

U.S. ELECTIONS 2008



NEWSLETTER

U.S. EMBASSY HELSINKI

AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER

NOVEMBER 2008

BARACK OBAMA PRESIDENT-ELECT

BARACK OBAMA WAS elected the 44th President of the United States on Tuesday November 4th. His selection was historical in many ways, not least due to the fact that he is the first African-American chief executive in history.

Obama, 47, a first-term senator from Illinois defeated the Republican candidate John McCain by a wide margin considering the recent elections in the United

States. Preliminary results give 364 electoral votes for Obama while his opponent, McCain, collected 163. Eleven electoral votes (from Missouri) are still too close to call.

His safe margin for victory will now give him a solid mandate to pursue towards the change that he referred to during his campaign.



“The road ahead will be long. Our climb will be steep. We may not get there in one year or even one term, but America – I have never been more hopeful than I am tonight that we will get there. I promise you – we as a people will get there.”

VICTORY SPEECH

“IF THERE IS anyone out there who still doubts that America is a place where all things are possible; who still wonders if the dream of our founders is alive in our time; who still questions the power of our democracy, tonight is your answer.”

“It’s the answer told by lines that stretched around schools and churches in numbers this nation has never seen; by people who waited three hours and four hours, many for the very first time in their lives, because they believed that this time must be different; that their voice could be that difference.”

Transcript: <http://edition.cnn.com/2008/POLITICS/11/04/obama.transcript/index.html>

The New President



HISTORIC ELECTION VICTORY

ADDRESSING SUPPORTERS IN Chicago November 4, the president-elect, Barack Obama said, "To all those who have wondered if America's beacon still burns as bright, tonight we've proved once more that the true strength of our nation comes not from the might of our arms or the scale of our wealth, but from the enduring power of our ideals: democracy, liberty, opportunity and unyielding hope."

Obama said that through their votes, Americans sent a message "that we have never been just a collection of individuals or a collection of red states and blue states. We are and always will be the United States of America."

"A new dawn of American leadership is at hand," he said. "To those who would tear the world down, we will defeat you. To those who seek peace and security, we support you."

Obama will become the first African-American president of the United States and also the first person of color to govern a country with a white majority.

The Illinois senator carried all the states won by Democrat John Kerry in 2004, as well as Ohio, Iowa, Florida, New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, North Carolina and Virginia — states previously carried by Republican George W. Bush in 2004.

Obama's victory came after a long and difficult Democratic Party primary battle with New York Senator Hillary Clinton, followed by an intense general election campaign against John McCain.

Obama's victory came 40 years after violent demonstrations had taken place at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. It was also in 1968 that Democratic presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy predicted an African-American could become president in 2008.

More about Barack Obama:
www.BarackObama.com
www.Change.gov

THE WINNING TICKET

JOE BIDEN WAS Barack Obama's choice for Vice President, and it was a successful one, as the Obama-Biden ticket won a handsome majority and so claimed a good and solid mandate to lead the United States for the next four years.

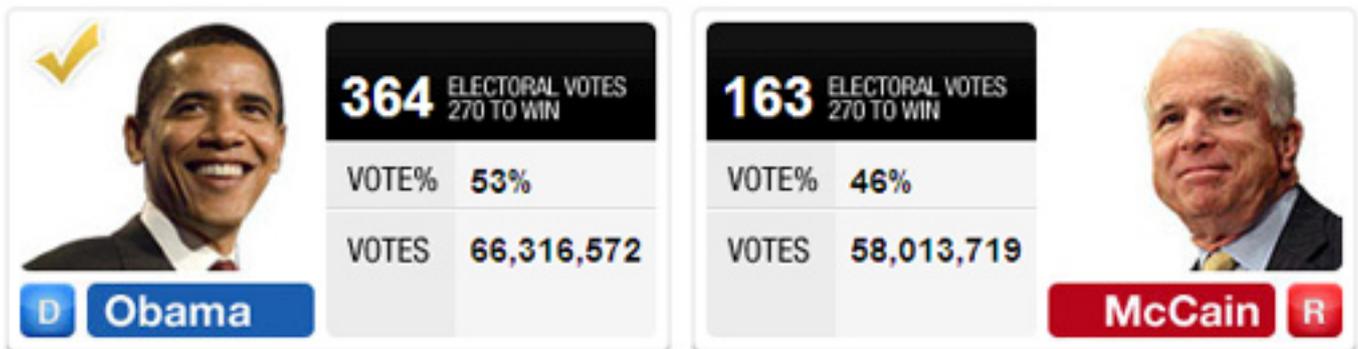
Joe Biden was first elected to the U.S. Senate, representing Delaware, in 1972. During his Senate career, Biden compiled a mostly liberal record. He "is widely seen as a liberal-minded internationalist," wrote Michael Gordon in the New York Times. "He has emphasized the need for diplomacy but has been prepared at times to back it with the threat of force."

