

Florida: The South's Premier Battleground State

Susan A. MacManus

with Cal Everett, Andrew Quecan, and Brittany L. Penberthy

Florida was the South's lone battleground state from start to finish of presidential campaign 2004. In this critical battleground state, there was never a clear break between the end of presidential Campaign 2000 and the beginning of Campaign 2004. As one ended with a ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, the next began. Each major party was intent on proving that its candidate *really* won the Sunshine State in 2000. Even the intervening gubernatorial election in 2002, featuring incumbent Republican Jeb Bush running against Democratic newcomer Bill McBride, was viewed as just a temporary blip in the seamless campaign season that stretched from December 2000 to November 2004.

Poll-after-poll showed the state to be a virtual toss-up, fluctuating a few percentage points here and there, mostly in response to political ads, party conventions, and candidate appearances (Table 1). Political parties, election officials, and the public at-large all saw Florida as a "must-have" state. Each had something to prove in a state that had grown even more important politically since the infamous 2000 election.

A Bigger, Still Highly Competitive, Contribution-Rich State

Florida, a high-growth state, gained two votes (from 25 to 27) in the Electoral College following the post-Census 2000 reapportionment. The voter registration rolls had swollen, the fruits of intensive registration drives conducted by political parties and a plethora of advocacy groups. By book closing on October 4, 2004, there were 1,548,573 more registered voters than in 2000.¹

Evenly Divided = Greater Emphasis on Turnout

The electorate was split nearly evenly between Democrats and Republicans whether measured by actual voter registration or self-identification.

SUSAN A. MACMANUS is Distinguished Professor of political science at the University of South Florida. CAL EVERETT and ANDREW QUECAN are undergraduate students in the honors program at the University of South Florida. BRITTANY L. PENBERTY is a recent honors graduate of the University of South Florida.

**Table 1. Florida Polls Showed Toss-Up Till the Bitter End:
Polls Conducted During Last Week of the 2004 Campaign**

Poll	Sample (Likely Voter)	Margin of Error	Bush	Kerry	Nader	Spread
ARG, October 30-November 1	600	4.0	48	50	1	Kerry +2
Zogby, October 29-November 1	601	4.1	48	48	0	tie
FOX News, October 30-31	700	3.0	44	49	1	Kerry +5
SurveyUSA, October 29-31	742	3.7	49	48	0	Bush +1
Insider Advantage, October 29-31	400	5.0	48	48	1	tie
Quinnipiac, October 27-31	1098	3.0	51	43	1	Bush +8
CNN/USA Today/Gallup, October 28-30*	1138	4.1	47	50	0	Kerry +3
Rasmussen, October 25-31	600	4.0	50	47	0	Bush +3
Mason-Dixon, October 27-29	625	4.0	49	45	0	Bush +4
Rasmussen, October 27	500	4.0	50	45	0	Bush +5
Strategic Vision, October 25-27	801	3.0	50	46	1	Bush +4
Fla. Poll/NY Times Regional, October 23-27	802	3.0	47	48	2	Kerry +1
Quinnipiac, October 22-26	944	3.2	49	46	1	Bush +3
La Times, October 22-26	510	4.0	51	43	2	Bush +8
ARG, October 23-25	600	4.0	46	49	1	Kerry +3

Note: Number includes allocation of undecideds.

Source: Real Clear Politics; available at www.RealClearPolitics.com/Presidential_04/fl_polls.html.

Independents made up about one-fifth of the registrants.² Early on, both parties and their supporters mapped out detailed Get-Out-The-Vote (GOTV) plans, knowing full well that turnout would be the key to winning the coveted sunshine state.³

The Democrats' GOTV plan called for targeting "two segments of the Florida electorate: (1) the under-performing Democratic base, particularly in sporadic voting African-American and non-Cuban Hispanic communities, and (2) swing voters, with particular attention paid to women in the I-4 corridor between Tampa, Orlando, and Daytona Beach" (Victory 2004 Florida Coordinated Campaign 2004, 1).

The Republican Victory 2004 72-Hour Plan (n.d.) aimed more directly at turning out the party's sympathetic base than at mobilizing swing voters. The 72-Hour Plan identified "friendly coalitions" like the "Unified Sportsmen of Florida, NRA, Social Conservatives (Evangelical churches, school choice/home school groups, pro-life groups), Florida Chamber of Commerce, NFIB (National Federation of Independent Businesses), Cuban-Americans, veterans." The key constituencies the GOP sought to mobilize

were “seniors, veterans, social conservatives, Hispanics, Jewish groups.” (Victory 204 72-Hour Plan n.d.)

Two constitutional amendment proposals (minimum wage and parental notification of a minor’s termination of pregnancy plans) were on the November ballot, placed there precisely for the purpose of turning out infrequent voters.⁴ The Florida Minimum Wage Amendment was sponsored by the Floridians For All PAC and put on the ballot through the petition process. A Democratic-leaning labor coalition led by ACORN was the primary driver behind signature collection efforts. The Parental Notification of a Minor’s Termination of Pregnancy Amendment was placed on the ballot by the Republican-dominated Florida Legislature. The push for it came from then Speaker of the House Johnnie Byrd (R), an announced candidate for the U.S. Senate, who saw the amendment as a way to energize religious conservatives.

Republicans expected Governor Jeb Bush’s popularity and his knowledge of how to win Florida (he won re-election in 2002 by a 13 percent margin) to be real assets in mobilizing voters sympathetic to his brother’s candidacy. Democrats hoped to capitalize on lingering and festering anger stemming from Al Gore’s 537-vote loss to George W. Bush in 2000 to turn out their supporters.

Both the Bush and Kerry campaigns hoped a highly competitive race for an open U.S. Senate seat would further spike turnout. The open seat was created when Democratic icon Senator Bob Graham announced he would not run for re-election after withdrawing from his bid for the presidency. A crowded field emerged on both sides of the aisle,⁵ and each party ended up with a bruising primary that somewhat wounded its eventual nominee.

The Democratic nominee for U.S. Senate, Betty Castor, was painted as weak on terrorism by one of her primary opponents, U.S. Representative Peter Deutsch from South Florida. He attacked her for refusing to fire a tenured faculty member at the University of South Florida (in Tampa), who had been formally accused of being a terrorist, while Castor served as the university’s president. Republican nominee Mel Martinez, formerly Secretary of Housing and Urban Development under President Bush, alienated many conservative Republicans with his campaign literature accusing his major primary competitor Bill McCollum, a former member of Congress and staunch conservative, of being “pro-homosexual” and anti-family.

The U.S. Senate race offered up several possible “firsts” (Crew, Fine, MacManus 2005a). Had she won, Democrat nominee Betty Castor would have been the first Democratic woman from Florida to win a U.S. Senate seat. Republican nominee Mel Martinez made much of the fact that, if elected, he would be the first Cuban American to serve in the U.S. Senate. The race was one of only two U.S. Senate contests in the nation not featur-

ing a white male. (Illinois was the other; two African American males competed for that seat.)

In the end, the issue of Castor's handling of the terrorist, raised by Deutsch in the primary, made terrorism the major issue in the Senate race just as it was in the presidential contest. While Castor lost to Martinez by a slim margin (49 percent to 48 percent), she did slightly better statewide than Kerry (48 percent v. 47 percent). Castor had more appeal than Kerry in conservative North Florida, and she undoubtedly won the votes of the Republicans who still were angered with Martinez's treatment of McCollum in the primary.

Big Contributor State

Florida has long had a reputation for being a big donor state, a real "cash cow." It is home to many retired corporate heads and labor union leaders. During the 2000 presidential cycle, Floridians contributed more than \$80 million to federal campaigns. Of that, nearly \$33 million went to Democrats (the third highest among the states) and more than \$47 million went to Republicans (the fifth highest of any state).

