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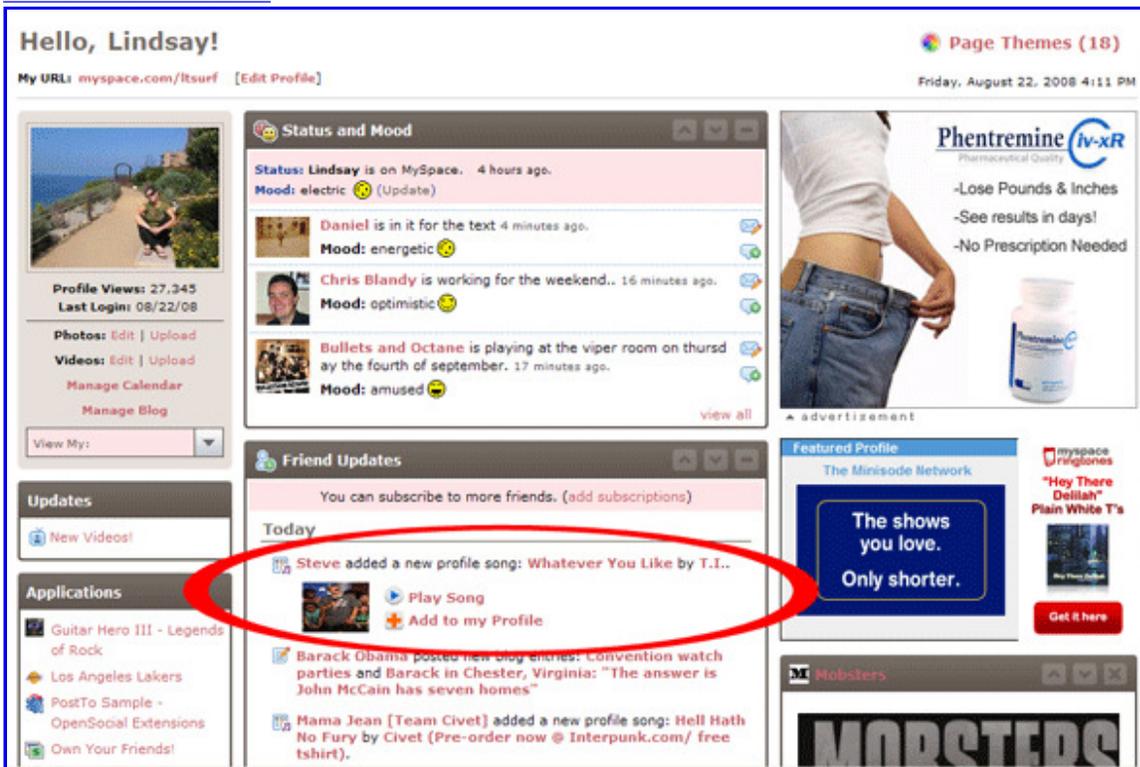
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Election 2008: A Dozen Sites Open for Political Debate

August 31, 2008 - 11:38 am PDT - by [Paul Glazowski](#) [6 Comments](#)

As has been made very clear by the media, the presidential candidates chosen to represent the two major parties of the United States for the election this November will be spending precious primetime airspace sparring over issues which pollsters of America deem most important to the nation's people. Those who dislike watching the matches will of course stray to different stations. But millions of others will remain transfixed. And given the social componentry now available to Web users, a large swath of the population - democrats, republicans and independents alike - will undoubtedly continue to toss one-liners and Google-searched investigative research every which way in any and all Internet channels available.



In light of this reality, we figure it is only fitting that we bring to your attention several moderately well-known as well as some relatively obscure websites that focus on all vocal aspects of the political process, from sound bytes to speech in long form and the commentary which accompanies the rhetoric. Sure, you could visit [RedState](#) or [HuffPost](#) or [CNN](#) or [Fox News](#). But there are some places less about the pomp and more about the circumstance worth a mention all the same.

