

# A Look Back and a Look Ahead: The Election of 2008 and What's Next

John Coleman

David Canon

University of Wisconsin

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Wisconsin Credit Union League  
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# Fundamentals

## Pro-Obama

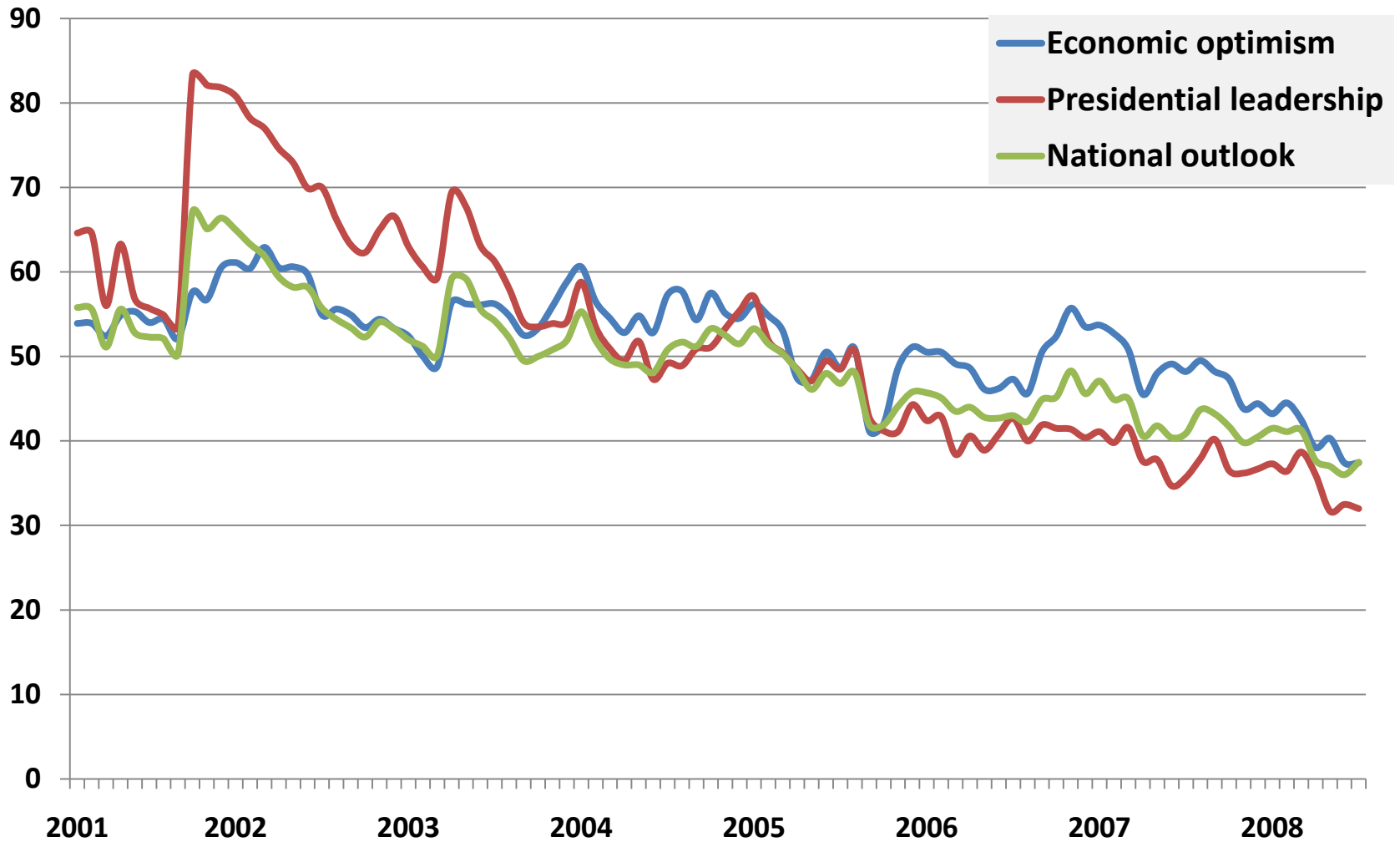
- The economy / consumer confidence
- Right direction / wrong track
- Unpopular Republican president
- Dissatisfaction with the situation in Iraq
- A shift away from Iraq and toward domestic issues
- Lots of mobilization, high voter turnout during the nomination
- Party identification and registration trending Democratic
- Hard for a party to win three consecutive elections: Repubs 1980-1988 are the only example since FDR

## Pro-McCain

- US is in two wars, and he has foreign policy credibility
  - Ike '52, Johnson '64, Nixon '72, Bush '04
- Three third-term losses were close: 1960, 1976, 2000
- Population shifts to Republican areas
- Dem difficulties getting over 50%
  - Only Johnson '64 and Carter '76
- Obama relatively unknown
- Race?

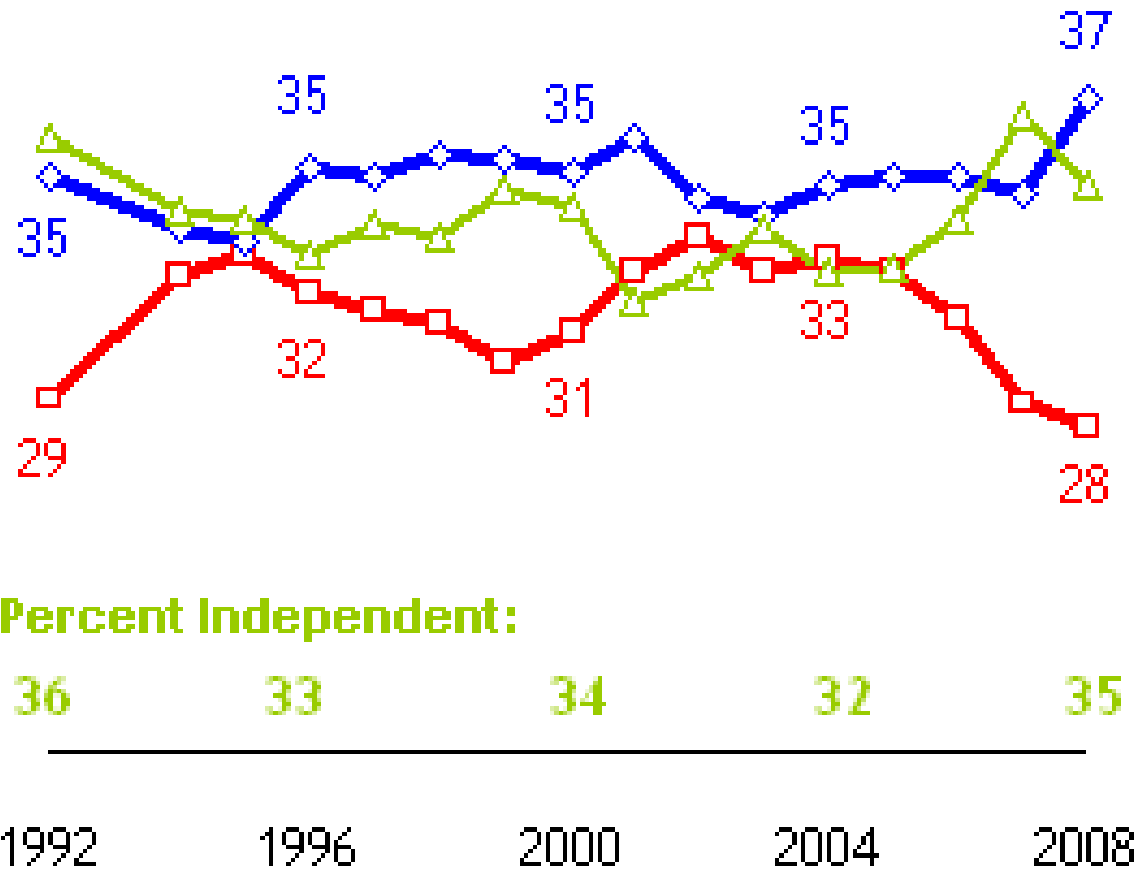
# National Mood

(Investors Business Daily/Christian Science Monitor)



