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The Keys to the White House: Electronic Democracy and the Race for the Presidency of the United States

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The United States of America recently endured another presidential election. After more than a year of active campaigning and billions of dollars later, Senator Barack Obama bested Senator John McCain to be the next occupant of the White House. Some chalk up Obama's win to a punishing economic crisis and a rousing call for change. Others say McCain ran a poor campaign and was unable to connect in a meaningful way with voters. Regardless of one's perspective on this race, it is important to recognize that Senator Obama developed an innovative, unprecedented Internet presence. Senator Obama implemented an electronic democracy strategy that reached out to millions of American voters and helped him win the presidential election. This paper explores the electronic democracy strategies of Senator Barack Obama and Senator John McCain. Fundraising, information deliver, and getting-out-the-vote all centered around the tools of electronic democracy. The strategies of these campaigns wove together the sensibilities of social networking (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter) and text message alerts to connect the campaign with everyday supporters. Perhaps the real reasons behind the Obama success has more to do with his superior electronic democracy strategy and his ability to bring voters together to support something larger than their individual interests.