



## The Political Geography of Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri: Battlegrounds in the Heartland

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This is the third in a series of reports on the demographic and political dynamics under way in key “battleground” states, deemed to be crucial in deciding the 2008 election. As part of the Metropolitan Policy Program’s *Blueprint for American Prosperity*, this series will provide an electoral component to the initiative’s analysis of and prescriptions for bolstering the health and vitality of America’s metropolitan areas, the engines of the U.S. economy. This report focuses on three major battleground states in the Midwest—Ohio, Michigan, and Missouri—and finds that:

### **A. Ohio, Michigan and Missouri all feature eligible voter populations dominated by white working class voters.**

However, this profile is changing, albeit more slowly than in faster-growing states like Colorado or Arizona, as the white working class declines and white college graduates and minorities, especially Hispanics, increase. The largest effects are in these states’ major metropolitan areas—Cleveland, Columbus, and Cincinnati in Ohio; Detroit in Michigan; and St. Louis and Kansas City in Missouri—especially in their suburbs.

### **B. In Ohio, these trends could have their strongest impact in the fast-growing and Democratic-trending Columbus metro, where Democrats will seek to tip the entire metro in their favor by expanding their margin in Franklin County and reducing their deficit in the suburbs.**

The trends could also have big impacts in the Cleveland metro (especially its suburbs), in the Cincinnati metro (especially Hamilton County) and in the medium-sized metros of the Northeast (Akron, Canton, and Youngstown). Overall, the GOP will be looking to maintain their support among the declining white working class, especially among whites with some college, who have been trending Democratic. Also critical to their prospects is whether the growing white college-educated group will continue its movement toward the Democrats.

### **C. In Michigan, these trends will likely determine whether the fast-growing and populous Detroit suburbs continue shifting toward the Democrats, a development which would tip the Detroit metro (44 percent of the statewide vote) even farther in the direction of the Democrats.**

The trends will also have a big impact on whether the GOP can continue their hold on the conservative and growing Southwest region of the state that includes the Grand Rapids metro. The GOP will seek to increase its support among white college graduates, who gave the GOP relatively strong support in 2004, but have been trending toward the Democrats long term.

### **D. In Missouri, these trends will have their strongest impact on the two big metros of Democratic-trending St. Louis (38 percent of the vote)—especially its suburbs—and GOP-trending Kansas City (20 percent of the statewide vote).**

The Democrats need a large increase in their margins out of these two metros to have a chance of taking the state, while the GOP simply needs to hold the line. The trends will also have a significant impact on the conservative and growing Southwest region, the bulwark of GOP support in the state, where the Republicans will look to generate even higher support levels. The GOP will try to maintain its support from the strongly pro-GOP white college graduate group, which has been increasing its share of voters as it has trended Republican.

These large, modestly growing states in the heartland of the United States will play a pivotal roll in November’s election. Though experiencing smaller demographic shifts than many other states, they are each changing in ways that underscore the contested status of their combined 48 Electoral College votes in this year’s presidential contest.