## Trend in Party Identification

—□— Republican    —◇— Democrat

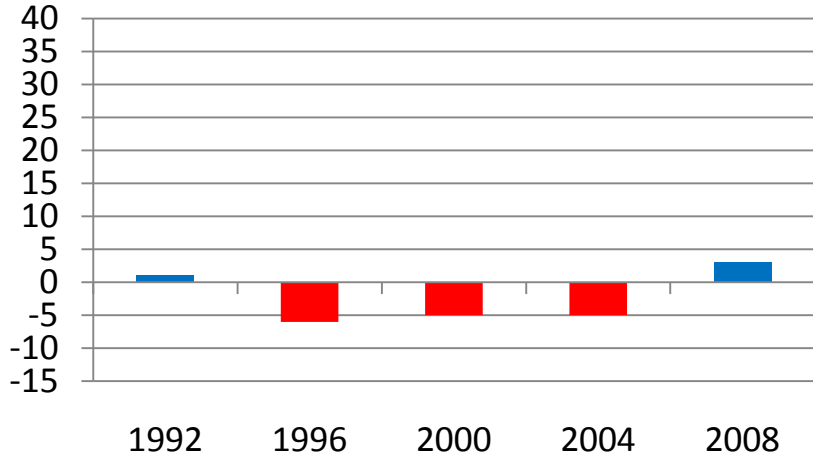


Based on registered voters.

