

SOUTH CAROLINA
Winner: Democrat

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The state of South Carolina gives the impression of your typical southern Republican stronghold, and the election results usually support this claim. However, despite South Carolina's overwhelming Republican voting trends, and history, this year's general election is far from predictable. There are many different impending questions still left in this race that I believe will influence the voters of South Carolina, and have a direct effect on which way this state goes in the general election. I anticipate these factors to prove to be what makes South Carolina a swing state in this election. Nevertheless, I believe the major primary victory, where Sen. Barack Obama earned more than twice the votes of his rival Sen. Hilary Clinton (55 percent for Obama, and 27 percent for Clinton), along with Barack Obama's ever-growing momentum, and growing dissatisfaction with the Bush administration, leads me to predict that South Carolina will support Barack Obama over John McCain in the general election (Cable News Network, 2008).

The state's demographic make-up looks as though it trends to the Republican side, with 67 percent white population, but African American voters are also represented heavily, with what makes up almost 30 percent of the states population (Cable News Network, 2008). The African American voters, a normal Democratic constituency rallied hard behind Sen. Obama in the primary, resulting in exit polls showing he received 78 percent of the African American vote (USA Election Polls, 2008), however he also managed to win by large margins in every demographic group, even gaining 78 percent of female votes, a core constituency of his rival Sen. Clinton (NBC News Exit Poll, PEW Research Center)

The South Carolina Republican Primary did not yield a big win for GOP candidate John McCain, who received 33 percent of the vote to barely pull out a win, as the voters supported Mike Huckabee with 30 percent of the vote (Cable News Network, 2008). The question in the upcoming weeks will be how well John McCain is able to reach out to the evangelical Christian voters that strongly supported Mike Huckabee. One of the difficult aspects in predicting the voting behavior of this state is that voters are not registered by political parties, so the exact pull of partisanship among voters, and the number of independents or middle of the road voters that can be swayed is not clear.

In the event of South Carolina potentially becoming a swing state in the 2008 election, endorsements will play an even bigger role in voter support. In that sense Sen. Obama has an obvious advantage, as the states largest newspaper, "The State", out of Columbia, SC, has given him its endorsement (The State, 2008). An endorsement was also made by a group of 130 local black ministers from South Carolina in Sen. Obama's favor (Charleston.net, 2007). However, there have also been rumors that John McCain may be considering South Carolina's Governor Mark Sanford, or Sen. Lindsey Graham as possible Vice President candidates, which if it came to pass may give him the advantage with South Carolinians.

The election results and history of voting behavior in this state definitely do favor republican candidates. This trend is apparent in each role in state politics. There has only been one Democrat elected as Governor since 1990, and both the State Senate, and State House of Representatives have maintained a Republican majority since at least the 2000 elections (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2007). Past election results have displayed minimal support for democratic candidates, especially in past general elections, with Carter being the last Democratic candidate to receive South Carolina's vote in the general election of 1976 (Cable News Network, 2008). This time the voices of the people have started to change, which was apparent in South Carolina's primary, and momentum has built in support of the Democrats' call for change in Washington starting with the general election in 2008. I predict that this momentum will continue and win South Carolina's vote in 2008.

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