Topic	Side 1 (Score)	Side 2 (Score)
Was Gov. Sarah Palin the right choice for McCain's VP running mate?	14 points	22 points
Is a federal sales tax more fair than the current income tax?	13 points	10 points

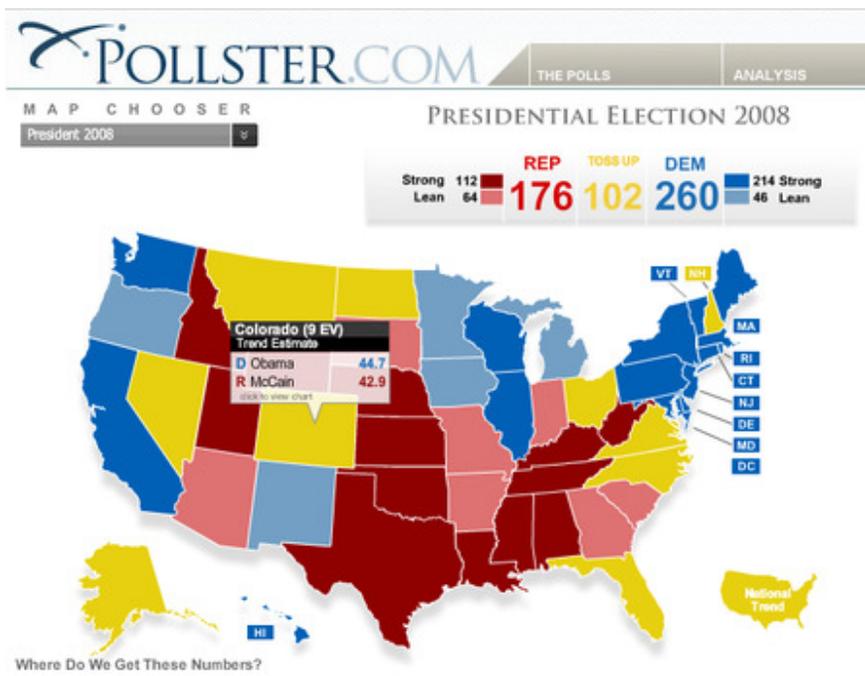
[CreateDebate](#) is one example. It offers a quick voting mechanism as well as one for commentary. Many users publish quite detailed summaries of their views on particular topics, which makes for engaging reading and naturally sparks responses from more users as a result. Want to engage a forum that follows politicians' one-liners with more extensive commentary to the affirmative or the negative (or perhaps neutral standing)? CreateDebate is well worth the cost of entry: free. We wrote about the website [back in April](#), and gave it considerable praise then. It turns out the review was warranted.

The screenshot shows the homepage of whereIstand.com. At the top, there is a search bar and the site's logo. Below the navigation bar, there are two main sections: "Express opinions." and "Find opinions." The "Express opinions." section encourages users to take a stand on issues and register for a free account. The "Find opinions." section invites users to search for opinions from public figures and organizations. A horizontal menu below these sections lists various categories like "art & entertainment", "business", "education", etc. Below the menu, a featured issue is displayed: "John McCain's age will affect his presidential campaign negatively." This issue has 72 "agree" votes and 37 "disagree" votes. A "109 opinions" badge is visible on the right. At the bottom of the featured issue, there are links to "follow this issue" and "share this issue".

Another service, [whereIstand](#), offers a similarly polished experience as that of CreateDebate, albeit with a different format. Navigation might take some getting used to, but it's [reasonably well-featured](#) to accommodate opinionmaking among the membership. Just to note, it's football season in the collegiate and professional leagues, so there are quite a few opinions sitting among the frontrunners which focus on the game. But the floor is open to all, as they say, so express yourself if you wish - for whatever reason.

The screenshot shows the MyGuesstimate website. The header features the site's name "MyGuesstimate" and navigation links for "Home", "My Profile", "Search Friends", "Sign Up", and "Login". A banner below the header says "Check out our Blog to see what's happening!" and provides a brief description of the site's purpose: "MyGuesstimate is a place to post questions and place 'guesstimates' to questions your friends have created. You have the ability to include photos, videos, links, and comments to support your idea about the topic at hand." Below this, there are toggle buttons for "Unsettled" and "Settled". The main content area displays a question posted by "Don & Laurie Higgins": "Will Gov. Palin of Alaska be the Vice Presidential Candidate that will seal the Presidency for Sen. McCain? Or will the ethics investigation in Alaska of her reveal that she is not the savior for McCain?" The question has a "1 Guesstimate" badge. Below the question is a link: "http://tinyurl.com/65h26q". There are two buttons: "Seal It For McCain" and "Investigation Will Determine She Is Guilty." At the bottom, there is a "Send to Friend(s)" button and a timer: "66 days : 06 hr : 16 min : 15 sec | Comments (0)". On the left side, there is a profile section for "Don & Laurie Higgins" with a photo of a gorilla and statistics: "Following: 15", "Followers: 3", "Questions: 9", "Guesstimates: 20", "Win : 0%". There is also a "Following" list with "View All" link and a grid of user avatars.

