

6 Reasons Why Howard Dean Will Win The General Election

(December 21, 2003) I have been following the presidential campaign of former Vermont Governor Howard Dean ever since Dean won MoveOn.org's first-ever "national primary" with a whopping 44% of the vote back in June of this year. I have become convinced that Howard Dean will not only win the Democratic nomination, but that he will win the general election as well. Let me tell you why.

1) The Nomination In every poll that counts at this time of year – that is, the early state-by-state polls, Gov. Dean is positioned well. In Iowa, the first caucus state, Dean has gained the lead. In New Hampshire, the first primary state, Dean has a solid, double-digit lead and a firm commitment from a remarkable 82% of those who support him. Dean also leads in recent polls in Arizona, Michigan, and New York. No competitor can rightly claim the second place title, as different candidates jockey for the position directly behind Dean in various states. Howard Dean has surged into the lead from the back of the pack. No one candidate matches Dean in terms of money, organization, endorsements, momentum, or supporter enthusiasm (see below).

On December 9, 2003, former Vice President **Al Gore officially endorsed Howard Dean** for president. Citing Dean's "insight and courage" and his ability to inspire the country at the grassroots level, Gore said that, in his judgment, Dean "has the best chance to win and the best chance to lead our country in the right direction." With each passing day, it becomes increasingly likely that Howard Dean will win the Democratic nomination.

2) Money With the New York Times (10/16/03) reporting a \$14.8 million take in the third quarter (ending September 30), Dean broke Bill Clinton's 1995 record of \$10.3 million in a single quarter by a Democratic candidate for president in a year before a national election—and Clinton was president at the time and running unopposed. This puts Dean, at \$25.4 million for the year, over \$5 million ahead of his closest competitor, who started big and then dwindled to just \$4 million in the third quarter. In addition, Dean can go back to the well again and again since the average contribution is less than \$100. It's a source of funding that is unlikely to dry up.

But in one of the most intriguing twists yet to a campaign that seems to break new ground on a weekly basis, Gov. Dean and his campaign manager, Joe Trippi, have announced that, after polling Dean's supporters for their opinion, the Dean For America campaign has decided to forgo matching funds. This bold move – giving up approximately \$19 million in public financing - is seen as a savvy general election strategy designed to make Dean financially competitive with George W. Bush. By opting out of the system (as Bush has), the Dean campaign is not required to adhere to strict primary spending limits – limits that would surely have crippled the campaign and brought it crashing to a halt by March of 2004. Dean supporters enthusiastically embraced this major decision and pledged their financial contributions in record numbers.

3) Number of Supporters Early in 2003, Dean and Trippi sat down to discuss numbers. They determined how many Dean supporters they would need to have registered on the DeanForAmerica.com website in order to win the general election. They then took that figure and worked backwards, deciding that they would need to have 450,000 registered Dean supporters by September 30, 2003, in order to meet the end figure. The Dean campaign reached that important goal on September 29.

4) Meet Up Meet Up is an Internet-based organization that allows its members to self-organize. Candidates for office can purchase the services of Meet Up to help in grassroots organizational efforts. Members meet monthly, planning outreach and campaign activities.

As of December 21, Howard Dean had over 159,400 registered Meet Up members, more than three times the number of his closest competitor. Joe Trippi believes that Dean's surge in the polls in Iowa and New Hampshire over the summer is largely due to 60,000 hand-written letters that Meet Up members wrote to voters in these two first-in-the-nation states. The letter-writing campaign has now shifted to the Dean For America website, allowing activists to write letters for Dean from the comfort of their own homes. Dean activists write an average of 10,000 letters a week.

The Dean Meet Up figures are indicative of a grassroots that feels energized and empowered. Clearly, Howard Dean and his message spark something in people that inspires them to self-organize – in all 50 states and in the District of Columbia. Dean is reaching out to the base, he's bringing drop-outs back into the political process, and he's creating interest among newbie activists who have never participated before – and he's using the Internet to start the process.

5) Labor Endorsements Based on the solid fundamentals mentioned above, several important labor unions have endorsed Gov. Dean as the candidate that they feel their dedication and hard work can help bring to victory in the general election. The International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT), named the most effective political organization in the labor movement in 2001 by the AFL-CIO, has pledged 250,000 activist events on behalf of Gov. Dean. The California Teachers Association, 335,000 members strong, makes a powerful presence in the all-important state of California.

But it was the endorsement of two of the country's most politically powerful service unions that kicked the campaign into high gear and anointed Howard Dean the "official" frontrunner. The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), with a combined total of over 3 million members, backed Dean because they strongly believe that he can win the 2004 general election. According to Gerald W. McEntee, president of AFSCME, Dean has "a plan for winning and the financial resources to get there." (Washington Post, 11/12/03) SEIU and AFSCME will invest a formidable number of manpower hours and tens of millions of dollars in the Dean campaign.

6) The GOP Pollsters' Memo In September, 2003, a prominent Republican polling firm, Moore Information, circulated a memo insisting Howard Dean can beat George W. Bush in the general election and that "Dean is a threat [that] Republicans better not ignore." "Dean comes across as a true believer to the base but will not appear threatening to folks in the middle," the GOP pollsters write. The memo even goes so far as to compare the appeal of Howard Dean to that of Ronald Reagan: "Voters in the middle looked to the bigger picture where they saw a man of conviction who cared about them and had solutions for their problems." The pollsters also make a convincing case for Dean's taking enough electoral votes to win the election even without Florida. "We are whistling past the graveyard if we think Howard Dean will be a pushover." (www.moore-info.com)

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