

Summary and Analysis –
North Carolina General Election Early Voting 2008:

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Special Thanks to:

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No summary can do the voting trends of a presidential year justice. Most likely, many books will be written (after the fact we might add) about this years election and the importance of Early Voting in determining the outcome of who our President will be for the next 4 years. This summary will try to as concisely as possible explain the trends seen during Early Voting and project the votes cast on Election Day. Early Voting has had a tremendous impact both on the Presidential election as well as the "down the ballot races". Due to the increase in spending by both Presidential candidates, North Carolina, a usually "solid red" state, has become increasingly "purple", if not even "dark blue". Let us explain:

As the numbers below indicate, Early Voting, compared to 4 years ago, has seen a 300+% increase in turnout. As opposed to just over 800,000 Early Voting ballots cast (which include military, mail-in civilian, and one stop ballots) in 2004, 2008 saw over 2.5 Million voters. 14.5% of eligible voters voted early in 2004, compared to 41.3% in 2008. Demographically, this increase has assisted the Democrats. Where 48% were Democrats and 37% were Republicans during Early Voting in 2004, 52% were Democrats and only 30% were Republicans in 2008. This is a difference of over 10%, which gives the Democrats a significant lead in estimated "raw vote totals". Most likely more than half of all votes cast in the 2008 election have already been sealed.

2000 was the first year that Early Voting became standard in North Carolina. That year Republicans outvoted Democrats 58% to 41%. By 2004, those numbers had shrunk to 53% to 46%. It should be noted, however, that in 2004 virtually all Democrats except John Kerry won Early Voting. Richard Burr and Cherie Berry were the only two exceptions – and in both of those races the Republican won. Taking into account the 10% shift of voters from 2004 to 2008, it is quite conceivable that Obama will become the first Presidential Democrat to win Early Voting outright, which could result in significant "coattails" for all state, county, and local Democrats. Obama's campaign has spent over four times the amount John McCain's has, and his placement of hundreds of paid staffers and thousands of volunteers has certainly had an impact on his chances in the state.

The most in-depth breakdown that is available does so using voting trends by party affiliation and ethnicity. Since this is the most in-depth breakdown that is available by the North Carolina State Board of Elections, it is the basis of our formula of predicting which party has the advantage and to what extent that advantage exists. Our analysis shows that Obama and the Democrats should see a minimum advantage of 128,863 votes from early and absentee voting statewide. Obama and other Democratic campaigns only targeted voters based on their party affiliation and ethnicity and given the large differential in turnout based

on those factors, highly selective targeting occurred. Given the size, resources, and sophistication of the Obama campaign; it is very likely that the differential will be higher than usual. This Early Voting advantage will be the key reason if Obama wins North Carolina. It should be noted that this analysis is for the Presidential election only, and although many inferences can be made by reading this data as to the outcome of the US Senate, Gubernatorial, and Council of State races, the "X" factors listed below can change the percentages of those races by upwards of 10%. Our analysis has attempted to take into account the following "X" factors, although some can not be quantitatively measured.

Possible "X" factors (and which party may benefit):

- Turnout: We're looking at unprecedented turnout for this election. 75-80% turnout is not out of the question. This turnout would defy and overwhelm all prior predictive models. Expanded turnout models in polls seem to favor Obama fairly consistently. Obama's voters also appear to be better organized and motivated. This will likely favor them as well. However, due to the extreme uncertainty turnout throws into the mix, the "silent majority" if there is an extremely high turnout (non-traditional voters who are not polled, etc) may go for McCain. If someone wins the state by 5+ points, this is the reason it happened. **Advantage: Likely Democrats.**
- Undecided Voters: The average undecided voted for Bush in 2004, but is deeply concerned about the economy. Current undecided voters also appear to have voted for Bush by about a 2-1 margin in 2004, meaning they are a Republican leaning group as is. Most undecideds break 3 to 1 against "the incumbent". Given Obama's higher Name ID and media coverage he effectively is the incumbent, even though the Republicans are in the White House. **Advantage: Likely Republicans.**
- Poll Responder Bias: Distrust of the media is at an all time high, and these are more likely to be Republicans, so they are less likely to agree to answer polls than Democrats. This was seen most famously in the Kerry "landslide" exit poll in 2004. These non-responders make the poll less random, and may make Obama look stronger than he is. **Advantage: Republicans.**
- The number of "absentee" or civilian ballots, may be overstated: This demographic, which usually overwhelmingly votes Republican, has the highest likelihood of not having their ballot counted (mail not making it on time, deciding against voting after the absentee ballot request had been made, or the voter not following instructions on the ballot and having 2 "witnesses" which disqualifies the ballot). An educated guess would be that between 10 and 30% of all absentee ballots requested do not end up back at the Board of Elections by the deadline. Out of the nearly 200,000 Absentee

ballots requested in 2008, 52,800 were Democrat, 80 were Libertarian, 108,000 were Republican, and 33,000 were Unaffiliated. Republicans made up nearly 55.5% of all Absentee ballots during an election where, with all Early Votes combined, they only comprised 30% of the entire Early Voting population. **Advantage: Democrats.**