At first [MyGuesstimate](#) may not strike you as a world-class forum. And that's because it isn't. [We first reviewed](#) the joint exactly one week ago, and while it has grown a bit, it hasn't flourished. Still, the structure of it allows for a good amount of discussion. Post questions with answers, and see where the community takes it. Comments are allow, too, so talk doesn't end with the click of a button. Its simplicity and user networking aspects are what I enjoy most.



Disregard for a moment my initial bout of sarcasm when mentioning the pollster establishment. This next one, appropriately enough, is called [Pollster.com](#). It essentially provides an interactive map displaying the 50 American states with a rough gauge on the consensus view on both major presidential candidates, Barack Obama (D) and John McCain (R). The utility of this service is limited, as you'll see. But perhaps a weekly or bi-weekly visit couldn't hurt. The latest poll results fall around the last few weeks of August, so the numbers are fairly current. If you're one to take regional, state-by-state, or national polls into consideration when writing your ballot red, white, or blue, this is one place to bookmark.



Meanwhile, if you're an all-around political junkie, [RealClearPolitics](#) covers the news, the numbers, and a fair amount of public discourse as well. Want a resource that scopes virtually every relevant and semi-relevant vantage in the quadrennial chess game currently underway? You can do far worse than RealClearPolitics.

I should say that I trawled the Web for quite some time before arriving at [We Op-Ed](#). And I'm not sorry I did. Well-design and equally accommodating of both original thought and user commentary, with videos debates and a fairly active community holding it all together, We Op-Ed should be far more busy in the way of conversation than it is today. It is arguably one of the best destinations among those listed here. If the mainstream media isn't doing it for you, We Op-Ed probably will.

Perhaps you're interested in a quick view of the top candidates' political leanings. Their voting records, their statements. All that fun stuff. If you need to keep informed to keep your online conversations teeming with data, [ProCon.org](#) is a kind of one-stop shop. You won't find everything, of course. But you'll likely find enough fodder to trigger posts on forums elsewhere.

Analysts of the election underway have made it very clear that youth involvement is the highest it's been

in years. That is especially true for those of voting age, but even citizens that will be below the 18-year threshold come November have places to dish their positions. [Youth Noise](#) is one interesting venue. It covers multiple topics outside of politics, but has also [reserved a spot](#) for those watching the race.

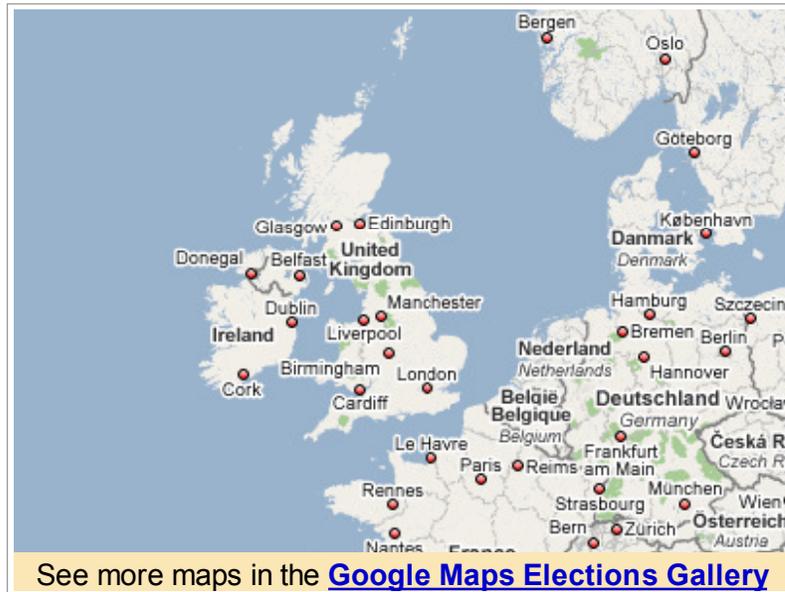
For those in the academic world, there are also sites like [Debate Central](#) and [iDebate](#) to serve as information centers for student debaters. As the fall semester commences in the next couple of weeks in many parts of the country, these destinations will likely be visited with great frequency. Get better prepared to play warring parties in front of your classmates.

[ForandAgainst.com](#) takes us back to original debate site premise given to this collection, but its topics are hugely diverse. That is to its benefit, but not for politics. Miscellany reigns supreme. You can of course present political discourse if you like, but it's open to question whether such material will rise to the fore. Science and philosophy share a spot at the top of the ladder, it seems.

Now, in the event that none of the sites presented here make the grade, or don't offer a enough of a fly-on-the-wall take on odd political jibber-jabber, there is a wildcard that may well grab your eye. A [Twitter-Google Maps mashup](#), developed by [Michael Geary](#), involves Twitter, [Twittervision](#), and the ever industrious [Google Maps API](#). Of course, watching it go can get tiresome. The blogging can get very redundant very fast. Nonetheless, the choice to be an observer with a bird's-eye view is entirely yours.