During the 2004 election cycle, Floridians contributed \$149,379,505 to federal candidates, PACs, and 527s (independent soft money groups named for the IRS code under which they are regulated. (*Politicalmoneyline.com*, March 1, 2005). Only California, New York, the District of Columbia, and Texas ranked ahead of Florida in total contributions.

Florida donors gave \$31,505,063 to presidential candidates, \$27,146,630 to U.S. Senate candidates, \$16,100,024 to U.S. congressional candidates, \$14,426,270 to federal PACS, \$45,567,013 to national party committees, and \$14,634,505 to IRS 527 soft money committees.

Of the two leading presidential contenders, George Bush raised considerably more in Florida than John Kerry (\$16,388,017 to \$7,286,751). U.S. Senate candidates Mel Martinez and Betty Castor were more evenly matched in their fund-raising (Martinez, \$12,856,384; Castor, \$11,645,379). (All figures are from *politicalmoneyline.com*.)

Money is essential to run effective statewide contests in Florida as the state has ten media markets. Three are among the 20 largest television markets in the U.S. (Tampa-St. Petersburg-Sarasota, 13th; Miami-Ft. Lauderdale, 17th; and Orlando-Daytona Beach-Melbourne, 20th).⁶ Each presidential campaign spent more than \$40 million on television commercials alone between March and November (Thomas 2004b).

The closeness of the presidential and U.S. Senate races, the intense party and candidate GOTV efforts, and the millions spent on campaigning and advertising in this key battleground state undoubtedly generated a lot of

interest among the voting public. The voter turnout rate rose sharply from 70 percent in 2000 to 74 percent in 2004, after being rather flat in the March presidential preference primary.

**Presidential Preference Primary:
Media Focused More on 2000 Than on 2004**

Florida's presidential preference primary certainly did not generate a very high turnout rate (20 percent in 2004 versus 19 percent in 2000). The question was not as much about who would win the primary (Kerry was a pre-election favorite according to the polls), as it was about what Florida had done to fix its broken election system.

National network anchors and high profile newspaper reporters dashed to Florida and began their coverage of the March 9 primary featuring flashbacks to Election 2000. Talk centered on the infamous butterfly ballot used in Palm Beach County, punch card ballots, chads (pregnant, hanging, dangling, etc.), the frantic counting and recounting of ballots, and disenfranchised voters.

In retrospect, coverage of Kerry's actual primary victory (77 percent) was overshadowed by the pre-election Florida-bashing frenzy. This was disappointing to many of the state's voters and election officials who were hoping to get beyond the 2000 election. But it was not meant to be. Throughout the campaign, the national media seemed intent on continually revisiting flaws in the state's electoral system even on Election Day.

A Major Overhaul of the Election System After 2000

Florida made major improvements in its election system after November 2000 (MacManus 2004d). The state expended much energy (and money) revamping its voting machinery and electoral processes by implementing the following reforms:

- (1) outlawing the use of punch card voting machines (2001) and giving counties \$24 million to modernize their voting equipment;
 - (2) approving provisional balloting;
 - (3) adopting clearer recount rules and procedures;
 - (4) requiring the posting of a Voter's Bill of Rights and Responsibilities at each polling place in the state;
 - (5) permitting early voting (also known as convenience voting);
 - (6) making the registration and voting systems more accessible to disabled voters;
 - (7) spending \$6 million on voter education and poll worker training;
- and

- (8) requiring county election supervisors to file post-election reports detailing the error rate in their county with the Governor, House and Senate leaders, and the Secretary of State.

The error rate (ballot spoilage rate) declined from 2.93 percent of the votes cast in the 2000 presidential election to 0.78 percent in the 2002 gubernatorial election and 0.41 percent in the 2004 presidential election (Florida Department of State 2005).

However, not all of the citizenry's anxieties about the state's election system were alleviated by these election reforms. The volume of critics' voices grew louder as the campaign unfolded and legal battles ensued. Problems with voting equipment and state-generated felons lists that surfaced during the primary election cycle sparked highly-negative news coverage and lawsuits (MacManus 2005a).

The lawsuits filed challenged everything from the lack of paper trails for touch screen voting machines to the constitutionality of state laws requiring provisional ballots to be cast in the precinct in which a voter is registered for it to be counted. Teams of lawyers were recruited by political parties and advocacy groups to watch over the shoulders of local election officials and poll workers, creating much pre-election angst among local election officials. Fortunately for Florida, most of the major lawsuits were resolved in the state's favor *prior* to the election. The early resolution of legal challenges and the state's two-week period for early voting greatly minimized the projected Election Day chaos.

Florida: Microcosm of the Nation At-Large

The Sunshine State is often considered to be a microcosm of the nation at-large. Its racial and ethnic mix mirrors the nation's more than any other large state. African Americans comprise 15 percent of the state's population, and Hispanics make up 17 percent (Hispanics may be of any race). Comparable figures for the U.S. are African Americans, 12 percent, and Hispanics, 13 percent.

Because of its demographic, socioeconomic, and political diversity, the state has long been used as a place for campaign consultants to test television and radio ads, direct mail, and voter mobilization strategies via focus groups and polls (Hill, Moreno, and MacManus 2004). Florida is home to NASCAR dads and security moms; younger and older voters; bleeding heart liberals, middle-of-the-road moderates, and right wing conservatives; rural-ites, suburbanites, and big city dwellers; and old-timers and newcomers (both native-born and foreign-born). It is also a place that the presidential and vice presidential candidates and their spouses felt compelled to visit frequently in 2004—53 visits from September to November, 2004 alone (Table 2).

**Table 2. Candidate and Spouse Visits to Florida:
September to November, 2004**

	Republican	Democrat
Presidential	9	13
Vice Presidential	6	13
Presidential Spouses	3	4
Vice Presidential Spouses	2	3
State Totals	20	33

Source: Data compiled by Andrew Quecan from ABC's The Note and candidate websites and newspapers.

**The Critical I-4 Corridor Battleground:
Tampa Bay & Orlando Media Markets**

A great deal of campaigning took place at various spots along the I-4 (Interstate 4) Corridor. Increasingly known as the “highway to heaven” for candidates, it stretches across the state from Daytona Beach on the east coast through Orlando in the central portion to the Tampa area on the west coast. It is the swing part of the state, primarily because a disproportionately high number of independent voters live along the Corridor.

This “mid-rift” of Florida is a booming part of the state, fueled by growth in the tourism and high tech sectors (MacManus 2004a,c). It is a magnet for foreign born immigrants (tourism) and young college educated professionals (high tech jobs in health care and financial services). Non-Cuban Hispanics, mainly Puerto Ricans, live on the eastern end (Orlando), and the young, college educated professionals on the western end (Tampa) of the Corridor. Both groups were highly sought after swing voters in Election 2004.

Historically, the Tampa Bay area has the reputation for being the best bellwether of how Florida at-large votes. It mirrors the state in its racial/ethnic make-up, the split between urban, suburban, and rural areas, its partisan composition (Democrats, Republicans and independents), and its age profile (almost equal proportions of young, middle-aged, and senior voters). Since 1980, the presidential candidate who has received the most votes in this 10-county media market, the state’s largest, has won Florida. The string remained in tact in 2004.

One fourth of all the state’s registered voters live in the Tampa Bay media market (MacManus 2004e). Al Gore ended his race for the presidency at dawn on Election Day 2000 in Tampa. George Bush chose Tampa as one

of two cities in which to kick off his 2004 fund-raising campaign. John Kerry picked Tampa as the place to watch the Super Tuesday election returns. The Sunday before the Election, Bush held a rally in the Yankees' spring training ballpark in the afternoon while Kerry drew large crowds to a park in downtown Tampa that evening. Tampa Bay residents saw each of the presidential contenders more often than they did in 2000—and that was a lot.

