand.

■ **Torture puts our troops at risk.** The U.S. military has zero tolerance for torture. This commitment is articulated in the U.S. Army Field Manual on Intelligence Interrogations, which was adopted in September 2006. Dozens of high-ranking, retired

military leaders have spoken out against policies that allow for torture or official cruelty by those outside of the armed forces. These policies put American troops at increased risk by weakening international legal protections upon which we rely when members of the U.S. armed forces are captured.

■ **Experienced interrogators rely on their professional skill and knowledge of human behavior to gather intelligence and bring terrorists and criminals to justice—without resorting to torture or cruelty.** A relationship of trust and dependence often produces very useful human intelligence. General David Petraeus, the senior U.S. military leader in Iraq has said: "Some may argue that we would be more effective if we sanctioned torture or other expedient methods to obtain information from the enemy. They would be wrong. *Beyond the basic fact that such actions are illegal, history shows that they also are frequently neither useful nor necessary.* [] our experience in applying the interrogation standards laid out in the Army Field Manual . . . shows that the techniques in the manual work effectively and humanely in eliciting information from detainees."

③ Debate Primer

Knowing the truth behind some common misconceptions will help in talking with friends, family, neighbors, candidates, and members of the press.

Q: Does the use of waterboarding or other “enhanced interrogation techniques” make America safer?

■ Though some officials assert that interrogations using official cruelty have yielded important intelligence that would not have been obtained through other methods, to date there is no detailed information to substantiate these claims.

■ The association of the United States with torture has caused significant harm to America’s standing in the world and undermined a range of important U.S. foreign policy interests. This increased international ill-will makes the United States less safe. It is causing even some of our closest allies to temper and qualify their support and it has lessened their willingness to cooperate, even on vital intelligence matters.

■ One has to weigh the value of actionable intelligence gathered against the harm caused by having U.S. officials engage in acts of official cruelty which are illegal, immoral, often produce bad intelligence, put U.S. troops at greater risk and damage our nation's reputation around the world.

Q: What about the “ticking time bomb case” where a captured terrorist knows the location of a bomb that is about to explode and kill hundreds or thousands of people? Wouldn’t torture be justified in that extreme case?

■ The “ticking time bomb” scenario makes good television, but experienced interrogators say that this situation does not occur in real life. It is certainly not a sound basis for crafting law or official policy.

■ If a ticking time bomb exception is embraced in law and policy it will play out quite differently in Iraq or Afghanistan than it does on television. In these places, daily threats of bombings are real. If it becomes U.S. policy to allow interrogators to torture any local residents who might have information about a possible attack, then torture will become an everyday occurrence.

■ If the ticking bomb scenario were actually to take place, and coercive techniques were to be used to thwart it, those responsibly could and would argue that they acted out of necessity, a defense a judge could consider. This is very different than making torture the law of the land.

Q: Hasn’t torture worked in the past to disrupt terrorist plots?

■ Some senior U.S. government officials assert that coercive interrogation techniques have yielded important intelligence that has been used to prevent violent attacks. But to date they have refused to provide any details to corroborate these broad claims. By contrast, the overwhelming majority of experienced interrogators say that they do not believe these techniques are ever necessary or appropriate. Instead, they have and will continue to rely on their professional skills and experience to disrupt plots and save lives.

■ Furthermore, in some cases information obtained by using torture has had dramatically negative consequences. Consider the case of Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi. He was a senior al-Qaeda operative who was first interrogated by the CIA and then transferred to Egypt. Egyptian security agents tortured him and he linked Saddam Hussein to al-Qaeda. Al-Libi subsequently recanted his testimony, saying that he told his captors what he thought they wanted to hear.

Q: This is a new kind of enemy. They don’t follow the rules—why should we?

■ The United States has faced determined enemies before. We were able to successfully combat them without abandoning our principles.

■ There is no guarantee that if we treat prisoners humanely, our enemies will treat captured Americans the same way. However, if we do engage in torture and cruelty, we vastly increase the odds that our adversaries will do the same. ■