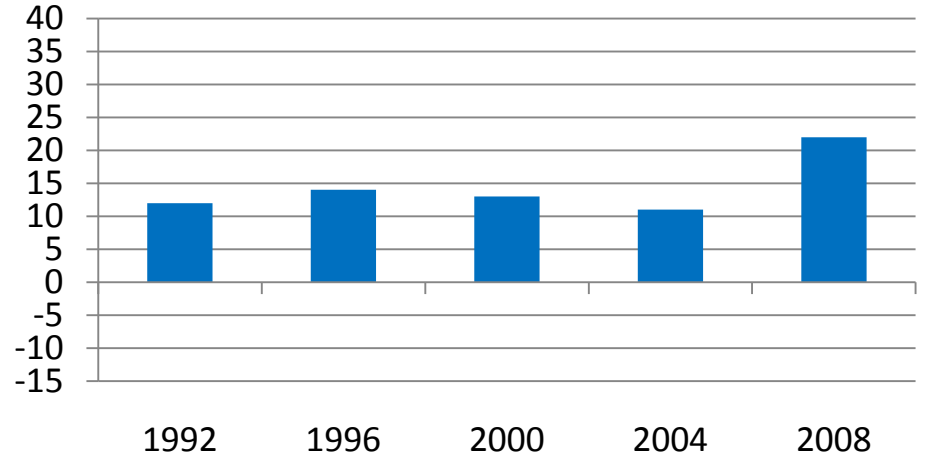
Data from Pew  
Research Center

# A Closer Look at Party Identification

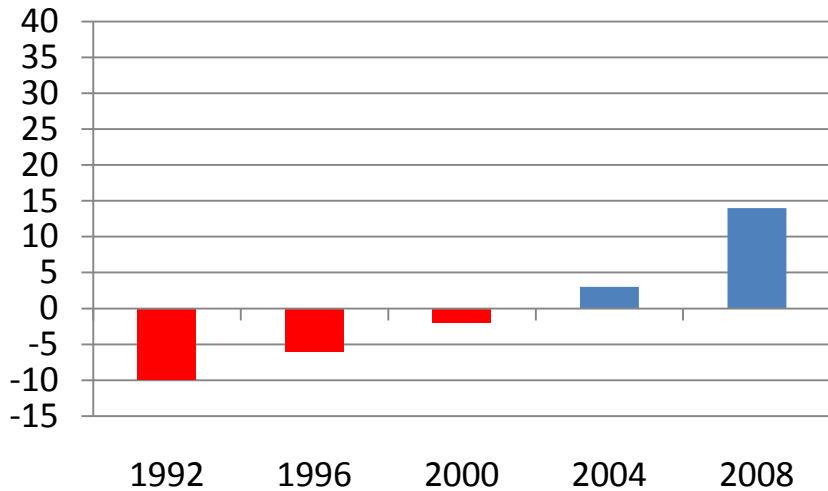
## Men



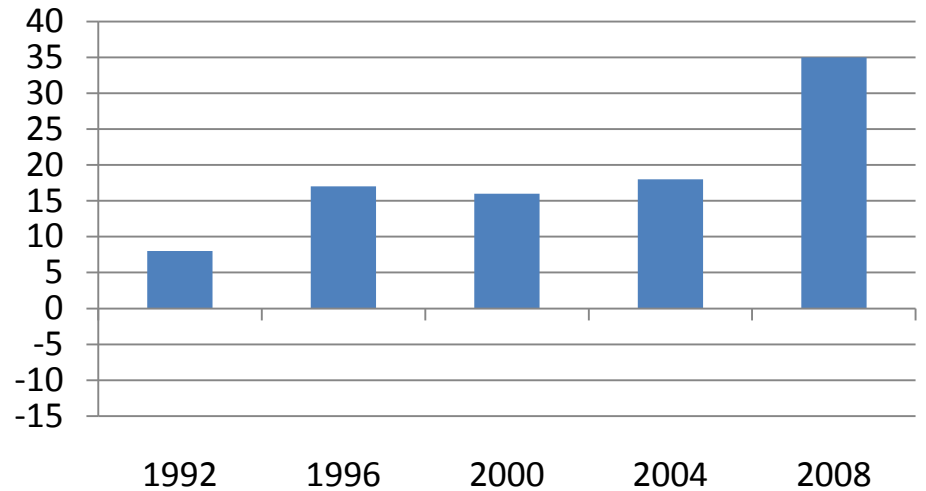
## Women



## Men 18-29

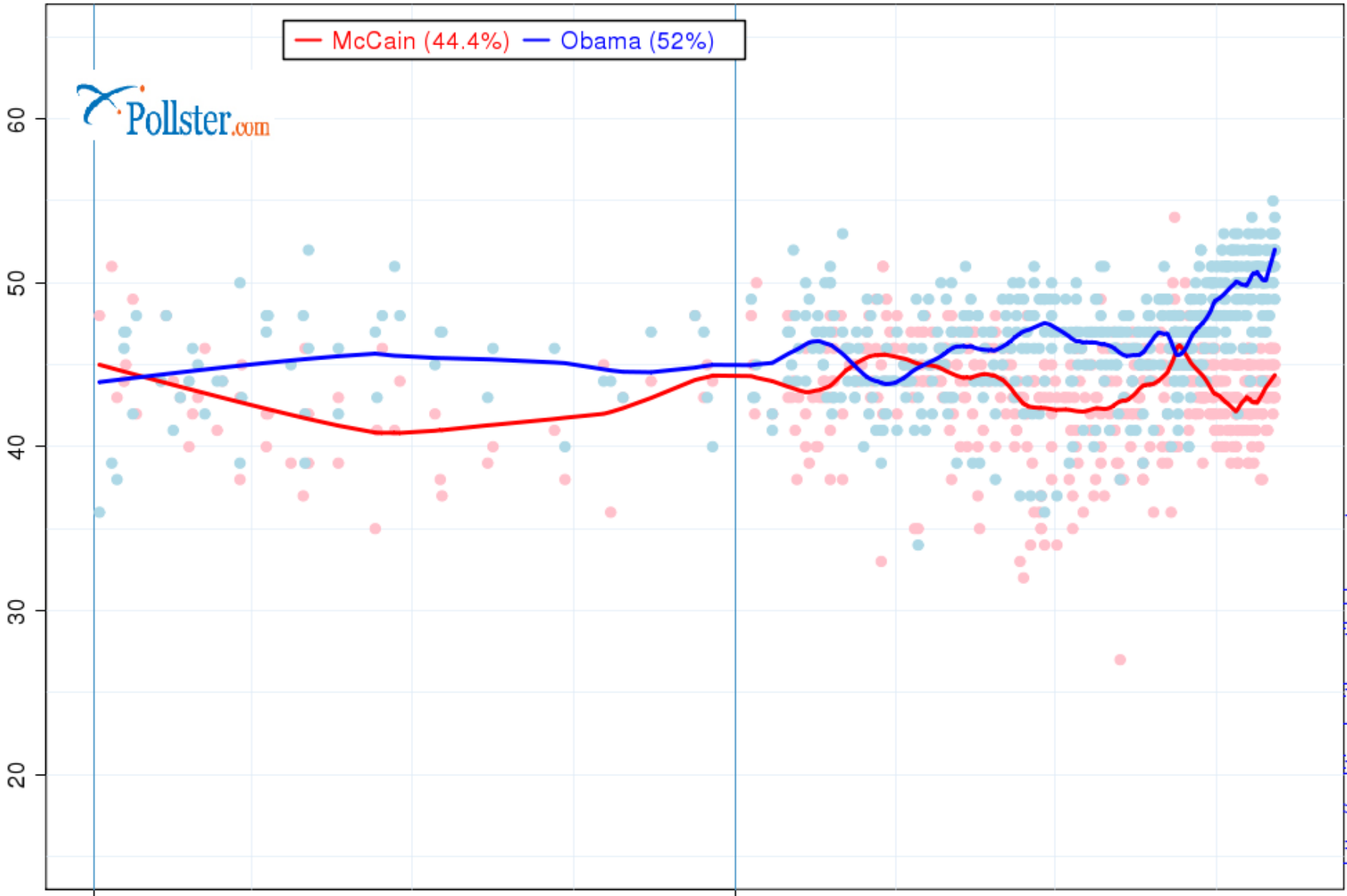


## Women 18-29



National: McCain vs. Obama  
Latest Poll: 11/03/2008

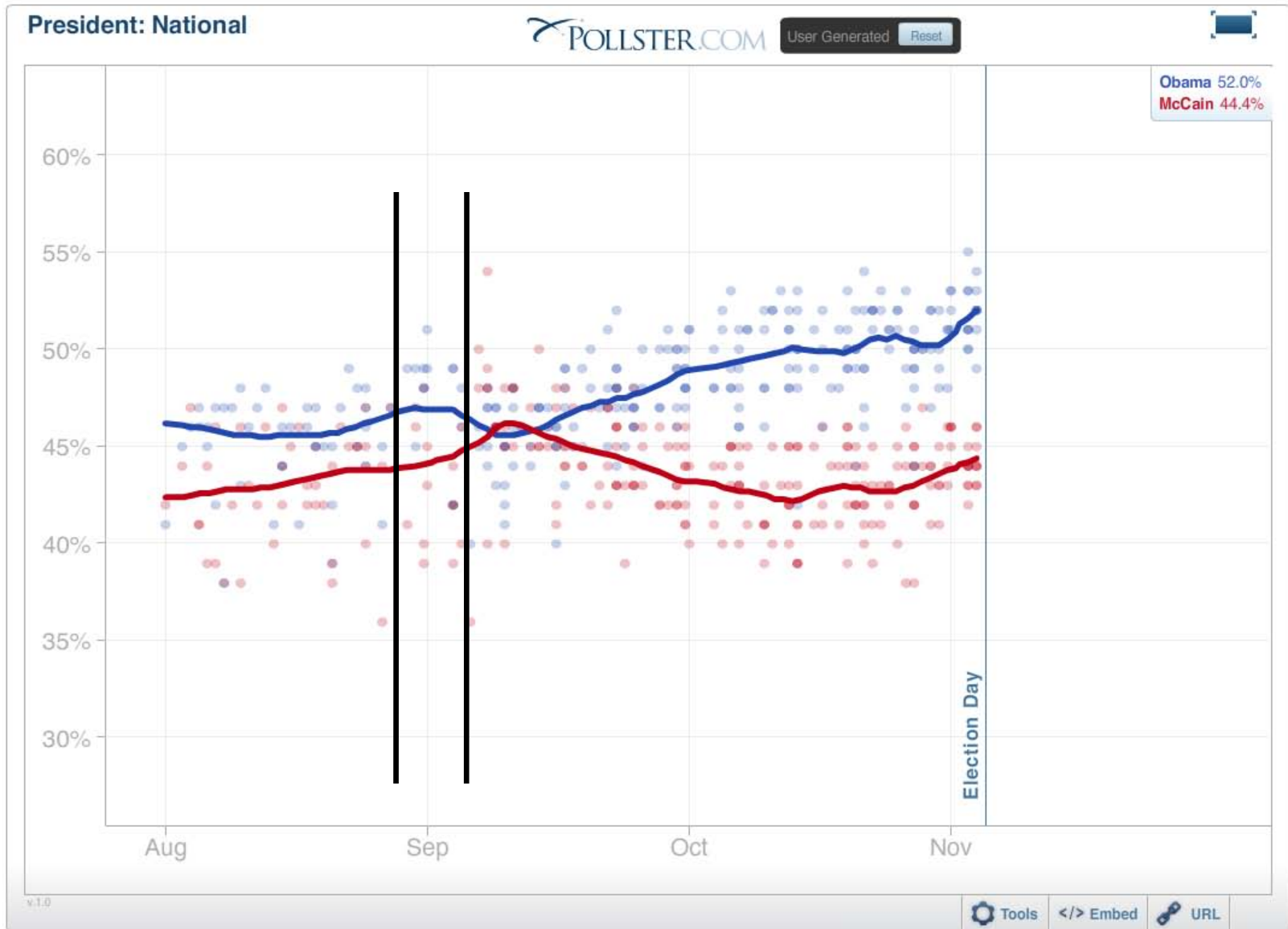
— McCain (44.4%) — Obama (52%)