Finally, how about a look at the Google Books upload of the [Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858](#). A total 423 pages, front to back. Something to inspire? Stir that nostalgia? Maybe rehash some of the matters at hand back in the day?

[Twitter Election Map](#)



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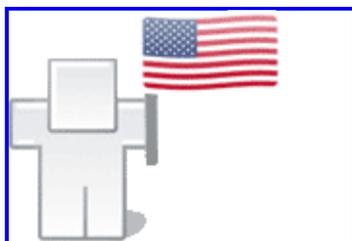
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- - [Chris Matthieu](#) [August 31, 2008 @ 8:41 pm](#)

One more... [VoteSpin!](#) VoteSpin.com is a robust Web 2.0 social political network with a single goal - to encourage dialog and debate amongst voters (both young and old) with the hope of restoring democracy in the US.

Traditionally younger voters have always had low voting turnouts. We aim to change this phenomenon while engaging all voters in healthy political debates to change minds, views, and positions. Using VoteSpin anyone can write a review on a candidate with the hope of spinning someone else's vote away or to a particular candidate. Reviews and candidates can then be rated. Reviews can be tagged and commented on while the system keeps everyone in the debate with emails. VoteSpinners can invite political-minded friends and family to receive RSS feeds of all debates and political activities.

VoteSpin was inspired by Al Gore's latest book, "The Assault on Reason". In his book, Al states:

"The easy accessibility individuals have to publish ideas on the Internet has led to the emergence of a new meritocracy of ideas that is similar in some ways to the public forum that existed during the time of America's founding. The Internet has several structural characteristics that make it particularly useful and powerful as a tool for reinvigorating representative democracy."

"The democratization of knowledge by the print medium brought Enlightenment. Now, broadband interconnection is supporting decentralized processes that reinvigorate democracy. We can see it happening before our eyes: As a society, we are getting smarter. Networked democracy is taking hold. You can feel it."

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- - [bisbrandt](#) [September 1, 2008 @ 5:30 am](#)

I'd like to add another one to this list.

[SocialVoter](#) is a community whose users engage each other to create a forum for social and political issues information, dialogue, and interaction – ultimately giving voice to issues that impact our Government.

Currently in early beta, SocialVoter is looking for new members and feedback to help decide on enhancements and build future versions of the site.

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- - **Brittany Bohnet** [September 1, 2008 @ 12:05 pm](#)

Here's a great gallery of political map mashups: maps.google.com/elections

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- - **growvotes** [September 4, 2008 @ 7:11 am](#)

<http://www.growvotes.org>

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- - **michael** [September 8, 2008 @ 2:37 am](#)

Cool Overview of electoral sites.

What I need is an overview of the progression of polls as the results come in.

The widget shows the election polls by strength of states.

In addition to other different graphical visualizations of data, this one displays the progression of votes over time.

It gives a great overview..

<http://www.youcalc.com/apps/1218019592041>

... and its easy to put on your blog!

Make a difference, keep on voting!

[Reply to this comment »](#)



- - **blkvegas** [September 8, 2008 @ 7:37 pm](#)

Barack is going to have to get mean! John McCain and the GOP will lie, punch, bite, kick and do whatever it takes to disrupt Barack at every turn from here on out. McCain is a warrior. At 72, he has nothing to lose and everything to gain and he is tough! Barack needs to "strap em' on" and come out fighting. He must knock this guy out.

Either let this guy have it, or risk losing it all in November. Good luck Barack.

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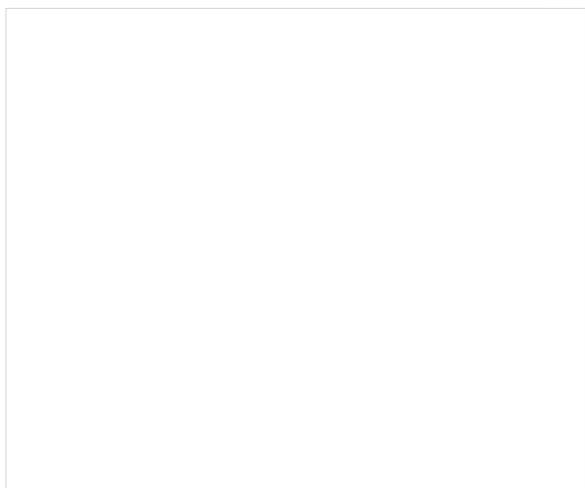
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