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WHAT THE 2008 ELECTION MEANT: POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190

PARTICIPANTS:

Moderators:

LARRY BARTELS
Director, Center for the Study of Democratic Politics,Donald E. Stokes Professor of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University

THOMAS E. MANN
Senior Fellow, Governance Studies

Panelists:

JOHN HARWOOD
Chief Washington Correspondent, CNBC;
Political Writer, *New York Times*

GARY JACOBSON
Professor of Political Science, University of California, San Diego

JAMES STIMSON
Raymond Dawson Professor of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. MANN: Good morning. I'm Tom Mann, we ordinarily hang out at Brookings. This is Brookings South today. Thanks to Bruce Cain for allowing us to hold the final of our five part series of seminars on the election here at the UC Center, we're always happy to be here.

We set this up a bit after the election would be over. We knew there would be ten days of early analysis and punditry and commentary, but we thought we'd have the advantage of a little time and distance, and we might even get some more election results in.

Now, some of you thought there would be – and certainly with the presidential election, but those who came from the very beginning knew there would not be. But there are congressional elections, and as we speak, we still have three Senate races unresolved, we have a handful of House races still to be called, and then we have two run-offs in Louisiana, one of which has a certain outcome of the victor, but

like the Alaska Senate race, it may ultimately be resolved in a way that conflicts with the outcome.

In our earlier series, we talked about a range of subjects. I remember our third session, we gave a lot of attention to race and the Bradley Effect, and we've been scouring the returns to try to find any evidence of it. We've largely been unsuccessful, not that race wasn't a factor, but that the presumed underperformance with the actual vote relative to the pre-election polls of black candidates seemed nowhere in evidence, although maybe my colleagues will correct me on that, but we have something to substitute for it, at least we had until about a day or two ago in Alaska.

The pre-election polls showed Begich winning by seven to ten points, and as the returns trickled in, Ted Stevens actually had a lead, which now has created a new category called the Felon Effect, as you all probably know.

We've also managed –

SPEAKER: Or you could call it the Rogue Effect.

MR. MANN: We now have a new campaign slogan, “Elect the Senator With Convictions.” But forgive me for all of that. This series has been co-sponsored by Princeton’s Woodrow Wilson School, and in particular the Center for the Study of Democratic Politics directed by my friend and colleague, Professor Larry Bartels. We did this four years ago, had a lot of fun, and managed, we think, to provide, if the audiences were an accurate guide, a little value-added to the conversation about American elections. So we’ve refrained that series this year and have had the same objective, seeing if we can’t find ways in which social science research can add some perspective and insight to our understanding of elections as they’re evolving and after the fact.

The previous sessions have covered topics such as parties and partisanship, the fundamentals of the election, including the economy, the war, and the President’s standing. Our third session looked to see how issues get involved in elections, how ideology or ideological proximity might or might not matter, race,

gender, and the traits of candidates. And then last time we looked at, more specifically, at campaign effects, money, ads, and mobilization.

Today we're going to look back on that, look at the election results, and ask, "What do they portend for politics and governance in the days and months and years ahead?" Partly what we're going to be doing is seeing what we can add, subtract, and amend to the analyses that have been offered up in the last ten days.

The order of our presentations will begin with Larry Bartels, who, as I said, is co-directing and organizing this session with me. Larry, for those who haven't bought it yet, you must, his book is called Unequal Democracy. And then we're going to follow with my long time friend and colleague, Gary Jacobson, who is a Professor of Political Science at the University of California San Diego, who has always written definitive work on congressional elections and money in elections, but whose recent book was a book about the Bush presidency, A Divider, Not a Uniter.

We're then going to turn to Jim Stimson, who's the Raymond Dawson Professor of Political Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Among many other things, Jim is a – one of the people who conceived of the notion of macropartisanship and who's looked at the ways in which shifts and public opinion are reflected in policy-making itself.

We'll then turn to John Harwood to offer his reactions to the presentations. John wrote for many years, reported and wrote for the Wall Street Journal, but a while ago switched and became the Chief Washington Correspondent for CNBC, that's why we see him on TV even more than before, but also he's a political writer for the New York Times. Just a word before Larry digs in, I think it's probably fair to say that all of us up here believed at the outset, I'm speaking for John and it may be unfair, I at least speak for my political science colleagues, that the outcome of this election was largely predictable, that it was fundamentally a referendum, and when times are

seen as so bad with the economy and the President and an unpopular war, there's little precedent in American history, the only exception being 1876, for a President's party being returned to power.

Having said that, it was important for us to understand how that referendum plays out in the – with the candidates, with their campaign strategies, with events, debates, money, race, and underlying demographic shifts. So the real question is, what role is there for these other factors given the broad environmental context in which our elections operate? And I trust our colleagues will have something to say about that.

For example, did the timing of the financial meltdown have a major impact on this election? That's a matter of some dispute, I hope we talk about that today. The other question is, are there any real signs of significant long-lasting changes in the electorate? This usually comes under the title of realignment or not, but it needn't be, it could be more modest and sort of the march over time or gradual

of demographic changes with certain groups composing more, others less of a share of the electorate, and their preferences, political preferences, changing over time in ways that might really advantage one party or the other.

Finally we'll want to talk about mandates, what is a mandate, what does it mean, is it objective, subjective, what are victorious candidates presented mandates, given permission to try something new, afforded an opportunity to govern that might not otherwise exist.

Well, those are some of the questions we'll be wrestling with and –

MR. HARWOOD: Can I just offer one quick –

MR. MANN: Yes.

MR. HARWOOD: -- since you raised the point about predictability. I sort of always thought from the beginning it was sort of predictable, but I learned from these guys, not the other way around, and when Larry Bartels told me in early October that the chances of an Obama popular vote victory were slightly

higher than 90 percent, that was good enough for me, I decided it was predictable at that point.

MR. MANN: Okay. We'll turn it over to Larry.

MR. BARTELS: Thanks, Tom. Since this is the grand finale, at least for the current quadrennium for our election series, I want to begin by thanking you for being a great partner, as always. I've had a good time and learned a lot doing these.

I want to thank Molly Reynolds and everybody else at Brookings for their hospitality, and Michelle Epstein, who's done all the organizing on Princeton and in taking care of our cavalcade of terrific panelists, and John, and Gary, and Jim as the latest of a series of terrific scholars and journalists who have taken their time to join us in going through this and thinking about this really interesting election.

I thought I would start by talking a little bit about the tension or the comparison that, as Tom mentioned, we've talked about a lot in these sessions over the last several weeks between the fundamental

factors that political scientists think about as shaping election outcomes on one hand and the campaigns, the short term campaign events and how they've worked on the other hand.

As usual, journalists have mostly focused on the latter in trying to explain how the election turned out the way it did or why it turned out the way it did. The main morning-after story in John's paper was headlined, "Near Flawless Run is Credited in Victory." My Princeton colleague, Julian Zelizer, wrote a piece for the Newsweek web site which was headlined, "Worst Campaign Ever," obviously that was McCain's campaign rather than Obama's campaign.

And so I think it's kind of become conventional wisdom already that Obama's campaign was really very well run and impressive, and McCain's campaign was very badly run and unimpressive.

Well, maybe, although it's hard to see why we should believe that on the basis of the outcome. Sure, Obama won, but he won by about the margin that political scientists had been predicting based on

these fundamental factors well before the campaign began.

In addition, he had what looked like some advantages beyond what the political science models were capturing; one which we talked about in one of our sessions is a huge advantage in terms of resources, outspending McCain by a substantial margin, maybe two to one, maybe a little less than that. As Tom mentioned, the fortuitous from Obama's point of view, timing of the financial meltdown in the middle of the campaign, which surely focused voters' attention on economic issues even more than it would have otherwise have been focused on economic issues, that must have helped somehow. Nevertheless, in spite of those factors, Obama won by about what we would have expected him to win by.

So one explanation for that is that his campaign wasn't as good and McCain's campaign wasn't as bad as people have thought. I don't have a good sense of that yet, although I'm hoping that subsequent research will begin to shed some light on that.

Another possibility is a factor that we talked about in our previous sessions and that Tom referred to briefly, the issue of race and the extent to which race affected voting patterns among white voters.