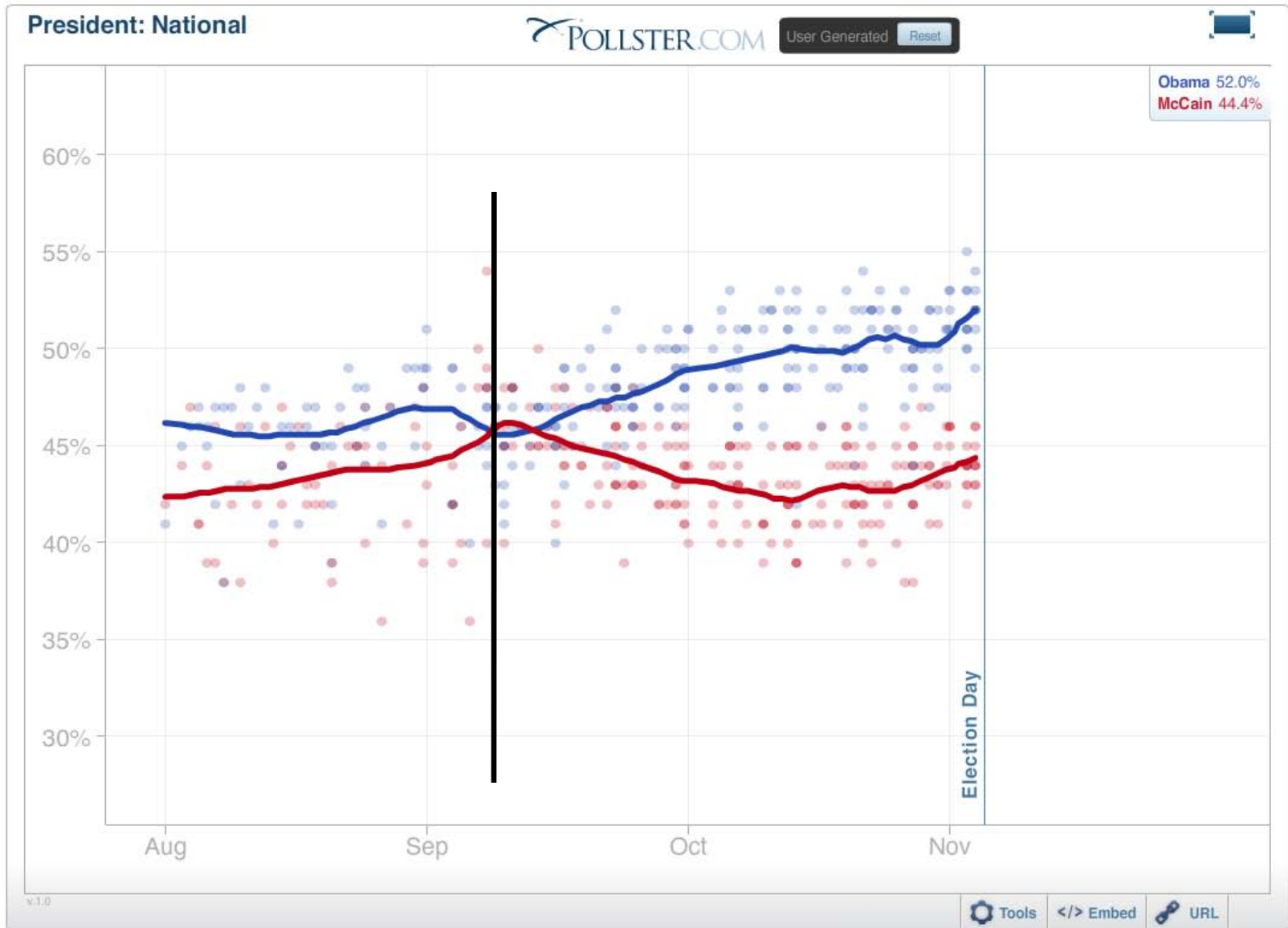
2007

2008

# End of Democratic (8/28) and Republican Conventions (9/4)

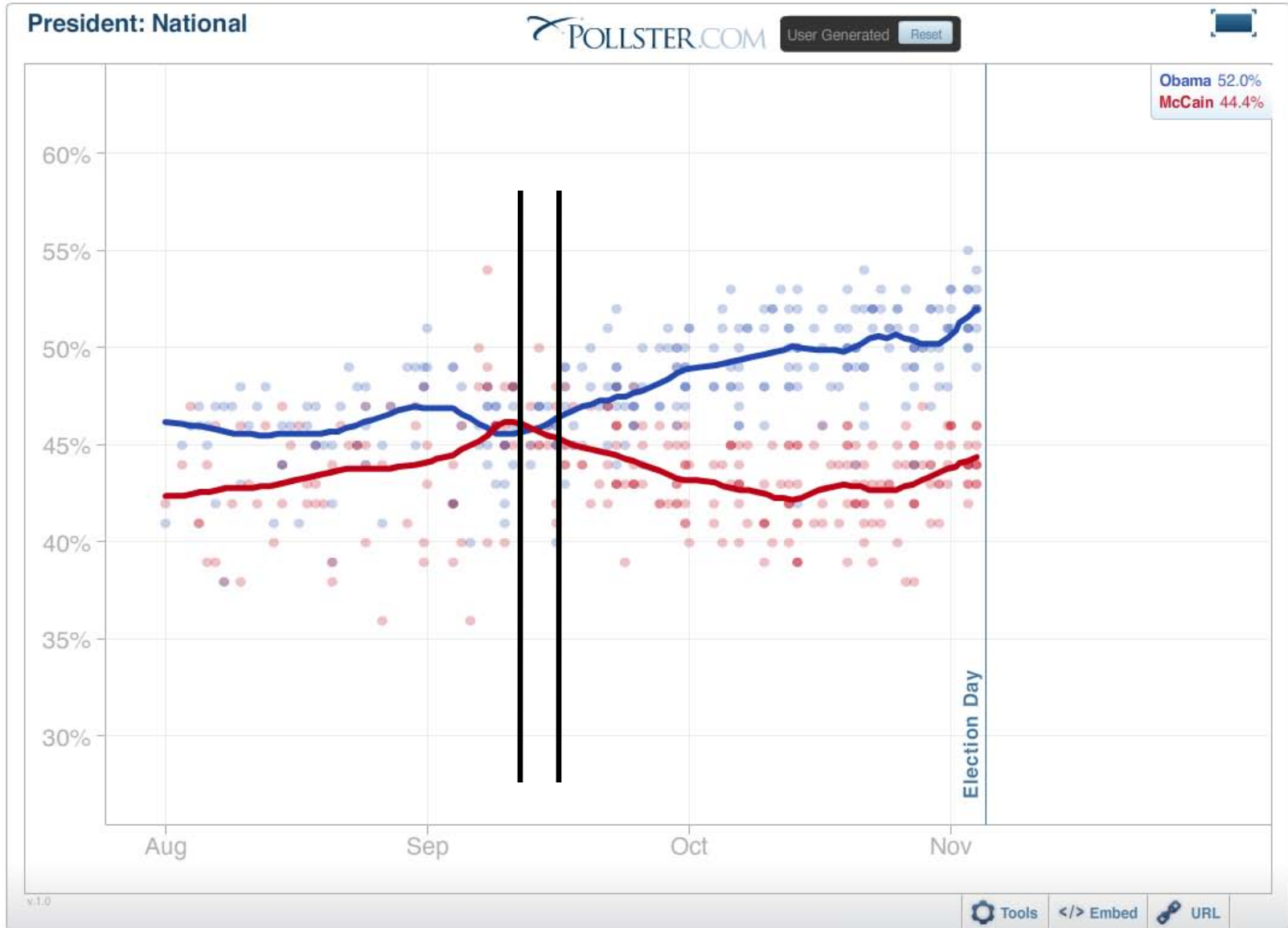


# Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Seized by US Government (9/7)

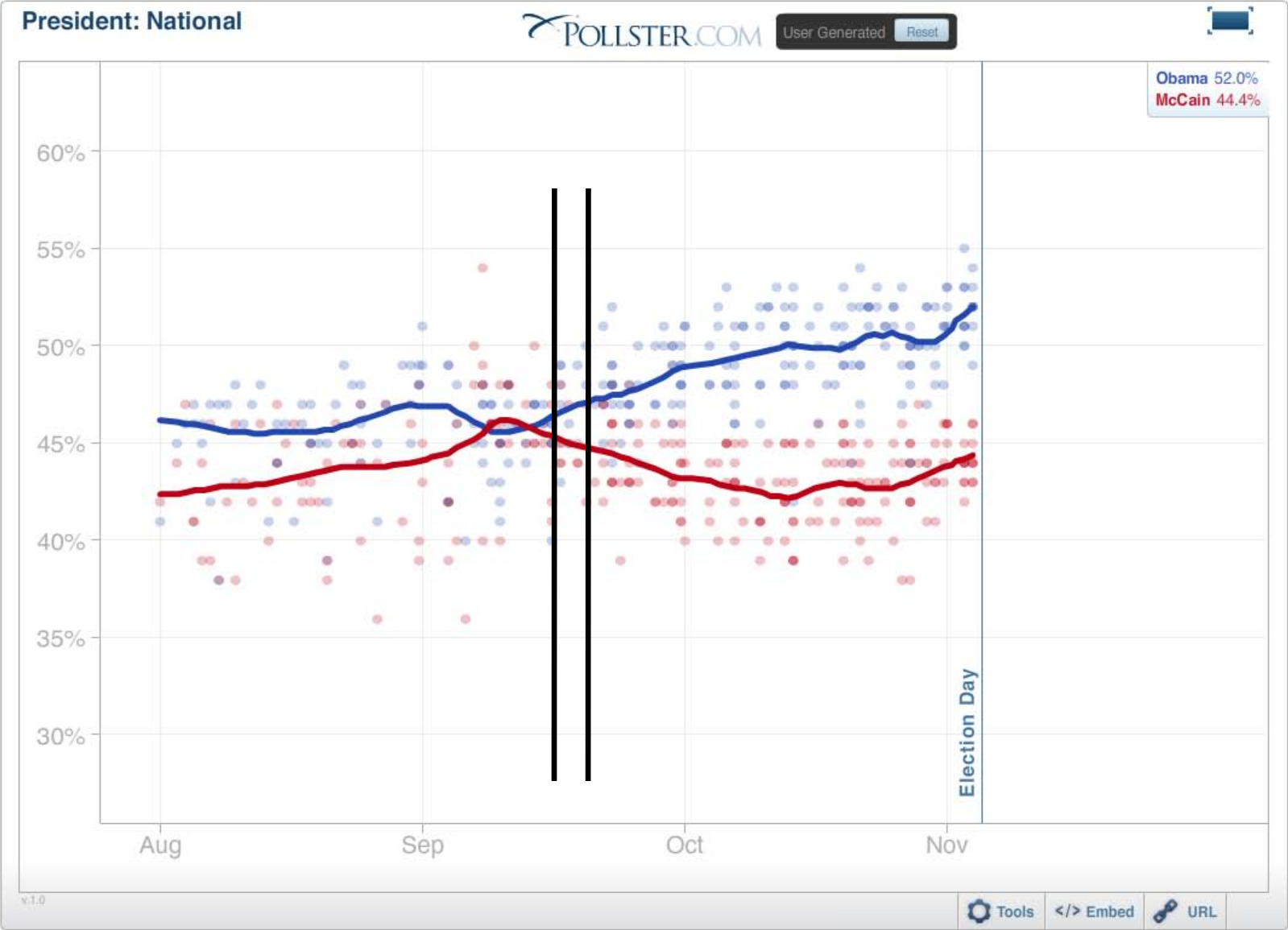




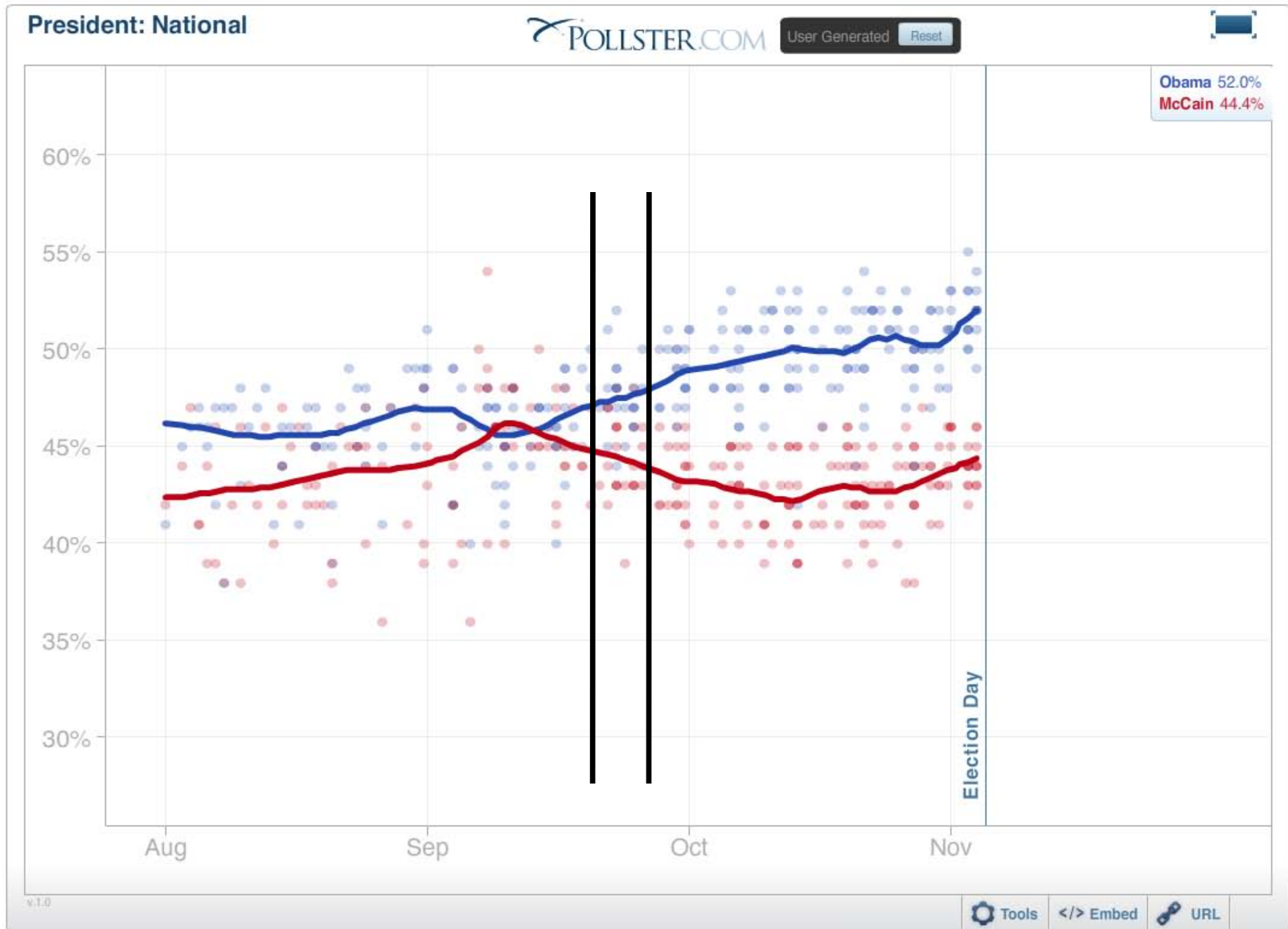
Lehman Bros. looking for buyer (9/11), Merrill Lynch sold (9/14), LB files for bankruptcy filing (9/15)



AIG rescue (9/16), LB purchased by Barclays (9/17),  
Administration announces bailout/rescue (9/19)



