

Throw Out the Maps

Kerby Anderson

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Michael Barone says it is time to throw out the old electoral maps, and he should know. Many people have called him the most knowledgeable person in U.S. politics. He is the co-author of the *Almanac of American Politics*. He has been watching the electoral scene for decades and sees some significant shifts.

The old map with red states and blue states served us well for the last two presidential elections, but there is good evidence that it is now out-of-date. In 2000 and 2004, the Republicans nominated the same man, and the Democrats nominated men with similar views and backgrounds. All of that has changed in 2008.

This time the Republicans will probably nominate John McCain, and the Democrats will probably nominate Barack Obama. There is always the possibility of a change between now and the convention, but that is unlikely. If these two men are the nominees, it changes everything.

It is clear that some of the states that went Democratic in 2004 are available to John McCain. And it is also clear that some of the states that went Republican that same year are possibilities for Barack Obama. And let's not forget the surge of new voters coming into the electoral process that are potentially available to either candidate.

The potential changes in the electorate shouldn't surprise us. Twenty years ago it seemed like Republicans had a lock on the presidency while the Democrats had a lock on the House of Representatives. At the time it seemed reasonable since Republicans had won five of the last six presidential elections, and Democrats had held the House for thirty-six years. But in 1992, Bill Clinton was elected

president. Two years later, the Republicans won the House. Electoral trends change, sometimes quickly.

It looks to me that it is time to throw out the maps, and it may be time for the candidates to rethink their strategy and not write off states lost by their party's nominee four or eight years ago. It's a new day.

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Superdelegates

Kerby Anderson

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In a [previous commentary](#) I talked about how the current Democratic Party rules made it possible for Barack Obama to do so well in the primaries. There are another set of rules that might cause him to lose at the Democratic Convention.

Back in 1982, the Democratic Party created a special role for party leaders. They were designated as superdelegates and were created to prevent the party from nominating an unelectable candidate like George McGovern. At first, they provided a necessary boost to a candidate already headed for the nomination. This boost helped push Walter Mondale over Gary Hart in 1984. And the superdelegates helped confirm Michael Dukakis as the Democratic nominee in 1988.

But this year's Democratic race is so close that the superdelegates may decide the outcome. There are nearly 800 superdelegates, and that represents 19 percent of all the delegates. In the past, these superdelegates were able to bring closure to

the nominating process. This time they could decide who the Democratic nominee might be, and that would most likely be the establishment candidate Hillary Clinton.

If they become the king-makers, it is easy to see that there will be lots of anger and frustration. This primary season has already begun to show the fault lines of race, gender, and generation. The animosity between the Clinton and Obama campaigns is well known. If the Democratic establishment decides the winner through the superdelegates, you have to wonder if the 2008 Denver Democratic Convention might start to look like the 1968 Chicago Democratic Convention.

Like the rules I talked about earlier, no one saw this coming. The Democratic Party rules for delegates has helped Barack Obama in the primaries. If the delegate count is close then it is possible that the Democratic Party rules for superdelegates could help Hillary Clinton. At the moment, Barack Obama is building a lead so this concern may evaporate. But the party may still reconsider the rules they enacted years ago.

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Candidates and Religion

Kerby Anderson

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Should we know more about a political candidate's religion before we vote? That is a question that will certainly surface in this election cycle.

When John Kennedy ran for the presidency he said: "I believe in a President

whose religious views are his own private affair.” While that may have satisfied some back in 1960, I doubt it will be sufficient in this election.

Michael Kinsley recently wrote about this important topic in *Time* magazine as he discussed Governor Mitt Romney. Although I would probably disagree with Kinsley on many political and theological issues, I think he rightly points out that the religious faith of a candidate cannot be kept private because it affects his or her worldview.

He says it is important for three reasons. First, we need to know the details of a candidate’s faith and the extent to which those details are accepted. He notes that Catholic liberal politicians since Mario Cuomo have said they accept the doctrine of the church but nevertheless believe in a woman’s right to choose. He concludes that either these politicians are lying to their church, or they are lying to us.

Second, since some doctrines of various religions may be offensive to the general public, they have a right to know if a candidate agrees with those doctrines. Michael Kinsley applies this only to Mitt Romney’s Mormonism, but it should also be applied to the religious faith of every candidate.

Third, candidates’ religious faith also will affect their character. Voters should take character into account before they cast their vote for a particular candidate.

This election season it has been popular for candidates to talk about their faith. But how does that faith affect his or her views on social and political issues? So far, the media has been content to let them talk about their faith in a vague way, but voters deserve to know more. Back in 1960, John Kennedy dodged the question of how his faith affected his decision-making. We cannot allow candidates to dodge the question now.