Because of the area's diverse demographic, socioeconomic, and political diversity, the Tampa Bay area was one focus of a national study on the effectiveness of various types of campaign advertising in 2004.⁷

Campaign Advertising Blitz: Precision Targeting of Key Demographic Groups

Florida voters were targeted on the basis of their race/ethnicity, gender, marital status, sexual preference, religion, ideology, veteran status, age, party affiliation, frequency of voting, geographical location, and so forth. The targeting was often razor-sharp, especially via direct mail, cable television and radio, and phone calls.

Overall, "Republican Party officials estimated that the Bush campaign, the Republican National Committee (RNC), and the Republican Party of Florida combined to spend between \$45 and \$50 million on TV, radio, direct mail, GOTV, and other activities in the state. Democratic Party officials place their estimates in excess of \$50 million" (Crew, Fine, MacManus 2005b, 72). Independent groups, the 527s, spent at least another \$22 million on TV and radio alone to reach key slices of the Florida electorate.

The Bush campaign "mounted forty-two unique TV ads and twenty radio ads" while "the Kerry campaign produced twenty-three TV ads and five unique radio ads" (Crew, Fine, MacManus 2005b, 72). Some 294 different e-mail messages, 236 unique mail pieces, and 25 unique telephone messages were crafted by the candidates, parties, and independent groups to reach key constituencies.

A post-election study of reactions to campaign mail, phone calls, e-mails, and television and radio ads among voters in the critical I-4 Corridor fit some patterns that were observed nationally (MacManus 2004-05). The quoted comments below were made to the author by those voters. The study's major findings were that:

- *Targeting by age, gender, race/ethnicity, religion, and ideology was very commonly done via the electronic media.* Radio was the most successful medium at targeting young African Americans on the Democratic side and religious conservative voters on the Republican side. Especially effective were the ads run on hip hop stations that urged

blacks to vote for Democrats as a way to protect their civil liberties and, conversely, anti-partial birth abortion ads aired on country stations by the Bush campaign. The placement and content of television ads was particularly sensitive to age: "During Wheel of Fortune, a person would likely see an ad that talked about health care, Social Security and drug costs. During a television show like Friends, employment, the economy, and Iraq (higher priorities of younger voters) were the focus of ads." Gender-targeted ads ran during women's programs like Oprah Winfrey, although gender-targeted ads mostly came in the form of direct mail or in recorded phone calls from female or male celebrities (MacManus 2005b).

- *The Republican Party and the 527 advocacy groups had more precisely-targeted ads than the Democratic Party per se.* Part of the explanation for this pattern was funding. The 527 advocacy groups were unlimited in the amount of money they could raise or the sources from which it could be raised. But the Republican Party's edge over the Democrats is attributable to its more multi-media approach. An article that appeared in the *Washington Post* featuring an interview with Ken Mehlman, the Bush-Cheney campaign manager, reported that "the Bush campaign spent heavily on such nontraditional sources as national cable networks, African-American and Christian radio, and Spanish-language media. . . . The campaign bought local radio advertising adjacent to rush-hour traffic reports and beamed ads into health clubs with their own TV networks" (Balz 2004). Each of these unique mediums is more easily targeted than traditional broadcast television ads aired primarily around news programming.
- *Spanish-speaking Floridians reported they got little communication in their native language, especially from Democrats.* Spanish-speaking Democrats were very critical of the paucity of efforts by Democratic candidates to reach them in Spanish. Several reported getting more in Spanish from Republicans than Democrats. Typical were these comments from a Latino Democrat: "One thing the Republicans seemed to do better than the Democrats was advertising towards Hispanic voters. . . . I personally found only one ad in Spanish for John Kerry. I would see tons of Viva Bush stickers, but nothing similar for Kerry. . . . You would think the Democrats would have done more to reach out to Hispanic voters." This is in sync with what has been reported by others: namely, that the data base used by the Florida Democratic Party was not refined enough to identify Latino registrants. But the ability to identify Latino voters was a challenge for both parties, especially persons whose last names are not easily-recognizable Hispanic names, often due to marriage.

- *Internet ads were not as visible or as widely used as Internet-using voters expected them to be. E-mails were more likely to focus on urging people to register or vote than on candidate events or issues.* Younger voters seemed particularly distressed that e-mail communication from campaigns was aimed at fund-raising more than at informing voters about issue stances. Said one young voter: “Although I surf the net frequently, I couldn’t find [many] advertisements that swayed me one way or the other.” Another had even more detailed criticisms and recommendations: “One e-mail that I really did like was the one Kerry sent out outlining his plan for the war in Iraq a few days before the first debate. It was very detailed and seemed really well thought out . . . [If an e-mail] only looked like they were asking for money, then I would delete it. I tried to at least skim over the ones providing information.” The same observer said she liked e-mails with information about volunteer opportunities and personal appearances. The problem with such e-mails was that they arrived too late: “I wish they could have been sent out at least a week ahead of time so I could have arranged my schedule to participate in more events.”
- *The most effective communication strategy is a multi-faceted one that creates a “brand.” The Bush campaign bested the Kerry campaign at creating a brand.* One of the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy (CSED) USF-WFLA ad analysis participants said it best: “I think it is your total campaign as a package that gets people’s attention. Overall, I cannot say that either side ran a bad campaign, it is just that one side was definitely more effective than another. Bush did a great job getting his name out there. He had the total package—signs, bumper stickers, t-shirts, yard signs, and commercials. The Bush Campaign was constantly in my face the entire campaign—their name was everywhere. The Kerry Campaign did not do enough to get their name out there. I think the ads and signs themselves were great; there just were not enough of them. I even went to the Tampa Kerry campaign headquarters and they did not have any merchandise to buy or give out. There were tons of people there asking for it. The same holds true for the people who visited our USF class. The Bush campaign brought advertisements and the Kerry campaign did not.”
- *The Swift Boat Veterans For Truth ads captured more attention than the ads by MoveOn.org and America Coming Together.* Groups on the left, primarily MoveOn and ACT, raised more money and ran more television ads than the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth. But the Swift Boat group’s ads ended up swaying the public more, particularly the one featuring a large number of Vietnam veterans expressing their opposition to Kerry in their own words. There are a lot of veterans and active duty

military in Florida who strongly identified with the Swift Boat veterans. Overall, Florida has 1.8 million veterans, approximately 100,000 active duty soldiers, and more than 30,000 members of the National Guard and Reserves.

The Margin of Victory Was Wider than Projected

When the polls closed at 7 pm on November 2, nearly everyone expected the presidential race in Florida to end up being so close that a recount would be needed—a replay of 2000. Nothing could have been further from the truth. President Bush easily won the state by a 5 percent margin over Senator John Kerry (52 percent to 47 percent). Bush's 380,978 vote margin was a far cry from the contested 537-vote margin in 2000. The President carried 56 of 67 counties and increased his share of the vote by at least 5 percent over 2000 in 51 counties. In contrast, in only six counties did Kerry's share exceed Gore's in 2000 by at least 5 percent (Smith 2004, November 4).

The Florida results shocked the pollsters. The bulk of their final pre-election polls either predicted a tie or had Kerry up by a point or two on Election Day. (Incidentally, the most accurate prediction came from none other than Governor Jeb Bush. He forecasted a four percent win for his brother on national TV talk shows the Sunday preceding the election.)