There's been a little bit of analysis on that. It's far from conclusive at this point, although again, I think subsequent analysis may shed more light. One of the things that I did with the exit poll data was to look at the relationship between Obama's gains among white voters in various states and the composition of the population. It turns out that there's a pretty strong systematic relationship between the number of African Americans in each state and Obama's gains among white voters. So in states that were entirely white, Obama's average gain was something like five percentage points over what Kerry had gotten in 2004. In states that were a third African American, that was essentially zero, and there was a pretty steep decline all through the range.

That's kind of visible if you just look at

the maps that everyone has seen about the areas, where the Republicans actually gained votes, that kind of band of the border south. But it's also true in the Deep South, where it's obscured in the overall election returns by the strong turnout of African American voters.

But if you look at white voters in Louisiana, and Alabama, and Arkansas, and Mississippi, those are the only places in the country where Obama actually lost white votes by comparison with McCain. That seems, to me, to be at least pretty strong circumstantial evidence that race factored pretty heavily into the behavior of white voters. And that may account for part of this discrepancy that I've described between what we might have expected in the way of the outcome and what we actually observed.

The other thing that was clearly hugely important and that fits very well with the way political scientists have thought about this, I can remember Jim Stimson telling me back in April when we happened to be together what was going to happen on

the basis of the fundamental factors that we've focused on a lot, changes in partisanship, the state of the economy, and presidential approval. And I've just, in this handout that you may have picked up, put together some results from the exit polls for the nation as a whole and for the key swing states.

Looking at Obama's vote margin in two groups, one is people who rated national economic conditions as poor, which is about half of the electorate. You can see that those people in the country as a whole and in most of these swing states went by about two-to-one for Obama.

And then another group, the people who strongly disapproved of President Bush's performance, again, that's about half of the electorate. And those people went for Obama by margins of about 70 percentage points.

So Obama got something like 90 or 95 percent of the support that he needed to get elected from people who strongly disapproved of the President's performance. He needed to pick up a little bit more

from people who only disapproved, rather than strongly disapproving, in order to get elected and that's what he managed to do. The other thing I wanted to talk a little bit about is the issue that Tom mentioned of realignment. Did something special happen in the electorate this year that portends big changes in the future?

Well, the way political scientists think about this is that realignments mostly depend on what happens after the election rather than what happens in the election. And so my guess is that if Obama succeeds in making progress on these huge challenges that are facing the country, and the country seems to be in good shape and people think we're on the right track, when the next election comes around four years from now, that his margins will be reinforced and the Democratic advantage will continue for some time.

On the other hand, if things go badly and people are convinced that the Democrats don't have the solutions to our problems either, then the gains this time around will turn out to be very short lived.

But one of the things that I've done is to look at how the pattern of election outcomes this time compared to previous races with respect to changes in the state-by-state voting patterns. You can decompose these patterns by comparison with the previous election cycle into three pieces in a way that I think is useful. One is to see how closely the partisan pattern in each state mirrors what we saw in the last election cycle or in previous election cycles generally. In a typical recent election, the continuity of that partisan pattern, the overlap between how states vote this time and how they voted last time is something on the order of 90 to 100 percent of the previous Democratic or Republican margin in each state persists from one election to the next.

In this election, that number was exactly 100 percent, which is to say, on average, Obama got the same margins in each state by comparison with how Kerry had done and McCain by comparison with how Bush had done.

Leaving aside two other factors, one is the national shift in the vote, that national swing that moves every state in one direction or the other. In this election, in terms of the vote margin, that turned out to be about nine percentage points, so in terms of the overall vote total, about four and a half percentage points, moving the whole country in a Democratic direction.

Again, that's very much in the range that we've seen in other recent elections. A typical swing is on the order of four or five percentage points in the last seven or so presidential elections, and that's pretty much what we saw this time. And then there's the variability of individual states around that national swing by comparison with what happened before. In a realigning election, we often see switches in parts of the country that portend longer term changes, deviations from the national vote swing.

In this election, the variability, the standard deviation of those individual state swings was on the order of five or six percentage points, and

again, that's very much in keeping what we've seen in other recent elections.

So there isn't anything in this pattern of vote shifts across the states from 2004 to 2008 that looks different in any real way from what we've observed in other recent presidential elections.

And just for a comparison, for those of you who want to try to think about this as a realignment, in the handout I gave you, I also presented a similar kind of set of statistical results for an election that really was a realigning election in 1932. Many of you have heard the analogies historically between 2008 to 1932. Is Obama going to be the new FDR and bring us the new deal? If you look at the numbers for 1932, they look vastly different from the numbers for 2008. About a third of the pre-existing partisan pattern dissolved in 1932. The overall national shift in the democratic margin was 29 percentage points as compared to nine in 2008. And the variability of state by state shifts was also much greater in 1932 than it was in 2008.

So I conclude that 2008 was probably a third of a realigning election. But then pretty much every election is about a third of a realigning election, which is to say there are important shifts, if they accumulate over a period of time, they may amount to a long term pattern that we'll come to think of as significant, but so far this election looks about like other recent elections have looked like in most respects.

Of course, the big difference is the historic outcome. We have our first African American President, that's hugely significant. And we have an opportunity for big policy changes which may make a big difference to the future, not only of the party system and electoral politics, but of the country, so stay tuned, we'll see.

MR. MANN: Thank you, Larry. Gary.

MR. JACOBSON: Okay. I thought I would do a little division of labor here and focus more on the congressional side and let Larry and Jim do the presidency, so I'll do that. And I'm still kind of

trying to come up with the right metaphor image for this election, but I'm thinking of it as a kind of three wave process in which forces fundamentally driven by reactions to the Bush Administration generated the Democrats' success to an increasing degree over time as the election approached.

And I also think of it as not a two year wave, but a four year wave. You really want to go back to 2006. The fundamental – one of the fundamental things underlying that, and I have an elaborate set of charts you can look at, the decline and public support of the Bush Administration, the economy, the proportion of the population saying the country is going in the wrong direction, all of these things have increased steadily over the last four years, or pretty steadily.

And one of the consequences, and this is something that was mentioned, is a shift in mass partisanship in the Democrats favor. And I see that as the first kind of underlying phenomenon that's shaping this election. Suddenly there – not suddenly,

but gradually there have been – Democrats have had an increasing proportion of mass party identification, graphically I've shown that in the handout. But also, the Republican Party's general image has suffered because of Bush. And it turns out there's a very nice, simple relationship. Every time Bush's approval ratings drop ten points, the Republican Party's image sinks five points. So it's not one to one, it's about a half to one. But there's a very strong relationship between the two. It turns out to be true of Clinton, as well, so this is a phenomenon that goes beyond the Bush Administration.

That's part of it, and a major component of this is the shift towards the Democratic Party among the youngest voting cohort. Michael Dimmick back here did a wonderful piece of analysis for Pew that ended up in the New York Times. I've summarized some of the results on the – on one of the tables here. It shows that the Democrats' advantage among people who came of age during the Bush Administration is about 15 percentage points compared to a disadvantage of like

one percentage point of those who came of age during the latter part of the Reagan Administration, the first Bush Administration. So there's been a really swing among the – a large swing among the young voters to the Democratic side. They have an increasingly negative or not positive view of the Republican Party and so forth. So that's one part of the wave. The second thing is the fact that the Democrats won control of Congress in 2006. They were in control of Congress in 2006; the same factors that contributed to that victory in 2006 continued to play in 2007, through 2007, that is unhappiness with Bush, unhappiness with the war, and the insults of minority status inspired a disproportionate share of Republican retirements from the House and the Senate.

So for 2008, there were 26 republican retirements in the House, only three were running for higher office, 23 were just retiring, period, going to K Street and making some money, something like that.

There were three more who lost primaries. So there were 29 Republican open seats, Republican-

held open seats. Only six Democrats left Congress voluntarily, one died, and there were seven Republican open seats. Three of those Republican – Democratic retirees were running for higher office, running for the Senate. And when you look at the results, it turns out the Democrats pick up 11 of the 29 Republican open seats, they lose none of their own open seats, they pick up another, I don't know the number yet, finally, but another 13 – 12 or 13 – 14 Republican-held – incumbent held seats. On the Senate side, the same thing, no Democratic retirements at all, five Republican retirements, Democrats pick up three of those seats, they pick up at least three seats also from Republican incumbents, maybe four, maybe five, probably not six, we don't know those final three yet, but they're still in play there.

So the sentiment that was prevailing in 2007 generated the kind of process by which you have kind of preemptive capitulation on the part of Republicans. They're not going to run anymore – going to retire, in part, because there wasn't any expectation of

regaining majority status in this election.

