

Canvassing for Dean in the Carolinas – Good Answers to Questions



Q: What's Dean's position on abortion?

A: Howard Dean sees abortion as a medical issue between a woman and her doctor. In fact, he is a VERY strong advocate for women's and children's health.

When he was Governor of Vermont, he passed laws that

- made it easier for women and children to get healthcare,
- lowered the rate of child abuse, and
- got 89% of Vermont's pregnant women into prenatal care, so important for healthy pregnancy.

Dean knows, because he is a medical doctor, that informed and educated patients take better care of themselves, and that includes pregnant women and teens at risk for pregnancy. It's far better and healthier to prevent an unwanted pregnancy in the first place, and that comes from education and providing good healthcare, which Dean has a record of doing. Here, I've got a sheet on his healthcare record if you're interested.

You have answered the question and transitioned into the larger question of healthcare, where Dean is strong.

This is a touchy, loaded subject in the South. Be careful about using the word "choice" with regard to abortion, because the religious right treats that word negatively and suspiciously (as in "Not a choice but a child" — "Being gay is a CHOICE" — "We are all held accountable for our choices"). We need to avoid potential verbal landmines when talking with people who are on the fence about abortion.

If someone asks you what his stance is, if they are "pro-choice," the above answer will tell them in the first sentence: Dean is pro-choice. If they are "pro-life," it will answer their question but not belabor the point and move to the real issue that matters, which is women's health in general (prenatal care, children's health coverage, all that needs to happen if you are pregnant and decide to have the baby).

Q: I'm a Democrat, but I am kind of leaning toward Kerry... what makes Dean a better choice?

A: I like Kerry too, especially his war time experience, but he doesn't have the executive experience required for running a country having not been a governor as Dean was for 12 years... Senators rarely win general elections. Kerry is very bright, he doesn't connect with people and issues that affect them as well as Dean does. *You may want to say that any of these Democratic candidates are better than Bush and you would support them against Bush if they get the Democratic nomination, but that Dean is the top choice. Say what you really think.*

Q: I'm a Democrat, but I am leaning toward Gephardt. What makes Dean a better choice?

A: I like Gephardt too, but he's had lots of opportunities to lead and become President (he ran in 1988) and he hasn't been doing very well at it. We need a new kind of way of looking at the country's problems, a new vision and Howard Dean has that vision.

Q: I'm a Democrat, but I like John Edwards because he's "from around here" and understands Southerners. What makes Dean a better choice?

A: I like Edwards too, but he doesn't have the experience necessary for the job. It bothers me that he started running for president before he was seated as the Senator from North Carolina and he is not running for Senate this term. Senators don't have real executive experience, but Dean was a governor for 12 years (he was endorsed by the NRA and is a proponent of state's rights in many issues, such as education).

Q: I heard Dean supports/disrespects the Confederate flag. What's his problem?

A: What Dean was saying was that Americans without jobs and health care and good schools have more in common with one another than differences despite race. He got jumped on by other Democrats in October, even though he'd been using the phrase since January, because he's the frontrunner and they saw a vulnerability.

What he said was he wanted to represent guys with Confederate flags on their trucks. What he meant/the phrase he should have used was "NASCAR dads" who want good jobs, health care for their kids and good schools.

Q: Jobs are being lost from the Carolinas. Wasn't that NAFTA's/Bill Clinton's fault?

A: First of all the Democratic party opposed NAFTA more and tried to soften its effects more than the Republican party did. The idea was promoted by President Clinton, but was corrupted by corporation lobbyists to benefit multinational corporations. But for everyday workers, family farmers, and the environment, it has meant a global race to the bottom. We need true fair trade agreements, which is what Dean backs.

Second, Howard Dean would like to revisit those agreements and make sure that the loss of American jobs stops. One thing that would help small businesses would be targeted tax cuts, which the Republicans oppose, such as health care credits so that people (the majority of workers in the US) would have health coverage.

Q: Bush cut taxes and I like that. Why would I vote for someone who would raise taxes/What's Dean's position on taxes?

A: I'm sure your family's finances are better if you fall in the top 2% of wage earners and that you would only vote Democratic on moral grounds, but if you are like me, I saw a tiny refund, my health care costs have risen quickly, my payroll taxes have increased, my local, state and property taxes are skyrocketing and they are cutting services at the local level because the federal government isn't sending federal money back to the state's at the rate they used to.

Q: Universal healthcare, isn't that communist? Why should my taxes go to pay for welfare people/people with too many kids, etc.?

