

DAILY ROS 2008 ELECTION GUIDE

A Minute-by-Minute Analysis of Which Races To Watch and Why You Should Watch Them

By Arjun Jaikumar (brownsox)

6:00 EST

Presidential:	1 Safe McCain: Kentucky (8) 1 Toss Up: Indiana (11)
Senate:	Kentucky: Leans Republican McConnell (R-inc) vs. Lunsford (D)
Governor:	Indiana: Likely Republican Daniels (R-inc) vs. Long Thompson (D)
House:	KY-02: Leans Republican Guthrie (R-open) vs. Boswell (D) KY-03: Likely Democratic Northup (R) vs. Yarmuth (D-inc) IN-03: Lean Republican Souder (R-inc) vs. Montagano (D) IN-09: Lean Democratic Sodrel (R) vs. Hill (D-inc)

Polls close in **Kentucky** and **Indiana** in the eastern parts of the state at 6 EST. Polls in the CST part of the states reportedly will not close until 7:00 EST.

Nevertheless, some of the earliest returns will come in from Kentucky and Indiana, so here's how to read them as a barometer for the election.

Presidential - Indiana

The presidential contest has not been especially close here for several elections. The last time Indiana was too close to call when polls closed was during Bill Clinton's 370-electoral-vote landslide in 1992. Even then, Clinton wound up losing the state by a significant margin.

If Indiana is announced too close to call when polls close this year, it will be an indicator that Barack Obama is headed for a similar landslide victory himself, even if he isn't quite able to carry the state.

If Obama wins Indiana, you can start popping the champagne corks. While it doesn't get him to 270 (when added to the Kerry states), it puts him just seven

short, and victory in any one of Iowa, Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, Ohio, Colorado, Missouri (or in both Nevada and New Mexico) would win the election for him. If Obama takes Indiana, he'd likely carry a number of these states and amass over 350 electoral votes.

Downticket - Indiana

The biggest races to watch are the **Governor's race**, in which Republican Mitch Daniels is heavily favored to win reelection over former Rep. Jill Long Thompson; the **3rd District** race, in which Republican incumbent Mark Souder faces a surprisingly tough challenge from Democrat Michael Montagano in one of the nation's reddest districts; and the **9th District** race in which incumbent Democrat Baron Hill faces off for the fourth time against former Republican Rep. Mike Sodrel.

The incumbents are favored in all these races. If Long Thompson or Montagano manages an upset victory, or comes close, it may be a harbinger of a Democratic tsunami.

If either the Presidential race, the Governor's race, or the 3rd District race are too close to call when polls close, it will be a long night for the Republicans. If they're all called instantly, stay tuned.

If Obama does manage to win Indiana, it's game over in the Presidential race. If Montagano manages to knock off Souder in IN-03, or come close, it should be a bloodbath in the House as well.

Downticket - Kentucky

The state should go solidly for John McCain, but the **U.S. Senate** race there will be one of the most closely watched in the country on election night. That race pits Democratic challenger Bruce Lunsford against the titan of titans, Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell.

McConnell is still given an edge, as he has consistently led in polling, but the polls have tightened dramatically of late, and Lunsford has a decent chance to pull off an upset.

A victory for Lunsford would send shock waves through the GOP faithful, as McConnell is the highest-ranking Republican in Congress. If that race is called for McConnell early, the GOP can breathe a big sigh of relief. If McConnell goes down, however, things are about as bad for the GOP as they could possibly be. They will lose their Senate leadership, they will stand almost no chance of retaining 40 Senate seats to filibuster effectively, and they will likely be facing a presidential landslide as the night progresses.

In the **House**, there are two Kentucky races worth watching— one in the 2nd District, where Democrat David Boswell and Republican Brett Guthrie will duke it

out for the right to succeed retiring Republican Ron Lewis; and the contest in the Third District, where Democratic incumbent John Yarmuth faces the woman he defeated to win his seat in 2006, former Rep. Anne Northup.

Guthrie leads in the Second District, but a Boswell victory would not be a shock. Because both candidates are conservative, who wins this particular battle probably won't be much of an indicator of how the country as a whole will vote. However, Yarmuth is strongly favored to defeat Northup again in the Third District, and should Yarmuth lose, it could be interpreted as a late Republican resurgence .