Biden has distinguished himself in the Senate in foreign affairs. He has been a member of the influential Senate Foreign Relations Committee since 1975.

When Obama selected Biden as his running mate, Obama said that Biden is "an expert on foreign policy whose heart and values are rooted firmly in the middle class." And that he is "a powerful critic of the Bush-McCain foreign policy and a voice for a new direction that takes the fight to the terrorists and ends the war in Iraq responsibly."

While Barack Obama is seen as a newcomer in Washington's political spectrum, and so lacking some experience and foreign policy credentials, Joe Biden brought this aspect to the Democratic presidential ticket.

Presidential Election Results



THE 2008 PRESIDENTIAL Election was the 56th consecutive quadrennial United States Presidential election, which selected the 44th President of the United States. The election was historical in many ways, perhaps the most importantly because the one ticket had an African American as a presidential nominee, and the other ticket had a female as a vice-president nominee; this would be

the first time an African American or a woman had achieved either of the respective offices.

As it stands, Barack Obama won 364 electoral votes against John McCain's 163; the results in Missouri are still under process, but will not have an affect on the outcome of the elections. In the United States' electoral college system the possibility exists that a candidate

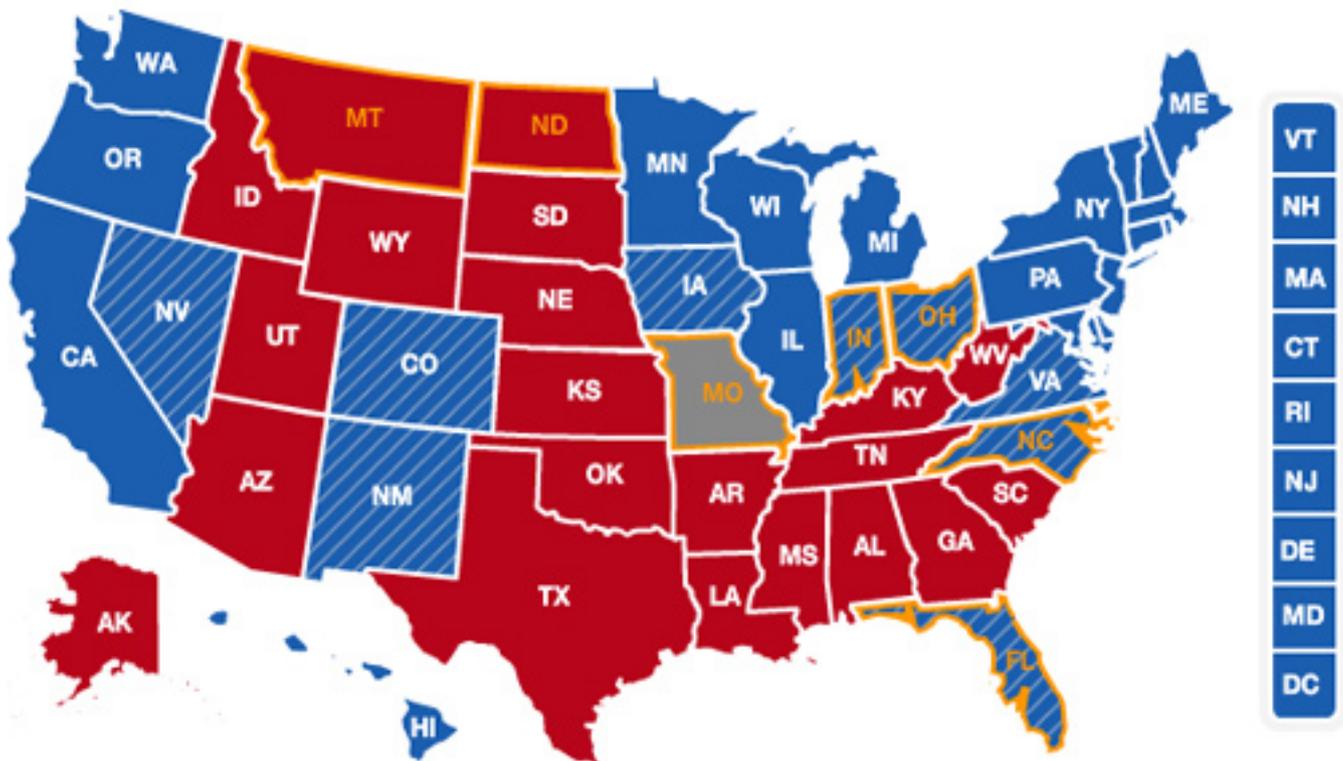
wins the popular vote but loses the state-by-state electoral vote (which has actually happened in the past).

