

VERMONT
Winner: Democrat

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Vermont is a state that looks politically unpredictable at first. The state's demographics look neither red nor blue, and a quick glance at Vermont's elections history shows wins for Democrats, Republicans and Independents. With closer inspection some patterns emerge. Vermont's presidential election trends coupled with incredibly strong Democratic turnout in this year's primary election point to an inevitable Democratic win in November, regardless of whether the nominee is Hillary Clinton or Barack Obama.

Vermont's demographic makeup is such that it does not favor any one party particularly. According to the most recent Census data, Vermont is 96.7% white ("State and County Quick Facts," 2008). Having less than 5% minority population would normally benefit the Republican party, as minorities have traditionally favored the Democrats. Additional Census data indicates that the average income of the state in 2004 was \$44,548.00, which is only slightly above the national average of \$44,334.00 ("State and County Quick Facts," 2008). Hovering near the national average does not provide enough information to categorize the state as Republican or Democratic. Complicating matters further, Vermont does not ask its voters to declare a party, so there are no registered Democrats or Republicans to count (Vermont Secretary of State, 2006).

Vermont's elections history is a mixed bag with solid wins from both major parties and Independent candidates. Over the last decade, Vermont has supported candidates for the US Senate from all three with wins above 60% (Cable News Network, 1998, 2000, 2004, 2006). For the US House of Representatives, Vermont supported the Democratic candidate in 2006 with 53% of the vote, but went for the Independent candidate in the previous four elections (Cable News Network, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006). At the Gubernatorial level, Vermont supported Republican candidate Jim Douglas in the last three elections, but voted Democratic for a decade previously (Cable News Network, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006; Leip, 2005).

Fortunately for our purposes, Vermont has been more consistent when voting in the Presidential elections. Over the last two decades, Vermont has been steadily moving towards the Democratic Party. The last time Vermont elected a Republican for President was in 1988 (Leip, 2008). Since then, the vote has gone exclusively to the Democratic candidate with generally increasing margins. Vermontians elected President Bill Clinton in 1992 with 46% of the vote and re-elected him in 1996 with 53%. The state showed slightly less support for Clinton's Vice President Al Gore in 2000 with 51%, but rebounded in 2004 with 59% of the vote going to Democrat John Kerry (Leip, 2008). Given the solid support for the Democrats, it is highly likely that Vermont will return to the Party in November.

Even though the pattern favors the Democratic candidate, the strongest support for a Democratic victory comes from this year's primary election. On March 4, Vermontians overwhelmingly supported the Democratic Party. A total of 155,279 votes were cast for Democratic candidates in the primary. The three Republican

candidates received markedly less support with a total of 40,120 votes (Vermont Secretary of State, 2008). It is almost certainly impossible for the Republicans to make up this deficit before the general election.

The combination of increased Democratic Presidential support and the overwhelming margins in the primary election are simply too strong to ignore. Drastic shifts in Vermontian public opinion would have to occur to prevent a Democratic win in the fall. Based on the evidence, it is probable that Vermont, and its three electoral votes, will go to the Democratic nominee in 2008.

SOURCES

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