Republicans Win at Registration Gains & Turnout

In a repeat of the 2002 mid-term election, Republicans bested Democrats at the turnout game. It was not that Florida Democrats did that badly. As Chuck Todd of the *National Journal* pointed out, "Democrats overperformed [in raw numbers] with every base voting group they targeted. They received more votes in Florida than they thought they needed" (Todd 2004). It is just that Florida Republicans did even better. Republicans made up 41 percent of the voting public in 2004 compared to just 38 percent in 2000. The reverse pattern was true for Florida Democrats (40 percent in 2000 but only 37 percent in 2004) (Table 3).

The GOP's 72-hour plan of action primarily staffed by volunteers was more effective at turning out Republicans than the Democratic Victory 2004 coordinated campaign that relied more heavily on paid activists to get Democrats to the polls. The latter strategy fell short. Florida pollster Jim Kane said it well: "One volunteer is worth 100 paid workers in a get-out-the-vote campaign. They don't have the same enthusiasm as the guy who believes in the candidate and makes sure his neighbors and friends of neighbors are going to show up at the polls" (Parker 2004).

Table 3. Makeup of the Florida Electorate

Category	Percent of Electorate 2000	Percent of Electorate 2004	Change 2000 to 2004
Gender			
Male	46	46	+0
Female	54	54	+0
Race			
White	73	70	-3
African American	15	12	-3
Latino	11	15	+4
Asian	1	1	+0
Other	1	2	+1
Age			
18-29	15	17	+2
30-44	31	27	-4
45-59	27	28	+1
60 and older	27	27	+0
Income			
Less than \$50,000	51	46	-5
\$50,000 or more	49	54	+5
Education			
No High School	5	3	-2
High School Graduate	22	20	-2
Some College	34	34	+0
College Graduate	24	27	+3
Postgrad Study	15	15	+0
Vote by Party Identification			
Democrat	40	37	-3
Republican	38	41	+3
Independent	22	23	+1
Ideology			
Liberal	19	20	+1
Moderate	50	47	-3
Conservative	31	34	+3
Have You Ever Voted Before			
No	n/a	13	—
Yes	n/a	87	—
Vote by Church Attendance			
More Than Once a Week	16	12	-4
Once a Week	27	23	-4
A Few Times a Month	14	16	+2
A Few Times a Year	28	29	+1
Never	12	17	+5

Table 3 (continued)

Category	Percent of Electorate 2000	Percent of Electorate 2004	Change 2000 to 2004
Religion			
Protestant	56	51	-5
Catholic	26	28	+2
Jewish	4	5	+1
Other	6	5	-1
None	7	11	+4

Note: 2000 Exit Poll results have been contested.

Source: Exit poll data from 2004 National Election Pool and 2000 Voter News Service.

The Republican Party of Florida also won the voter registration battle as measured against the 2000 figures. This came as somewhat of a shock to many. Intense media focus on the registration activities of groups like America Coming Together, Mi Familia Vota, MoveOn.org, and other Democratic-leaning advocacy groups created the image that Republicans were getting beaten handily in the registration game. Why? Because the increase in the number of registered Democrats between January and October (book closing) 2004 was the statistic cited rather than the relative gains of Democrats and Republicans from 2000-2004. Republicans actually out-registered Democrats by 4,086 during the longer time-frame, although each party's gains lagged behind the increase in the number of voters registering as independents (no party affiliation).⁸

Terrorism as the Number One Issue in Florida

Nationally, "moral values" was the most important reason affecting voters' choice for president. But in Florida, it was terrorism, 24 percent to 20 percent for moral issues. (Unless otherwise indicated, data on various demographic and other voter groups are drawn from the exit poll data from the 2004 National Election Pool, conducted by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International.) This fact has gotten little attention in most post-election analyses in spite of the fact that throughout the campaign, most Florida opinion polls showed terrorism to be the highest priority issue. The only exceptions were a few polls close to Election Day—giving the Kerry campaign hope as those polls were also the ones showing Kerry in the lead.

Terrorism simply was—and is—a bigger issue in Florida than elsewhere for many reasons: our larger-than-average number of military installations, deep water ports, commercial and private airports; the state's exten-

sive coast line—the longest of any state; and Florida-based terrorism incidents and impacts—the anthrax death in south Florida, the flight school training of the terrorists who flew into the World Trade Centers, and the devastating economic impact of 9/11 on the state’s tourism-based economy (MacManus 2004-05).

From the start, the Kerry campaign (and the Betty Castor U.S. Senate campaign) understood that, to carry Florida, Democrats would have to change the subject from terrorism and homeland security to domestic issues. It was just beginning to work when the national news coverage reverted back to terrorism-related stories (including stories on missing explosives in Iraq followed by the release of the Osama Bin Laden tape).

Moral Values: Prompt GOP Gains among Conservatives, Catholics, and Blacks

The national and state media were shocked by the importance of moral values as a vote cue. They should not have been. There were plenty of warning signs that the public was disgusted with the “trashing” of America, beginning with outrage stemming from Janet Jackson’s revealing halftime-show episode at the 2004 Super Bowl. Other rather obvious cues included the extent to which the nation was captivated by Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ* movie, the intensity with which the nation grieved over the death of President Ronald Reagan and revered in the moral attributes of his life, and the rejection of gay marriage in a moderate swing state (Missouri) where turnout reached record levels for a primary election (MacManus 2004-05).

The degree to which Republicans would successfully lure social conservatives (of all races and ethnicities) to the polls was a big question mark heading into the election. Exit poll results clearly showed that their targeting strategies worked (Table 4). The GOP gained votes from social and religious conservatives who turned out in considerably higher numbers than in 2000. Republican consultant Bill Coletti acknowledged that: “[The Bush-Cheney campaign] mobilized the base, as the base has never been mobilized. The evangelical Christians, I’ve never seen them as excited as this year” (Smith 2004).

Conservatives made up 34 percent of Florida’s voters in 2004, up from 31 percent in 2000. Among conservatives, 86 percent supported President Bush compared to 77 percent in 2000.

Catholics made up a higher proportion of the electorate in 2004 than in 2000 (28 percent to 25 percent). Among Catholics, 57 percent voted for Bush in 2004 versus 54 percent in 2000. Hispanic support for Bush increased from 49 percent in 2000 to 56 percent in 2004. Much of this increase undoubtedly came from socially conservative Hispanic Catholics.

Table 4. Vote Patterns: Florida Electorate

Category	2000		2004		Change in Vote for Republican
	Bush	Gore	Bush	Kerry	
Gender					
Male	54	42	53	46	-1
Female	45	53	50	49	+5
Race					
White	57	40	57	42	+0
African American	7	93	13	86	+6
Latino	49	48	56	44	+7
Asian	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	—
Other	n/a	n/a	66	34	—
Age					
18-29	40	55	41	58	+1
30-44	50	47	53	46	+3
45-59	49	49	57	42	+8
60 and older	51	47	52	47	+1
Income					
Less than \$15,000	37	62	40	59	+3
15,000-30,000	36	60	39	59	+3
30,000-50,000	47	48	48	51	+1
50,000-75,000	53	45	54	45	+1
75,000-100,000	59	40	62	37	+3
Over \$100,000	66	33	n/a	n/a	—
100,000-150,000	n/a	n/a	56	44	—
150,000-200,000	n/a	n/a	60	38	—
\$200,000 or More	n/a	n/a	59	41	—
Education					
No High School	47	50	45	53	-2
High School Graduate	42	56	48	51	+6
Some College	49	48	51	48	+2
College Graduate	57	39	56	44	-1
Postgrad Study	52	45	53	45	+1
Vote by Party Identification					
Democrat	13	86	14	85	+1
Republican	91	8	93	7	+2
Independent	46	47	41	57	-5
Ideology					
Liberal	17	79	18	81	+1
Moderate	46	51	43	56	-3
Conservative	77	21	86	13	+9

table continues . . .