So that set the stage for the process going from January through August. And then in August, the economic meltdown, or early September, the economic meltdown hits, and I think it did have an effect on the House races.

Now, if you look at the graphics of – the graphic that shows public attitudes toward the direction of the country, there's a sharp downward – a little downward spike at the end of that series representing that period. The same thing in Bush's approval ratings, they dropped another six or eight points right at that period. And my favorite illustration of this is what happens to Charlie Cook's handicapping during this period. If you look on the two Charlie Cook charts, one for the House and one for the Senate, his classification as seats as "leaning" or a "toss-up," it goes from where appointed – at the end of August it was something like 28 – 29 – I guess 27 Republican held seats were considered to be in play, no, 33 – 34 Republican seats in play, about 20

Democratic seats in play.

By the time the election rolls around, it's up to the 40 – 47 – 48 seats, Republican seats and play down to about 11 Democratic seats in play, so there's this big split, and that hits right after the – in the course of the economic meltdown. And suddenly, at least Charlie Cook perceives these seats as in play that weren't in play before.

And the Democrats end up winning I think more than one would have expected given conditions in August, I would guess by five or six seats, but I can't be precise until I get the final numbers on that.

So that was the third part of the wave, however that metaphor works. It kicked in at the end to give Democrats a little extra boost and pushed them toward really large majorities in the Senate, maybe not quite to 60, but maybe 58 or 59. And then representation in the House that looks like the whole process has, over the four year period, basically undone the verdict of 1994. And we're back to the pre-1994 status of the parties at the congressional

level.

Now, where are the Democrats, one turned out to be interesting, as well. If you look at the states according to their presidential outcome, and there's a graphic – there's a little chart on this, as well, in those states where – were red and remained red, okay, the Democrats win three House seats in those states and lose – win four and lose three, so there's a net one seat gain.

In those states that stayed blue in both elections, Kerry won and then Obama won, Democrats picked up nine seats and didn't lose any. I have a mistake in the chart that you're seeing there.

In the states won by – that switched, the nine states that switched from red to blue, Democrats won 11 seats, lost one, that one in Florida they lost because of the scandal. But their victories came in those states primarily or disproportionately in those states that switched from Republican to Democrat at the presidential level. The same thing is true for the Senate, that four of the six seats that surely

picked up came in states that went from red to blue in 2008; another two seats were taken in seats that were blue in both elections; and they didn't win any seats in states that were won by both McCain and Bush, at least so far. If they end up winning in Alaska, that will add one to that call.

So there was a clear relationship between how well Obama did and how well the Democrats did at the House and Senate level. I don't attribute that to coattails so much as to mobilization and the fact that the same sentiments that drove voters in those states toward the Democrats at the top of the ticket, drove people to the Democrats lower down on the ticket, as well. It wasn't necessarily Obama, but it was the same atmosphere that made Obama victories possible.

MR. MANN: Gary, could I just get you to clarify that table? When you're talking about one by Bush and then Obama, it's the state-wide results? You don't have – it's not –

MR. JACOBSON: I don't have any CD results yet.

MR. MANN: Right.

MR. JACOBSON: In terms of – turning to that question, you look at this shift of – in the Congress, especially in the House, you can measure this pretty well, I think one of the results of this election is that the median member of both caucuses, Democratic and Republican caucus in the House, is going to move to the right. That is, Republicans, if you look at their Poole-Rosenthal scores, that's a measure of their roll call ideology, the Republicans who departed were more moderate than the Republicans who remained by about, you know, a point one on the scale that goes from minus one to plus one.

If you look at those democrats coming in, two-thirds of them are elected in districts that – where George Bush got more than 53 percent of the vote in 2004, so they're Republican leaning districts.

The same kinds of – about the same proportion of the Democrats elected in 2006 came from such districts. And those folks were – their voting pattern is considerably more moderate than the average

democrat. So the ones coming in, if they behave like the other new representatives from those kinds of Republican leaning districts that are Democrats, they're also going to be voting in a more moderate way.

Again, on this Poole-Rosenthal scale, the average Democrat or average Democrat from a – not from a Republican leaning district is about minus point four or five, but from one of these Republican leaning districts, about minus point two, so that's more than two – two-tenths of a point on this – on this scale that goes from minus one to plus one.

So the median of the entire Congress is going to move to the left, because they're more Democrats, but the median of each caucus is going to move to the right, and the Republicans are going to be very conservative, and the Democrats are going to be more moderate on average than they've been in the past, and I think that bodes reasonably well for Obama if he wants to try to govern just slightly to the left of center. It's the kind of Congress that will make that possible.

MR. MANN: Thank you, Gary. Jim.

MR. STIMSON: Thank you, Tom. I'm going to begin with an apology to Bruce Cain, who's our host here this morning. Back in April I gave a talk that could have been entitled, "Why are democrats going to win in 2008?", and Bruce had to sit through that. And a month ago, in October, I gave a talk that said why Obama's leading, and Bruce had to sit through that, and here I am today giving a talk why Obama won, and it's the same talk, well, it's almost the same. And the vice in that problem is, there's really not much innovation in these three talks, and the virtue is, there's not much innovation in these three talks. This isn't a story that was made up after the fact to explain what happened, it was a story that was made up a long time ago and seemed to work pretty well.

MR. BARTELS: But you've had some practice.

MR. STIMSON: Yeah, I'm getting better. So I'm going to do two things today, I want to focus on fundamentals and what I say will have a lot in common with what Larry and Gary have said already, and then I

want to say a few words entirely differently on the issue of mandates, what they are, whether there is one or not.

My basic story, and this is sort of taking on the leading spin that is on the news media, that the two candidates were more or less tied and then we had a financial meltdown and advantage Obama, and that's why Obama won.

My basic story is that any Democrat ought to have won in 2008 because the fundamentals so strongly favored the Democratic Party. In the midst of all the campaign events that are going on, the meltdown, the debates and all of that, we tend to forget that most voters are either partisans committed to their own party, or if they're not partisans, they're people who are deciding on the basis of how the country has been going in the last month or year, and that means that most of them really haven't been up for grabs this year or any other year.

So my basic claim is that most of Obama's surge in September and October and the ultimate lead

that came from that are due to the fundamentals that were there all along.

I'm going to focus first on partisanship. And if you have the handout, it'll be helpful for you to look. And if you make a mistake, and by mistake, have Gary's handout instead of mine, it'll work just as well, there's a lot of similarity.

Partisanship, macropartisanship is just the Democratic proportion of the number of people who declare themselves as either Democrats or Republicans. It's an incredibly stable barometer of American politics, it's quite highly predictive of election outcomes, it wouldn't surprise anyone, and basically this exceedingly stable measure has moved one time in history, the time that we've been able to observe it, and moved one time dramatically, and that's 1984. In the midst of that morning in American election, something really changed in the American electorate and a pretty solidly Democratic plurality in the United States came to be an almost 50/50 split that we've lived with ever since then and which we

attribute to Ronald Reagan and the times.

And basically, until 2004, that would be the story for the history of partisanship, and now it's moved a second time. There's a movement back to the Democratic Party that's of a magnitude, you can see at the end, that's roughly comparable to what happened in 1984. So I want to make a good deal of that because I think it's exceptionally important. So this stable force has been out there, and when it moves, we ought to pay attention to it, because when it moves, it predicts the future.

So I've taken the same data and in the second figure broken it down for the Bush Administration on a monthly basis, and that leads to a forecast of what should happen in 2008.

You can observe from that figure that there are about eight and a half percent more Democrats in 2008, early 2008 than there were when George Bush was re-elected in 2004. Given that about 91 percent of partisans vote for the candidate of their own party, that gives you a straight forward forecast that a

Democratic candidate, candidate X, should have run about eight points better in 2008 than John Kerry ran in 2004. So how well did Barack Obama do by that standard? Well, that predicts that a Democrat should have gotten about 56.8 percent of the vote, Obama actually got 53.4, the last digits changing by the day, which means that the real question to answer this morning is not why did Obama win, but why did Obama get a couple percent less of the vote than a Democrat should have gotten in 2008? And I suspect that the candidates' race would be a good starting point for answering that question.

