

= Tom Vilsack presidential campaign , 2008 =

After being considered as a potential Vice Presidential candidate for Senator John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election , former Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack began a campaign for the Democratic Party 's 2008 nomination for President of the United States .

On November 30 , 2006 , he became the second Democratic candidate to officially announce a presidential run . His short @-@ lived campaign was focused on his home state of Iowa but suffered low standing in national polls and a lack of name recognition . During the campaign , he emphasized the War in Iraq and his plan for ending it .

His run concluded on February 23 , 2007 , before any debates or primaries , due to funding shortfalls . He endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton after his exit , but shifted to Barack Obama after her withdrawal .

= = Early stages = =

Near the end of his eight years as Governor of Iowa , Vilsack , as head of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council , campaigned for Democratic gubernatorial candidates across the nation . While on the campaign trail he gauged support for a possible presidential run . Vilsack was inspired by the results of the 2006 mid @-@ term elections , and proclaimed that " Americans sent a clear message " that " they want leaders who share their values , understand their needs and respect their intelligence " and that that is what he would " intend to do as president " . On November 9 , Vilsack filed with the FEC and announced that he had been " put [ting] together the building blocks needed to run a successful national presidential campaign . " He made his formal announcement on November 30 .

= = Campaign developments = =

Vilsack made his announcement in Mount Pleasant , Iowa . He listed the themes of his campaign as energy independence , national security , and the economy . The candidate promised change in government by means of reduced partisanship and decried the Bush Administration as one " whose first impulse is to divide and to conquer . " Vilsack acknowledged his underdog status , given his low profile outside Iowa , which hampered fundraising .

In December , Vilsack embarked on a campaign tour beginning in his hometown of Pittsburgh . While there , he addressed a local Democratic Committee , reminiscing about his childhood and how his adopted mother overcame alcoholism . He also discussed his policy on the Iraq War , advocating devolving control to the Iraqi government : " It 's their country , it 's their future and they should be willing to fight for it and they certainly should be willing to die for it . " He returned to Iowa for a fundraiser later in the week .

In mid @-@ December 2006 Vilsack was interviewed by two major magazines . In U.S. News and World Report , he explained why he decided against forming an exploratory committee like many of his Democratic rivals , on the principle that he had " to get to work . " He linked the issue of energy security to global warming and national security . He advocated moving American troops from southern and central Iraq to the north , and further commented that political reconciliation must be refocused on " building local governance " rather than spending " all the time on the national government . " In an interview with Rolling Stone , he made a distinction between " experience and judgment " and emphasized the importance of the latter . Vilsack attacked Republican candidate John McCain 's planned Iraq troop surge as " making a big mistake bigger " , and denied that the military had the resources to execute it . In discounting the importance of name recognition , he said " people don ' t have to remember my name , they only have to remember the first letter which is V. It stands for vision , it stands for victory , it stands for Vilsack . " He also expressed his satisfaction with frontrunner Hillary Clinton , calling himself " a big fan . "

In January , Vilsack toured New Hampshire , site of the first primary . There he met with middle school students , with whom he discussed his plans for rebuilding Iraq . Dismissing his Democratic

opponents ' calls for caps on American troops in the nation , Vilsack advocated a troop withdrawal . He also talked about Iraq with employees of the Granite State Independent Living Group , blaming the costs of rebuilding for the lack of public funds available for domestic projects . In Iowa later in the month , Vilsack reiterated his opposition to troop caps , likening them to " staying the course " . He stated that troop capping " reflects the continuation of a failed policy " and that America " ought to be ... aggressively redeploying troops out of Iraq . "

On February 15 , before an appearance on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno , Vilsack visited the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco where he gave a speech about energy . He explained that his campaign remained carbon neutral through the purchase of carbon credits . On The Tonight Show , Vilsack joked about his relative obscurity . He remarked that he was okay with Leno making jokes about him , because " when you are just below the margin of error in polls , anything anybody says about you is important . "

Vilsack officially withdrew from the race on February 23 , stating that the crowded field of Democratic candidates made it impossible for him to raise enough money to continue his campaign . In explaining his withdrawal , he stated that he " came up against something for the first time in [his] life that hard work and effort couldn't overcome . " Bemoaning an electoral process that he saw as dominated by fundraising , he left the race proclaiming " it is money and only money that is the reason we are leaving today . " Vilsack raised \$ 1 @. @ 1 million during his run and left the race with \$ 396 @, @ 000 on hand .

= = Polling = =

In the race for the Democratic nomination , Gallup polls placed Vilsack at 1 % support in November and December 2006 . This fell to 0 % on January 7 , where it remained until his withdrawal in February .

A Rasmussen report published December 18 , 2006 that polled voters on their preferences in a variety of hypothetical presidential matchups showed that Vilsack was preferred to former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee by a margin of 37 % to 29 % , but trailed former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani 56 % to 28 % . " A similar poll , published in February 2007 before Vilsack 's withdrawal , found that he trailed Republican Senator John McCain 50 % to 22 % . In a separate poll by Rasmussen , Vilsack was viewed favorably by 21 % of the electorate and unfavorably by 21 % . 58 % of voters did not have enough information about Vilsack to have an opinion . 19 % of respondents considered Vilsack a moderate , 9 % considered him a liberal and 7 % considered him a conservative . 65 % could not describe his political stands .

= = Aftermath = =

After withdrawing from the race , Vilsack endorsed Senator Hillary Clinton for the presidency on March 25 , 2007 . He hoped to build momentum for her in Iowa . The former Governor identified Clinton as the candidate with " the best ideas , the most energy , and the values and vision to lead our country . " Shortly after the endorsement , Clinton named Vilsack 's wife Christie as the co @- @ chairman of her campaign in Iowa . The Clinton campaign announced they would help Vilsack pay off his campaign 's \$ 400 @, @ 000 debt . Vilsack campaigned for Clinton nationwide as national campaign co @- @ chairman , and focused on helping her win the Iowa caucuses . Despite his efforts , Clinton finished third in the caucuses behind Barack Obama and John Edwards . Following Clinton 's withdrawal , Vilsack endorsed Obama for the presidency on July 15 , 2008 . He labeled Obama as the " only candidate " for voters " against partisanship " to change " the tone in Washington "

Vilsack was later nominated by President Obama to serve as the United States Secretary of Agriculture in his administration . He was confirmed for the post by the Senate on Inauguration Day .