A: Every other country in the industrialized world has universal healthcare, including Canada. One reason I support it is for small business owners who would like their employees to have health care.

On occasion, you and I probably eat at restaurants, and the people making, serving, and cleaning up after the food don't have basic health care so they might pass things like TB to others eating at the restaurant!

A system in place for people between jobs or not able to afford high premiums makes a healthier society for all of us, and makes sure that people don't needlessly get serious problems because they can't afford checkups or prevent health problems from getting worse. Once that happens, they go to the ER, the hospital absorbs the cost and passes it on to us by raising their prices.

Do you know anyone who's out of work? Have they been out of work for a while? Do they have healthcare? This situation can happen to anyone. It's smarter for us to create a system that helps everyone equally, not just people who can afford it at any given time. If two kids are on a seesaw and the seesaw breaks and both kids break an arm, should only the kid who can afford it go to the doctor? That's the way the system is now.

IRAQ WAR/HOMELAND SECURITY QUESTIONS

Q: I supported the Iraqi war. Doesn't Governor Dean realize that Iraq was behind 9/11?

A: Despite what the media and the Bush administration have hinted, no intelligence has found links between Saddam Hussein's regime and Al Qaeda. In fact, most of the intelligence community believes no such links exist. The two never had reason to be allies. Saddam's secular, Baathist regime was the exact opposite of what Al Qaeda hopes to achieve — a fundamentalist Islamic state.

Q: The Iraqi war has liberated the Iraqi people and freed them from a murderous tyrant. I can't believe Dean was against that.

A: Governor Dean is glad to see the Iraqi people rid of Saddam Hussein. Hussein was a menace to his own people and to the world at large. What Governor Dean has questioned is the process by which we were dragged into that war and the Bush administration's pattern of deception about it.

- Overstatement of the threat Iraq posed to the American people and ignoring of more serious threats facing our country – North Korea and Al Qaeda.
- Claiming Iraq-al Qaeda alliance where no proof of such an alliance exists.
- Claiming actual knowledge of actual and imminent development of weapons of mass destruction, of which it has yet to show proof.
- Claiming that Iraqi reconstruction would be largely Iraqi-financed. It's now costing American taxpayers \$4 billion dollars a month.
- Claiming that American troops would be returned quickly, and would be in country for 1-2 years after the end of conflict. Most knew beforehand that Iraqi reconstruction would take years.

PLUS, Dean has issues with the current handling of the situation, including:

- Humiliation of our allies and the world though its swaggering, "go it alone" style.
- Disdain for international institutions in solving the Iraq and other world problems.
- The administration's dangerous precedent of "preemptive war."
- The lack of planning for post-war Iraq, and how the failure to build a true international coalition is jeopardizing our country's ability not only to build a stable, democratic, and peaceful Iraq but to have our military available to meet the other urgent threats facing the nation.

Q: I find Governor Dean's anti-war stance offensive. It's demoralizing and disrespectful to our troops to demean their efforts.

A: Governor Dean applauds the service of our troops. He recognizes and respects their sacrifice and duty to our country. What concerns Dean is the thin justification for putting our troops into this dangerous battle. He doesn't want our military's profound devotion to the protection of our country to be wasted on a conflict that will not likely improve our nation's security. He wants to make sure the president of the US gives the same respect to the military that our servicemen and women give to our country.

Q: The President is trying to garner international support for post-war Iraq now. What would Dean do

differently?

A: First, Dean would have started before the conflict, generating a true "coalition of the willing," with most of our traditional allies on board. Because of the President's heavy-handed treatment of them, they're much less willing to help.

Governor Dean would go to the U.N., something that administration won't do, and work with our allies there to transfer control of Iraq occupation to the U.N. Once a U.N. mandate is in place, an international force four times the size we have on the ground now would be put into place to secure the country and assist in the building of democratic institutions. Peacekeeping forces would include troops from both Arabic-speaking and majority-Muslim nations. The Bush Administration still wants the U.S. to be the primary power controlling Iraq. Other nations, such as India, won't put their troops in harm's way for the U.S. – but they will for the U.N.

Q: We need to give Iraq time. Reconstruction takes a while. Look at Europe after WWII.

A: It's going to take patience, to be sure. The American people must be prepared for a long stay of U.S. troops in the country. But European reconstruction was assisted by the Marshall Plan. The administration has provided no such plan for the reconstruction of Iraq. The Administration completely underestimated the problems that would face our nation after the end of the Iraq war. No we're paying for it in a \$4 billion a month tax bill, and the daily killing and wounding of our brave soldiers who are stretched thin trying to police a broken country.