I'm going to say a quick word about the war in Iraq, because it's already been talked about. I've put together a scale using entirely different technology than what Gary used, and the scale looked like one of the two of us copied it from the other, from a variety of survey items, things like whether we made a mistake sending troops to Iraq, whether we made the right decision to go to war, whether Bush misled the public and all that kind of thing in one scale,

and in my figure three, you see that scale, and it looks just like Gary's, and the story it tells is steadily downward support for the war in Iraq, which won't come as novelty to any of you. There is the – there was always one chance that things might have turned around in 2008, and that was the famous surge strategy and the apparent success of the surge, and you can see a little bit of that in the figure. But it turns around from an extremely negative verdict on the war to just a moderately negative verdict. It doesn't look like it's going to help John McCain.

So we know that McCain was viewed as more experienced in international and particularly in military affairs, and he got some credit for supporting the surge when others opposed it, because the public generally believed that the surge had worked. But that doesn't mean there was ever public support for a strategy of ultimate victory in Iraq, whatever victory happens to mean, and the data clearly indicate that there wasn't.

Now I want to say some words about the

economy. And what I want to say is different than a lot of the commentary that I've at least heard in the public, because I want to emphasize what happened before October, not after.

It's tempting to say that the current financial crisis is so important that normal economic events were pushed into the background, and I think that's not true. It, indeed, is important, it probably had some effect. But it's worth recalling that most American voters had already decided how they would vote when the economic crisis hit in October. And the implication of that in normal human behavior is to expect that people who had already decided to vote for McCain or Obama was likely to view this crisis through the lens of a decision already made and decide that his or her candidate was the one that would have handled it better, and that's what we expect of normal voting behavior.

So although I wouldn't deny that there was some advantage to Obama in that series of events, I think it's much, much overrated. So what did the

economy look like before October? Well, as we all know, the housing bubble burst almost exactly a year ago, a little bit over a year ago, so this isn't a new phenomenon in October. That started the sub-prime mortgage crisis. That caused secondary failures and other kinds of financial markets, including financial markets that had nothing to do with mortgage paper.

That produced a world-wide sell off of stocks despite record corporate profits. That had analysts believing that we either were in a recession or one would soon follow, and we're now five quarters since analysts started saying that we're probably already in a recession, so the recession has been slow coming, but surely will arrive. And every bit of that was known before Lehman Brothers failed in September. All of this was known; it was all on the record.

So what's been going on in the long term? In the longer term, the incomes in America are stagnating. Household income in the United States for the last 35 years roughly has grown at a little over a half a percent a year, which is basically stagnation.

And the years of the Bush Administration, as Obama often pointed out during the campaign, have seen declining household incomes in real terms.

We can locate that in the recession of 2001, which causes declining household income, but more importantly, in a recovery that didn't restore the level of household income that had existed at the end of the Clinton Administration.

So how do consumers feel about this? Well, I have a graph, number four in my numbering, which shows a sudden really dramatic drop in consumer confidence. And now I want you to take a second look at that graph and read the heading, because the last reading in that graph is August 2008. All of this occurred before the current crisis started, and all of this was very much in place at the moment that the crisis we give so much credit to was going on. And what you see there is a really dramatic verdict of the American electorate, that basically things are going to hell in the American economy. And there are two measures there, one is how things are and one is how

the future looks, and they both tell the same story, grim.

Well, we've seen movements like that before. We saw it in 1980, we saw it in 1992, and what those two years have in common is a first term President seeking re-election was not re-elected in the face of an economy like that. So it's not surprising that those economic numbers get translated into votes. They get translated directly into partisanship and they are one of the explanations for why partisanship has moved so strongly in the Democratic direction.

Approval of George W. Bush, that isn't news, it's been a downhill slide ever since September 11. He is the most unpopular President ever, and he's been unpopular longer than any of his predecessors who was so unfortunate as to be unpopular. Basically, since George W. Bush was re-elected in 2004, he's been in negative territory all the rest of that time, and four years is a long time for that. So what's going on in the elections? Well, what we know is that basically, for much of the whole year, Obama was leading by about

five points.

And then we had the Democratic convention producing a little Democratic surge and offset by a Republican convention producing a little Republican surge, a bigger one to be accurate, leaving some impression that McCain and Palin might actually have been ahead for a week or so in September, followed by a surge to Obama, which led to about a six or seven point lead that just stayed rock steady the rest of the way.

So the question then is, what produced that surge? Why is it that after flirting with McCain and Palin for a week, American voters decided to vote Democratic? Well, what we know about the convention bounces is that previous ones have been permanent effects, they haven't dissipated, and the Republican convention bounced, big as it was, eminently was temporary. So why did we have this temporary bounce?

Well, you can tell two stories; one is that a big part of that was Sarah Palin. Sarah Palin caused enormous excitement, we might tend to forget

from the perspective of November 14. That excitement was not contained within the bounds of Republicans, it spread to independents and even some Democrats, and it lasted for a week or so. And then excitement met reality, and some famous media interviews, and it dissipated. So basically, the story I would tell first about why the very tiny McCain/Palin lead dissipated is, it was based upon an electorate that was excited about the vice president, and the excitement didn't last, and the lead went south with it.

And the other story is the story I've been telling all along, fundamentals. The fundamentals were out there when voters started approaching Election Day, they started thinking about those fundamentals, they were pretty much bound to drive the outcome in the direction that they did.

And so – and what's useful to keep in mind about those fundamentals is that they're not a magic force, it's – if they're ten percent more Democrats out there observing a partisan warfare, they're likely

to score it for the Democratic side. It isn't going to be even, and that was basically the contest that we had. In an earlier version of this talk, I used a football metaphor and said, what if you had 13 players on one team playing against only nine on the other, you play the game, you have all the fumbles and interceptions and brilliant running plays and pass plays and the commentators are all excited by these events, but the reality was that the team that had 13 players was bound to win. Well, that's basically what the election of 2008 looked like, the Democrats had 13 and the Republicans had only nine, and that's how it came out.

Let me switch topics then to the second thing I want to talk about. A couple of years ago I wrote a book called Mandate Politics with Larry Grossback and David Peterson, in which we set about studying the elections in American history and classifying some of them as having been mandates and most of them not.

And we came to the conclusion that what

mandates are is that they're a social construction, that for a variety of reasons, people in this community come to believe that the voters were willful in a recent election, and it's that belief itself that drives people to change their behavior, and particularly drives members of Congress to change their behavior.

So where does it come from? Well, we trace it to a consensus in the world of commentators, people who write about politics, saying that, yes, there was a message in the election. So where does that come from, you might ask, pushing it back a stage? Well, we found that, as much spin as there is in the press, that that consensus that an election carried a message can be predicted pretty well by the objective facts of election night.

And we isolate two of those facts. One is whether a party sweeps all office on a given election night, we think is vastly more important than, for example, doing well in the presidency, and second is whether the sweep was anticipated or whether it comes

as a surprise on election night, because if it's a surprise, commentators are having to reach for an explanation, and the obvious explanation to grab onto is, willful voters were out there sending a message.

What I can say in defense of these two standards, the virtue of them is that they were set in stone before this election cycle began, so unlike the spinners on both sides who are making up facts to say whether the election was or was not a mandate, these are a pre-existing set of standards that I'm now just going to mechanically apply to a new election. So was it a sweep? Well, the familiar facts, Obama won the election by 53.4 percent of the two party vote and 364 electoral votes. That counts as impressive, not huge, not the biggest in the history by any means, but impressive. Democrats in the Senate appear to have gained seven seats, that counts for the Alaska seat in the Democratic column, we don't know about Minnesota and Georgia yet, that counts as impressive.

Democrats picked up 21 seats in the House of Representatives with five still to be decided; that's

– it's solid. Democrats gained only one governorship, but they did gain – and that comes on top of six gains two years ago, so the cumulative pattern looks okay. I'd say that's okay as opposed to being impressive.

So was there a sweep? Yeah, there was a sweep. Was it impressive? That's a little harder claim to make. This is not the biggest Democratic win of all times, it's ever so slightly smaller than 2006, when you had all offices also going in the same direction, and both of them are ever so slightly smaller than 1964, the one Democratic win in history, which we've declared was a mandate.

On the other hand, if you put the two elections back to back, 2006 and 2008, as Gary suggested we should do, you have the biggest party movement in history. Now, should you believe that standard? Well, unlike everything else I've said that was set in stone before this election cycle, we've never compared back to back elections before, so you probably ought not to believe me much more than you believe the commentators who were trying to spin the

election.

In that two sets of elections, Democrats have gained 62 seats in the House of Representatives, 13 seats in the Senate, seven governorships, and a clear win of the White House. That's a pretty impressive showing for a two year span.