7:00 EST

Presidential: **1 Safe Obama:** Vermont (3)
 1 Leans Obama: Virginia (13)
 2 Tossup: Florida (27), Georgia (15)
 1 Likely McCain: South Carolina (8)

Senate: **Georgia:** Toss Up
 Chambliss (R-inc) vs. Martin (D)

South Carolina: Safe Republican
Graham (R-inc) vs. Conley (D)

Virginia: Safe Democratic
Gilmore (R) vs. Warner (D)

Governor: **Vermont:** Likely Republican
 Douglas (R-inc) vs. Symington (D) vs. Pollina (P)

House: **FL-08:** Toss Up
 Keller (R-inc) vs. Grayson (D)

FL-13: Likely Republican
Buchanan (R-inc) vs. Jennings (D)

FL-16: Likely Republican
Rooney (R) vs. Mahoney (D-inc)

FL-18: Likely Republican
Ros-Lehtinen (R-inc) vs. Taddeo (D)

FL-21: Toss Up
L. Diaz-Balart (R-inc) vs. Martinez (D)

FL-24: Leans Democratic
Feeney (R-inc) vs. Kosmas (D)

FL-25: Toss Up
M. Diaz-Balart (R-inc) vs. Garcia (D)

GA-08: Leans Democratic
Goddard (R) vs. Marshall (D-inc)

SC-01: Leans Republican
Brown (R-inc) vs. Ketner (D)

SC-02: Likely Republican
Wilson (R-inc) vs. Miller (D)

VA-02: Leans Republican
Drake (R-inc) vs. Nye (D)

VA-05: Leans Republican
Goode (R-inc) vs. Perriello (D)

VA-10: Likely Republican
Wolf (R-inc) vs. Feder (D)

VA-11: Likely Democratic
Fimian (R-open) vs. Connolly (D)

Presidential

In the presidential race, there are three big prizes here. The first is **Florida**, with its 27 critical electoral votes. The second is **Virginia**, with 13 EVs, and the third, **Georgia**, with 15 EVs.

No one expects any one of these to be called right away. They should be too close for that. However, these are three of the most important states on the map—John McCain simply cannot become president without taking all three, unless he manages to pick off Pennsylvania from the Obama column.

Obama has consistently led in Florida and Virginia, while McCain has consistently led in Georgia, but the margins have been close enough in Florida and Georgia for the two states to be deemed tossups.

It's virtually game over for McCain if he drops any of these states, as several states that went for Bush in 2004 – New Mexico, Iowa, Colorado, Nevada – are expected to go for Obama.

Virginia alone, plus the Kerry states, gives Obama 265 electoral votes, just five shy of victory (a win in any other competitive Bush state, aside from Montana or North Dakota, would do it). Georgia alone, plus the Kerry states, puts Obama at the edge of victory with 267 electoral votes. A win in Florida would put him well over the top at 279.

Final results should be coming in from **Indiana**, as well, so we'll know if Obama was able to pull off the upset there. Indiana carries 11 EV's, so it can be treated more or less like Virginia...but if Obama carries Indiana, a historically Republican state, he's going to win the election handily.

On the other hand, if McCain can sweep Florida, Virginia and Georgia, he has a legitimate chance to pull off a stunning upset in the election. Because of Obama's strength in the West, McCain would likely need an upset victory in Pennsylvania as well to seal the deal.

Obama should win easily in **Vermont**, while McCain ought to take South Carolina with relative ease.

Downticket

The biggest race to watch here—indeed, one of the biggest anywhere in the nation—is the **Georgia Senate** race, where Democrat Jim Martin faces off against Republican incumbent Saxby Chambliss. Chambliss has led in almost every poll, but consistently within the margin of error, and early voting numbers favor Martin strongly. If neither candidate gets 50%, however – a strong possibility with a credible Libertarian candidate in the race – the race will go to a run-off election in December.

It's very likely that the battle in Georgia will determine whether the Democrats have a filibuster-proof 60-seat majority in the United States Senate. With Democrats expected to win at least seven Senate seats, with tossup races in Minnesota and Kentucky, and an anticipated loss in Mississippi, it's looking increasingly likely that Democrats will control exactly 59 Senate seats outside of Georgia.

