

Much Ado About . . . Something?

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September 9, 2008

Should Campaigns Matter?

- Early voting decisions
- Partisanship predicts the vote
- Those most open to influence pay the least attention

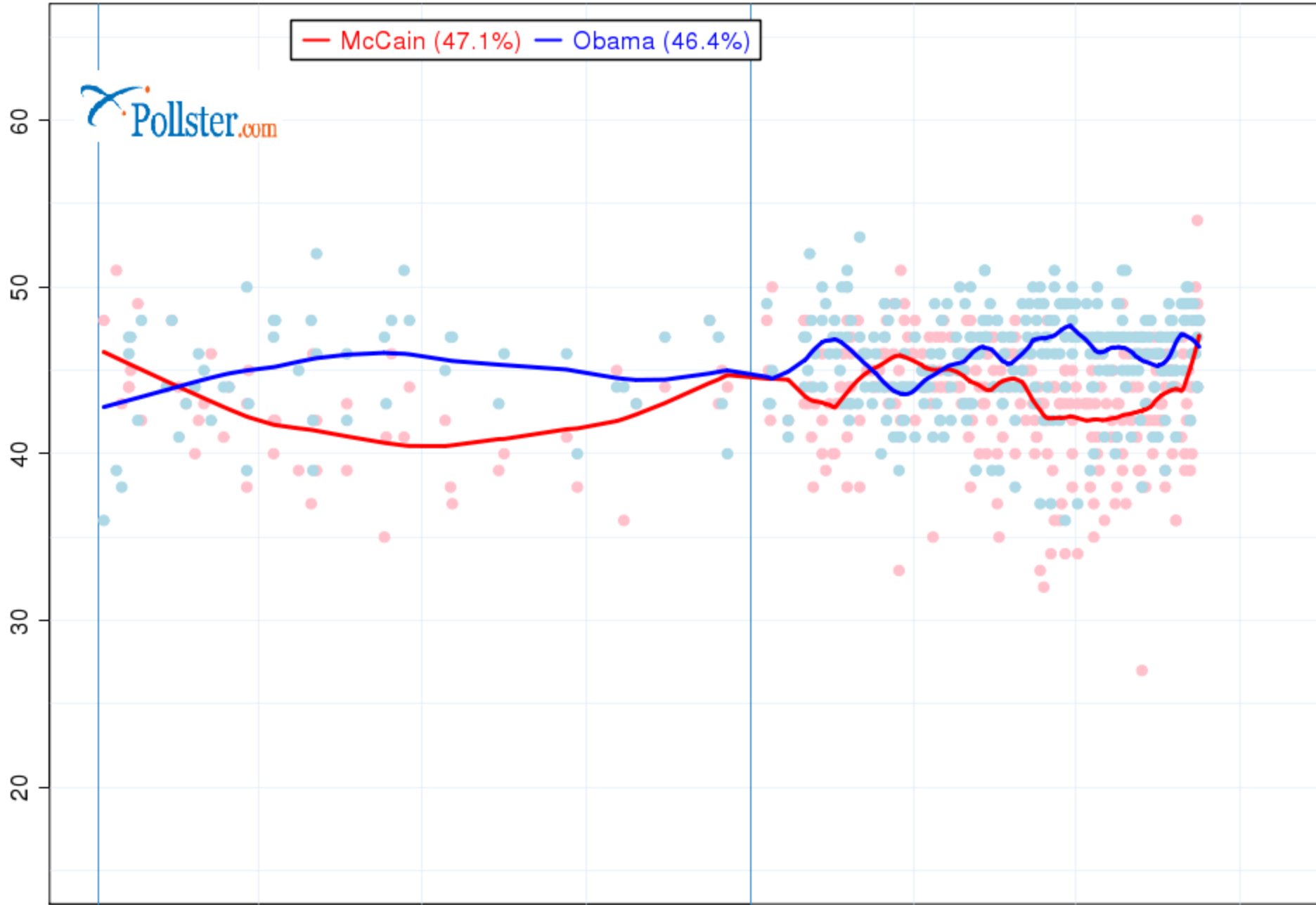
Should Campaigns Matter?