Second criterion surprise, did we see this election coming? Yes, we saw it all the way. We've seen it month after month after month through 2008. Virtually every forecast model had Obama winning, and those have been in the press and published for a long time. Obama's lead in September, October, and November was one of the largest and steadiest leads in a presidential election that I've ever seen, so anyone who was paying any attention to the polls would have known who was going to win on November 4, so there was no surprise in 2008.

That predicts that there will be no consensus on a mandate, and if there's no consensus, there is no mandate. So my prediction is that this will not come to be interpreted as a mandate election,

but ultimately it doesn't depend on scholarly judgments, so we'll see. The final point, to return to where I started, partisanship, what's important about partisanship is that at least a large proportion of partisan – movements in partisanship is permanent. So whatever happens to the Obama Administration, the fact that the Democrats have gained eight or nine points in the last four years, they probably won't retain all eight or nine points, but some large proportion of that will get carried into the future.

MR. MANN: Thank you, Jim. Well, what do you think, John?

MR. HARWOOD: Well, like the Senator who once said that – to the charge that he was mediocre, that mediocre people deserve representation like everybody else, I'm going to speak for the people in the commentariat who make up the mandate stuff and make up the interpretation, the election, and the realignment stuff.

And I say that with humility because it's true that journalists and commentators tend to be

somewhat less rigorous than my colleagues up here in figuring out what happened and why. I was reading recently for a column that I talked to both Gary and Larry for, and I was reading some discussions about realigning elections and which ones were realigning and which ones weren't, and whether these historical cycles repeat themselves. Walter Dean Burnham at Texas is a proponent of the notion that there are sort of generational realignments that occur. But I read something by David Mayhew of Yale and one particular story that actually had a real ring of truth to me, not that I would heed it as a guide to operations, which was that in reality, the history of American politics is just one thing after the other, it's not –

I also have humility about this because after the 2004 election, I was approached by a publisher to write a book about what struck her as the remarkable fact that Bush, despite his sort of infirmities and difficulties which were evident, to some degree, at the time, and growing with respect to the Iraq war, had won re-election and increased the

size of his Republican majority for the second consecutive election in 2004.

And so we conceived a book to explain how this had happened and what it meant. And as we were preparing to sign the contract for this book, we had a meeting in New York, and it happened about two weeks after Katrina, and the poll numbers for Bush, which were already a little shaky, as Jim was saying, just went south, and she said, “Wait a minute. We’re explaining how Republicans sort of, you know, developed this persistent advantage and kind of took control of Washington, what if they lose it?”, and we were planning the book to be published in September of ’06, and we said, “Well, we better have a plan B, and let’s make plan B – let’s slow down the time table for this book and wait until we’ve seen the 2006 election and come out somewhat after that.”

That sounded like a good idea to us and so we put it on a slower track. One of my friends, a journalist I’ve worked with for many years, was working on a similar proposal proposed by a different

publisher, and they went ahead and did it and published in ’06, and the title of their book was, One Party Country: The Republican Plan for Dominance in the 21st Century, and that was an artifact of when he had to produce a book.

I would say a couple of things about what’s been said. First of all, on the good and bad campaigns, there are two different things, one, were the campaigns good or bad, and secondly, did the goodness or badness of the campaigns have a big effect on the outcome of the election. I think objectively, the Obama campaign was exceptionally well run, and Obama was an exceptionally good candidate, and objectively, McCain was not. And I think that was evident from the events that they had in the campaign, from the demeanor and the rhetoric that they used on the trail, to the choice of running mates that each one selected, to their handling of the financial crisis, to how they performed in the debates.

You had this radical name calling inflation on the Republican side of the campaign, the more they

got in difficulty, and it became not just good enough to, you know, question the tax policy of your opponent, but you had to say he was a socialist, which was sort of preposterous in the context of the campaign, and it wasn't enough to say that he had sort of an ill-advised foreign policy, you said he palled around with terrorists, and you, you know, sent out mailers that sort of suggested he was actually a terrorist.

That stuff did not make McCain look good. And by contrast, Barack Obama, this first African American nominee in history, also a rookie in national politics, made virtually no mistakes the whole campaign. So I agree with my colleagues, I think it was highly likely that a Democrat at the beginning of the campaign was going to win the election. But candidates can blow elections, or they can make mistakes and make them closer than they needed to be, and I think Obama didn't do that. Just a couple of like personal insights about this; I remember in early '04, David Axelrod, who was Obama's strategist, was the strategist for John Kerry in 2004. And I had

been a real admirer of John Edwards's talents, which even before I knew what came out in 2008, thought were Clinton-like, and I wasn't thinking of that.

And he called me at one point in the campaign and said, "You know, I've got a guy that I'm also working for at the, you know, Illinois state level who's better than John Edwards who you should get to know." And I said, "Well, tell me something about him." And he says, "Well, he's an Illinois state Senator, he's running for the U.S. Senate." Fine, okay, tell me what else. "Well, he's a black guy." Interesting. "What's his name?" "Barack Obama." And my reaction was, get out of town, they will not elect a black guy named Barack Obama to state-wide office, and he said, "Well, I'm just telling you, he's really good, so watch him."

At the beginning of this campaign, I talked to a Senate colleague of both Obama's and Hillary Clinton's, at a time when Hillary Clinton was looking pretty formidable in the process, flawed, but formidable, and said, do you think Obama can beat her?,

and the answer was, he's more talented, he's more charismatic than she is, and so, yes, in theory, he could beat her, but she's been through it, she's seen everything, you've got to assume that she will not make mistakes, and he's a rookie and new to this, and you've got to assume that he will make mistakes.

Well, the reverse happened, they made huge strategic mistakes in terms of how they invested their resources and where they organized and where they didn't, and Obama did everything right.

And so I think that you have to credit Obama with doing that, not just in the primary and in the general election. I'm struck most of all in terms of his general election performance. Yes, it was the highest Democratic proportion since Lyndon Johnson, and you know, a higher share of the vote than Jimmy Carter got, but, of course, we're accustomed to the idea that Democrats don't win land slides. What was more striking to me was that he had a higher proportion of votes than Ronald Reagan got in 1980, when he swept Jimmy Carter and won 44 states.

As for what happened in the fall, the financial crisis, I agree with my colleagues, I thought Obama was going to win the election before then. Oh, one small just sort of window into that sort of expectations and what we knew about the race, I was at a dinner in June with – that was convened by Peter Hart, who's a long time pollster for NBC and the Wall Street Journal, with a bunch of sort of big shot Democratic strategists from various campaigns and some reporters like me, and Peter convened a discussion of the vice presidential choice and said, well, here's my take, and he kicked off the discussion and he said, one, it is highly, highly likely that Obama will win the election if he doesn't screw up, two, therefore, his ultimate goal in vice president is no mistakes whatsoever, maximum safety.

And so the way Peter interpreted that was, no Hispanic, no Bill Richardson, no woman, no Hillary Clinton, no Jew, no one-election-wonder, he said I want somebody who has been through the election process multiple times and has won over and over again,

somebody to reassure people that it's safe to vote for Barack Obama, and all of those factors lead me to think that Joe Biden is the guy he should pick, well, that's who he picked, and in retrospect, it looks like a pretty smart pick.

Obama – McCain, you know, behind the eight ball, tried to square the circle by picking Palin. I think she had a pretty profound effect and increasing enthusiasm for McCain that didn't exist among conservatives. I couldn't believe when I got to the Republican Convention how unexcited members – I've never seen a party convention like that where the rank and file of the party really didn't care much about McCain at all. And for them it was a Palin convention, not a McCain convention.

And they sort of thought that there would be some bonus among independents, and especially women, from Palin. And I do think that it is notable that they did appear, by the account given to me by both campaigns, that he did – McCain did take the lead, that was different. And then you had the financial

crisis after that.

Now, I suspect that Obama was going to regain the lead whether that happened or not. But I do think, what we can say from the crisis, is that, as with the debate performances that were affirming of Barack Obama's strength and steadiness and even temperament, that it helped lock in place fundamentals that were in favor of the Democratic ticket. Look at the Gallup track, beginning in like the third week in September, and it was remarkably stable the whole rest of the campaign, it was six to ten points, or sometimes it would get up to even twelve, but it never got below six, and it was just flat line like that. And there was one period in the last three weeks of the campaign when Gallup switched from just publishing their track of registered voters every day to publishing tracks of different groups of likely voters. And because of that anomaly of the publishing of their data, where the top line was likely voters, that it said – some people looked at the Gallup number and said the race is narrowing, it's gone from twelve to

seven, well, that's just because they were describing a different group of people that they were polling.

