



Why Missouri Will Not Be a 2016 Presidential Campaign Battleground

For more than a century, Missouri was known as the “bellwether state” because of its tendency to swing between Democratic and Republican presidential candidates. The title was well-earned. FairVote’s analysis of state partisan leanings (based on a state’s partisan deviation from the national average) shows a consistently balanced division in Missouri.

Closely Divided Missouri Partisanship, 1968-2004

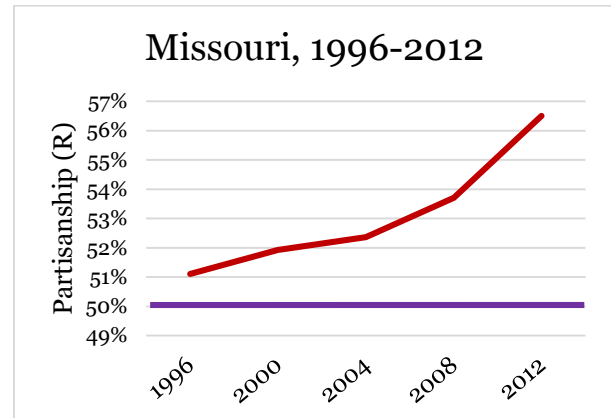
Year	Partisanship
1968	50.2% Republican
1972	50.7% Republican
1976	50.8% Democratic
1980	51.5% Democratic
1984	50.9% Republican
1988	51.9% Democratic
1992	52.3% Democratic
1996	51.1% Republican
2000	51.9% Republican
2004	52.4% Republican

However, recent elections suggest that presidential candidates in 2016 are highly unlikely to target Missouri as a battleground and that, just as in 2012, it will be nearly completely ignored.

In 2008, the Obama and McCain campaigns devoted significant attention to Missouri, spending more than \$9.8 million on ads and holding 20 campaign events in the state. However, Missouri still became more Republican. McCain won the state by 0.13%, despite the fact that Obama won 7.3% more votes nationwide, reflecting how it was a strong year for Democrats overall. Missouri’s underlying partisanship thus rose to 53.7% Republican in 2008.

This Republican lean explains why the Obama and Romney campaigns largely ignored Missouri in the general election in 2012. Total ad spending in the state was only \$127,560, which is just 1.3% of what it was in 2008. Neither candidate, nor either of their running mates, held even one campaign event in the state. Romney won the state by 9.4% despite losing nationally by 4%. As a result, Missouri’s underlying partisanship increased to 56.5% Republican in 2012.

In the 2016 presidential election, Missouri is highly unlikely to regain its battleground status. First, the trend in its partisanship has been steady, becoming more Republican in every election since 1996.



Second, Missouri is unlikely to experience a large enough shift back toward Democrats to make it a swing state. In the 2004, 2008, and 2012 elections, an average of just three states shifted partisanship by more than 5%. In 2012, the only three states shifting at least 4% were small, uncompetitive and ignored.

Third, Democrats have far more inviting targets to build on their base of 242 electoral votes in the 19 states they have won six straight times. They can seek the 28 additional electoral votes needed to win from these states with a total of 100 electoral votes.

States Democrats Likely to Target in 2016

State	Electoral Votes	Partisanship 2012
Nevada	6	51.5% Democratic
Iowa	6	51.1% Democratic
New Hampshire	4	51.0% Democratic
Colorado	9	50.8% Democratic
Virginia	13	50.1% Democratic
Ohio	18	50.4% Republican
Florida	29	51.4% Republican
North Carolina	15	52.9% Republican

As a result, Missouri has joined the growing number of states that have no chance of being a swing state and earning campaign attention. It’s just one more flyover state rather than “the bellwether state.”