

Unity08 looks to the Internet for 2008

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A new political movement seeking a bipartisan ticket for the 2008 presidency looks to garner voters via the Internet.

Calling themselves Unity08, the new online political movement seeks to fix existing parties by creating a president and vice-president bill for the 2008 presidential election to be headed by a woman or man from each party or an independent who presents a Unity Team from both parties, according to group's Web site.

"We believe that, while the leaders of both major parties are well intentioned people, they are trapped in a flawed system -- and that the two major parties are today simply neither relevant to the issues and challenges of the 21st century nor effective in addressing them," Unity08's Web site states. "As a result, most Americans have not been enthusiastic about the choices for president in recent elections, the key issues they ran on, or the manner in which the campaigns were conducted."

So unlike the current presidential primaries system, the group is planning to open its delegation to where any American voter will be qualified to vote in a secure online convention.

The online convention where delegates vote is expected to take place in the first half of 2008. And organizers say that if at least 20 percent of the voting public vote in the convention, then "our voters will decide the 2008 elections."

"In our current nominating system, middle America will lose based on how the Iowa Caucus, New Hampshire, and South Carolina will vote and by and large, the race is over, leaving greater middle America without any say," said Doug Bailey, media adviser to former President Gerald Ford and co-founder of The Hotline. "Why not use the technology to enable greater middle America to correct today's politics. (They) are not only upset with the Republicans and the Democrats, but with Washington."

Moreover, he added that young voters who have been turned off by the political system could use their movement to empower themselves via technology, but that anyone would be interested in the group's goals since close to 70 percent of people use e-mail and the Internet on a daily basis.

But Unity08, headquartered in Denver, is also focusing its efforts on reforming the 2008 national elections by influencing major parties in terms of crucial issues for the national agenda.

These crucial issues are defined as those for America's future safety and welfare including global terrorism, national debt, education, healthcare, global climate vs. important issues regarding gun control, abortion and gay marriage, the site said.

Its members include former communications director for Jimmy Carter Gerald Rafshoon, Democratic consultant and co-founder of The Hotline Roger Craver, and Nicco Mele, Howard Dean 2004's Internet strategist and webmaster.

Already launching their site to promote their campaign agenda and getting people interested some two years before the next election isn't too early, says Julie Germany, deputy director at The Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet at George Washington University's

Graduate School of Political Management.

According to Germany, people are excited about the new group and the site, which also includes an interactive game allowing users to help voters cross the street to DemocracyLand by dodging partisan parties, special interests, and lunatic drivers.

"In fact, it's just the right time," she said, "especially at a time where people are ready for the emergence of a new kind of party."

Moreover, she mentioned that the group is using the Internet more to provide a new forum of debate to pique the public's interest as well as "decrease the polarization and partisanship, not only among the political parties, but the American public."

"The people involved learned the important lessons from the Bush campaign, the Kerry campaign, and the Dean campaign, taking the best components and putting them together to target the public all on one site," Germany said. "I think it's a good start, it's neither far left or far right, at the very least it aims to regain some of that middle ground."

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