In **Virginia**, former Democratic Governor Mark Warner will cruise into a U.S. Senate seat formerly held by Republican John Warner. The only question there is how big his margin will be. Similarly, Republican Lindsey Graham will win re-election in **South Carolina** over fringe Democrat Bob Conley with the only question of significance being how close Conley can come. As a candidate with no money and no party backing, this Democrat's fate will stand as a measure of just how unhappy Americans are with the Republican Party, and how unhappy South Carolinians are with their senior Senator. If Conley can approach 45%, it's going to be a very long night for the GOP.

The three-way **Vermont Governor's race** is another critical one to watch, although it doesn't look to be a close election. Here's why.

Popular incumbent Republican Governor Jim Douglas is currently garnering the lion's share of the vote. However, according to Vermont law, the state legislature elects the governor if no candidate wins 50% of the vote. Currently, Douglas is polling at 47%, while Democrat Gaye Symington and Progressive Party candidate Anthony Pollina are at 24% and 23%.

If Douglas doesn't get to 50%, it's at least conceivable that the Vermont House could elect Symington governor—she is, after all, the Vermont House Speaker.

In the **House**, the big state in this batch is **Florida**, where there are no fewer than *seven* competitive races—the 8th, 13th, 16th, 18th, 21st, 24th and 25th districts. The 13th and 18th district races pit Democratic underdogs (Christine Jennings in the 13th, Annette Taddeo in the 18th) against Republican incumbents (Vern Buchanan in the 13th, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen in the 18th). Victories here would be considered upsets.

On the other hand, very tight races are expected in the 8th District, where Democrat Alan Grayson is taking on unpopular Republican Ric Keller; the 21st District, a “battle of the titans” between Democratic Hialeah Mayor Raul Martinez and Republican Congressman Lincoln Diaz-Balart; the 24th District, where Democrat Suzanne Kosmas takes on Republican incumbent Tom Feeney; and the 25th District, where Democrat Joe Garcia faces Republican Mario Diaz-Balart.

House race junkies will also be watching **Virginia**, **Georgia** and **South Carolina** as well. In **Virginia**, Democrats are expecting at least one pickup, with Gerry Connolly running in VA-11 for the seat of retiring Republican Tom Davis. If Connolly loses, Democrats should be seriously concerned that they've missed a terrific opportunity to expand their House majority in 2008.

Conversely, if Democratic underdog candidates in VA-02 (Glenn Nye, facing Republican incumbent Thelma Drake), VA-05 (Tom Perriello, closing rapidly on Republican incumbent Virgil Goode), and VA-10 (where Democrat Judy Feder faces Republican incumbent Frank Wolf for the second time) can manage to pull off victories, the night is likely to turn out even worse than expected for House Republicans.

In **Georgia**, the race to watch is in the 8th District, where perennially endangered Democrat Jim Marshall will face former Air Force Major General Rick Goddard. Marshall is favored to win; if he does not, it will be due to the overwhelmingly Republican nature of his district, and probably won't serve as much of an indicator for national tides.

Finally, **South Carolina** offers two under-the-radar House races, one of which has received a good bit of national prominence of late. That one is in the 1st District, where Democrat Linda Ketner—a wealthy businesswoman, unabashed liberal, and openly gay candidate in a conservative South Carolina district—has run a shockingly strong race against incumbent Republican Henry Brown, who seemed woefully unprepared for such a spirited challenge. The 2nd District race is an even longer shot for Democrats, but they have a solid candidate in Iraq War veteran Rob Miller, who can't be ruled out completely against mediocre Republican incumbent Joe Wilson.

7:30 EST

Presidential: **1 Leans Obama:** Ohio (20)
 1 Tossup: North Carolina (15)
 1 Likely McCain: West Virginia (5)

Senate: **North Carolina:** Leans Democratic
 Dole (R-inc) vs. Hagan (D)

Governor: **North Carolina:** Toss Up
 McCrory (R) vs. Perdue (D-open)

House: **NC-05:** Likely Republican
 Foxx (R-inc) vs. Carter (D)

NC-08: Toss Up
 Hayes (R-inc) vs. Kissell (D)

NC-10: Likely Republican
 McHenry (R-inc) vs. Johnson (D)

OH-01: Toss Up
 Chabot (R-inc) vs. Driehaus (D)

OH-02: Leans Republican
 Schmidt (R-inc) vs. Wulsin (D)

OH-07: Likely Republican
 Austria (R-open) vs. Neuhardt (D)

OH-15: Leans Democratic
 Stivers (R-open) vs. Kilroy (D)

OH-16: Leans Democratic
 Schuring (R-open) vs. Boccieri (D)

WV-02: Leans Republican
 Capito (R-inc) vs. Barth (D)

Presidential

The next great electoral-college prize—and like Florida, a major battleground for House seats as well—is in **Ohio**. Of only slightly less importance in the Presidential race is **North Carolina**, with 15 electoral votes of its own.

