

Oregon Virtually Ignored in 2008 Election Campaign *FairVote Analysis Shows Likely Impact of No Longer Being a “Swing State”*

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, Oregon fell nearly to the bottom, receiving less than 1% the attention per capita of the state receiving the most attention.¹

Upon securing their parties' nominations, both 2008 major party candidates 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.

Before 2008, Oregon had received more presidential candidate attention than many states, but it is likely to continue to be largely ignored under the current system in the 2012 election. This is due to a steady trend towards Oregon supporting the Democratic candidate at a higher rate than the national vote. In 2000, Oregon was a highly competitive state in a nationally close election. Unsurprisingly, Oregon in 2004 was among the nation's top 13 states in campaign attention. But due to Oregon's clear trend – from 49.8% Democratic in 1996 to 50.0% Democratic in 2000 to 53.3% in 2004 – major party candidates' campaigns abandoned the state in 2008, viewing it as no longer competitive.

Indeed, campaign spending dropped from \$2,280,367 in 2004 to \$144,720 in 2008 despite a large national increase in spending. Oregon also went from receiving five campaign visits to zero in the

campaign's peak season.² Based on an even larger margin of victory in 2008 and continuing Democratic trend, candidates are almost certain to ignore Oregon even more in 2012. In other words, Oregon's more than 3,700,000 people will likely be completely ignored in upcoming presidential campaigns.

To put this in perspective, if Oregon had received an amount of campaign spending and visits proportionate to its share of the national population, then the state would have seen \$2,676,712 in spending and four campaign visits in 2008. Visits and money are not the only barometer of political attention, but rather 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 campaigns are issues important to voters in Ohio, Florida, Virginia and Pennsylvania, far outweighing those important in states like Oregon, Idaho, and Washington.

Oregon is joined in this no-attention status by most small population states. In fact, even though Ohio and the 12 smallest states both have eight and a half million eligible voters, Ohio had 62 campaign events (more than a fifth of all events), dwarfing the total number of campaign events in all small states combined.

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, including the voters of Oregon.

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

² Visits based on *Washington Post* tracker for major party candidates and running mates. Visits not recorded by the *Washington Post* were not part of our analysis.

