

# FACTS AT A GLANCE

## INTERNET USAGE AND POLITICAL CONSUMERS

*\*As reported by the PEW Research Center, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and the Institute for Politics Democracy & the Internet (IPDI)*

- The Internet became an essential part of American politics in 2004. More than 75 million Americans used the Internet to get political news and information, discuss candidates and debate issues, or participate directly in the political process by volunteering or giving contributions to candidates in 2004. (PEW)
- Over the past 5 years, the Internet population has grown to become much more mainstream, including higher proportions of women, older Americans, minorities and rural residents. (PEW)
- Today, more than 100 million Americans are online. (FEC)
- More than half of online political consumers say the information they get from the Internet helped them decide how to vote. (PEW)
- The Internet is now a more important source of campaign news and information than radio. PEW reported 28 percent of Internet users cite the Internet as their primary source of campaign news, as opposed to 17 percent who cited radio.
- Last year, millions of online political consumers use the Internet to research candidates' issues positions, research candidates' voting records, take online polls, discuss politics in chat rooms and other online forums and make campaign contributions online. (PEW)
- In general, major campaigns are now specifically designed with the specific goal of driving people to campaign web-sites, and online Americans render a positive verdict about the overall impact of the Internet on campaigns. (PEW)

## ***However...***

- As the Internet becomes more widely used, fraudulent web-sites are on the rise. CNN reported more than 2,100 Hurricane Katrina charity websites are being questioned for fraudulent fundraising.
- Last year, Presidential candidates George Bush and John Kerry lost millions to fraudulent campaign and fundraising web-sites. (FEC)
- The vast majority of Microsoft Network users have indicated (in a 2003 study) that they hesitate to provide their e-mail address and credit card number to political web-sites. (IPDI)
- Campaigners across the board are finding it increasingly difficult to persuade individuals to give up sensitive personal information to Web sites. (IPDI)