Ohio was the critical state in deciding the 2004 election, and it may well be so again. With 20 electoral votes at stake, McCain needs to hold Ohio to win. Famously, Ohio has gone for the winner in every presidential election since time immemorial.

It's possible for Obama to win without Florida or Ohio, although he would need to hold on to Kerry states and amass 18 electoral votes from the following combination:

New Mexico (5), Nevada (5), Iowa (7), Colorado (9), Missouri (11), Virginia (13), North Carolina (15), Montana (3), North Dakota (3), Nebraska's Second District (1).

If the mood of the country is such that Obama doesn't take Ohio or Florida, it's unlikely he'll take North Carolina, Montana, North Dakota or NE-02, but he could still win the election since all the other aforementioned states are currently leaning Obama.

If McCain has already won Virginia, Florida and North Carolina by the time Ohio is called, it will be down to New Mexico, Colorado, Nevada and Iowa.

If Obama **does** win Ohio, however, McCain would need to carry at least one Kerry state to win. The obvious targets would be **Pennsylvania** (where the 21 electoral votes cancel out Ohio's 20), and **New Hampshire**, where a win offset by a loss in Ohio would give McCain the narrowest possible victory, 270 to 268. That would, however, necessitate McCain holding all other Bush states aside from Ohio, a tall order for the Arizona Senator. If Ohio goes for Obama, wait to see what happens with New Hampshire and Pennsylvania—if Obama holds them, he will have won.

North Carolina is about as interesting a state as the country offers this cycle, with 15 critical electoral votes considered a tossup at the presidential level, perhaps the most closely watched U.S. Senate race in the country (pitting Democrat Kay Hagan against incumbent Republican Sen. Elizabeth Dole), a tossup in the Governor's race (between Republican Charlotte Mayor Pat McCrory and Democratic Lieutenant Governor Beverly Perdue), and three contested House races.

Bush won North Carolina with 57% of the vote in 2004, but Obama currently enjoys a slim lead in the state, buoyed by exceptionally high early-voting turnout.

If North Carolina is called for Barack Obama, the presidential race will essentially be over. By itself, the state doesn't get Obama to 270 electoral votes (when added to the Kerry states), but it is a virtual certainty that if Obama is able to carry North Carolina, he will be able to carry several less conservative states along with it, like Iowa, New Mexico and Nevada, and that those states will put him over the top.

West Virginia is expected to go for McCain. It's bad news if he loses it, not because West Virginia is a must-hold, but simply because if West Virginia goes for Obama, many tossup states are likely to go for Obama as well. That would be a major surprise, however. If Obama does win here, he will be cruising toward 375 electoral votes.

Downticket

The **House races in Ohio** make it one of the critical states to watch in determining the size of the Democratic majority after the elections. There are five competitive House races in the Buckeye State.

The OH-01 race is a pure tossup, as Democrat Steve Driehaus faces battle-tested incumbent Steve Chabot. Chabot has escaped tough challenges before, but this will likely be the most difficult of his career.

Democrats Mary Jo Kilroy (OH-15) and John Bocchieri (OH-16) look strong in their quests to capture Republican-held open seats, and will be slightly favored. Meanwhile Democrat Sharen Neuhardt is the underdog in OH-07, running against Republican State Sen. Steve Austria.

Finally, Republican Rep. Jean Schmidt is favored to win reelection over Democrat Victoria Wulsin, but the race remains competitive. If Democrats pick up two or more House seats in Ohio, the chances are good that the party will significantly expand their majority, perhaps by 20 seats or more.

