

# Colorado: Forerunner of National Democratic Resurgence

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Presented by  
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**PAPOR Conference**

**December 2008**



# The Changing Landscape

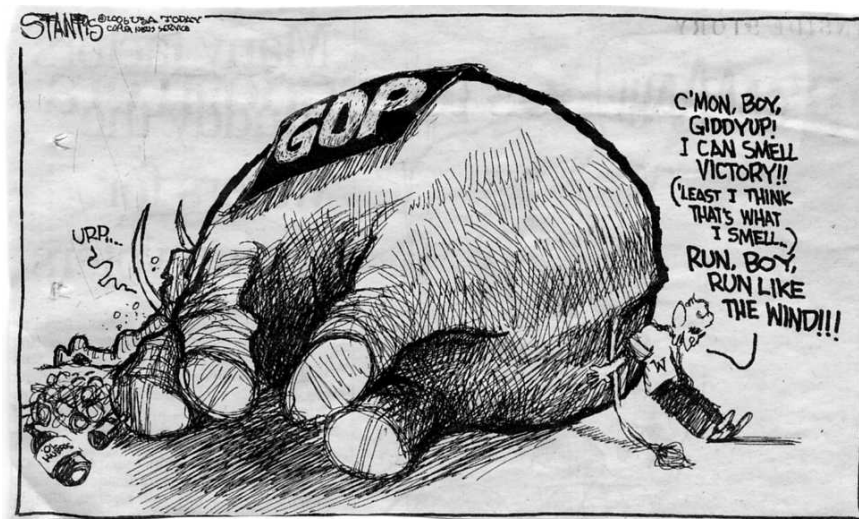
## Headlines From Ciruli Associates Since 2004

Election 2004: The color purple. Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 6, 2004

The shift to blue – Democrats' wins fueled by unaffiliated, moderate voters put state in play in '08. Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 11, 2006

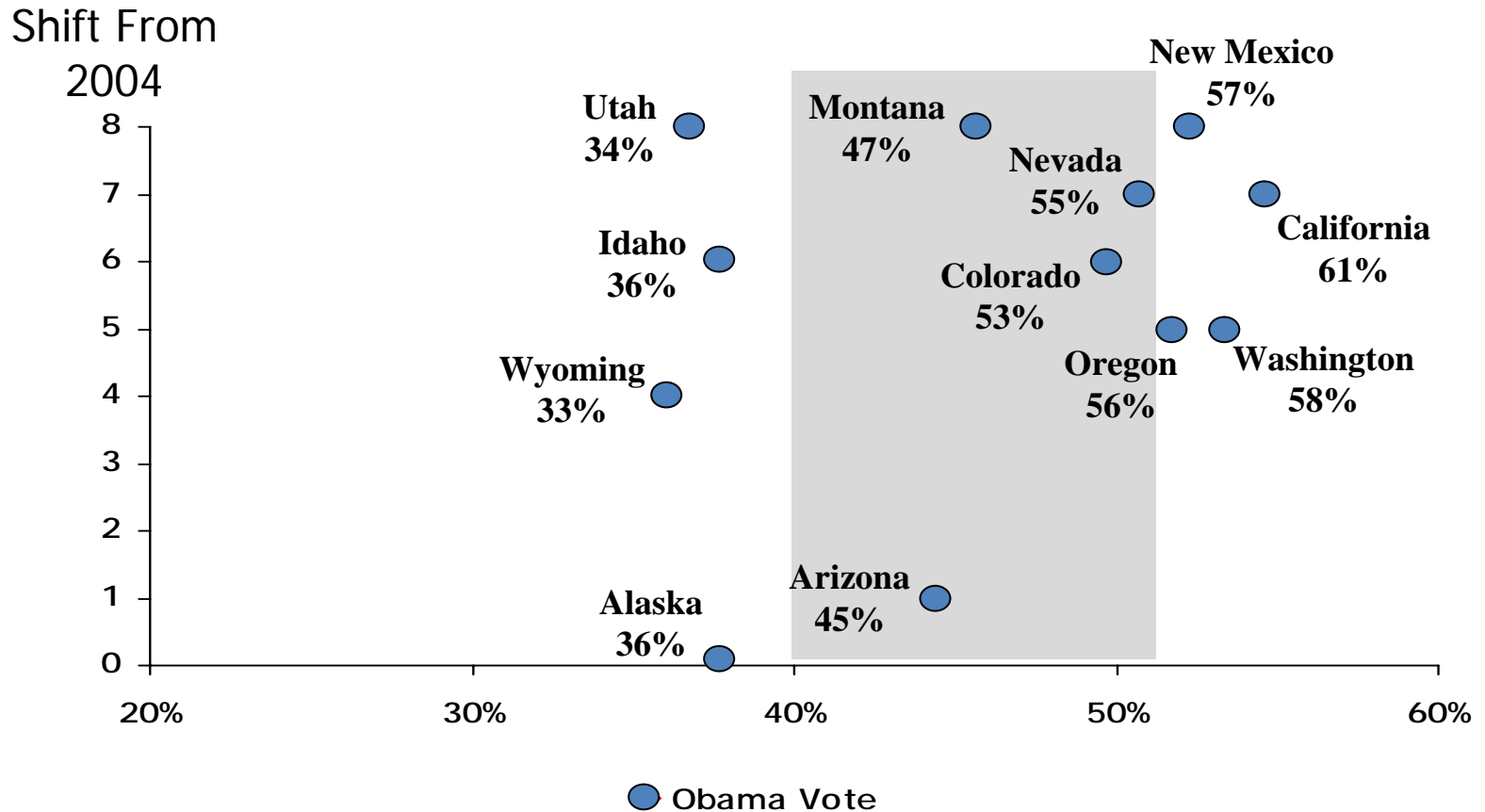
Colorado: From red to purple to blue in four years – Harbinger or outlier? PAPOR, December 2006