- Dixiecrats: Southern Democrats, especially in Eastern North Carolina have a long tradition of splitting their ballots, vote Republican for federal races and then vote Democrat down the ballot. Dixiecrats are roughly 7% of the average NC electorate. They are predominantly white Democrats in rural NC. This voting strategy clearly helps the Republicans. **Advantage: Republicans.**
- Unaffiliated Voters: Most conventional wisdom dictates that Unaffiliated Voters, which now comprise 22% of the electorate, vote approximately 60% Republican to 40% Democrat. There are numerous studies that indicate that the percentage may split 50/50. An unpopular war, severe economic woes (housing market collapse, stock market issues, and near trillion dollar bank bailout) make many voters distrusting of the Bush administration and Republicans in general. Unaffiliated voters this year may very well be voting their wallet or pocketbook, as most Americans amount of Disposable Income has gone down significantly. **Advantage: Likely Democrats.**
- Conservative Voters: Due to McCain's persona of a "maverick", and Palin's lack of credentials, conservative voters may leave the race blank, vote for Bob Barr (the Libertarian candidate) or crossover and vote for Obama. 6 months ago during the North Carolina Republican Primary, over 25% of Republicans voted against McCain, even after he had sewn up the nomination and had no true opposition. There will probably be some backlash from the "Ron Paul wing of the GOP" and from the true fiscal/social conservatives who disagree with McCain's position on illegal immigration, campaign finance, and other core issues to that part of the conservative base. This is likely to be minimal, however it is worth noting as a possible factor. **Advantage: Democrats.**
- Confusion of the ballot: Voters in NC, when casting a straight party vote, can do so for all candidates except President which is separated from the rest of the ballot. In 2004, there was a 2.57% drop off from the total number of voters to the total number of ballots cast for President. That could be voters going and pulling the straight party lever and then leaving, making no choice for the office of President. Given the unusually high numbers of single shot voters for Obama in the primary, and the fact there are more registered Democrats than Republicans, this factor will hurt Democrats more. **Advantage: Likely Republicans.**
- The infamous "Bradley Effect": Mostly discounted, this theory says that voters will say they will support a black candidate, but then vote for the white opponent. Some folks

said that the Bradley Effect may count for up to 10 percentage points among white voters. Our opinion is that this effect is extremely overstated and has virtually no impact on modern elections. It's not that we believe racism doesn't exist in the United States, but we firmly believe that those who would be considered "Bradley Effect" voters have already made their intentions clear and would not be giving additional points to Obama in any polls. **Advantage: None.**

Given the above information, it is very hard to pinpoint numbers for the November 4 election. Our educated guess is that North Carolina will go to Obama, 51% to McCain's 48% and Bob Barr's 1%. We estimate 4.6 Million total votes cast, which equates to approximately 74% Voter Turnout.