Table 4 (continued)

Category	2000		2004		Change in Vote for Republican
	Bush	Gore	Bush	Kerry	
Have You Ever Voted Before					
No	n/a	n/a	43	56	—
Yes	n/a	n/a	53	46	—
Vote by Church Attendance					
More Than Once a Week	53	45	65	35	+12
Once a Week	52	46	63	37	+11
A Few Times a Month	42	56	51	48	+9
A Few Times a Year	51	45	47	52	-4
Never	41	54	37	62	-4
Religion					
Protestant	66	32	59	40	-7
Catholic	54	42	57	42	+3
Jewish	n/a	n/a	20	80	—
Other	n/a	n/a	29	69	—
None	n/a	n/a	31	66	—

Note: 2000 Exit Poll results have been contested.

Source: Exit poll data from 2004 National Election Pool and 2000 Voter News Service.

One Hispanic newspaper columnist from Orlando had predicted this ahead of the election: “There’s trouble in paradise for Kerry if he thinks the economy, education and health care will trump family values among Hispanic voters” (Marquez 2004).

Bush nearly doubled his support among blacks in Florida in 2004 (from 7 percent to 13 percent), an increase exceeding that at the national level (from 9 percent to 11 percent). By most accounts, Bush’s gains came from African-American religious conservatives, voucher supporters, and advocates of faith-based initiatives (Kunerth 2004).

Hispanics Surpass African American Voters for First Time

The 2004 election saw a seismic shift in the minority make-up of the Florida electorate. *For the first time in Florida history*, Hispanic voters made up a larger portion of those who voted than African Americans. In 2000, blacks comprised 15 percent of the Florida electorate, and Hispanics, 11 percent. In 2004, Hispanics made up 15 percent, and blacks, 12 percent. This is an extremely significant development, one that poses a real challenge to the Florida Democratic Party which lost ground to the GOP among Hispanics.

The Hispanic vote in 2000 was, for Bush, 49 percent, and, for Gore, 48 percent. In 2004, it was 56 percent for Bush and 44 percent for Kerry, a gain of 7 percent for the GOP. It was good news for Republicans and bad news for Democrats: the Hispanic population in Florida is growing at a much faster pace than the African American population.

The Cuban Vote: Some Democratic Gains but Not Enough

Prior to the election, Democrats aimed to get the same level of vote within the Cuban community as had President Bill Clinton in 1996 (around 40 percent). Their hope was that the Bush administration's more restrictive Cuba travel policy would do the trick. But Kerry received only 35 percent of this vote, still an improvement over what Gore received in 2000 but short of the goal. Bush ended up receiving 63 percent of the Cuban vote in 2004 according to a precinct-level analysis by the *Miami Herald* (Clark, 2004, November 10).

The Non-Cuban (Puerto Rican) Vote

Florida Republicans appear to have made some gains among the growing swing Puerto Rican vote in central Florida, continuing a pattern observed in the 2002 governor's race when that vote went for Republican Jeb Bush. (The non-Cuban Hispanic vote split in the 2000 presidential race.)

Osceola County, home to a sizable and growing Puerto Rican population, voted for the Democrat Gore in 2000 but for Republican Jeb Bush in the 2002 gubernatorial race. Between 2000 and 2004, some 20,000 Hispanics, mostly Puerto Ricans, moved into the county. Post-election comments by local political observers concluded that "those arriving directly from Puerto Rico, as opposed to New York, were in play—but only Republicans went after them. For four years they went on Hispanic radio shows, held Hispanic recruitment nights, invited Hispanics to hear Republican speakers, and served them Hispanic food. Democrats were hampered by a late start and a hierarchy dominated by old-line Anglos" (Lawrence and Page 2005). Evidence that the Puerto Rican vote probably tipped slightly toward Bush comes from 2004 returns in the State House District 49 race covering Orange and Osceola counties when Republican incumbent John Quinones, a Puerto Rican, won re-election over his Democratic competitor, Israel Mercado, also a Puerto Rican, by a 52 percent to 48 percent margin.

In contrast, Kerry did well among other Latin and South-American Hispanics, primarily the Nicaraguans and Venezuelans in the Miami area (Hernandez 2004) and Mexican voters living in central Florida's more agriculturally-oriented regions (Marquez 2004).

The Jewish Vote in South Florida: Some Republican Gains

Historically, the Jewish vote in Florida, as across the U.S., has been heavily Democratic. Republicans hoped to make inroads with Jewish voters in 2004. As early as January 2004, Florida Republicans were quoting a national poll conducted by the American Jewish Committee showing that “the number of Jews who considered themselves Republican had increased from 9 percent in 2000 to 16 percent in 2003” (Nevins and Huriash 2004). Florida Democrats were not convinced. However, “both sides agree[d] Israel is the main reason for the weakening of Jewish support for Democrats” (Man 2004).

The GOP brought in several high-profile Jewish politicians to court the large south Florida Jewish vote: Ed Koch (former Democratic mayor of New York City), Rudy Giuliani, former Republican mayor of New York City whose wife is Jewish, Ari Fleischer, former press secretary for President Bush, and U.S. Senator Norm Coleman from Minnesota. The Democrats matched them by bringing in Joseph and Hadassah Lieberman and Senator Kerry’s son, Cameron, who is a convert to Judaism.

One month prior to the election, Sid Dinerstein, chairman of the Palm Beach County Republican Party, predicted President Bush would get one-third of the Jewish vote. Charles Glick, director of Jewish outreach for the Kerry campaign in South Florida, warned fellow Democrats that, “If they get 40 percent, it would be devastating. If they get 30 percent they could win the election. We need to keep them under 20 percent” (Man 2004).

Jewish voters made up a slightly larger portion of the electorate in 2004 (5 percent versus 4 percent in 2000). Consistent with national trends, the GOP made some inroads into this traditionally Democratic bloc, but not as much as had been hoped. Bush received 20 percent of the Jewish vote in Florida in 2004, up only slightly from 19 percent in 2000 (Thomas 2004).

Florida’s Women Voters: GOP Gains to an Even Split

Women made up the majority of the Florida electorate in 2004 just as they did in 2000 (54 percent in each election). President Bush garnered 5 percent more of the female vote than he did in 2000: 50 percent to 45 percent. He actually received 50 percent of the 2004 vote to Kerry’s 49 percent, a marked reversal from 2000 when Democrat Al Gore won 53 percent of the women’s vote. Bush’s gains came from security moms, women of conservative religious faiths, and female small business owners.

Both parties focused intense efforts on infrequent or non-voting women registrants. Democrats heavily targeted minority and single women. Republicans aimed at married women with children; these women were mostly

white. Republicans won this battle. Non-white women made up only 16 percent of the voters while white women made up 38 percent. White females heavily leaned toward Bush (55 percent) while non-white females were among the staunchest supporters of Kerry (75 percent).

The bottom line was that Kerry lost ground among women relative to Gore in 2000, and “that put a big dent in Kerry’s numbers because women make up 54 percent of the state’s electorate” (Thomas and Pain 2004).

The Youth Vote Increased in Florida, Helped Kerry

Across the U.S., the relative size of the youth vote remained unchanged from 2000. But in Florida, the proportion of the electorate age 18-29 increased from 15 percent in 2000 to 17 percent in 2004. Florida’s younger voters turned out at higher rates than their counterparts in other states for several reasons: (1) a youth vote more heavily targeted by both parties than in 2000; (2) the competitiveness of the race in a key battleground state; (3) more opportunities to attend events at which the candidates appeared; (4) memories of the closeness of 2000 which served to reinforce the notion that one vote could make a difference in the outcome; and (5) a more vigorous outreach campaign by Florida’s supervisors of elections aimed at high school seniors and college students (MacManus 2005a).

The GOP improved its reach among the younger cohort, although only slightly. Bush won 1 percent more of this vote in 2004 than in 2000. But Democrats still held the edge here: Kerry’s 58 percent to Bush’s 41 percent. As it turned out, the younger cohort was the only age group Kerry won in Florida. Even a majority of seniors voted for Bush. But the most devastating losses for Kerry occurred among voters age 45 to 59, 57 percent of whom voted for Bush in 2004. “Terrorism and moral values were the top issues for about half of that age group” (Thomas and Pain 2004).

I-4 Corridor Keeps Its Reputation as the Swing Part of the State

On Election Night, all eyes were on the returns coming in from the counties making up the I-4 Corridor. When Bush won counties that he lost in 2000 (Pasco, Pinellas, and Hernando on the Tampa end; Flagler and Osceola on the Orlando end) and did better in Polk (+5 percent), Hillsborough (+3 percent), and Orange (+1.6 percent), the networks painted the state “red.” The I-4 Corridor truly turned out to be the “highway to heaven” for President Bush. The vote margin in the Corridor closely mirrored the statewide margin and reaffirmed the area’s reputation as Florida’s bellwether swing region.

Bush's strategy of visiting suburban counties in the I-4 Corridor really paid off. The president, after the late summer hurricanes, visited a number of smaller places outside of Tampa and Orlando such as New Port Richey (Pasco County), St. Petersburg and Safety Harbor (Pinellas), Melbourne (Brevard), and Lakeland and Lake Wales (Polk County).

A post-election analysis by *The New York Times* pointed to Bush's travels through suburbia as his pathway to victory: "The Bush campaign lavished these communities with attention while Senator John Kerry's campaign and the independent groups working on its behalf invested most of their resources in cities like Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa, and Orlando. The Republican strategy succeeded most along the Interstate 4 corridor . . . where Mr. Bush's pledges to quash terrorism and promote traditional values appealed to the [suburban areas'] mostly white, middle-class, religious-leaning population" (Goodnough and Van Natta 2004).

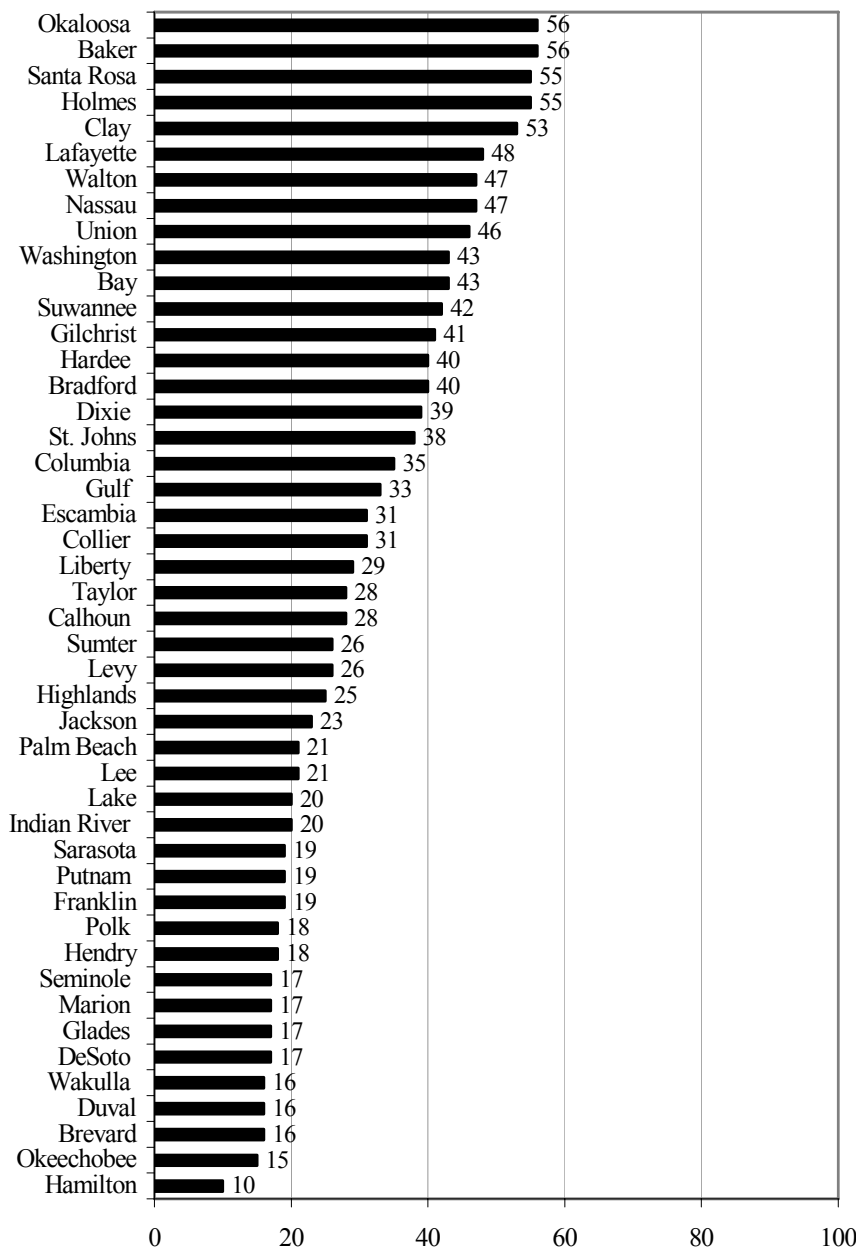
Rural Counties: High Turnout, Heavily Bush

Going to rural and suburban counties was a key part of the highly successful Republican Get-Out-The-Vote strategy—one borrowed directly from brother Jeb's own campaign playbook. Jeb's initial victory in 1998 featured the now infamous bus tour through the more rural parts of the state. It yielded high voter turnout and large vote margins that were seen as vital to his win (MacManus 2003).

The turnout rates in the rural counties, especially those in North Florida, were considerably higher than those in the more urban counties. Bush's margin of victory over Kerry was often greatest in the rural, socially conservative counties (Figure 1) while Kerry's margin over Bush was highest in large urban and university-dominated counties (Figure 2). In fact, "Just on the mostly small, rural counties stretching from Pensacola to Jacksonville, Bush picked up more than 193,000 votes more than he did in 2000" (Smith 2004). Kerry held Bush closer in the large, urban counties like Broward. Turnout rates increased the most from 2000 to 2004 in rural counties (Figure 3) but changed very little in some of the states larger, urban counties, including Miami-Dade, Hillsborough, and Broward (Figure 4).

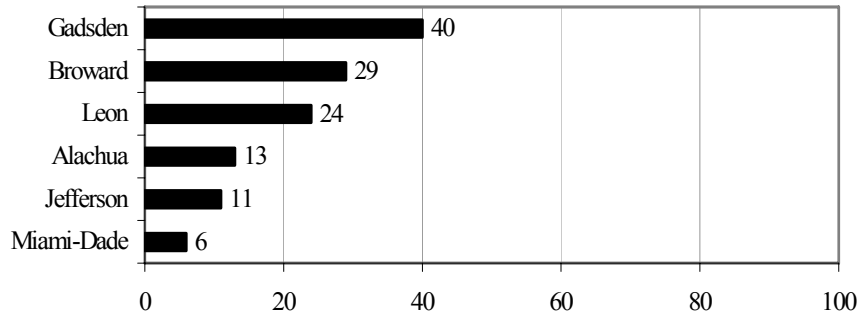
So why did not Kerry do better in the rural parts of the state? Democrats certainly expected him to put a dent in the Republican hold on these areas, believing that "the economy would trump cultural conservatism." But "rural voters stunned Democrats by placing moral values over their own economic interests and even Iraq and terrorism" (Reiss 2004).

Figure 1. Counties Where Bush's Margin of Victory over Kerry Exceeded 5 Percent



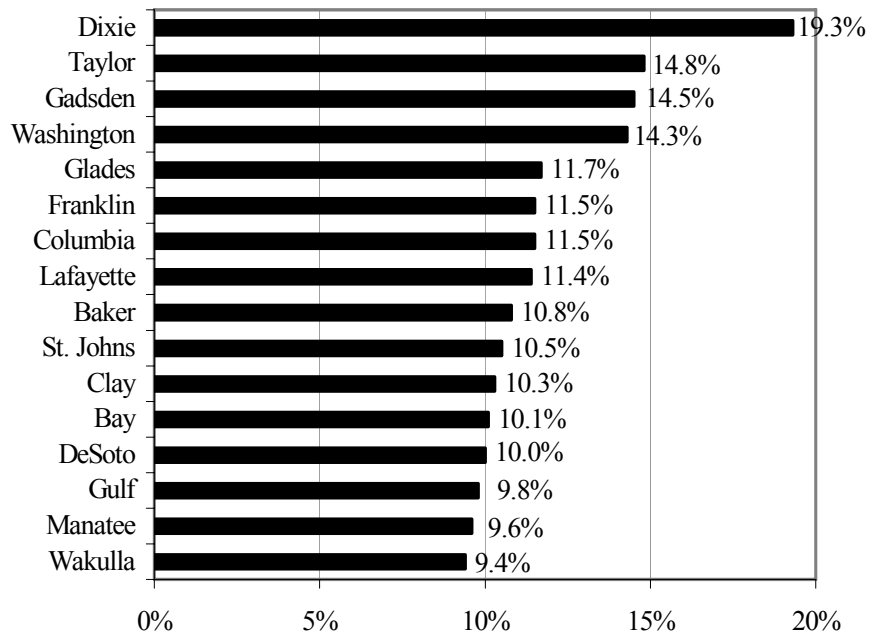
Source: Data compiled by Calvin Everett from election returns.

Figure 2. Counties Where Kerry's Margin of Victory over Bush Exceeded 5 Percent



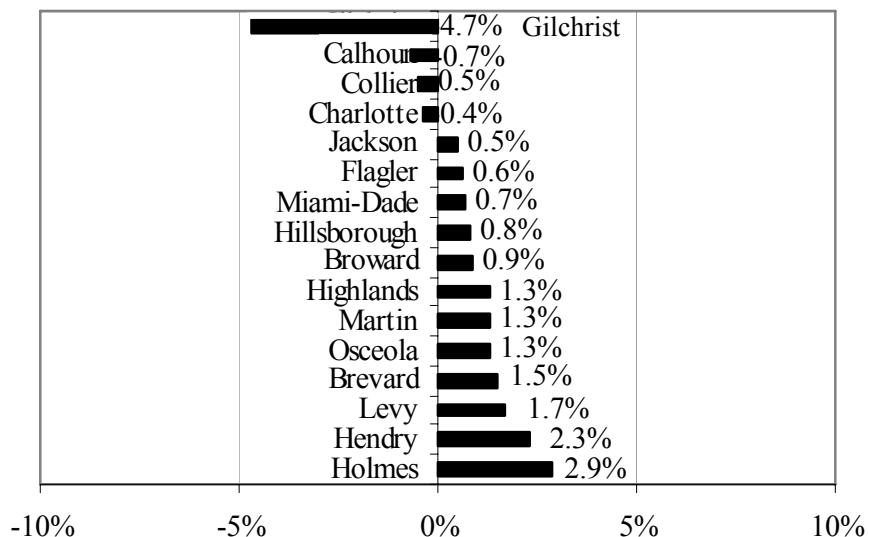
Source: Data compiled by Calvin Everett from election returns.

Figure 3. Fifteen Counties Where Turnout Rates Changed the Most, 2000 vs. 2004 (percent increase)



Source: Compiled by authors.

Figure 4. Fifteen Counties Where Turnout Rates Changed the Least, 2000 vs. 2004 (percent change)



Source: Compiled by authors.

Hurricanes Helped Bush; Didn't Hurt Turnout

Floridians traditionally ignore politics in the summer. When a record four hurricanes unleashed their fury on the sunshine state during a six-week period in August and September, many candidates, including Senator Kerry and U.S. Senate candidates Castor and Martinez, simply stopped campaigning out of respect for the victims and their families. No one anticipated the lasting bump in the polls that the hurricanes would give to both President Bush and Governor Bush as they made numerous “non-political” trips to comfort residents in time of distress.

Polls taken after the hurricanes showed each Bush brother's favorable ratings rising among Floridians. The exit poll showed that of the 87 percent of the voters who approved of the government's response to the hurricanes, 57 percent voted for George Bush. More dramatic was the fact that although the hurricanes hit heavily-Republican areas hardest, voter turnout in those counties did not fall off significantly, a testament to the effectiveness of the Bush brothers' hurricane recovery efforts.

No Chaos or Endless Recounts: The Election 2004 Voting Process Went Well

“The sky is falling” predictions of an election system meltdown were simply off base (MacManus 2005a). Only 5 percent of the Floridians who voted in the 2004 presidential election said that their experiences were worse than in 2000 while 29 percent described them as better. The remainder said they were about the same. These results are from a survey of 800 Floridians who voted in Election 2004 conducted on November 2-3 for The Collins Center for Public Policy, Inc., by a team of Republican and Democratic pollsters (Barcelo & Company and Hamilton Beattie & Staff). (The margin of error is +/- 3.5 percent at the 95 percent confidence level.)

Higher-than-average percentages of the youngest (31 percent) and oldest voters (32 percent), Hispanics (56 percent), early voters (36 percent), and touch screen-using voters (35 percent), said things got better (Pritchett, MacManus, Barcelo, and Beattie 2004). The most critical assessments came from African American voters; 12 percent said their voting experience was worse in 2004. But to put things in perspective, 33 percent of the black voters surveyed said their overall experience was better. Like other groups, most African Americans said things went about the same.

Almost 90 percent of those who voted in November said there was an excellent (63 percent) or good chance (22 percent) their vote would be counted. The most positive ratings came from those who voted on Election Day at their regular precinct or voted early using either touch screens or optical scan systems. (Those who cast absentee ballots were slightly less confident, although 77 percent said the chances their vote would be counted were excellent or good.) The lowest confidence ratings came from black voters, but 72 percent of them rated their vote counting chances as excellent or good.

Does this mean the election was perfect? Of course not, but the criticisms in 2004 were a far cry less catastrophic than those heard in 2000. Then, many bitterly complained that their votes did not count due to punch card ballots, confusing ballot designs (the butterfly), and the lack of clear, uniform recount rules in all 67 counties. The 2004 complaints stemmed from a larger-than-expected number of people voting early (almost one-fifth of the electorate): “The lines were too long.” “There weren’t enough voting machines and the place where we voted was too crowded.” “It was hot.” “We needed water and more places to sit.” Problems caused by a heavy turnout are much less serious—and easier to address—than those stemming from someone being disenfranchised when the vote they cast did not count.

Looking Ahead: A Red State or a Competitive State?

The results from presidential election 2004 have prompted many to ask the inevitable question: “Is Florida now a *red* state or is it still a *competitive* state?” This represents the third election in a row that Florida Republicans have won the top race on the statewide ballot (president, 2000; governor, 2002; and president, 2004).

Post-election analyses painted a very dim picture of the status of the Florida Democratic Party. An Associated Press story released the day after the election read:

Headline: “Florida Democrats had little to lose—and lost it.”

Text: “It was hard for Florida’s Democratic leaders to think the party could sink any lower than it was two years ago—but it has. The state’s dominant party until the early 1990s, the Democrats are now all but irrelevant in the Legislature, have lost one of their two U.S. Senate seats and didn’t live up to expectations in the presidential election” (Farrington 2004).

The devastating losses have forced Florida Democrats to reexamine thoroughly every facet of the party’s structure, ranging from its communication technology and data bases to its messages and candidate recruitment strategies. State Representative Joyce Cusack, a Florida member of the Democratic National Committee, summed up the crisis facing the party at all levels: “We have hit rock bottom, we have got to rebuild our party.”⁹ State Representative Bob Henriquez was even more introspective: “I thought we hit rock bottom, but apparently we have a ways to go” (Farrington 2004). State Sen. Skip Campbell, from the Democratic stronghold of Broward County, said: “We’re dead. Need CPR” (Reinhard and Clark 2004). And House Democratic Leader Chris Smith of Ft. Lauderdale readily admitted: “It’s hard to put lipstick on this pig” (Kennedy and Mahlburg 2004).

The biggest challenge facing the party is how to reach rural and conservative voters, say members of the newly-formed Florida Mainstream Democrats. The group was founded to begin building a coalition of Democrats “who support fiscal responsibility, patriotism, and faith and moral convictions” (*St. Petersburg Times* staff writers 2005). Democratic pollster Dave Beattie has bluntly stated, “I look at the math—and it applies to Florida and the country—and say if we can’t do better in rural areas as Democrats, we can’t win” (Smith 2004).

As proof of Beattie’s calculus, analysts point to Kerry’s slide in the state’s small, but growing, northern 36 counties. “In 1996, Clinton won Florida partially because he won 16 of those counties. . . . But Al Gore only won five of those counties, and Kerry won four. . . . Overall, Bush increased his share of the North Florida vote to 60 percent, nearly 22 points higher

than Kerry” (Decamp and Rushing 2004). Steve Schale who worked with the Democrats’ House Victory Campaign lamented that, “It’s just hemorrhaging red in some of these counties. We’ve done a good job turning out our base vote. But what’s scary is that our base just isn’t big enough anymore” (Kennedy and Mahlburg 2004).

Other Democratic leaders, mostly at the county level, lay the blame for the 2004 losses primarily in the laps of the 527 groups. Local party leaders saw these groups as ineffective at GOTV in their own backyards. By one account (Hull 2004):

[M]ostly, they said, the Democrats’ strategy of relying on loosely organized, paid recruits, many of them brought in from outside Florida by liberal special interest groups, had failed miserably. . . . Orange County Democratic Party Chairman Doug Head was scathing in his assessment of the 527 groups. . . . “I didn’t see any impact,” he said. “I just don’t think they produced.” . . . Head complained that the 527 groups and Kerry’s national organization “sucked up” volunteers from the local Democratic Party. Rather than having a field of volunteers working with neighbors at the precinct levels, the outside groups used a fragmented approach that was uncoordinated with local workers. “An awful lot of bodies got sucked into being paid volunteers,” Head said. “We couldn’t persuade people to stay home and work the precincts. The Kerry organization was saying, ‘We need poll greeters, poll watchers.’ They were all redundant and poorly assigned. It was disconnected and obviously ineffective.”

Ever the optimist, State Democratic Party Chair Scott Mattox has said what most long-time observers of Florida politics know to be true: “The pendulum always swings back. I think with the right candidate and the right message we can win statewide” (Dunkelberger 2004). While cautiously optimistic, Florida Republicans sense that their tremendous successes in 2004 due to record-level GOTV efforts will be difficult to replicate. In reflecting on Election 2004, Tom Slade, former chairman of the Republican Party and a member of the Republican National Committee, said: “I thought you saw a phenomenal political operation at work and it’s going to be very difficult to ever duplicate again.” Democrats and Republican activists alike will undoubtedly agree with Slade’s parting assessment of the state’s political landscape: “*I think Florida is still very, very much a two-party state in statewide contests*” (Goodnough and Van Natta 2004). And with that, the next election cycle begins.

NOTES

¹Registered voters in October 2000: 8,752,717; in October 2004: 10,301,290. Florida Department of State, Division of Elections.

²At book closing for the November election, the registration breakdown was: Democrat, 41 percent; Republican, 38 percent; minor parties, 3 percent; no party affiliation, 18 percent. But according to the Gallup Poll (Jones 2005), the self-described party affiliation of Floridians in 2004 was: Democrat/Lean Democrat, 47.6 percent; Republican/Lean Republican, 46.2 percent; and independent, 6.2 percent.

³The Democratic-supporting Victory 2004 Florida Coordinated Campaign had its *Florida Victory 2004* plan (September 3, 2004). The Republicans had their extensive *Victory 2004 72-Hour Plan* (no date).

⁴Both measures easily passed: parental notification (65 percent to 35 percent) and minimum wage (71 percent to 29 percent). Byrd lost his bid for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate to the eventual winner, Republican Mel Martinez.

⁵Senator Bob Graham's decision not to run again opened up the floodgates on both sides of the aisle. On the Republican side, two candidates flirted with running but eventually backed out (U.S. Representative Mark Foley of Palm Beach Gardens and State Senator Daniel Webster of Orlando). Eight candidates were actually on the ballot, although one (Karen Saull, an independently wealthy businesswoman) withdrew but too late to be removed. That left seven: former ten-term U.S. Representative Bill McCollum, who lost the 2000 U.S. Senate race to Democrat Bill Nelson; Mel Martinez, who resigned his position as Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to take a post he held after having served as the elected chairman of Orange County (FL); Florida Speaker of the House Johnnie Byrd, a lawyer from Plant City; Sonya March, an Air Force Academy graduate and a retired pilot, now a patent attorney from St. Petersburg; Larry Klayman, Miami, founder of Judicial Watch and a former prosecutor in the Reagan Justice Department; Doug Gallagher, a wealthy Coral Gables businessman and brother of Tom Gallagher, the state's Chief Financial Officer; and William Kogut, a realtor from Ormond Beach. On the Democratic side were three political pros: Betty Castor, a former state legislator, former Florida Education Commissioner (a Cabinet post at that time) and former president of the University of South Florida; Peter Deutsch, a six-term Jewish Congress member representing Florida's 20th Congressional District who gave up his safe seat to run; and Alex Penelas, the youthful, Cuban-American mayor of Miami-Dade County who could not seek re-election to that post because of term limits. A fourth contender was Bernard Klein, a little-known attorney from south Florida. The newly-formed Veterans Party of America fielded candidate Dennis Bradley, a retired Army veteran and businessman from Kissimmee and a former Republican.

⁶Market size estimates are for the 2004-05 television season which began September 20, 2004. <http://www.nielsenmedia.com/DMA.html>, accessed March 1, 2005.

⁷The study was conducted by the Center for the Study of Elections and Democracy at Brigham Young University and funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts. It focused on how candidates, parties, and interest groups interacted in the 2004 election cycle, the first following rules instituted by the national Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act. The Tampa portion of the study was directed by Susan A. MacManus and involved WFLA-TV (an NBC affiliate) viewers and University of South Florida students in her Florida Politics class, along with their families, friends, and acquaintances.

⁸The specific registration gains were as follows: Independents (532,582), Republicans (462,254), Democrats (458,168), and minor parties (95,569).

⁹The remarks were made at Democratic National Committee meeting in Washington, DC, in February 2005 (Associated Press 2005).

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