Colorado has its bray – In just six years, state takes a 180-degree turn, Rocky Mountain News, Nov. 8, 2008



# Western Battleground

## Democrats' Western Strategy Works/Colorado Most Competitive



# Colorado is the Battleground

## Obama Wins 53.5% to 45%



- Obama leads most of June and July
- Then lead exchanges in late July and August
- McCain gets convention bounce
- Obama takes lead at end of September



*"It's tough to make predictions, especially about the future."*

### Colorado: McCain vs. Obama

<u>Poll</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>Obama (D)</u>	<u>McCain (R)</u>	<u>Spread</u>
<b>RCP Average</b>	<b>10/27-11/2</b>	--	<b>50.8</b>	<b>45.3</b>	<b>Obama +5.5</b>
Fox/Rasmussen	11/2-11/2	1000 LV	51	47	Obama +4
Denver Post	10/28-10/29	625 LV	49	44	Obama +5
Marist	10/27-10/28	652 LV	51	45	Obama +6
CNN/Time	10/23-10/28	774 LV	53	45	Obama +8
Ciruli Associates	9/19-9/23	501 LV	44	43	Obama +1
Fox/Rasmussen	9/14-9/14	500 LV	46	48	McCain +2
Fox/Rasmussen	9/7-9/7	500 LV	49	46	Obama +3
CNN/Time	8/24-8/26	670 RV	46	47	McCain +1
Denver Post	8/13-8/15	400 LV	46	43	Obama +3
Rocky Mtn News/CBS4	8/11-8/13	500 RV	41	44	McCain +3