This year this was not the case. Barack Obama carried away a clear majority of 53% against John McCain's 46% (Total of 66,316,572 for Obama and 58,013,719 for McCain).

Results Map

 Obama
  McCain
  Processing results
  Battleground state

Note: Stripes indicate party change



Total National Precincts: 99% reporting

U.S. Elections in Finland

THE OUTCOME OF THE U.S. ELECTIONS INSPIRED FINNS

THE UNITED STATES Embassy, Helsinki, with the American Chamber of Commerce in Finland organized an election morning watch at the Hotel Presidentti in downtown Helsinki. Attendees included, among others, Ambassador Barbara Barrett, President Tarja Halonen, and Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb.

The U.S. Presidential elections were truly global this year, as they drew the world's attention to the U.S polls, and Finland was no exception. The Sylvi Hall at the Presidentti was crowded throughout the morning, and many of the guests showed great interest in other elections in the U.S. as well. The highlight of the morning for many was perhaps Barack Obama's victory speech that inspired spontaneous applause from the crowd.

The outcome of the elections was also widely seen as a new beginning. And as Finland's Foreign Minister Alexander Stubb noted, the hopes are that in the near future a black President or Prime Minister will be elected in Europe too.

IN THE EVENING a panel discussion on the outcome of the U.S. elections attracted a full house to the American Resource Center. Councillor for Cultural Affairs Nicole Conn acted as moderator and Finnish and American experts – Journalist Yrsa Grüne from Hufvudstadsbladet, Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Butler from the U.S. Embassy, and Professor Markku Henriksson and Fulbright Bicentennial Chair Andrés Reséndez from the Renvall Institute of the University of Helsinki – analyzed and commented on the results of the elections.



The panelists expressed their rapid responses emphasizing e.g. the historical aspects of the presidential election. The diverse audience – from eminent scholars to students and diplomats to the general public – participated in the discussion keenly.



BARBARA BARRETT

Ambassador Barrett said that: "This is a great day for America, This is a proud and historic day." She also wanted to emphasize the often unknown fact that Obama had led the U.S. Senate's Northern Europe committee. "He is well informed about Northern Europe and studied Finland in connection with my appointment. I believe this means an upswing for US-Finland relations."

TARJA HALONEN

The Finnish president said on Wednesday that the outcome of the U.S. presidential election was "historic," adding it had demonstrated beyond doubt that a good man or a woman could win the U.S. presidency whatever the color of their skin.

"I am sure that your election to the presidency will further strengthen the relations between our two countries and people," she added.

ALEXANDER STUBB

The Finnish foreign minister said early on Wednesday that he hoped the landslide victory of Barack Obama in the American presidential election meant that the U.S. would contribute to international efforts against climate change.