Q: We're at war. Dean shouldn't criticize the President.

A: Former President Teddy Roosevelt: "To announce that there must be no criticism of the President, or that we are to stand by the President, right or wrong, is not only unpatriotic and servile, but is morally treasonable to the American public. Nothing but the truth should be spoken about him or any one else. But it is even more important to tell the truth, pleasant or unpleasant, about him than about any one else."

Q: I can't vote for Dean. He's a peacenik.

A: Governor Dean is not "anti-war," he was "anti-Iraq war."

As commander in chief, Governor Dean will be prepared to defend our country militarily if attacked or preemptively if an imminent and real threat faces our nation. Governor Dean supported the war in Afghanistan. He's committed to maintaining our military as the best-trained and best-equipped in the world. His principled opposition to the Iraq war is the result of his beliefs that Iraq as it was, boxed in by sanctions and no-fly zones, did not represent an imminent threat facing America. Governor Dean would have focused on two greater threats, North Korea and Al Qaeda.

Q: I thought Dean was a peace candidate. I'm voting for Kucinich.

A: I can understand your confusion. Unfortunately, the portrayal of Dean as a "peace" candidate was the result of media outlets that couldn't find a way to "sound-bite" the Governor's opposition to the Iraqi conflict. As a result, the fact that the Governor was "anti-Iraq war" and not "anti-war" was mischaracterized.

Governor Dean, like all of us, hopes for a world in which there are no wars. But he recognizes that humankind is not yet evolved beyond armed conflict. Our nation has enemies, and may have more in the future, that may need to be met on the battlefield. As President and Commander-in-Chief, he must be prepared for that.

Q: I can't vote for Dean. Dean has no homeland security experience.

A: Dean does have experience with security issues. As Governor, Howard Dean made daily administrative decisions protecting and preparing Vermont for the possibility of terrorist attacks. There's no other candidate for the Democratic president nomination that has had executive experience making these kinds of choices. Don't forget, of our last five presidents (Carter, Reagan, Clinton, and Bush Jr.) NONE had any federal level national security administrative experience prior to entering office. Only Bush Sr. had experience with that.

Q: I heard Dean dodged the Vietnam War draft.

A: Governor Dean did not serve in the Vietnam War but it was the U.S. Government's decision, not his. Dean reported for the draft, but the military rejected his enlistment due the Governor's back condition and gave him a deferment. **(But he went skiing...)** What should he have done instead? Sat home and watched TV? Look, no one in their right mind wanted to be involved in Vietnam. Dean was rejected by the Government and he went on with his life, becoming a doctor, teaching for 3 months, and then helping people as Governor. He's got a lot to be proud of. Bush's got a questionable record with the Texas Air Guard and Cheney got four student deferments. Cheney's quote in 1989: "I had other priorities in the '60s than military service."

Q: I can't vote for Dean. A President should have had military experience.

A: This country's greatest war presidents, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln, never served in the American military. Like these great leaders of the past, Governor Dean will surround himself with expert military advisors so that he may chart the proper course for the defense of our nation based on his experience, training, and intelligence.

Q: How does Dean differ from Gephardt and Kerry on his opposition to the war in Iraq? They're both questioning the President, too.

A: Both Kerry and Gephardt voted for the resolution giving the President unrestricted authority to begin a conflict in Iraq. Governor Dean would have voted against that resolution. Kerry and Gephardt are only questioning the President now that it's campaign time. The reasons for doubting the case for the Iraq war were evident all those months ago, except neither stood up for them.

Q: The UN didn't take the lead on Iraq. We had to do something since they were sitting on their hands.

A: Like Governor Dean, many members of the UN weren't convinced that the factual case had been made for using military force for toppling the Hussein regime. They were also quite offended by the Administration's "our way or the highway" approach and its "we'll tell you what to think" leadership.

Q: What does Dean think of the Patriot Act?

A: Governor Dean believes many things in the Patriot Act to be unconstitutional.

- The government's ability to search library records without a proper warrant.
- The government's ability to search through video store records without a warrant.
- The government's ability to incarcerate of American citizens without access to a lawyer.

The President is appointing members of the far-right federalist society who have a very different view of the Constitution than the rest of America. As President, Governor Dean would appoint an attorney general that actually believes in upholding the Constitution. He'll ask the Congress to revise the Patriot Act and take out the things that are clearly an invasion of individual privacy. And he'll appoint judges who are moderate mainstream judicial figures, not ones on the far right.