In **North Carolina**, there are three contested House races this cycle. Of those races, the 8th District race is a pure tossup, with Democrat Larry Kissell facing off for the second time against Republican incumbent Robin Hayes. The 10th District race is a long-shot Democratic pickup opportunity, with Democratic prosecutor and Navy veteran Daniel Johnson taking on entrenched Republican Patrick McHenry. The 5th District contest is an even more unlikely pickup opportunity, with Democrat Roy Carter, a high school football coach, taking on incumbent Republican Virginia Foxx.

It's likely that only the 8th District race will be truly competitive, but both the others bear watching. In fact, almost everything bears watching in North Carolina this year.

In **West Virginia**, there is one competitive House race, where Republican Rep. Shelley Moore Capito faces a challenge from Sen. Robert Byrd's former state director, Democrat Anne Barth.

8:00 EST

Presidential:

- 8 Safe Obama:** Connecticut (7), Delaware (3), Washington DC, (3), Illinois (21), Maine (4), Maryland (10), Massachusetts (12), Michigan (18)
- 3 Likely Obama:** New Hampshire (4), New Jersey (15), Pennsylvania (21)
- 1 Toss Up:** Missouri (11)
- 2 Likely McCain:** Mississippi (6), South Dakota (3)
- 3 Safe McCain:** Alabama (9), Tennessee (11), Texas (34), Oklahoma (7)

Senate:

- Maine:** Likely Republican, Collins (R-inc) vs. Allen (D)

- Mississippi:** Leans Republican Wicker (R-inc) vs. Musgrove (D)

- New Hampshire:** Leans Democratic Sununu (R-inc) vs. Shaheen (D)

- New Jersey:** Likely Democratic Zimmer (R) vs. Lautenberg (D-inc)

- Oklahoma:** Likely Republican Inhofe (R-inc) vs. Rice (D)

- Texas:** Likely Republican Cornyn (R-inc) vs. Noriega (D)

Governor:

- Delaware:** Safe Democratic Lee (R) vs. Markell (D)

- Missouri:** Likely Democratic Hulshof (R-open) vs. Nixon (D-open)

- House:**
- AL-02:** Leans Republican
Love (R-open) vs. Bright (D)

 - AL-03:** Likely Republican
Rogers (R-inc) vs. Segall (D)

 - AL-05:** Likely Democratic
Parker (R) vs. Griffith (D-open)

 - CT-04:** Leans Democratic
Shays (R-inc) vs. Himes (D)

 - IL-10:** Toss Up
Kirk (R-inc) vs. Seals (D)

 - IL-11:** Leans Democratic
Ozinga (R-open) vs. Halvorson (D)

 - IL-13:** Likely Republican
Biggert (R-inc) vs. Harper (D)

 - MD-01:** Toss Up
Harris (R-open) vs. Kratovil (D)

 - MI-07:** Leans Democratic
Walberg (R-inc) vs. Schauer (D)

 - MI-09:** Leans Democratic
Knollenberg (R-inc) vs. Peters (D)

 - MS-01:** Likely Democratic
Davis (R) vs. Childers (D-inc)

 - MO-06:** Likely Republican
Graves (R-inc) vs. Barnes (D)

 - MO-09:** Toss Up
Luetkemeyer (R-open) vs. Baker (D)

 - NH-01:** Likely Democratic
Bradley (R) vs. Shea-Porter (D-inc)

 - NJ-03:** Leans Democratic
Myers (R-open) vs. Adler (D)

NJ-05: Leans Republican
Garrett (R-inc) vs. Shulman (D)

NJ-07: Toss Up
Lance (R-open) vs. Stender (D)

PA-03: Toss Up
English (R-inc) vs. Dahlkemper (D)

PA-04: Likely Democratic
Hart (R) vs. Altmire (D-inc)

PA-10: Likely Democratic
Hackett (R) vs. Carney (D-inc)

PA-11: Toss Up
Barletta (R) vs. Kanjorski (D-inc)

PA-12: Leans Democratic
Russell (R) vs. Murtha (D-inc)

PA-15: Likely Republican
Dent (R-inc) vs. Bennett (D)

TX-07: Likely Republican
Culberson (R-inc) vs. Skelly (D)

TX-10: Leans Republican
McCaul (R-inc) vs. Doherty (D)

Presidential

Obama should take **Connecticut, Delaware, Washington D.C., Illinois, Maine, Maryland, and Massachusetts** easily. He will also be heavily favored in **Michigan, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and New Hampshire**.

