



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on July 1, 2009

Franken Gives Democrats Filibuster-Proof Vote

Franken's election eliminates the last check on Democratic Party governance over the federal government. Democrats currently hold the White House as well as a majority in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Franken is best known for being a [Saturday Night Live writer](#) during the two periods of the show's greatness, 1975-1980 and 1988-1995, and as the flagship host of the now-bankrupt "Air America" radio talk show network.



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During the campaign, Franken ran afoul of traditional conservatives for his authorship of [an article for Playboy](#) magazine (in 2000) and for joking about his past use of cocaine. Franken [said this of his use of cocaine](#) during his time at *Saturday Night Live*:

People used to ask me about this and I'd always say, "No, there was no coke. It's impossible to do the kind of show we were doing and do drugs." And so that was just a funny lie that I liked to tell. Kind of the opposite was true, unfortunately — for some people, it was impossible to do the show without the drugs. Comedians and comedy writers and people in show business in general aren't the most disciplined people, so the idea of putting the writing off until you had to, and then staying up all night, was an attractive one. And then having this drug that kept you awake in an enjoyable way was kind of tempting too. But I only did cocaine to stay awake to make sure nobody else did too much cocaine. That was the only reason I ever did it. Heh-heh.

Though Franken demonstrated many moments of comedy genius during his comedy writing and acting career, his launch of a radio talk show seemed doomed to failure. Billed as a leftist alternative to "right-wing talk" on the radio dial, Franken's monotone voice flatlined Air America's Arbitron ratings across the country. Franken may or may not have had a face for radio, but his voice proved to be born for print. The idea of putting Franken up for a radio spot on the left ranked up there in the universe of bad ideas alongside a hypothetical "right-wing" idea to cast [deadpan monotone actor Ben Stein](#) as the conservative radio talk-show ratings messiah.

But Franken has successfully transferred his failure behind the radio mic into electoral success. Franken's political ideology can be summed up as being a left-winger on social and economic issues, and a foreign policy interventionist (though he did call for withdrawal from Iraq).

Here is a sampling of [Al Franken on the issues](#):

Support the United Nations and build up UN "peacekeeping": Asked whether he supported "full and timely payment of U.S. assessments to the United Nations and its special fund for peacekeeping missions," Franken replied, "Yes. UN peacekeeping is one of the best deals around." ([OnTheIssues.org](#))



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Withdraw from Iraq gradually: “Our withdrawal should not be precipitous, and we should have a national conversation about the best way to complete our disengagement — we should put more thought into how we get out than we did into how we got in. But we should start now.” ([Al Franken campaign website](#))

Support for Barack Obama’s “stimulus” spending plan: Franken wrote of the stimulus bill as it was being debated that “the stimulus package represents a significant step toward the change we chose on Nov. 4.” He also said that “were it not for the current election contest, I would be voting for it today.” ([Al Franken campaign blog](#))

Increase federal education spending: “I believe we have to fully fund our public schools. We owe it to our states, and more importantly, we owe it to our kids to provide them with the same opportunities I had growing up. Every public school in America should have small class sizes, well-maintained facilities, plenty of school supplies, and more support staff... When I get to Washington, someone is going to have to explain to me why we have unfunded mandates. It’s unconscionable that the federal government fails to live up to its commitments. Right now, the federal government only pays for 19% of special education costs — after promising to cover 40%. When I get to the Senate, I’ll fight to end unfunded mandates.” ([Al Franken campaign website](#))

Washington control of school testing: “Stop duplicative testing. My daughter taught third grade in a public school for three years, and she was constantly frustrated by the amount of classroom time that had to be devoted to testing and test preparation. While we need to measure student progress, too many districts have overlapping district, state, and federal tests. We should audit tests at the district, state, and federal level to ensure that this doesn’t happen.” ([Al Franken campaign website](#))

Federal educational control of pre-schoolers: “I believe we should invest in early childhood education. A child who’s been read to by the age of 5 has twice the vocabulary of a peer who hasn’t.... It’s time we invested in the earliest part of life instead of building more prisons.” ([Al Franken campaign website](#))

Massive federal environmental/energy spending and regulation to stop global warming: I think we need a new “Apollo project” — this time to fundamentally change our energy policy and end our reliance on foreign oil. ([Al Franken campaign website](#))

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