Q: What did Dean do for Vermont's Homeland Security as Governor?

A: In 1998, Governor Dean established the Vermont Anti-Terrorism task force. Its purpose was to determine how the State would respond to terrorist incidents.

After 9/11, Governor Dean and the Task Force:

- Designated the Vermont State Police as the lead agency in charge of crisis management during a terrorist act in Vermont.
- He divided the state into four terrorism management districts, mirroring State Police troop districts. Each Troop Commander was responsible for planning, coordinating and managing terrorism response.
- Set up a 24-Hour Terrorism Hotline for reporting terrorism or suspicious activities.
- Conducted joint terrorism preparedness assessment with FEMA and state agencies.
- Developed a common vulnerability assessment pamphlet that was distributed to local governments and critical service providers.

MISCELLANEOUS

Q: I heard Dean sealed his gubernatorial records for 10 years. What is he hiding?

A: Many governors all over the U.S. seal certain of their papers. The two governors of Vermont who served right before Dean each had their papers sealed for six years. The governor prior to Dean died while in office and his papers were sealed *for* him. The majority of the paperwork produced when Dean was Governor is open to the public. The papers aren't all about the Governor; there are hundreds of other people mentioned or involved. Here's an example of something that might need to be sealed: Say someone sends a letter to the Governor saying, "I have breast cancer and my insurance company dropped me," asking him for help, or revealing something of a personal nature. If it were not sealed, any journalist could pore over it and report it because it's public record.

George W. Bush was sued because he signed an executive order allowing incumbent or former presidents to withhold the release of their presidential papers. And Presidential papers are more important by a long shot than gubernatorial records. Bush also sent his own gubernatorial papers to his father's presidential library, and when lots of people complained, they were sent to the Texas state archives.

For the last two years, Dick Cheney's office has been dealing with a lawsuit filed by Judicial Watch and the Sierra Club seeking information on closed meetings he conducted as chairman of a task force on national energy policy. Cheney says the panel was mostly government officials from the Department of Energy, the Department of Commerce and the EPA. The plaintiffs claim energy industry execs led the task force. Environmentalists and renewable energy advocates, they say, were excluded from actual participation.

Q: What's Dean's position on the death penalty?

A: Governor Dean opposes the death penalty except in very limited circumstances involving extreme and heinous crimes. He is also a proponent of fair trials, and would work to pass the "Innocence Protection Act" – a measure with wide bipartisan support that has largely been ignored by Bush. Dean will sign it into law.

As President, Dean will instruct his Attorney General to evaluate the federal death penalty system, take steps to ensure that it is applied fairly and reliably, and reverse Ashcroft's overzealous policies. He will also establish a Presidential Commission on the Administration of Capital Punishment to analyze the causes of wrongful convictions around the country and recommend additional reforms at the federal and state level.

Q: Where does Dean stand on No Child Left Behind/vouchers?

A: Because Dean's a strong advocate for local control of school boards, he opposes No Child Left Behind. He calls it "Every School Board Left Behind." He is critical of vouchers for two reasons: 1) They pull kids and resources from public schools, leaving behind special education students and, 2) They are a form of segregation. "Public schools are the last place on Earth where everybody has to get to know everybody else."

THE ECONOMY & JOBS

Q: What does Dean think about the economy?

A: Our country is headed in the wrong economic direction, principally because President Bush has returned to the Republican "Borrow and Spend" policies of the 1980s. The deficit, which is approaching \$200 billion per year, is the direct result of the reckless \$1.6 trillion tax cuts of the President's first year in office.

Rather than stimulating job growth, the Bush-backed millionaire tax cuts will stimulate a massive federal budget shortfall—a 10-year deficit of nearly \$6 trillion, according to George Akerlof, a 2001 Nobel Prize winner and economist at the University of California, Berkeley. "The popular discussion is there might be some question whether Bush's economic policies are advisable," he said. "But that's wrong—they're the worst in over 200 years." As a result of these cuts, states will receive 30 percent less next year from the federal highway fund, putting 150,000 American construction jobs on the line. These tax cuts are not a stimulus package. Just the opposite — the deficits are once again soaking up capital, diverting money from the private sector and making the economic situation worse.

Q: The economy's in such a mess — how would Dean fix it?

