

Connecticut is Nation's Most Ignored State in 2008 Election

FairVote Analysis Finds It is Most Populous State to Have No Campaign Spending or Visits

As part of its ongoing analysis of presidential election campaign spending and events, FairVote compiled its 2008 campaign attention index, analyzing the campaign resources per capita that were directed into each state during the peak season. Based on this analysis, Connecticut was dead last in 2008, showing that its voters were completely ignored by both major party campaigns.

Upon securing their parties' nominations, both major party candidates in 2008 made a simple promise – to reach out to as many voters in as many states as possible. Barack Obama hired field staff in every state, while John McCain pronounced he would engage democratic strongholds like California. But these well-intentioned goals of political inclusiveness ultimately failed, due to the reality of the current Electoral College system and its application of statewide winner-take-all rules.

Based on this anachronistic system, candidates are rewarded for funneling their resources and attention into a handful of battleground states containing a fraction of the population. Our research shows that this narrow focus ignores millions of Americans who happen to live in the two-thirds of states that are discounted: Democrats, independents and Republicans; rural, urban and suburban; and residents of small and big states and from every profession, ethnicity, and walk of life.

Connecticut is no exception to this rule. Because no candidate in recent history has viewed Connecticut as a state whose party affiliation could be flipped, it has gone largely ignored in general election campaigns. Our analysis of campaign behavior in 2008 reflects a stark contrast between Connecticut and heavy battleground states. In fact, Connecticut was last in our analysis of the campaign

attention index.¹ It was the largest state not to have a dime in presidential campaign spending nor have any campaign visits by major party candidates during the two months between the Republican convention and the general election. In other words, Connecticut's more than 3.5 million people were the most marginalized group in the 2008 election.

To put this in perspective, if Connecticut had received an amount of campaign spending and visits proportionate to its share of the national population, then the state would have seen \$2,472,743 in spending and 3.5 campaign visits in 2008. Visits and money are not, of course, the only barometer of political attention; they are merely indicators of the value that campaigns place on various states. The true worth is the excessive weight that battleground state voters have on shaping national campaign policy and topics. What matters most to campaign are issues important to voters in Ohio, Florida, Virginia and Pennsylvania, far outweighing those important in states like Connecticut, Utah and Texas.

If states representing a majority of Americans apportioned their electoral votes based on the national popular vote, as proposed by the National Popular Vote plan for president (www.nationalpopularvote.com), then every vote and every voice in every state would be treated as equal. Recent polling data indicates that more than 70% of voters in a full range of states support such a change. Certainly it would benefit tens of millions – and, including the voters of Connecticut.

¹ For more information on FairVote's Attention Index, please see our updated 2008 version of *Who Picks the President*

