

Contentions and Questions about Election 2004

- **Campaign Issues**
 - **Vision**
 - "Vision without details (Bush) beats details without vision (Kerry)"
 - **Style**
 - Extreme left wing democrats pushed moderate, swing voters over to Bush's camp. These "swing" voters were revolted by the vicious, insulting and ridiculous attacks on Bush from the left. Some examples are how the left repeatedly called bush a liar and an idiot.
 - **Security and the economy**
 - Bush won the election by exploiting the terrorism issue while Kerry was unable to dominate the economic issues.
 - Kerry lost because he was unable to convince voters that Bush was pursuing the wrong policies in combating terror.
 - The democrats were weak on defense, and that lost them the election.
 - National security and tax cuts were the major issues.
 - 9/11 and the war on terror is the reason Bush won.
 - Bush won the election because he had credibility where as Kerry did not, particularly where it concerned national security.
 - The September 11th attack was the "central deciding thing" in the 2004 elections and the release of the Osama Bin Laden tape just before the elections ruined Kerry's chances.
 - Bush won because terrorism and moral values trumped the economy and the Iraq war.
 - Bush won because he supports "economic freedom" (tax cuts, reduced social programs, and less regulation).
 - **Religion and moral values**
 - Bush achieved an alliance between Catholics and Protestants on social conservative issues.
 - Kerry's secular stance was less appealing to voters than Bush's faith-based stance.
 - Many Christians don't support Bush.
 - Exit polls demonstrate that "moral values" was the central issue of the election.
 - **Gay marriage**
 - Gay marriage lost the south for the Democrats.
 - The Republican stance against gay rights played a crucial role in Bush's re-election.
 - Bush carried Ohio because of his opposition to abortion and his advocacy of a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.
 - The gay marriage issue may have drawn significant support for the Bush campaign. Strong Republican support was found in the 11 states that passed gay marriage bans prior to the election.
 - **Other**
 - Abortion was the key issue that lost the election for the democrats.
- **Voting patterns**
 - "Swing" voters

- Not much difference between "base voters" and "swing voters".
- There was no swing group that "ultimately broke for one side and made the difference".
- Each candidate only rarely appealed to voters of the other party. Did fewer voters registered in one party vote for the candidate of the other party?
- **Race**
 - Hispanic voters were a key asset for Bush in this election.
 - Native Americans are a key voting bloc and are beginning to swing Republican.
 - Did religious affiliation trump economic interests among minority groups, causing them to vote for Bush on "values" issues rather than Kerry on economic and social programs?
- **Gender**
 - Kerry lost the 2004 presidential election because of decreased support among women voters in comparison with Al Gore in 2000. If Kerry had been able to maintain female voting support in Ohio alone, he would have won the election. The same is true for Iowa and New Mexico.
- **Other socioeconomic variables**
 - Kerry was popular with urban voters, single voters, working women, African Americans, and gay voters. Bush was popular with married women, military families, and routine churchgoers.
 - Smarter voters disproportionately voted for Kerry.
 - How does average income affect votes?
- **Spatial patterns**
 - This election demonstrated a large split between urban and rural voters ("Metro vs. Retro"). This was particularly true in Ohio, where Kerry supporters dominated the urban areas, but it was the turnout in the rural areas that overwhelmingly voted Republican that swayed the election.
 - What got so many counties to shift from blue to red? Is "political diffusion" occurring? Were counties which were blue in 2000 and surrounded by red counties in 2004 more likely to shift to red? Does political diffusion signal a better use of grass-roots organization?
 - Voting communities have become increasingly polarized. Although the election was relatively close, a large percentage (45%) of the counties were "landslide counties." Migration patterns of citizens is increasingly causing politically likeminded individuals to cluster together into homogeneous locales. This coagulation of voting opinions is described as being self-perpetuating, since minority opinions are changed under increasing peer pressure.
 - Bush won because the GOP was able to gain the votes of so many rural and "exurban" counties. These areas contributed two-thirds of the GOP's increase in votes from the previous election.
- **Fraud**
 - There was fraud in Ohio and elsewhere, particularly in the assignment of more voting machines to predominantly white districts and sending minority voters to the wrong districts.
 - Some votes were simply not counted in Ohio. Higher numbers of votes were discarded in counties with a higher minority population.
 - Did the Bush campaign engage in massive fraud, given that exit polls turned out to have been mistaken only in the swing states, there was weird inflation of the Bush vote in county after county, where the number of votes for president was somehow higher than the