A: As President, Dean would begin the economic recovery by raising the minimum wage. At a time when nine million Americans are out of work, Dean believes we should at least help those who are still working. When he was Governor, he raised the minimum wage. It's now \$6.75 an hour, compared to the federal minimum of \$5.15. We're the richest nation in the world – we can do it. He would also expand unemployment insurance to cover more low-wage and part-time workers. Less than 1 in 5 is covered today.

As President, he will be committed to preserving the integrity and long-term stability of the Social Security Trust Fund. Dean will oppose privatizing the Social Security System. And he will pursue a responsible economic agenda, and under his plan we will never have to consider raising the retirement age. We need to provide help to the states and communities who are laying off firefighters and police officers, closing schools early, reducing highway assistance and even releasing prisoners from jail.

Finally, Dean's administration will also re-examine our trade policies. In an era of globalization, multinational corporations chase the lowest wages and the most permissive regulations. Fair trade is good for America and the world, but the playing field needs to be level. We can't allow some countries to subsidize exports, manipulate their currencies, or erect barriers to imports from the United States.

Dean would repeal PART of Bush's tax cuts — the parts that go to people who make an insane amount of money and didn't need the cut to begin with. He's all for giving the little guy a break, which is what he did in Vermont. In exchange for the most wealthy losing that tax cut, Dean would fund schools, roads, homeland security in YOUR back yard not just the president's and he'd insure those with no insurance without touching employer-based insurance. That will save you money, too — when the uninsured go to the ER you and I pay their bill because the health care industry has to up our bills to cover those extra costs.

Q: What's Dean's position on Israel?

A: Howard Dean supports the following for bringing peace to Israel

- a two-state solution, along with the majority of Israelis and Palestinians,
- full engagement of the United States in the peace process,
- an end to terrorist attacks on the Israeli people,
- the eventual withdrawal of Israel from the occupied territories.

Q: What about North Korea?

A: A serious policy toward North Korea would be based on these principles.

First, it must result in a verifiably nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

Second, it must be carried out in full coordination with our allies in Seoul and Tokyo and close cooperation with Moscow, Beijing and the European Union.

Third, it must include a willingness to engage in direct talks with North Korea if necessary, not as some kind of reward to blackmail, but as a means of doing what is necessary to prevent proliferation and the risk of war.

Together with our allies, and others in the region, Dean would challenge Pyongyang to return the fuel rods to their previous location, and allow international authorities to inspect and re-seal them. North Korea must also continue its moratorium on tests of long-range missiles. In return, the U.S. can pledge to take no military action against the North and agree to resume direct, high-level talks. The discussions should be wide-ranging and designed to give North Korea a chance to reduce its isolation and begin moving in the direction of a normal society.

Thanks to the authors of “Dean Sight Bites” from Marin County, CA, Debra Dahlin, Brian O’Shea, Cherie Mabrey and Jennifer Gaddy for contributing to this list of questions and answers.

Words of encouragement from an experienced canvasser

If you are still wary about knocking on strangers' doors, maybe these mental notes will help you over the hump.

1. **Most people don't answer the door** (on a Sunday afternoon). The exception to this is in **African American neighborhoods**. My experience there has been open and friendly, and a willingness to sign the petition. One elderly lady said. "That George Bush is a devil in clothes!" It is most important to make...
2. **Eye contact**. Look straight into people's eyes as you speak. They want to believe that you believe in what you are telling them.
3. **Stay positive in your attitude**; it works better to not to run down Republicans, but to boost Dean.
4. If I feel the need, I'll add to my pitch that "**signing the petition does not mean you endorse Howard Dean, or will vote for him**, merely that you feel he should be included on the ballot."
5. **Have a few points in mind if they ask why they should consider Dean**. "Fiscally Responsible" rings bells.
6. I wrote this before but will tell you again — **quite often I am thanked for making the effort**.
7. **It takes me four hours on a Sunday to gather 20 signatures**. Some days it will be quick at first and I think I may get home in time to rake (oh joy!) or something, but I haven't broken the 12 minutes per signature time yet. **It may go more quickly when I start working on the apartments** in my precinct; I am saving them for bad weather days.
8. Later on I may go out **after work**, when people will be more likely to be home (but maybe eating dinner). They'll feel sorry for me out in the dark & cold and sign the thing.
9. The few nasty people I encountered were Republicans. Heh.
10. **The hardest approach was the first**.
11. I've **lost 3 pounds** since I began all this walking.

Again I will tell you that I've found I enjoy it, even though I am naturally a shy person. And the satisfaction I have going to sleep knowing I've filled in another sheet is, er, —priceless. Can you hear me now?