But then once you got those different samples out there, those flat lined the whole way. It never moved by, you know, there were days when the McCain track was up one and the Obama track was down one and then it sort of looked like it was narrowing, but it just – that was never sustained past one date. And I think some of that had to do with how well the Obama campaign ran. I will tell you one small personal story to explain – give a window, my window into that even temperament by Obama that also put me in the tank for him for some period of time; early in the campaign, in September of '07, when Obama was beginning to be a sensation in Iowa, but nobody knew exactly how big a sensation, he was drawing big crowds, and I covered Iowa caucus campaigns for more than 20 years, and you see when somebody has something exceptional going, and I pressed for an interview with the campaign.

Usually early in campaigns, it's pretty easy

to get interviews with these guys before they really take off. And at this – but Obama was becoming kind of a rock star and his campaign said, “No, we don’t have time.”

Finally they agreed and said, “Okay, after this event in Storm Lake, we’re going to give you ten minutes. We’re going – he’s going to meet and greet after his speech, they’re going to wind up the motorcade, and you get your ten minutes, and then we go.”

So that happened; I was with a freelance crew. When you work in TV, you hire freelance crews in states you go to, and you’ve never met these people before. And I learned as we were riding over to the event that these two guys were relatively new to videography. They had been in a rock band a few months before. And so at the appointed time, I stand in the right place with some of Obama’s aids and my producer and the crew, Obama comes over, and I commence an interview about income inequality and what are you going to do to narrow the gap between rich and

poor, and about 30 seconds into his answer, the videographer says, “Stop, my battery is dead,” at which point the Obama campaign people said, “Okay, we’ve got to go, you had your chance, but we’re going to be late.” And Obama, thank goodness, said, “No, we’ll wait, we’re going to give the guy his interview.”

So the sound man went to go get another battery out of his van, and he goes running away, it’s about five blocks away, it takes him five minutes, he comes back, and I’m not kidding, he says, “Dang, I forgot my keys.”

So he gets his keys, and at that point the people – the campaign said we really have to go now, and Obama said, “No, we’re going to wait.” He went back and he got the keys, and we recorded the interview, he gave me his full ten minutes, it was a great interview, I was so happy, the motorcade goes off, we go back to the satellite truck to screen the tape, and there’s something that you may have seen people on television do at the beginning of interviews,

where they hold up a white sheet of paper in front of the camera, it's called white balancing, so that the camera can kind of get a fix on the colors, and right as we popped the tape in, the guy says, "Dang, I forgot to white balance." So we watched the tape, and Obama is green as a martian, and we could not use any of it. Nevertheless, that calm, that steadiness, that sense of generosity, he got some benefit out of that over the long run from me.

MR. MANN: What about your camera man, did you fire him?

MR. HARWOOD: Well, what happens is, you hire these freelance crews on the basis of approved lists, like you go into a state and like these guys are on the approved hire them list, and I think those guys lost their spot.

MR. MANN: John, thank you very much. You know, I found John's comment about it's that – when you look at campaigns, it's important to keep the two somewhat separate, that is, judging their goodness, badness, effectiveness, ineffectiveness separately

from trying to claim or not claim that it was instrumental in determining the outcome of an election, and I think what you're saying is useful is, there was a stark contrast between the campaigns, but they tended to reinforce the fundamentals, help to make them more central, and in Larry's terms, may have actually helped to counter some of the underlying sort of racial effect on the campaign.

MR. HARWOOD: And I will say, one fun fact I discovered after the campaign was triggered by a call from a Kerry campaign veteran, and of course, after the campaign, everybody celebrates how smart the winning guys were, and after you lose, they talk about how stupid the campaigns were. And the Kerry campaign lost the presidency in Ohio, and had they won Ohio, he'd be President.

A Kerry person called to say, did you notice that Obama got the same number of votes that we did in Ohio, but he won, because McCain got 300,000 fewer votes, and I thought that was a useful object lesson in, you know, some of it was the brilliance of the

Obama campaign, and some of it was how lackluster the McCain campaign may have been.

MR. MANN: Yeah, in thinking about campaign effects, I think one would have to conclude that Obama's greatest achievement on the campaign side was in the nomination phase, where it made a huge difference, but that once you enter a general election, so many votes are so pre-determined in structure by the macropartisanship and the fundamentals that there it's a matter of simply making sure those fundamental factors are brought to bear on the minds of voters as they go into the booth, and in this case they succeeded. I wanted to raise one question with you all before we turn to the audience, which is this sort of whole notion of mandate. I love Jim's conception of it. I sort of like to think of it as – and Jim's is much more sophisticated, because I always call it – it's a fiction, it's a story told after elections based on some results of the election, but it's by no means essential that – determined that it's only one story and gets accepted or not accepted.

Sometimes a story gets told that has little bearing on – and doesn't go anywhere. Sometimes there's some connection and it does take off, so it's a fascinating exercise.

But I was going to suggest, you need neither a realignment in the sense that some were claiming, or the surprise effects, to be able to say there's something substantial going on.

In Obama's case, he was the first Democratic President-Elect, a successful Democratic candidate replacing a Republican in the White House since FDR that had a serious across the board election victory. By the way, Jim, you didn't mean to say the 2006/2008 consecutive victory was the biggest in – is the biggest since FDR, since '30/'32 in terms of the pick-up? But if you think about Kennedy, Carter, and Clinton, all of them had, in one way or another, disappointing results. This is the most decisive for a Democratic candidate. Secondly, it's the first big consecutive wave election since '30/'32, and that's pretty significant.

And then thirdly, were the changes underneath, that is, yeah, there was a pretty consistent pick-up, but has been discussed among the youngest cohort, among minorities, among – in metropolitan areas, among young professionals and others, there are shifts that seem to be occurring to the Democrats' advantage among groups that are going to be growing over time, and therefore, the very gains in macropartisanship suggest that it could be more enduring, but, of course, real achievements in terms of moving into a dominant position in the party system depend, as Larry said, on successful governance.

So it all remains to be seen, but I would suggest that the potential – there are signs there that are more impressive than Larry's chart, looking comparatively at recent elections suggest, and I'd just get your reaction to that.

MR. HARWOOD: I just wanted to make one point, well, two things, one about mandate. I think one thing that complicates the question of mandate was that whether or not the financial meltdown was a major

determinant of the election result, it was a huge event provoking a very large policy response by the government, and that is going to be an ongoing issue for Barack Obama in the campaign.

And it wasn't – and that policy response is related to what he was running on, but it's not what he was running on. And, in fact, when he was interviewed – I had an interview with him in September, right after Congress had approved the $700 billion rescue, and said, "Okay, you started running for President two years ago, and you had an agenda, and you're still running on that agenda, and you've just now – the governance is committed to spending $700 billion to bail out Wall Street with all sorts of ramifications we don't know yet, so how is that going to change the agenda you're running on?" And he said, "It doesn't."

Well, that strikes me as a cautious statement, where he didn't want to change anything, but he is going to – I suspect we'll have to change some things, and to me, it limits the fact that he did

not – that what he's going to administer, a treasury, and in terms of the rescue of the auto industry, and banks, and insurance companies and all that, it's going to be very much subject to making it up as they go along and not the kind of thing that you can actually claim a stable mandate other than the practical one of like trying to make things better, which is, in the broadest sense, is not really specific to anything.

The second thing is, in terms of the durability of this, it seems to me the most potentially evanescent element is the huge disproportion among young people, which, you know, how long is that going to last.

One of the things that was interesting to me and my colleagues, we were talking about Democratic gains at the congressional level in states that switched from, I think Gary made this point, states that switch from red to blue, in North Carolina at the end of the campaign, when Obama was playing seriously and doing well in the state of North Carolina, there

was a – there were two things that were notable about that, one was the Democratic nominee for governor and Senate, Bev Perdue and Kay Hagan, did not run away from the Democratic ticket, as usually southern Democratic state-wide elected officials do, which was an indication of the state was looking at Obama differently, but they weren't including him in their advertising and making a huge deal of that. However, very late in the campaign, Emily's list, the feminist political advocacy group, discovered in their polling that huge proportions of young people who registered to vote for Barack Obama had no idea there was even a Senate or a gubernatorial race in the state, and they could not name Bev Perdue or Kay Hagan, and so they did a very targeted ad campaign late in the game that included all three of their pictures and linked the two – the three of them together.