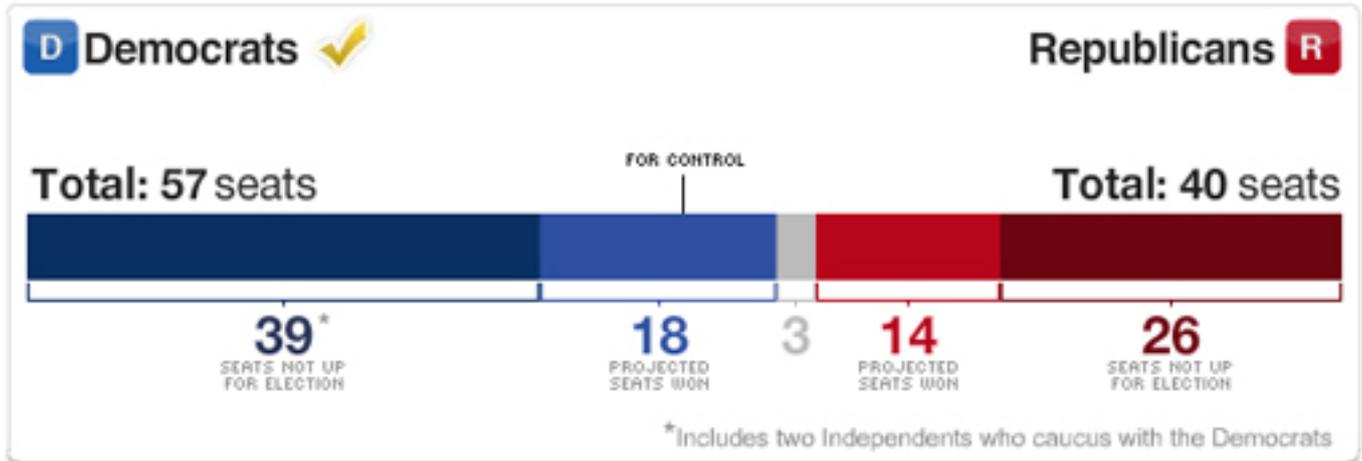
Mr. Stubb said he was confident that cooperation between the EU and Mr. Obama's administration would be smooth and described the expectations bearing down on the president-elect as "extraordinary."

MATTI VANHANEN

PM Vanhanen said in a separate statement that he hoped cooperation between Finland and the U.S. would continue to be "close and active."

Senate Elections Results

U.S. Senate Balance of Power



THE DEMOCRATS WENT into the 2008 elections with a small majority in the Senate. Both parties had 49 seats, but two independents both caucus with the Democrats. In November

2008, when 35 of 100 seats were contested, the Democrats were able to increase their majority to at least 57 seats. Three elections have not yet been confirmed, but it looks

like the Republicans will be able to achieve at least a 41 seat minority.

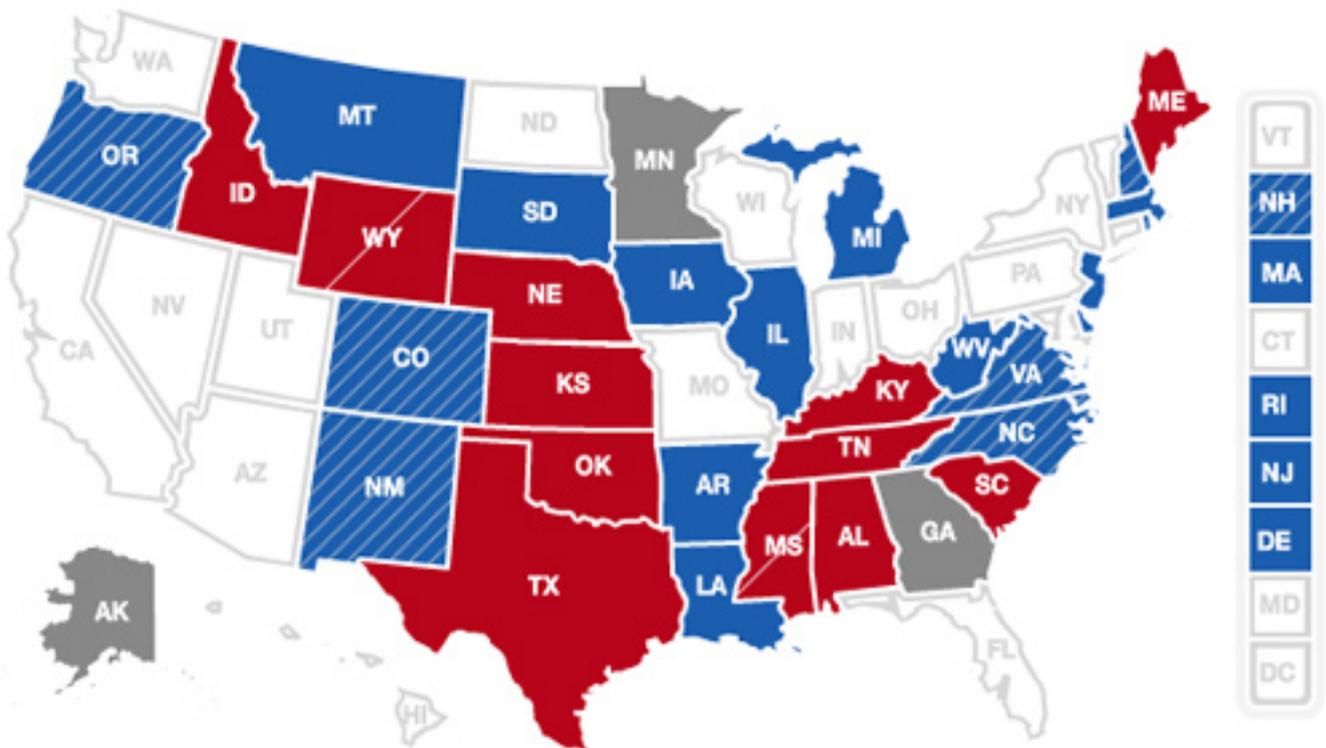
The new senators will take office on January 3rd, 2008.

U.S. Senate

Results Map

Democratic Republican
 Note: Stripes indicate party change

Processing results No Race



Electoral Statistics

Year	Total REG*	% REG of V.A.P *	Turnout	% TO of V.A.P.
1960	63,854,789 *	58.22%	68,838,204	62.77%
1964	73,715,818 *	64.61%	70,644,592	61.92%
1968	81,658,180 *	67.86%	73,211,875	60.84%
1972	97,283,541 *	69.11%	77,718,554	55.21%
1976	105,024,916 *	68.96%	81,555,789	53.55%
1980	113,036,958 *	68.67%	86,515,221	52.56%
1984	124,184,647 *	71.18%	92,652,680	53.11%
1988	126,381,202 *	69.20%	91,594,693	50.15%
1992	133,821,178 *	70.79%	104,405,155	55.23%
1996	146,211,960 *	74.40%	96,456,345	49.08%
2000	156,421,311 *	76.00%	105,586,274	51.30%
2004	174,800,000 *	79.00%	122,295,345	55.27%
2008	TBD	TBD	125-137 million	TBD

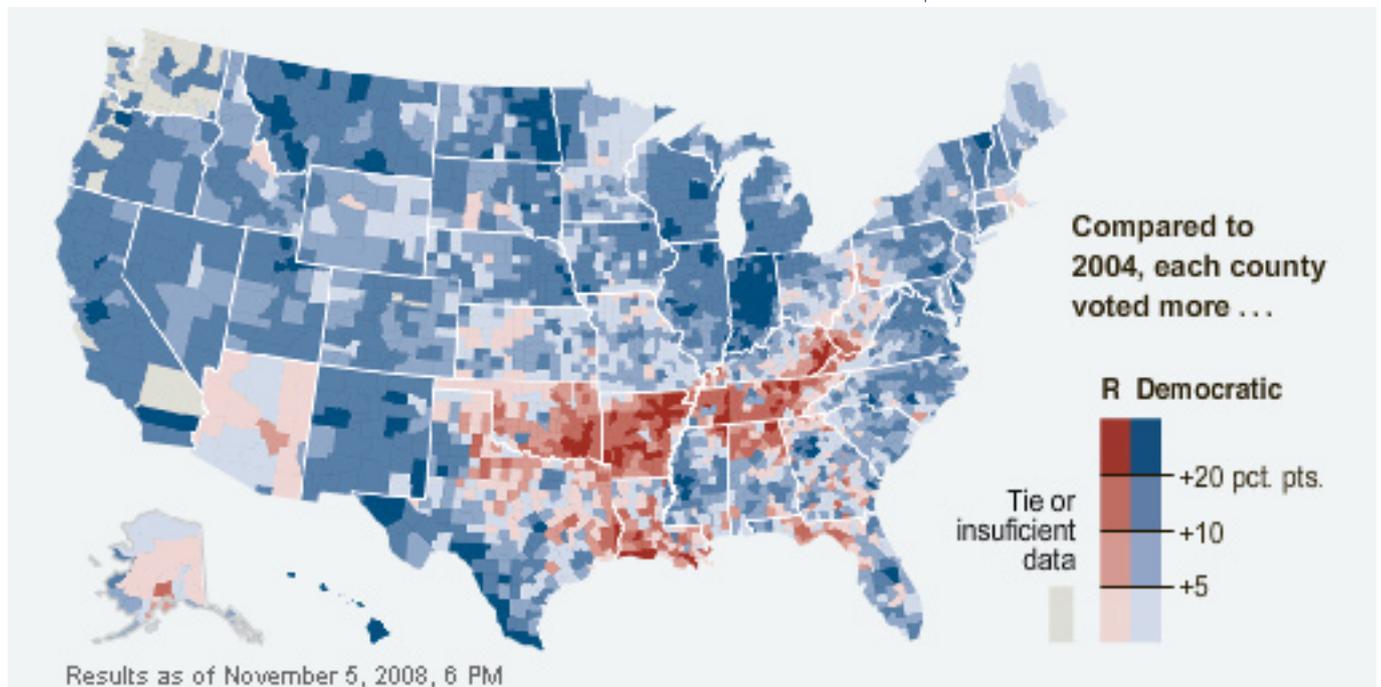
RECORD VOTER TURNOUT IN 2008

ACCORDING TO FIRST estimates, more than 130 million people turned out to vote on Tuesday Nov 4th - the most ever in the Presidential elections. Estimates for the voter turnout percentages still vary, but in any case, the 2008 witnessed the highest percentage turnout in generations, since 1968.

"Exit polls indicate that whites made up a slightly smaller percentage of the electorate than in 2004, as a surge among minority and youth voters aided Obama, who exit polls show won two-thirds of voters ages 18 to 29, 66 percent of Hispanics and 95 percent of blacks."

2008 data is preliminary and will be updated

- V.A.P. = Voting Age Population
(from 1972 includes citizens 18 years of age)
- REG = Registered to Vote



ELECTORAL SHIFTS

THIS YEAR, ONLY 22% of the nation's counties voted more Republican, while the rest of the nation shifted more Democratic. Senator John McCain won 20 states and leads in Missouri, while Senator Barack

Obama won 29 states, including 9 states which Senator John Kerry lost in 2004.

Noteworthy is also that a wide array of demographic groups voted more Democratic this year. For example, of ages from 18 to

29, 25% more voted Democrats this year than in 2004.

However, even though the Democrats won seats in many areas around the U.S., the nation is not turning blue, but perhaps just few shades bluer-purple.

What Next?

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION

BARACK OBAMA BECAME the President-elect after defeating Republican presidential candidate John McCain in the general election, and is due to be sworn in as President of the United States on January 20, 2009. However, although Obama will not take office for more than two months, he is already moving quickly to fill key posts in his new administration.

One of the most important appointments for the president