LV=Likely voters; RV=Registered voters

Ciruli Associates from Real Clear Politics, 2008

# Colorado Battleground Swing State has Swung

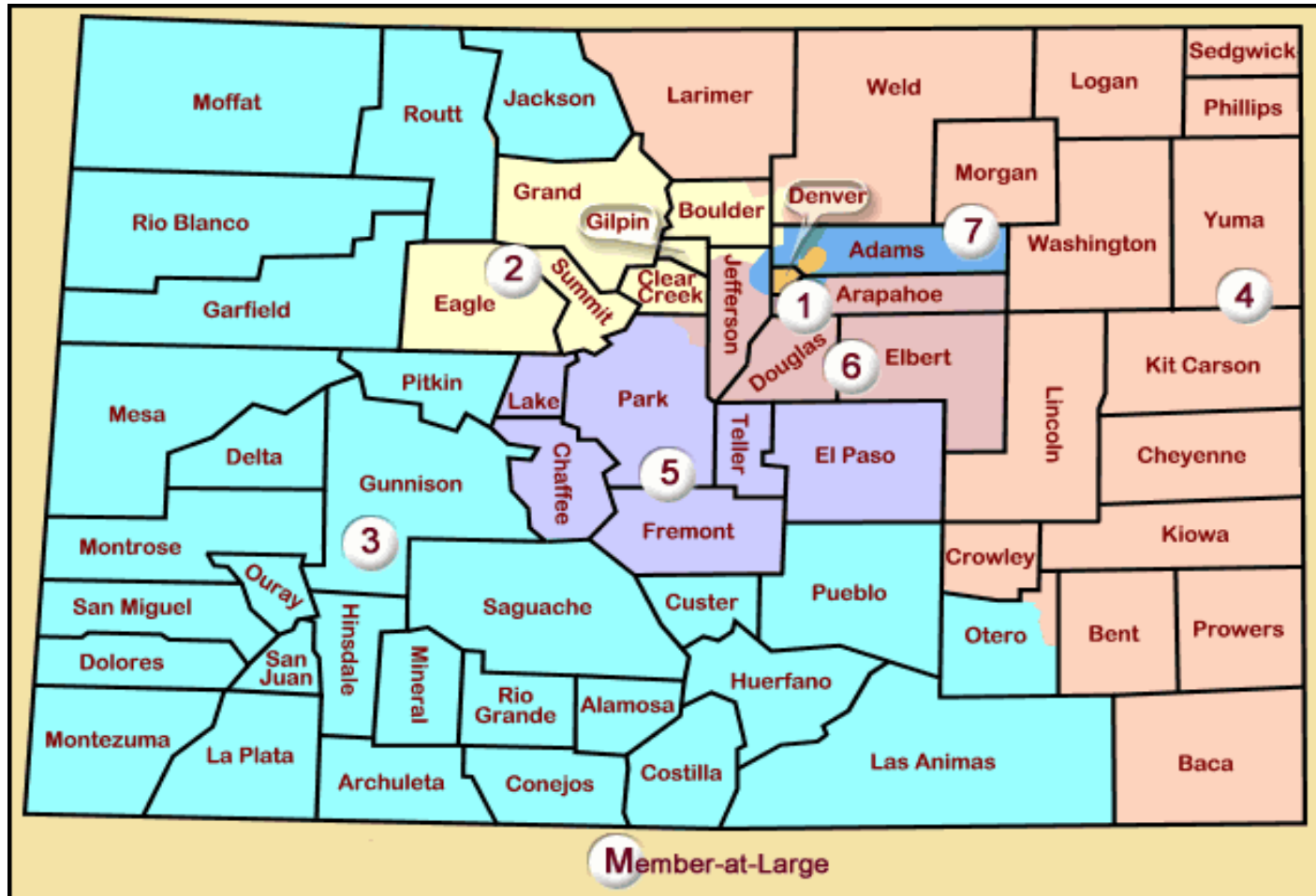
*"The recent decade of Republican dominance peaked in 2002 when the party saw Gov. Bill Owens re-elected with 63 percent of the vote, Wayne Allard won re-election to U.S. Senate (joining Republican Ben Campbell), a win of Colorado's new 7<sup>th</sup> congressional seat, and continued control of the state legislature.*

*A mere six years later, