

Geek's Guide, Election 2012
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This document presents

- a) Key states to watch early in the evening;
- b) Ways to identify polling biases such as incorrect weighting or missed cell phones;
- c) One key Presidential race to watch (NH);
- d) Senate races; and
- e) A list of poll closing times.

General Overview

Here races are defined as "safe" if they have poll margins $\geq 5\%$. The safe states are

Obama (247 EV): CA CT DC DE HI IL MA MD ME MI MN NJ NM NY OR PA RI VT WA WI.

Romney (191 EV): AK AL AR AZ GA ID IN KS KY LA MO MS MT ND NE OK SC SD TN TX UT WV WY.

This leaves the following states with intermediate polling margins:

<u>State (electoral votes)</u>	<u>Poll margin</u>
Colorado (9 EV)	Obama +2%
Florida (29 EV)	Tie
Iowa (6 EV)	Obama +2%
Nevada (6 EV)	Obama +2.5%
New Hampshire (4 EV)	Obama +3%
North Carolina (15 EV)	Romney +1%
Ohio (18 EV)	Obama +3%
Virginia (13 EV)	Obama +2%

A purely poll-based view leaves little room for uncertainty about who will reach 270 EV. Tests to estimate the amount by which polls may be inaccurate are on pp. 3-4.

Rank Order of States

This list runs from most likely Obama to most likely Romney. Toss-ups are in **bold** (2.5% margin or less). Anomalies (e.g. if Romney wins a state left of Florida) indicate an unexpected result. Even if there is polling bias, the rank order of Obama-Romney margins should correlate well with this sequence.

Obama <<< DC / VT / HI / NY / DE / RI / MD / IL / MA / CA / NJ / WA / ME / NM / CT / MN / RI / OR / PA / WI / NH / OH / **NV <270> / CO / IA / VA / FL / NC** / SC / MT / AZ / GA / TN / KY / MO / SD / MS / IN / LA / NE / ND / AL / TX / KS / WV / AK / AR / OK / WY / ID / UT >>> **Romney**

EV left of <270> sum to 275, enough to win.

Canaries in the Coalmine

Surprising results in certain Eastern states would suggest that results differ by 3 points or more from pre-election polls. Possible causes include biases such as unexpected turnout effects, unrepresentative models by pollsters, or missing cell phone users.

Early warnings for a larger-than-expected Obama win: *North Carolina* (closing time 7:30 pm, Romney +1%). An Obama win would foretell a larger-than-expected re-election margin.

Early warnings for a closer race or a Romney win: *The number one state to watch tonight is New Hampshire*. New Hampshire is a homogeneous and quickly-reporting state. Obama has a lead of 3% in polls. If he wins by less than 1% or falls behind, tonight may be a nail-biter. A virtually must-win for Romney is ***Ohio*** (closing time 7:30 pm, Obama +3%).

The Senate

The close races are in ***Indiana, Montana, Nevada, North Dakota, and Wisconsin***. Not counting these, Democrats/Independents are likely to control 51 seats. If they win all five, they will control 56 seats.

The likely final range of outcomes is **Senate 54-56 D/I, 44-46 R**. This is a gain of 1-3 seats for Democrats.

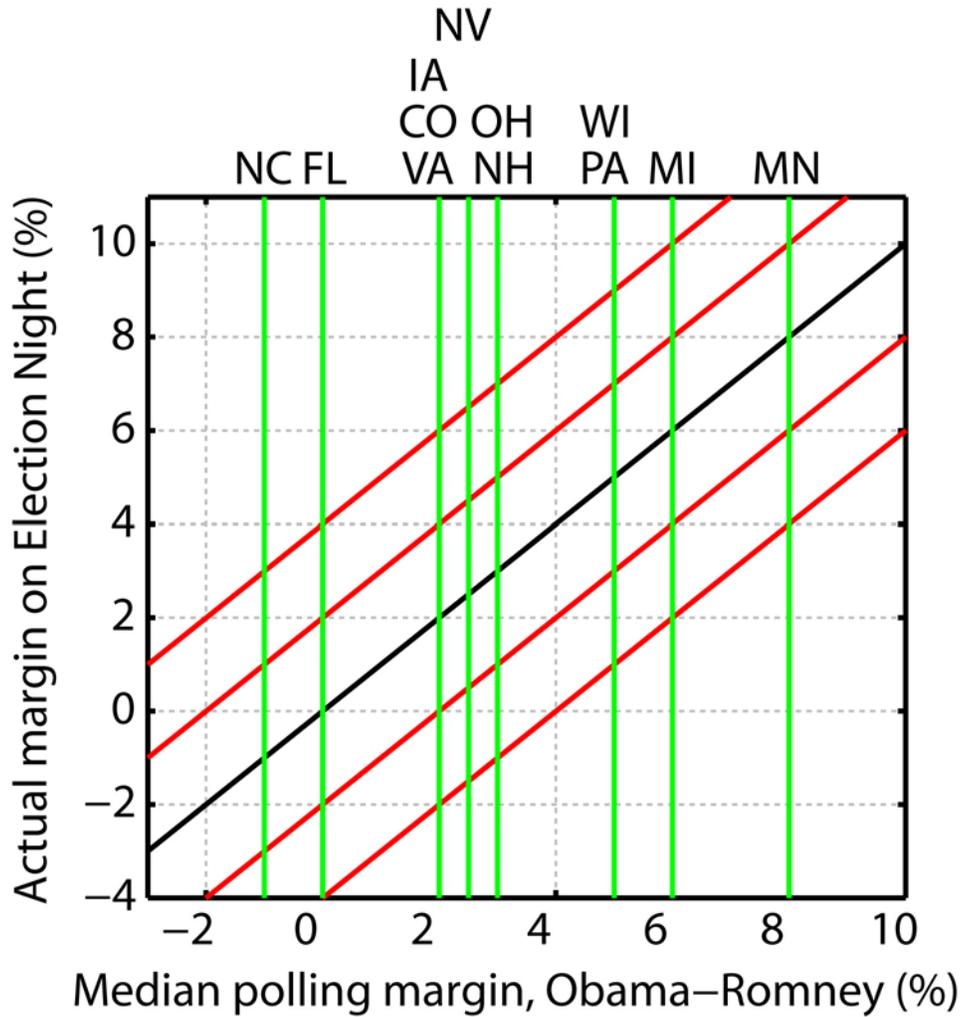
Other key Senate races:

Democrats lead in Connecticut (Murphy over McMahon), Indiana (Donnelly over Mourdock), Massachusetts (Warren over Brown), Missouri (McCaskill over Akin), and Virginia (Kaine over Allen).

The House. Democrats should gain 2-22 House seats but not take control. However, we will not find out on Election Night.

Find your inner geek! Use the chart on the next page to plot the Obama-Romney margin as a function of the polling margin. When a margin becomes available, plot it on the appropriate vertical line. Points near the center **black** diagonal suggest that polls were accurate. **If points fall predominantly on one side or the other, this indicates a systematic difference between polls and voting.**

PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS TRACKER



When you get results for a state, find it on the list at the top. Plot the actual margin along the green vertical line for that state. If it falls near the black diagonal, that indicates little or no polling bias.

The red diagonals are spaced at 2% intervals.

After the election, you can use this graph to estimate how far results differed from polls.

Poll closing times (Electoral-vote.com and <http://www.thegreenpapers.com/G12/closing.phtml>)

Here are the poll closing times, more or less. A few states span multiple time zones. In most cases, the polls remain open an hour longer in the western portion of the state. Sometimes the networks will call the state when polls are closed in the eastern part of the state. If you want the exact story on poll closing times, look [here](#). The swing states are in boldface.

Closing time (EST)	EVs	States
7:00 P.M.	60	GA IN KY SC VT VA
7:30 P.M.	38	NC OH WV
8:00 P.M.	172	AL CT DC DE FL IL ME MD MA MS MO NH NJ OK PA RI TN
8:30 P.M.	6	AR
9:00 P.M.	153	AZ CO KS LA MI MN NE NM NY SD TX WI WY
10:00 P.M.	21	IA MT NV UT
11:00 P.M.	85	CA HI ID ND OR WA
1:00 A.M.	3	AK

House nomograph

This will mainly be useful after the election. It allows you to see whether redistricting and incumbency had the expected effect. Plot the national House vote vs. the final seat count. If the point falls on the red segment, the simple model was close to correct.

