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US Democratic Party Chooses Howard Dean as New Leader

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Former Vermont governor, presidential contender and practicing physician Howard Dean has been elected to head the Democratic Party, as it seeks a strategy for winning back the presidency in 2008.

Howard Dean, whose presidential campaign was notable for the grassroots support he received, urged Democrats to work at the local level to organize and unite the party.

"We can change the party, but only by working together and competing in all 50 states and territories," he said. "We can change the party, but only by working together and becoming a national party again. We can change this party, but only by working together at the local level, because, if we want to win nationally, we have to start by winning locally."

The opposition Democrats have been debating where they went wrong, following presidential candidate John Kerry's loss to President Bush in November. The 2004 election also put Republicans firmly in control of both houses of Congress.

Dr. Dean, who was elected chairman by the Democratic National Committee, said the party must move forward from November's defeat and connect with American voters, if it hopes to be successful in congressional elections in 2006 and the 2008 presidential race.

"Republicans wandered around for 40 years in the political wilderness before they took back Congress," he said. "It cannot take us that long and it won't take us that long, not if we stand up for what we believe in, organize at the local level

and recognize that this party's strength does not come from the consultants down. It comes from the grassroots up."

Dr. Dean, who was the early favorite to win the Democratic Party's presidential nomination last year before losing to Senator John Kerry, was the first national candidate to harness the power of the Internet to raise funds and build grassroots operations.

"We are going to use the power and potential of technology as part of an aggressive outreach to meet and include voters, to work with your state parties and get our unified message out," Mr. Dean said.

Some Democrats have worried that his liberal image could be a detriment in areas of the country where Republicans have made strong gains in recent years. Dr. Dean said he will work to ensure that the Democratic Party connects with American voters by promoting issues of concern to all Americans: strong national security, high paying jobs and affordable healthcare.