elect this year is the next Treasury Secretary. Whoever fills the post will have control of \$700bn, allocated by Congress, to stop the financial meltdown. Besides Treasury, other key positions include Secretary of State, Secretary of Defense, Chief of Staff (by the time of writing, Obama had selected Rahm Emanuel to this position), and Chief Advisor.

The transition is led by "President-Elect Barack Obama, Vice-President Elect Joe Biden, a transition advisory board, and respected leaders from both the public and private sectors; the transi-

tion is responsible for ensuring that the transfer of power from the current administration to the Obama Administration is smooth and that the continuity of leadership is preserved."

TRANSITION SCHEDULE:

Dec 15. Electoral College Electors meet in their respective states.

Jan 20. The Inauguration

Jan-Feb The State of the Union Speech (43rd President George W. Bush has right to deliver this if he so chooses.)

AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

AMERICAN RESOURCE CENTER at the
National Library of Finland
P.O.Box 15 (Unioninkatu 36)

00014 University of
Helsinki, Finland

Telephone: +358-9-
191 24048

Fax Number: +358-
9-652 940

E-mail: arc@usembassy.fi

<http://finland.usembassy.gov/arc.html>

Hours: Mon-Fri 9-20, Sat 9-16
(Reference services: Mon-Fri
9-17)

Summer Hours: Mon-Fri 9-18, Sat
9-16 (Closed Saturdays in July)



THE AMERICAN RESOURCE Center is an authoritative source for information about American government and politics, foreign policy and international relations, U.S. economy and foreign trade, the environment, history, society, and culture.

The ARC serves the academic world, media, government officials and non-governmental organizations, research institutions, teachers and students, and individuals interested in the United States.

The ARC is operated jointly by the American Embassy in Helsinki and the National Library of Finland.

AMERICAN SPEAKER AT YOUR EVENT?

TRAVELING TO THE United States is the best way to get to know the United States. The second best is by conversing with Americans living right here in Finland. One of our top priorities at the Embassy is to arrange for our diplomatic representatives to visit and speak to groups of people.

Whether you're interested in life in America or U.S. foreign policy, the Embassy has someone who can speak on the issue. We're looking for a wide range of audiences.

If you would be interested in a speaker from our Embassy, we would be pleased to arrange such a visit by an Embassy officer. Please do not hesitate to contact the Public Affairs office by email at Helsinki-PAS@state.gov.