- Voting by “looking back” doesn’t require paying attention to the campaign
- Forecast models are fairly accurate

But . . . Things Do Change

Leader in Gallup's July surveys	Year	Election result
Thomas Dewey	1948, 11 pts	Truman, 4 pts
Hubert Humphrey	1968, 5 pts	Nixon, 1 pt
Michael Dukakis	1988, 6 pts	Bush, 8 pts
George H. W. Bush	1992, 7 pts	Clinton, 6 pts
John Kerry	2004, 7 pts	Bush, 2 pts
And almost blew it: John Kennedy Jimmy Carter	1960, 6 pts 1976, 33 pts	Kennedy, 0.2 pts Carter, 2 pts

National: McCain vs. Obama
Latest Poll: 09/08/2008



Why Do Campaigns Seem to Matter?

- Campaigns relate the “raw data” to voters
- Campaigns (usually) bring partisans home
- Campaigns speak especially to the moderately attentive
- Campaigns build comfort/discomfort

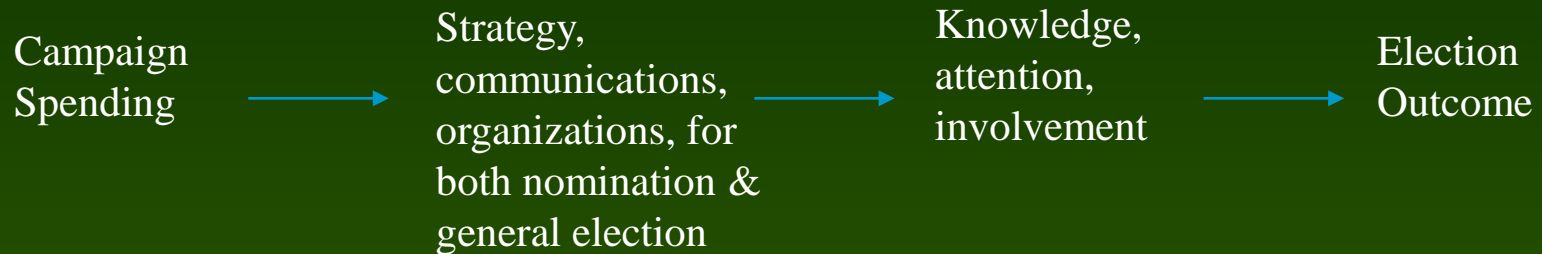
“Too lengthy, too costly,
too nasty, too silly”?

Gil Troy, *See How They Ran* (1996)

Why So Long?

- We the People
- More democratic means less tidy
- Need to start early, raise funds, build organizations, appeal to voters
- Time for wounds to heal

Why So Costly?



- Much to do
- Competitive elections are the most costly
- Spending is beneficial
- Compared to what?

Why So Nasty?

Percentage of airings

		Negative	Contrast	Positive	Total
Kerry	Candidate or coordinated	2.4	35.8	61.8	100
Kerry	Party	62.2	27.9	9.9	100
Kerry	Interest Group	86.4	12.3	1.3	100
Kerry	Total	39.5	27.7	32.8	100

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Kerry	Total	39.5	27.7	32.8	100
Bush	Candidate or coordinated	59.5	13.6	26.9	100
Bush	Party	99.8	0.2	0.0	100
Bush	Interest Group	41.4	27.4	31.2	100
Bush	Total	59.1	14.5	26.4	100

Why So Nasty?

- It works
- Negative/contrast ads include more policy information than positive ads
- Conveys a sense that stakes are high
- A double standard?