McCain should handily win **Alabama, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas**. He will be heavily favored in **Mississippi, and South Dakota**.

That leaves **Missouri** and its 11 electoral votes as the one true tossup in this group.

If Obama does not win Ohio or Florida, a Missouri win will be of much greater importance. It is still not critical to Obama's victory, as it's also unlikely he'll win in Missouri and lose in both Ohio and Florida. If Obama does win Missouri, however, it's extremely likely he'll be the next president. A Missouri victory, plus Kerry states,

puts Obama at 263 electoral votes...meaning a win in Iowa, Colorado or Virginia takes the election, as would a dual victory in Nevada and New Mexico.

McCain fans will be watching Missouri anxiously while praying for a miracle in one of four key Kerry states—New Hampshire, Michigan, Pennsylvania or New Jersey.

New Jersey is worth 15 electoral votes, Michigan 18 and Pennsylvania 21. These three states are hotly contested every cycle, but generally go Democratic. A victory in any one of them, though currently viewed as unlikely, would give McCain a nice cushion and room for error. Winning one would mean McCain could afford to lose Florida, for example, as long as he doesn't bleed too much support in the West.

New Hampshire is listed not because it carries many electoral votes—only four, in fact—but because it's the lowest-hanging fruit for McCain out of all the Kerry states. A win in New Hampshire would be significant because it would enable McCain to lose Ohio, or lose Iowa and Virginia.

Currently, Obama is strongly favored to hold Michigan, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey. McCain is in deep trouble if he can't pick off one of these, because these states represent the entirety of his offense.

Needless to say, an Obama win in Texas (the cornerstone of the Republican electoral map) would be the ballgame, but that isn't going to happen. What will be interesting to see is how Democrats across the ballot do in Texas without the state's native son President Bush atop the ticket. Kerry got 38% in Texas, which is near the Democratic baseline statewide; can Obama approach 45% in the Lone Star State, or come close?

Similarly, while Obama won't win Tennessee, it will be awfully interesting to see whether he outperforms John Kerry, who picked up 43% in the state.

Missouri is still the bellwether in this time slot, as it has been a bellwether in nearly every election in recent years.

Downticket

The races coming in at this time slot ought to be critical in terms of determining the size of the Democratic House majority.

The determinant races here are **Mississippi's** Senate race (a victory or near-victory by Democrat Ronnie Musgrove would signal an impending landslide), and **New Hampshire's** Senate race (where a come-from-behind win by incumbent Republican John Sununu would stun every prognosticator in the nation). If Musgrove wins, the night will be a Democratic bloodbath; if Sununu pulls off the upset, it will indicate a surprisingly resilient Republican electorate.

In the **House**, the toss-up races—and presumptive bellwethers— will be Connecticut’s 4th District (Democrat Jim Himes against Republican Chris Shays), Illinois’ 10th District (Democrat Dan Seals against Republican Mark Kirk), Missouri’s 9th District (Democrat Judy Baker against Republican Blaine Luetkemeyer), and New Jersey’s 7th District (Democrat Linda Stender against Republican Leonard Lance).

If the Democratic wave is exceptionally strong, watch races like Alabama’s 3rd District (Democrat Josh Segall against Republican Mike Rogers), New Jersey’s 5th District (Democrat Dennis Shulman against Republican Scott Garrett) and Texas 10th District (Democrat Larry Joe Doherty against Republican Mike McCaul). If some of these races do go Democratic, the Republicans can expect to lose close to 40 seats all told.

8:30 EST

Presidential: **1 Likely McCain:** Arkansas (6)

Presidential

Arkansas could theoretically tip to Obama in a strong wave, but don’t expect anything other than a solid McCain win here. None of the state’s four Congressmen is threatened, and neither is Democratic Sen. Mark Pryor. In fact, no candidate for federal office in Arkansas faces major-party opposition at all.