And so they're all for the same things, and they ran it, not on general broadcast television in North Carolina, which by conventional standards would be a risky thing to do, they ran it on Comedy Central,

on What Not To Wear, on, you know, all of the kind of like youth oriented shows that people in college or just out of college would watch, and they all three won.

Now, can Kay Hagan, Bev Perdue and other Democrats in North Carolina count on those people being with them in a secular way from election to election? I think that's very much a question.

MR. MANN: John, the flip side of the meltdown and the recession was captured by Rahm Emanuel in saying "never waste the crisis," that is to say the very change in the broader economic conditions provide constraints, but opportunities, as well, which might eventually, if played skillfully, allow him to move forward on his own original agenda. Any word on reactions on the mandate?

MR. STIMSON: Yeah; the mandate is not to be George Bush, that's the clear mandate. This was a rejection of the current administration in no uncertain terms asking for something different, for change. Now, change is totally open, and it remains

to be seen what that change is going to be. But I think there's a very strong mandate to be different without any particular direction to it.

MR. BARTELS: I certainly agree with that, but I have two quick reactions to Jim's analysis of mandates, which I always find very interesting: one is that it's striking and kind of scary if the presence of a mandate depends on the election outcome being a surprise, right? Journalists have to be incompetent in order for the president to have a mandate. You can imagine a world in which political scientists and polls and journalists actually get a handle on what's happening. In that case, by Jim's analysis, there can't be a mandate by definition.

The other thing I wanted to say is that I think one of the political lessons of the Bush Administration that's been quite important is to loosen the perception that big policy changes depend on popular support on an issue-by-issue basis. I mean if you think back to 2001, Bush came into office with the most tenuous possible hold on public support,

nevertheless, proceeded to implement really important policy changes.

I mean even before 9/11, the tax changes in the spring of 2001 were fundamentally important for the whole decade of politics and economics. I think that was because they pushed the limits of what they thought they could accomplish, there was no resistance, so they pushed further, no resistance, pushed further, and really I think have taught politicians a lesson about how much you can accomplish if you just proceed on the basis of your own ideological convictions and not pay a lot of attention day-by-day or month-by-month to whether the public is with you or not.

MR. MANN: Jim.

MR. STIMSON: What I'd like to say about mandates is that the three that we have more or less decided were real in the minds of Washington and have profound impact on policy-making because people thought they were real, in all three cases, we eventually decided they were not. So the thing – it's a kind of will of the wisp. We decide for a few

months in the early days of an administration that it has a mandate, and Congress rolls over and plays dead and lets the administration do whatever it wants, and then six months later we look at the same data and say, oh no, nothing has changed, it's the same old election, that's what's interesting.

MR. MANN: All right. Your questions, please.

SPEAKER: I have a hard time believing the debates weren't really fundamental. I mean in this particular case, the common wisdom is that Kennedy and Reagan and Obama really scored big in the debates because the public was not sufficiently familiar with them and viewed them as inexperienced.

So I wondered, maybe you would like to comment on that. I mean the fundamentals may have been with the Democrats, I'm sure, but Obama could have easily blown it, and he really needed those debates to introduce himself to a large number of voters who might well have gone with McCain if he hadn't done so well in the debates.

MR. STIMSON: Well, that's a real set up question for me, because I've done exactly the analysis that answers the question you're asking, which is, in general, do debates have a big influence on outcome?, and the answer is no. Reagan maybe, and in most other cases, for example, Kennedy, Nixon, all of the trees that have been cut down to write books about that issue, Kennedy was ever so slightly further ahead when that debate was held than he eventually won by, and we give the debate credit for the win.

But clearly, Obama could have screwed it up, he could have made mistakes, he could have looked unpresidential, and he didn't do those things, and so the game wasn't fixed. It was just in favor of him to start with. And the audience who was scoring it weren't evenly divided between Democrats and Republicans.

MR. HARWOOD: But that's not to say they were unimportant. Look, if he did screw it up, we might be talking about a different situation. And, you know, the playing error-free ball cannot be under

estimated, even if you start out with a lead.

MR. MANN: I mean one would have expected him to do well given what he had come through in the nomination phase of the battle and given what he had working for him in the broader environment, so that it turns out that candidates who go into these settings with the wind at their back almost invariably do what they have to do in the debates. And, yes, theoretically, it's possible to blow it, but we don't have much actual experience of that happening. Bruce.

MR. CAIN: I want to go back to the mandate question. And, Jim, I've got to apologize, even though I've heard you many times and read much of your stuff, I haven't read the book on the mandate, so I will order that. But in the interim –

MR. MANN: Available on Amazon.

MR. CAIN: -- in the interim, I'm going to ask, is it possible that we're not looking in the right place for a mandate, and that the mandate may be located where the fundamentals are, and where another literature, the Mayhew literature was about policy

consensus, so that we should be looking for, in the mandate, in the spread between the Democratic and Republican identification, that has to be based – yes, there's a negative aspect of that, as Gary says, that's based on a rejection of Bush, but is there a positive element of that?

Is there any evidence of a general movement in some policy consensus, particularly around green economy/environmental issues and around health care and possibly security, you know, the security – weakening of the security blanket? Is there some movement that we can see in terms of macro-policy consensus that gives us a hint that, forget about the number of seats that are won, forget about whether people are surprised or not, underneath that, between the macropartisanship changes and possibly some macroshifts in policy consensus, that there's a mandate that – that's where the true mandate is that gives the party and Obama some room to move.

MR. STIMSON: I very much regret that the data I need to update my own series on exactly that

question, the sort of net policy preference as the American electorate, the data ended in 2006, where the electorate is leaning left a little bit of normal and six months too late to matter, I'll find out the answer for 2008, but don't know it today.

MR. CAIN: But it's possible?

MR. STIMSON: Yes, it's possible, yeah.

MR. MANN: Absolutely; yes, please.

SPEAKER: Obviously, Obama would have won without winning the southwest, but in the campaign he verbalized a 50 state strategy, I'm going to change the electoral map. Were the demographics in the southwest, meaning New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada, strong enough that he would have won there if he had run a more traditional campaign? And the fact that he didn't, that he didn't run the more traditional, that he reached out there, did he make more permanent the democratic leanings of that part of the country?

MR. MANN: He would have won. I mean my reading of this is that he probably would have – his five to six point sort of national swing, if realized

in these states, would have been sufficient for the most part to win, but he enjoyed unusually large shifts in Nevada, New Mexico, and to a slightly lesser extent Colorado.

There was tremendous increase in – of Hispanics as a share of the electorate, and there was a much more decisive Democratic vote among these groups, suggesting that both were at work, it was part of the national rejection of Bush, the referendum, but it also reflected his appeal among growing parts of the population and his mobilization efforts.

MR. BARTELS: I think the big shift to Obama among Hispanics is important and has gotten a lot of attention. But it's important to bear in mind that what that really is a reversal of the big shift in the Republican direction in 2004. So the split among Hispanics now is really not much different than it was in 2000. But I wanted to say that I think the other kind of regional change that's quite interesting, having had an election in which the Republican campaign was so heavily based on otherness, socialism,

elitism, palling around with terrorists, that Obama's – some of his biggest gains relative to Kerry by six to ten percentage points in Indiana, North Dakota, Utah, Montana, Nebraska, Kansas, all those places that you would think would be the most fertile ground for the kind of campaign that the republicans ran actually moved more in the democratic direction than the rest of the country did.

MR. MANN: What's the matter with Kansas, right?

SPEAKER: But Louisiana maybe.

MR. HARWOOD: But, Tom, to make sure I understand you correctly, she asked if you ran a traditional democratic campaign. Traditional Democratic campaign, you would not have had the convention in Denver, he would not have run heavy advertising in Colorado, he would not have had all those campaign offices and organizational activities. Is it your feeling that he would – the water level would have just risen in the absence of a campaign?

MR. MANN: Probably sufficient to win those

states. Colorado had been moving already inexorably in a Democratic direction. We saw other offices in the state, so he probably would have – but it became much more comfortable.

MR. JACOBSON: Yeah; the fact that he wins eight percentage points more in Utah than Kerry did suggests there's something across that region that goes beyond the individual campaigns. And then the success of House candidates and Senate candidates in those western states – pick up of six seats, House seats in the mountain west and some Senate seats, that this was part of a more general movement of that region back to being what it was 30 years ago, which was either a balanced or even a Democratic region.

