

WASHINGTON
Winner: Democrat

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By all initial indications, Washington does not appear to be a blue state, but voting records confirm that come election time it is safe to bet a Democratic outcome. Washington is certainly not a mainstream Democratic state based on its demographics, inhabitants, and rural layout. Despite these initial, misleading signs, I am confident Washington will vote Democratic in the general election because if the state's voting history is any indication, Democratic candidates are favored to win.

A rural state voting Democratic is a surprise. Most rural states tend to vote Republican, but Washington is an exception. Census data suggests that 84% of residences are white while minorities comprise only 16% of the population ("Washington Census Data," 2006). With such a low minority count it is a wonder how the Democrats can do so well being the party that tries to represent diversity and must rely on minority voting to stay competitive. Not to mention how few urban areas exist in a state of this size. Interestingly, Washington residences are below the national poverty rate and above in Median household income rate. Also telling is that Washington has nearly 7% and 3% respectively higher high school graduates and Bachelor's degrees than the national average ("Washington Census Data," 2006). It could be argued that the higher education rates indicate a Democratic leaning population. For example, polls have shown that out of all the state primaries so far, Clinton has only beat Obama by a single percentage point in 5 states when College educated whites were polled ("The Washington Post," 2008). Forget for a second about Hillary vs. Obama and take note that the poll numbers for college educated white voters were significantly higher across the board for a Democratic candidate. Just maybe Washington fits this criteria of Democratically leaning upper educated whites which has helped Democrats over the years here do well, despite what the demographics tell us. No accurate statistics are available for registered voters in Washington as of now, so it is difficult to ascertain how much of the voting population votes Democrat, Republican, or something else. Maybe the 2008 Presidential election will resolve the indefinite voting tendencies.

The voting record of Washington on Presidents has been predominantly Democratic. In the past 5 elections, starting back since 1988, Washington has always edged the Democratic Presidential candidate just into victory. Yet, the Democratic success is a mixed bag. For example in 2000 and 2004, Al Gore and John Kerry narrowly beat Republican candidate George W. Bush by a few percentage points; 50.1% and 53.0% of the vote respectively. Looking back further, President Bill Clinton enjoyed at least a 10% lead in percentage points over Republican contenders in the 1992 and 1996 elections; 43.4% and 49.8% respectively. The assumption as to whether or not Washington is a Democratic voting machine at the Presidential level is inconclusive. It appears that Democrats are likely to win, but the odds increase with the popularity of the Democrat candidate running disproportionately with the unpopular (if that) Republican incumbent or candidate. Think back to how popular Bill Clinton was in the 90s (he did well with voters in Washington) and to the excitement Obama in

generating for the Democratic ticket in the midst of a very unpopular lame duck President. The odds, based on the past and the subjective popularity only measured at best in percentage of votes, appear to favor a Democratic Presidential win.

Briefly, it should be mentioned that Democrats also benefit from strong success in all levels of government ranging from the Governor to State legislative bodies in Washington. The Governor has been a Democrat 5 out of the last 5 Gubernatorial Elections with healthy margins reaching as high as 62.2% in 1988 and only one year under the half way mark of 48.9% in 2004 (Leip, 1988; Leip, 1992; Leip, 1996; "CNN.com", 2000; Reed, 2004). The Republicans have only gained moderate success in the U.S. House 4 times out of 9 Election cycles since 1990 up to 2006 (Carle, 1990, 1992, 1994; Trandahl, 1996, 1998, 2000; "Cable News Network", 2002; "Election Results CNN", 2004; "America Votes 2006 CNN", 2006). Otherwise Democrats are dominant in Washington not only on all levels, but also in succession of election years.

Based on Washington's voting record, the unpopularity of the Republican party right now, and the aspiring possibility of a once in a lifetime unique Democratic Presidential Nominee, it is good reason to believe Washington will once again give a majority of Electoral College Votes to a Democrat come November 2008.

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