

## Polling News & Notes

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**New Research Shows Obama's Victory Based on Bush Defections:** Conventional wisdom has long held that Barack Obama's victory in the 2008 presidential election was based on bringing new voters to the polls. As the *New York Times* declared two days after the election, Obama's victory was created by "fishing in a pond stocked with millions of new voters who were ready and primed for the catching."<sup>1</sup>

But new research by Professor Arthur Lupia shows turncoat Bush voters and absent Republicans, not new voters, were enough to guarantee an Obama victory. In an [article](#) that will appear in the April 2010 issue of *PS: Political Science & Politics*,<sup>2</sup> Lupia relies on turnout statistics and data from the 2008 American National Election Studies (ANES) survey to show that "Bush voters' decisions not to vote or to support Obama were a sufficient condition for Obama's victory." If Obama had won no more votes that John Kerry did in 2004, McCain would have won the national popular vote, but the Republican would have come up short in Iowa, New Mexico, and Ohio—three states worth 32 electoral votes that went narrowly for Bush in 2004—costing him the Electoral College. In all three states, McCain experienced a significantly higher defection rate from the Bush 2004 vote ( $\Delta R$  below) than he could sustain to carry the states.

State	Obama 08	Bush 04	Kerry 04	McCain 08	$\Delta R^*$	$\Delta S^*$
Iowa	828,940	751,957	741,898	682,379	9.25%	1.34%
New Mexico	472,422	376,930	370,942	346,832	7.99%	1.59%
Ohio	2,887,114	2,858,727	2,739,952	2,647,538	7.39%	4.15%
United States	69,394,675	62,040,610	59,028,444	59,892,681	-	-

\* $\Delta R$  is the minimum possible percentage of Bush voters who failed to support McCain, given aggregate election statistics.  $\Delta S$  is the percentage of such defections that would have been sufficient for an Obama victory.

Furthermore, the ANES data reveals that nearly a quarter of all 2004 Bush voters (23.6%) either voted for Obama, an independent candidate, or stayed home in 2008. As a result, any new voters that Obama brought to the polls "were not a necessary condition for his victory."

Prospective Republican presidential candidates can take some solace in these findings—GOP votes are still plentiful in battleground states if candidates can rally them. But Republican voters alone will not be enough. Obama won nearly 7.4 million more votes in 2008 than Bush did in 2004, meaning that Republicans will still need to peel independent voters away from Obama to be successful in 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Kirk Johnson, "Across the Country, A Creeping Blue Tide," *New York Times*, Nov. 6, 2008 at P16.

<sup>2</sup> Arthur Lupia, "Did Bush Voters Cause Obama's Victory?" 43 *PS: Political Science & Politics*, Mar. 2010, available at <http://www.themonkeycage.org/Lupia.pdf>