SPEAKER: Gary, can I ask you a question; were you surprised at all that there – some of us thought that given the Democratic wave in 2006, that there would be some effect of the delusion of responsibility or accountability onto Republicans because Democrats now had the Congress, and that they either would have some kind of – the tide would fall

back a little bit or it would be very limited in the up side, and that didn't seem to happen, even though ratings for Congress were very, very low, and that number has never struck me as all that significant because it's quite abstract, but was there anything surprising to you about that?

MR. JACOBSON: Well, initially, after 2006, I thought that would be the reaction. But as 2007/2008 developed, it gets worse and worse for the administration. Those trends that produce 2006 just continue. Bush gets less popular, the war gets less popular, and then the economy tanks. So you put that all together and it just keeps the ball rolling in the Democrats' direction.

And you get a little bit of a reaction. The four seats that the Republicans take back, three of them are explicable on that ground. These are districts where Bush got 60 percent of the vote or more in 2004.

SPEAKER: Nancy Boyda.

MR. JACOBSON: Boyda, and one in Texas that

had been – seat, and there's one other, it skips my mind right now. But that was what you kind of have expected. Now, I wish I had the graphic to show you on congressional ratings and presidential ratings, because it turns out, if you look over a long period of time, they're basically parallel, that is, the President and – ratings of the President and ratings of the Congress move together, and it doesn't matter whether it's the same party or in both – in control of both or whether it's divided government, they move together the same way, and the gap between them always favors the President, usually by, you know, five or six or seven points. Right now it's about three or four points, but nonetheless, they all move together with a little blip up for Congress after 1994 for a couple of quarters and after 2006, spare a could of quarters. And then it goes right back down to parallel.

So it's – we think of that as the government, we respond to it as the government, if we're unhappy with the President, we're going to be unhappy with Congress and vice versa.

MR. MANN: But then if you ask the Democratic Congress or the Democrats in Congress, the Republicans, you get a little –

SPEAKER: You get a partisan –

MR. MANN: -- difference, and that partisan difference ends up having more of a connection with the vote than the ratings of the institution; would that be fair?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

SPEAKER: John referred to these people who didn't know that there was a Senate race. I think there are a lot of people who recognize these subtleties, like the fact that we have a Congress which – the other party, but they mostly have decided ahead of time who they're going to vote for, and the people who are left undecided are mostly people who aren't paying attention at that level of detail.

MR. MANN: Gary, let me just say there is a bit of a debate, although somewhat one sided, but Bob Erickson, you know, continues to believe, and we had this discussion at one of our seminars, that there is

this – some balancing effect that you – if you believe that Congress is going to stay in Democratic hands, then you'd want to vote or a Republican president or vice versa to keep the power divided, but it's pretty hard to find direct evidence of that.

MR. MITCHELL: Thanks for a wonderful, as always, session. I want to ask a mandate question, but in a different way, which is, I want to give you four elections, and don't use the word mandate, but could you give me another word to describe the election of presidential, '32, '52, '80, and '08? I'd be interested to know what adjective or descriptor you would use in place of mandate, and then I want to just tack onto that, you know, did Obama create his own mandate in this election by seemingly guaranteeing that there would be multiple Republicans in his cabinet, and what would be the cost to him politically? John, I'd be interested in your view if he doesn't follow through on that.

MR. HARWOOD: If he doesn't follow through on having an inclusive cabinet, well, I tend to think

that Obama has a tremendous amount of flexibility within his base. I do not see him as being tied down by a set of promises or sort of political curbs on him. And I think there's a potential upside that he can have. If he wants to make Democratic gains more durable, if he wants to grow the party, it seems to me that there is some potential to appeal to independence and maybe even some soft Republicans by appearing inclusive, not appearing, being inclusive, and doing that both in appointments and in legislative strategy and in policy.

I think we had an early hint in his approach to Joe Lieberman by saying, "No, don't kick him out of his chairmanship; don't kick him out of the Democratic caucus." That is his inclination. And so I don't think he would pay a huge immediate price if he didn't have a bunch of Republicans, because most people won't pay much attention to that, most average voters, but I do think he – over time, there would be an opportunity cost if he didn't do it.

SPEAKER: I think what the four elections

you mentioned have in common is disaffection and repudiation of the incumbent party. And I think there's a kind of paradox with respect to this post-partisanship thing. I mean Obama, both in terms of rhetoric and his own inclination, wants to be a post-partisan president, but for the reasons that Gary described, all of the legislative dynamics are going to work in the opposite direction, right. He's dealing with a Republican caucus in Congress that's more conservative than it was before, and probably is going to be reluctant to cooperate and give them the kind of post-partisan and bipartisan support that he would like to have going with –

MR. MANN: Anybody else? Okay, Jo.

MS. FREEMAN: Two quick questions; first, turnout, were there any groups that turned out at a particularly higher or lower rate than normal expectations would predict? And the second question, Professor Stimson said that by your macropartisan analysis, he should have done about three points better than he actually did, and John said that there

were no flubs in his campaign; why then didn't Obama do the extra three points or better?

MR. STIMSON: The second question first. I suggested that the race of the candidate was probably a factor, and I believe it is. I think to understand what happened in 2008 and make all the numbers add up, because they don't, there are huge numbers of people who are racially prejudiced in the American white community and there are huge numbers of people who voted for Obama, and it stands to reason that huge numbers of racially prejudiced people voted for Obama.

But nonetheless, as Larry said in his state by state description, I think it's clear that race, as we always knew it would be, was a negative factor.

MR. MANN: On the turnout, we're still up in the air, frankly, there's still ballots to be counted, we have debates as to just where the overall turnout will be. I think best estimates now are maybe a percent higher than in 2004, which was an usually high turnout election. As far as groups, again, it's very risky using the exit polls for this. But the one

thing that seems clear is, among African American voters, there really was an increase in turnout. This is not a growing part of citizenry, but it – they certainly increased their share in the electorate, estimates are by two percentage points, together with a larger margin for the Democratic Party made them significant.

Debate about young people, but the best – I mean the exit poll estimate is they increased their share of the electorate by one percentage point. You don't want to place too much stock on that estimate. But it looks as if their overall turnout rate increased by about four or five percentage points, so it was higher than the increase in the rest of the electorate, which is consistent with 2004 and 2006. I'd say those were the most distinctive turnout surges. One last question, yes.

SPEAKER: Mr. Harwood, based on the management of the Obama campaign, the selection of the Chief of Staffs for both Obama and Biden, and the transition teams that have been selected, how do you

foresee this administration coming out of the gate?

MR. HARWOOD: Well, I think the choice of Rahm Emanuel, which surprised me, I didn't expect it, I thought Tom Daschle was going to get that job, was, from everyone that I've talked to and just in thinking about it since then, a pretty smart one. Rahm is a – he's a very experienced guy, he's tough, he has sort of sharp edges sometimes, but he has sharp edges not – this was why the immediate republican critique of him as a partisan was so silly, that Rahm's – the way Rahm used his sharp elbows in his time in Congress and heading the Campaign Committee was against Nancy Pelosi and Howard Dean and what he perceived as the left of the Democratic Party that was complicating his attempt to win moderate seats in Republican areas and build a new majority.

And I think that sensibility is likely to play a big role in how he leads this White House, so that he'll use the temperament and the profanity and the toughness in the service, I think, of a very pragmatic approach and one that might involve, you

know, picking off some of John Boehner's members more so than Boehner's, you know, critique suggested, that it was just going to be a partisan.

MR. MANN: Which really underscores the point that while the Republican Party has moved to the right, they also are in a position now where they have no realistic chance of soon getting back into the majority, and therefore, some members will want to engage in law making as opposed to campaigning if it has no effect, and so the efforts from the Obama Administration will not be with the leadership of the Republican Party, but finding six – eight Republicans in the Senate, maybe 20 plus in the House that might actually be interested if treated fairly and openly.

Well, there we are. I want to, as Larry did, thank Molly and Gladys and Michelle, I want to thank Larry for this last couple months, it was a pleasure doing it again. Thanks to Gary, to Jim, and to John, they were terrific today. And thank all of you for coming.

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ANDERSON COURT REPORTING
706 Duke Street, Suite 100
Alexandria, VA 22314
Phone (703) 519-7180 Fax (703) 519-7190