# Administration announces bailout/rescue plan (9/19); first presidential debate (9/26)



# Wisconsin Opinion

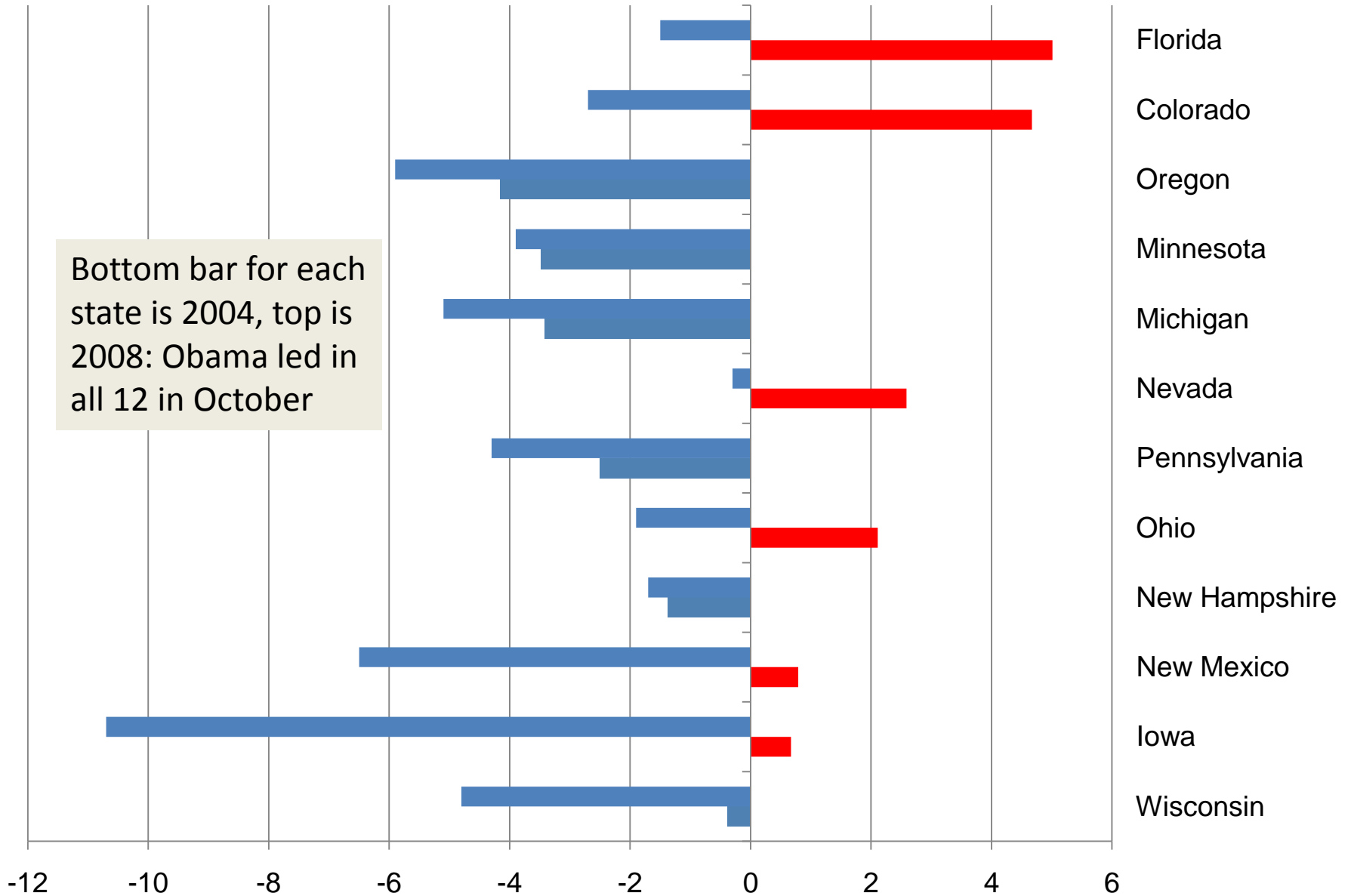
	Advantage
<i>Top Priority for U.S.</i>	
Improving economy: 37% - June 2008	Obama 8 pts
<i>Most Important Problem Facing U.S.</i>	
Economy and Jobs: 64% - October 2008	Obama 31 pts

Source: UW Dept. of Political Science/Wispolitics.com Poll, June; UW Big Ten Battleground Poll, Sept-Nov. polls.

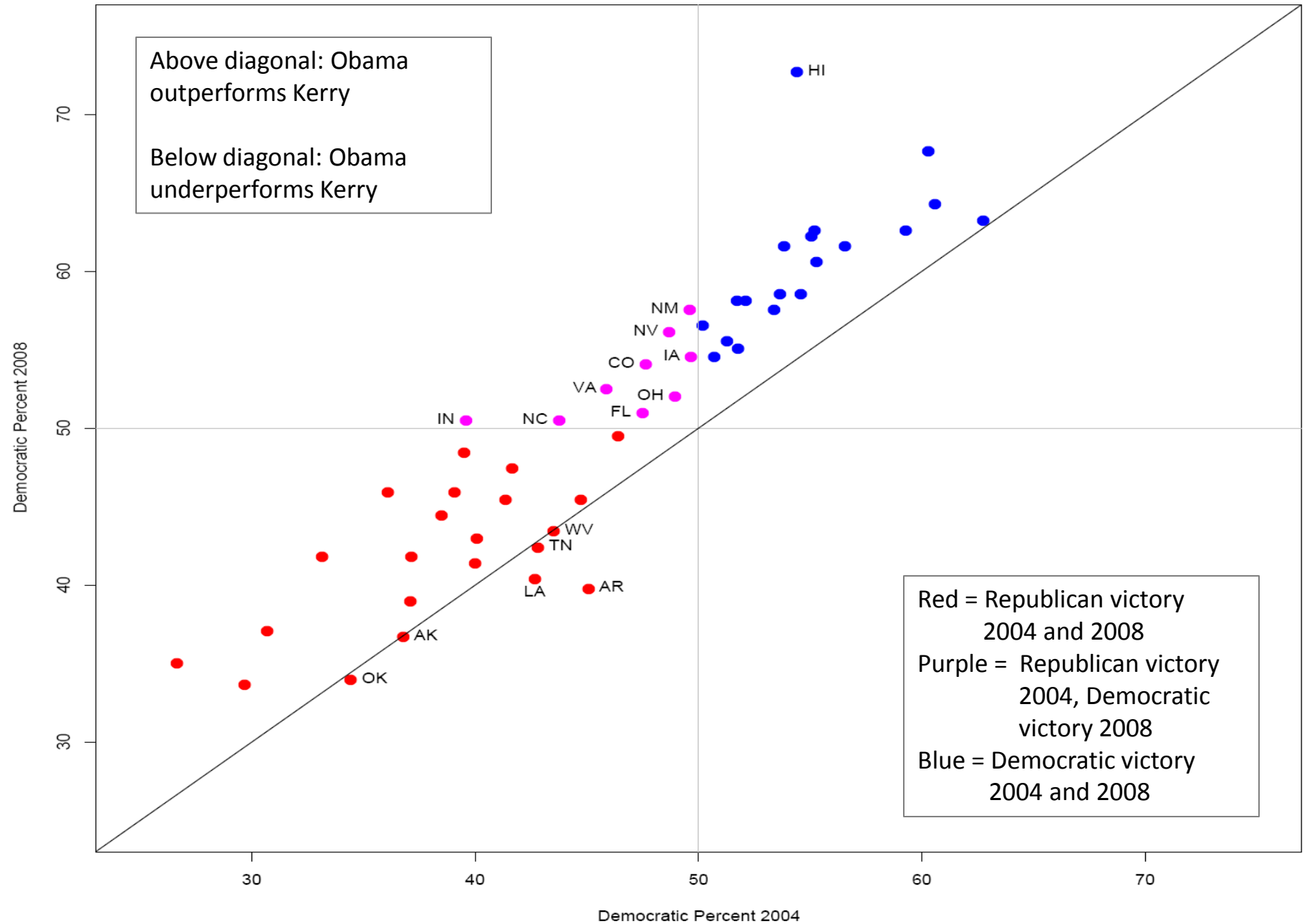
# Wisconsin Opinion

<b>U.S. is on wrong track</b>	<b>Percent of Public</b>
September	76%
October	85%
November	85%
<b>U.S. economy has gotten worse over past year</b>	
September	84%
October	92%
November	95%