9:00 EST

Presidential: **3 Safe Obama:** New York (31), Minnesota (10), Rhode Island (4)
2 Likely Obama: New Mexico (5), Wisconsin (10)
1 Lean Obama: Colorado (9)
1 Lean McCain: Nebraska 2d Dist. (1)
1 Likely McCain: Arizona (10)
4 Safe McCain: Kansas (6), Louisiana (9), Nebraska Statewide (2), NE-01 (1), NE-03, (1), Wyoming (3)

Senate: **Colorado:** Likely Democratic
Schaffer (R-open) vs. Udall (D)

Kansas: Safe Republican
Roberts (R-inc) vs. Slattery (D)

Louisiana: Likely Democratic
Kennedy (R) vs. Landrieu (D-inc)

Minnesota: Toss Up
Coleman (R-inc) vs. Franken (D)

Nebraska: Likely Republican
Johanns (R-open) vs. Kleeb (D)

New Mexico: Likely Democratic
Pearce (R-open) vs. Udall (D)

House:

AZ-01: Likely Democratic
Hay (R-open) vs. Kirkpatrick (D)

AZ-03: Leans Republican
Shadegg (R-inc) vs. Lord (D)

AZ-05: Likely Democratic
Schweikert (R) vs. Mitchell (D-inc)

AZ-08: Likely Democratic
Bee (R) vs. Giffords (D-inc)

CO-04: Leans Democratic
Musgrave (R-inc) vs. Markey (D)

KS-02: Leans Democratic
Jenkins (R) vs. Boyda (D-inc)

KS-03: Likely Democratic
Jordan (R) vs. Moore (D-inc)

LA-01: Likely Republican
Scalise (R-inc) vs. Harlan (D)

LA-04: Toss Up – primary runoff on
Nov. 4, general on Dec. 2

LA-06: Leans Democratic
Cassidy (R) vs. Cazayoux (D-inc)

LA-07: Likely Republican
Boustany (R-inc) vs. Cravins (D)

MN-01: Likely Democratic
Davis (R) vs. Walz (D-inc)

MN-03: Toss Up
Paulsen (R-open) vs. Madia (D)

MN-06: Toss Up
Bachmann (R-inc) vs. Tinklenberg (D)

NE-02: Toss Up
Terry (R-inc) vs. Esch (D)

NM-01: Leans Democratic
White (R-open) vs. Heinrich (D)

NM-02: Toss Up
Tinsley (R-open) vs. Teague (D)

NY-25: Likely Democratic
Sweetland (R-open) vs. Maffei (D)

NY-26: Leans Republican
Lee (R-open) vs. Kryzan (D)

NY-29: Leans Democratic
Kuhl (R-inc) vs. Massa (D)

WI-08: Leans Democratic
Gard (R) vs. Kagen (D-inc)

WY-AL: Likely Republican
Lummis (R-open) vs. Trauner (D)

Of note: Arizona expects fully 200,000 early ballots not to be counted or processed until well after the election – between November 6 and November 21.

Needless to say, this could have a major effect on a state that is suddenly hotly contested at the presidential level, and perhaps on Arizona's three competitive Congressional races as well.

Presidential

The states in this time slot should essentially decide the Presidential race, if results in Ohio, Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Georgia have not already done so.

The contested states here are **Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada**. Obama has solid leads in all of them and expects to win each. If they go for Obama, he wins, assuming that previous results have not yet put him over the top.

As with every battleground state this cycle, McCain needs these to win. All of them.

The only other questions of particular interest are historical in nature. Can Obama be only the second Democrat, after Bill Clinton in 1996, to win Arizona, and the first Democrat in God knows how long to win his opponent's home state? And can he steal a prized electoral vote in the Second District of Nebraska?

Downticket

By now, we'll know whether Dems are headed for a wave election, a tsunami election, or whether we're going to be disappointed in the House.

The chance exists for a Republican upset in Colorado or Louisiana, but it's far from likely. The one truly competitive race here is the nation's most prominent tossup race, the Minnesota Senate race. Republican Norm Coleman and Democrat Al Franken are deadlocked, and virtually no one can predict what might happen on election day.

Other noteworthy races to watch: Can Democrat Gary Trauner become the first Dem elected to Congress from Wyoming in three decades? Can Democrat Jim Harlan pull off a miraculous upset in one of the most conservative districts in the nation, LA-01? And will New Mexico see an entirely Democratic federal delegation for the first time in its history, with Democratic takeovers in the 1st and 2nd districts and the U.S. Senate?