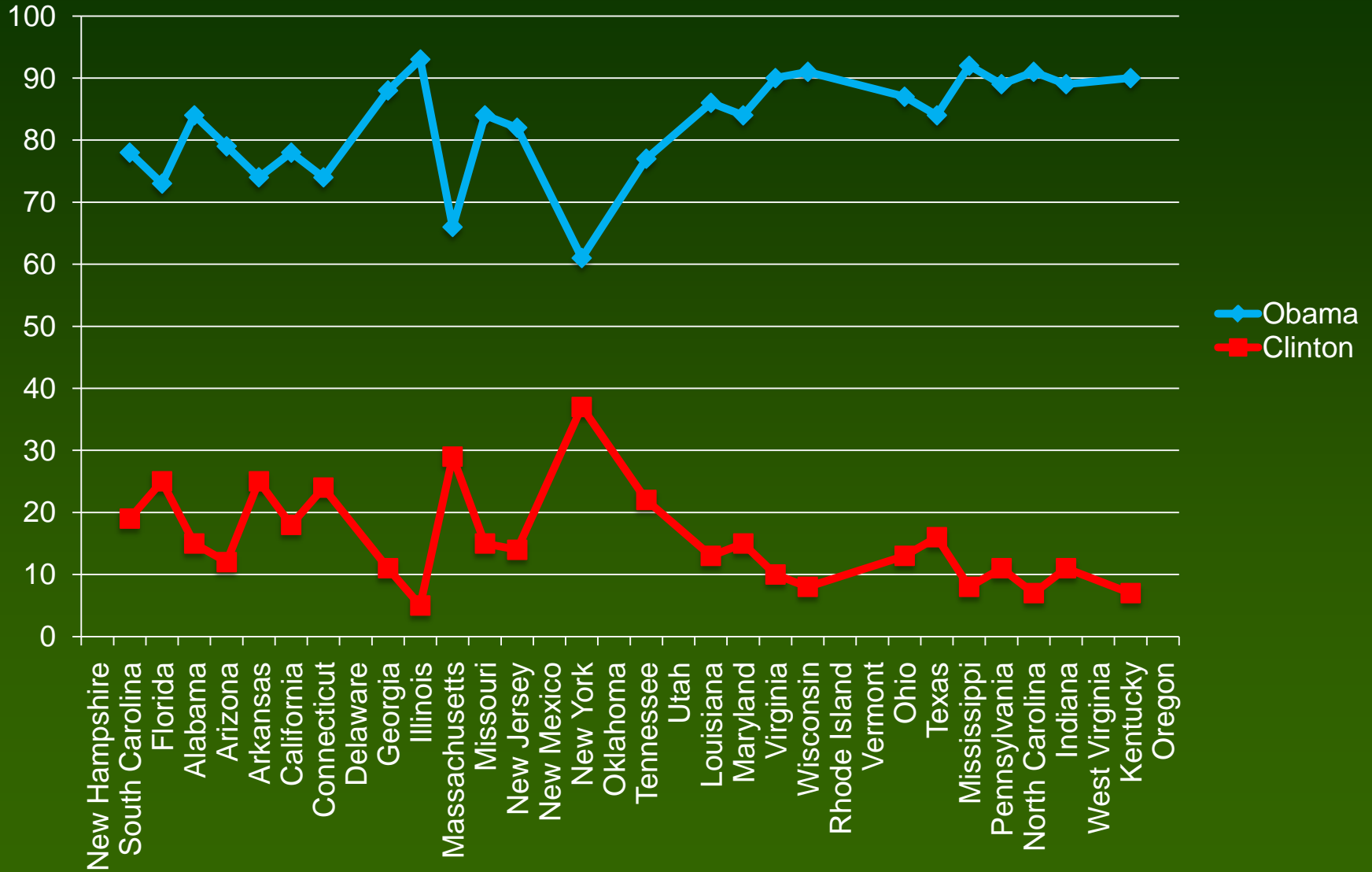
Why So Silly?

- Many different voters of differing interest levels
- “Silly” is in the eye of the beholder
- A “distraction” to one voter might be vitally important to another

Any Adopted Reform Should:

- Preserve the benefits of time and spending
- Enlarge the “public forum”
- Not view elections as “owned” by candidates
- Some things to keep in mind

African-American Vote (percent)



McCain vs. Bush

(UW Polisci/Wispolitics Poll)

	McCain, June 2008	Bush 2004
Abortion illegal in most cases	51%	73% (national)
Abortion illegal in all cases	58%	71% (national)
Weekly churchgoers	41%	59% (WI)
Nonunion household	38%	53% (WI)
Gun in home	44%	63% (national)
Rural	41%	54% (national)
Suburban	38%	52% (national)

America the Complicated