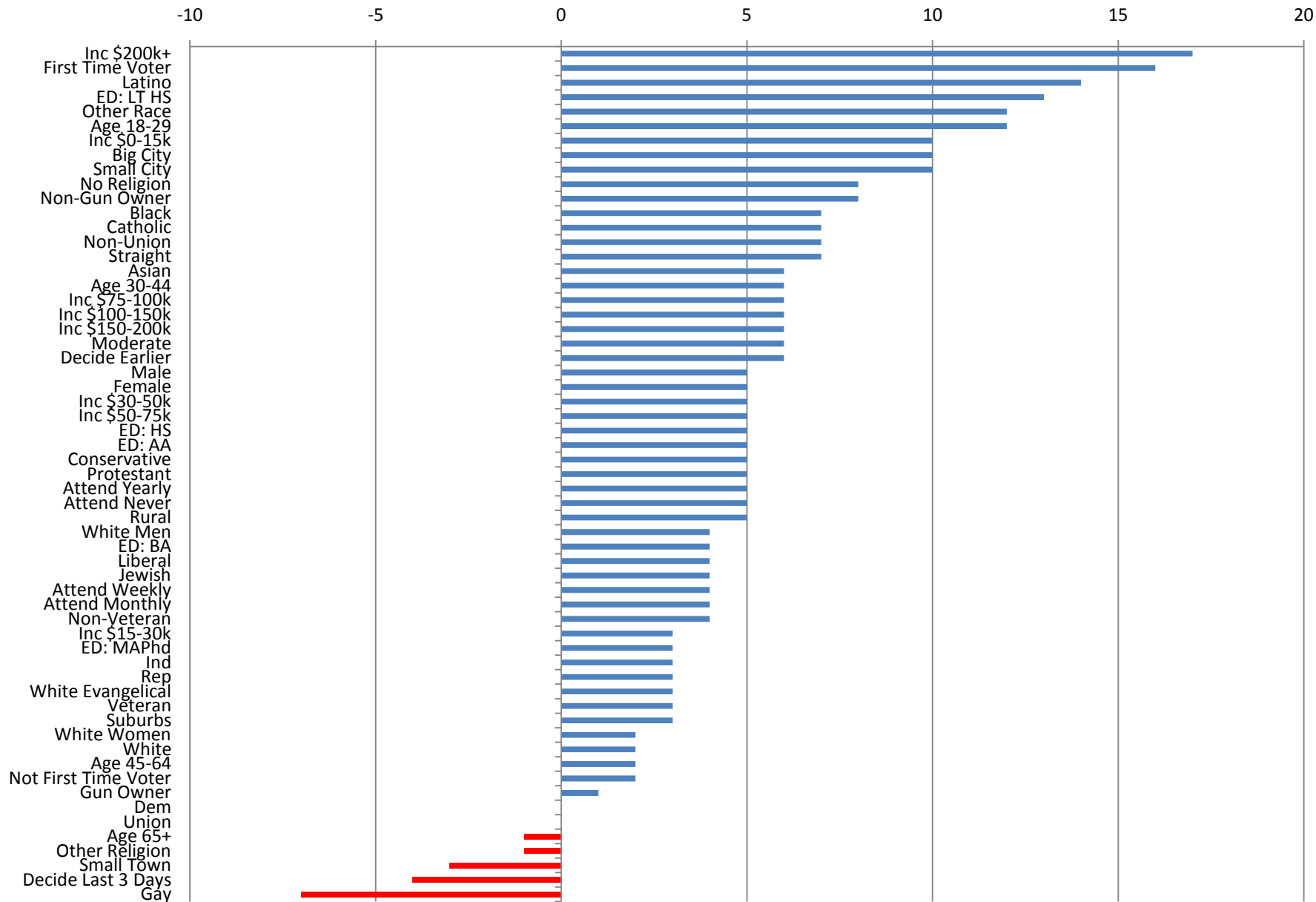
# Closest States 2004 vs. October 5, 2008 Poll Standing