10:00 EST

Presidential:

- 1 Likely Obama:** Iowa (7)
- 1 Lean Obama:** Nevada (5)
- 2 Tossup:** North Dakota (3),
Montana (3)
- 1 Safe McCain:** Utah (5)

House:

- IA-04:** Lean Republican
Latham (R-inc) vs. Greenwald (D)

- NV-02:** Lean Republican
Heller (R-inc) vs. Derby (D)

- NV-03:** Leans Democratic
Porter (R-inc) vs. Titus (D)

Presidential

By now, Obama will likely be looking to pad his victory total with wins in Montana or North Dakota, or both. If the race is still actually close, Iowa will be the battleground, but Obama's expected to take it handily.

Downticket

Democrats are looking for a huge upset in Iowa's 4th District, where Becky Greenwald has run a surprisingly competitive race against incumbent Republican Tom Latham.

Meanwhile, Dems expect to pick up at least one seat in Nevada, with Democrat Dina Titus waging a fierce battle against incumbent Republican Jon Porter in the Dem-leaning 3rd District. The 2nd District is the base of Nevada's Republican Party, but Jill Derby is perhaps the strongest candidate Democrats have ever fielded there, and she has a decent shot at knocking off favored incumbent Dean Heller.

11:00 EST

Presidential: **4 Safe Obama:** California (55), Hawaii (4), Oregon (7), Washington (10)
1 Safe McCain: Idaho (4)

Senate: **Idaho:** Safe Republican
Risch (R-open) vs. LaRocco (D)

Oregon: Leans Democratic
Smith (R-inc) vs. Merkley (D)

Governor: **Washington:** Toss Up
Rossi (R) vs. Gregoire (D-inc)

House: **CA-03:** Likely Republican,
Lungren (R-inc) vs. Durston (D)

CA-04: Toss Up
McClintock (R-open) vs. Brown (D)

CA-11: Likely Democratic
Andal (R) vs. McNerney (D-inc)

CA-26: Likely Republican
Dreier (R-inc) vs. Warner (D)

CA-46: Likely Republican
Rohrabacher (R-inc) vs. Cook (D)

CA-50: Leans Republican
Bilbray (R-inc) vs. Leibham (D)

ID-01: Toss Up
Sali (R-inc) vs. Minnick (D)

OR-05: Likely Democratic
Erickson (R) vs. Schrader (D-open)

WA-08: Toss Up
Reichert (R-inc) vs. Burner (D)

Presidential

The Obama victory may become official only after his three states are called, worth 69 electoral votes between them, but he should carry them all with no difficulty.

Downticket

The big enchilada here is the **Oregon Senate** race, where Democrat Jeff Merkley has surged into the lead over the past month and is favored to topple two-term incumbent Republican Gordon Smith.

The **Washington Governor's race** is one of the most hotly contested in the nation and the other big one to watch, for anyone inclined to stay up that late.

Jim Risch is walking away with the U.S. Senate race in **Idaho**, but Democrat Walt Minnick has the chance to take the U.S. House race in Idaho's 1st District against Republican Bill Sali, in one of the most Republican districts in the nation.

In the **House**, there are two very tight races—CA-04 and WA-08, both with Orange to Blue candidates—and one other good pickup opportunity for the Democrats in California, CA-50, where Nick Leibham takes on incumbent Republican Brian Bilbray.

Democrat Debbie Cook is a relatively strong candidate in CA-46, but her weak fundraising may wind up giving the race to incumbent Republican Dana Rohrabacher, despite his lousy campaign. That's the fourth-best Democratic pickup opportunity at this late hour.

Beyond that, Democrats will be hoping for a miracle in CA-03 and CA-26, a district where a victory would mean toppling powerful Republican David Dreier, the ranking member on the Rules Committee.

**1 AM EST
Nov. 5**

Presidential: **1 Safe McCain:** Alaska (3)

Senate: **Alaska:** Likely Democratic
Stevens (R-inc) vs. Begich (D)

House: **AK-AL:** Leans Democratic
Young (R-inc) vs. Berkowitz (D)

John McCain will cap a sad night with three electoral votes in **Alaska**, courtesy of native daughter Sarah Palin.

Yet even here, Democrats will likely rejoice, as they expect to pick up a **U.S. Senate seat and a U.S. House seat**, courtesy of Mark Begich and Ethan Berkowitz.