number of voters who turned out, there were numerous accounts of vote fraud coast to coast throughout the prior weeks of early voting, and the fact that every single glitch or error that has been reported favors Bush?

- **Voting methods (electronic, punch card, etc.)**

- Electronic voting machine may actually be more accurate than traditional methods.
- Voting machines were used to commit systematic fraud.
- Significant numbers of ballots in states such as Ohio weren't counted because they either didn't select a presidential candidate or selected more than one. Electronic voting machines would "fix" this problem.
- There is a link between touch-screen voting machines and divergence between exit polls and final vote counts.
- There is a relationship between GOP support and the use of voting machines.
- Voting method influenced the election outcome.
- Early voting affected the election outcome.

- **Exit polls**

- Without reliable exit poll data, there is no way to know which voters and issues decided the election.
- Voting patterns differ by time of day, and this (among other things) may influence the discrepancies between the exit poll predictions and the actual outcome of the election.
- The discrepancy between exit polls and election results indicate voter fraud, particularly since 42 of the 51 states in the union swung towards George Bush while only nine swung towards Kerry, and ordinarily in the absence of an obvious mis-tabulation error, roughly the same number of states should have swung towards each candidate.
- The discrepancy is not due to random errors.
- Exit polls were overwhelmingly wrong.
- Different networks predicted the outcome for individual states at different times, heavily influenced by their use of exit polls.
- Exit polls don't really exist. The networks simply match their bogus exit polls to extensive pre-election polling.
- The discrepancy between exit polls and final tallies be explained by careful choice about which ballots to consider as "spoilage," that is, uncounted due to some sort of irregularity.
- What is the explanation of the difference between the final tallies and the exit polls?

- **Campaign financing**

- Money wins. In nearly all Congressional races (95% of House races and 91% of Senate races), the candidate who spent the most money won. Bush spent more money than Kerry.

- **Advertising and media**

- What is the relative effectiveness of 527 ad campaigns vs. DNC/RNC ad campaigns? Did people living in counties where 527 ads aired also live in counties where DNC/RNC ads aired? Were there differences in voter turn out rates which could be linked to either ad campaign?
- Did targeted advertising that uses consumer buying patterns and television-watching habits strongly affect the election outcome? What are these associations (e.g., Coors beer and bourbon drinkers skew Republican, brandy and cognac drinkers tilt Democratic) make any sense?
- "New media" (Internet-based news sources) had substantially more influence on the election outcome than in prior elections.

- Political endorsements are irrelevant to election outcome.
- The Republican party spent their campaign funds more wisely. Since the swing voters only constituted only 7% of the voting public, the GOP made the decision to focus its expenditures on getting Bush-supporters to actually vote (e.g. by getting them to register), rather than trying to gain the votes of the undecided.
- **Voter registration and turnout**
 - Both sides did well at getting out the vote.
 - The states decided by the smallest margin are the largest electoral states.
 - Bush's victory in swing states was dependent on the intervention of churches. Turn-out-the-vote campaigns by churches were crucial to Bush's victory,
 - Newly registered voters disproportionately voted for Kerry, but in states where Kerry had less than a 15-point advantage among new voters, he lost.
 - Voter registration and turnout efforts in Ohio strongly influenced the results,
 - Did the "Rock the vote" campaign have any effect on the election outcome?
 - Massive get-out-the-vote efforts among evangelical Protestants and conservative Catholics provided the margin of victory for the president.
 - First-time voters turned out in record numbers to support Kerry, but not enough to carry the election.