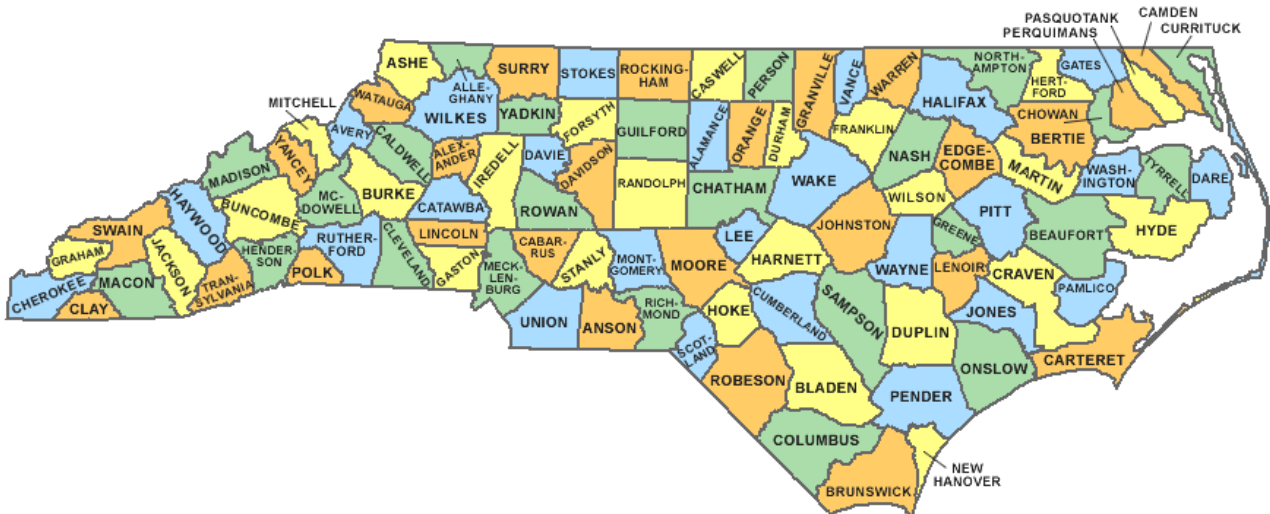
Respectfully Submitted,



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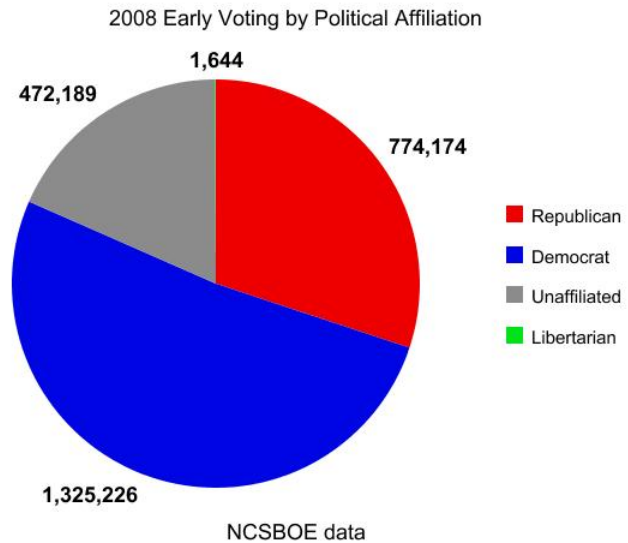
Final Early Voting Numbers: From 11:00 PM, Saturday, Nov 1, 2008:

2004 Results Early Voting: (numbers are rounded)

395,500 D (48.6%)
 304,100 R (37.4%)
 1,200 L (0.1%)
 113,200 U (13.9%)
 814,000 Voters total
 14.5% Voter Turnout
 5,600,000 Reg. Voters

2008 EV Results:

Dem 1,325,226 (51.50%)
Lib 1,644 (0.06%)
Rep 774,147 (30.08%)
Una 472,189 (18.35%)
Total Votes: 2,573,206
Total Voters: 6,232,230
% of turnout: 41.29%



EV Differences from 2004 to 2008:

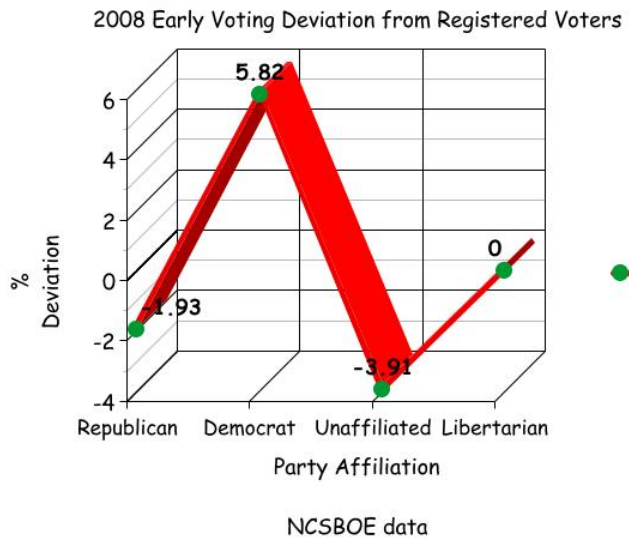
Democrat voting is up 2.9%
 Republican voting is down 7.32%
 Libertarian voting is negligible
 Unaffiliated voting is up 4.45%

As a percentage of total registered voters:

Democrat: 2,843,234 (45.68%)
Libertarian: 3,247 (.05%)
Republican: 1,992,361 (32.01%)
Unaffiliated: 1,385,388 (22.26%)
Total: 6,224,230

Differences between turnout percentage (2008) and registered voters:

Democrat voting is up 5.82%
 Libertarian voting is up .01%
 Republican voting is down 1.93%
 Unaffiliated voting is down 3.91%



TOTALS for 2008:

ONESTOP/EARLY: 2,369,577
CIVILIAN/ABSENTEE: 193,291
MILITARY: 7,021
OVERSEAS: 3,317

References:

Although this report is not written in a traditional research paper format, we would be remiss without listing our points of reference. With that said, they are as follows:

[North Carolina State Board of Elections](#): Various historical data, voter registration statistics, election results from 2000/2004, as well and numerous answers to questions via phone.

[Justin Moore \(Duke University\)](#): Election results from 2000/2004 by early voting, election day, and provisional subcategories; estimates of trends in Libertarian voting; drop-off of voting electorate versus ballots cast for Presidential races.

[National Center for Education Statistics](#): 2008 voting by political affiliation as well as early voting deviation from registered voting graphics used in this report.