# Obama Vote 2008 vs. Kerry Vote 2004

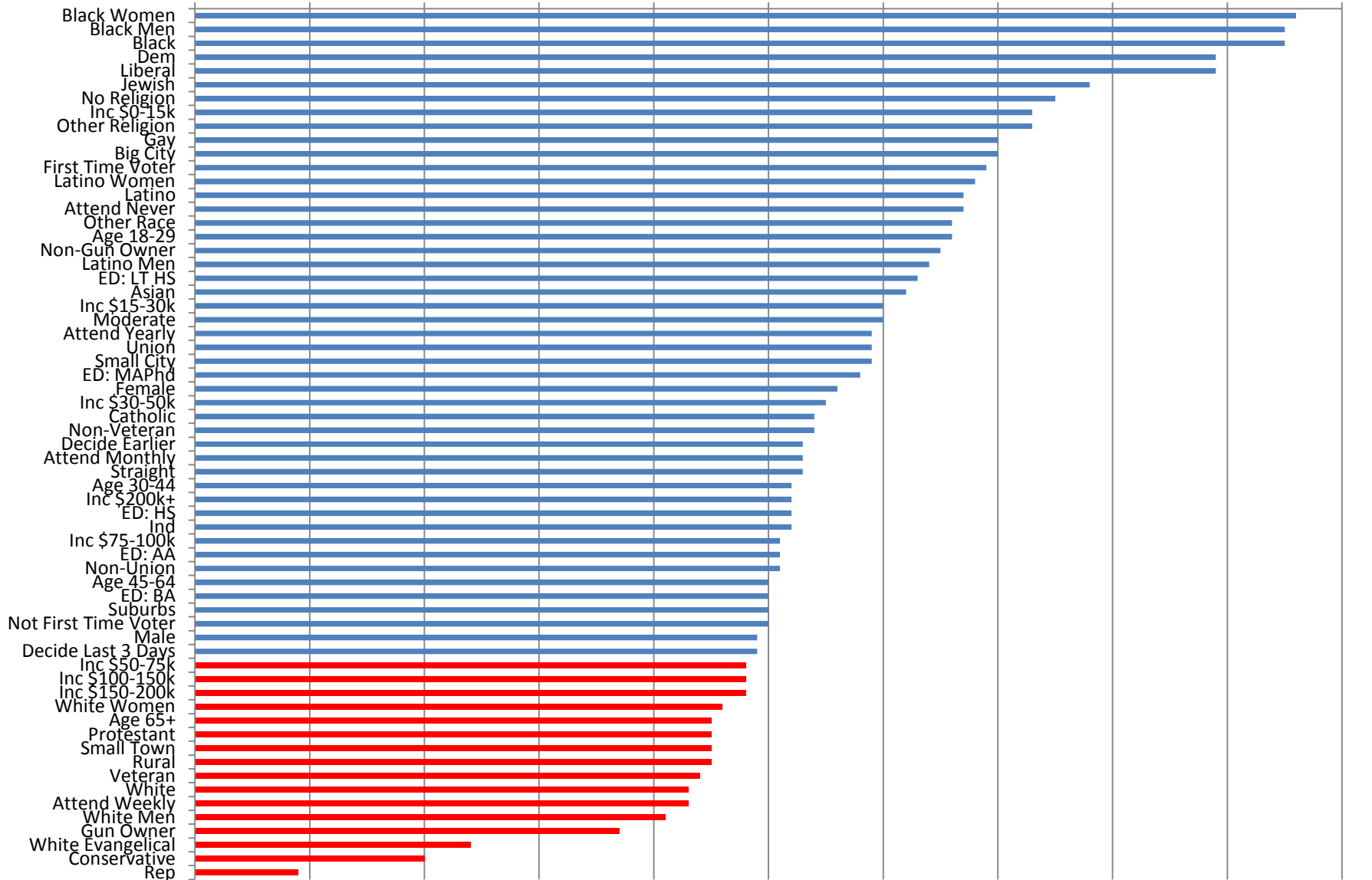


# Obama 2008 Vote Compared to Kerry 2004 (in %)

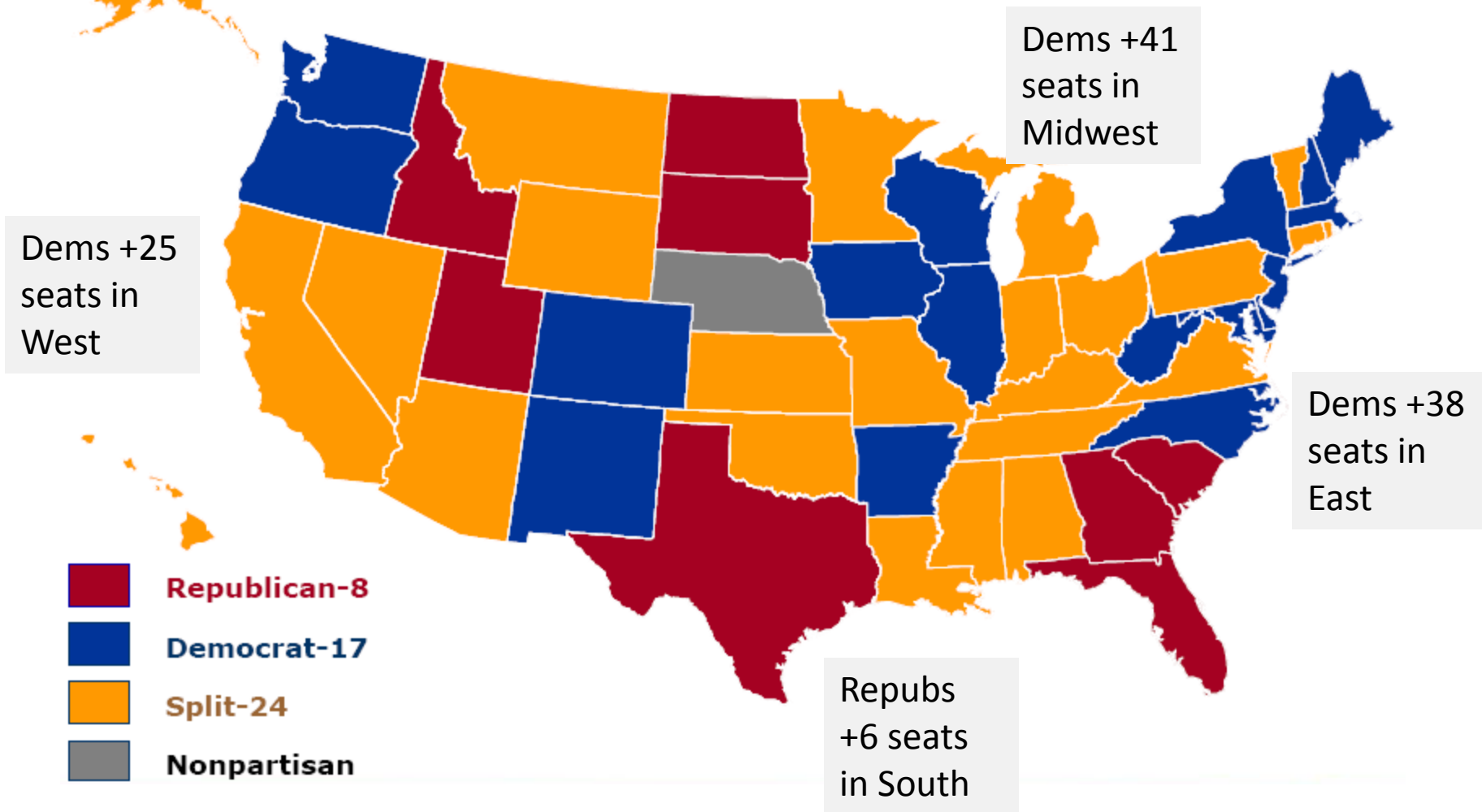




# Obama Support Among Social Groups (in %)



# State Government Post-Election 2008



Source: National Conference of State Legislatures

# Will Obama be a transformational president?

- Very unusual in American politics: Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, and FDR are the only three typically cited by political scientists. Each changed the fundamental nature of American politics



# A transformational president?

- The transformational potential:
  - Generational divide
  - Racial politics
  - A new kind of non-partisan, or at least bipartisan, politics
- Importance of historical context.



# Obama and Congress: historical context

- This is not 1933, despite the arguments of both liberals and conservatives.
  - Huge differences in the nature of the economic problems.
  - Republicans did not provide any alternative policies.
  - FDR was in a much stronger position politically in Congress.



Closer to 1993 in terms of the partisan split in Congress.

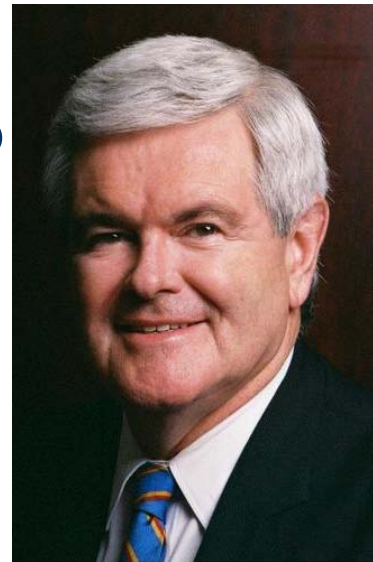
# Partisan splits in Congress

	Senate			House		
	Dem	Repub.	Ind.	Dem	Repub.	Ind.
1933	59	36	1	313	117	5
1935	69	25	2	322	103	10
1937	75	17	4	333	89	13
1993	57	43	0	258	176	1
2001	50	50	0	212	221	2
2009	57*	41	2	256	178	(1 vacancy)

\*(assuming Franken is seated)

# Internal partisan politics

- Good news for Obama: largest Democratic majorities since 1993. Bad news: expanding the number of Democrats means bringing in more moderates. Role of the Blue Dogs – already grumbling about the deficits.
- Republican response: compromise and bipartisanship or repeat of the late 1980s and early 1990s? Can Senate moderates contain the more partisan House?



# How will Obama govern?

- Many have talked about uniting the country and moving beyond partisan politics, but few have succeeded.
- Temptation to govern from inside your own party: 1993-1994 and 2001-2006.
- Early signs are that Obama will govern from the center.
  - Cabinet appointments: not quite a “team of rivals” but very centrist.
  - Stimulus package and business tax cuts.
  - Recent comments on not investigating Bush officials.



# The legislative agenda

- Top priorities: economic stimulus (infrastructure, state aid, alternative energy, tax cuts, education) and national security (start to bring troops home).
- Short term, easy fixes: women's pay issues, embryonic stem cell research, "global gag rule" on abortion funding. More controversial – labor "card check" rather than secret ballots.
- Will wait a bit: health care, climate change, energy, immigration, trade (NAFTA revisions), gays in the military, and repeal of Bush's tax cuts.