

What makes a voter?

Ask just about anyone what makes a great voter and you'll probably get a variation of the same answer...one who seeks the truth about the candidates, follows the important issues of the day and who is well-informed about them. Ask the campaign managers and they'll probably give you a simple more direct answer like: one that votes for their candidate. To them, THAT'S a great voter.

Dig a bit deeper into the inner workings of the campaign analysts' and strategists' minds and you'll hear: a voter they can attract with the right message, a voter that they can poach from the opposition, a voter that will not change his mind no matter what their candidate says or does and lastly, a voter that contributes to the campaign. Each type of voter is important to a campaign, but some are more important than others and make up a bigger part of the candidate's base. The highest ranking might go to the voter that contributes money to the candidate's campaign.

Why? Because no voter that donates his hard-earned money is going to admit he bet on the wrong horse and change his vote. Next might be the candidate's most ardent supporters whose loyalty will not be compromised regardless of their disagreement with the candidate over a single issue they deem important. (These are the 'totality voters' who see the candidate's whole views and not just positions on single issues as being the decisive factor in supporting them.) Slightly down the value scale are voters that are moved by the candidate's message or position on a single issue (single-issue voters). They are bit more prone to jump ship if they perceive that the candidate has changed his position on *their* issue.

Finally, we come to the 'poached' voter that has been convinced to desert his first-choice candidate. This group is the least loyal, the thought being, "If they were wooed away once, they can be wooed away again." The next level of voters are their subsets and demographics like age, gender, education, race, ethnicity, urban/rural residence, marital status, financial situation, voting frequency, etc.

The whole voter 'tree' is hung with these identifiers and subsets which are like Christmas ornaments of various shapes and sizes. The only thing connecting them is the tinsel (their motivation to vanquish the opposition). The campaign pollsters are the ones that have the all-important task of identifying which voters are which and then figuring out how many of them are actually telling the truth. There are a number of groups that may play a pivotal role in getting either the presumptive nominee from the Democrat or Republican side, elected.

To nobody's surprise the important voting groups are women (particularly single women), minorities (particularly Blacks and Hispanics), disaffected (angry) voters, and independents (42% of the self-identified electorate). The polls will be flying fast and furiously in the coming months and will be used to bolster the campaigns' success in attracting these voters AND amass much-needed campaign funds. The Republicans will be trying to shore up their base of older, White, high school-educated, male voters, married women over 40, evangelicals and conservative-leaning independents, while the Democrats will be concentrating on winning over their base of college-age voters, union members, younger single women, Blacks, Hispanics, left of (Democrats') center middle-aged Progressives and independent voters. Both groups will be courting first-time voters and will be engaged in aggressive new voter recruitment drives.

There are two major things driving this election for the Democrats: 1. their dedication to continuing the Obama Administration's path towards social, racial and economic equality and 2. to elect the first woman President. The Republicans see this as an existential election, largely a contest between good and evil: the goodness of *free range* capitalism leading to economic opportunity, personal freedom and government accountability versus the 'evil' of government excess, overreach and abuse of power.

The major voter issues for the electorate are (according to many exit polls taken during the primaries): the economy (jobs and wages), bloated runaway government (excessive national debt, executive power grabs and legislative gridlock) and security (personal and foreign). Second-tier issues include: immigration, education, healthcare, our military budget/readiness, and social issues.

With a little over five months to go before election day, voters of all stripes still have ample opportunity to assess the candidates' strengths and weaknesses and throw their support behind them before voting on November 8th.

The choices we make for President, Senate and Congress this year will determine America's course for decades to come.

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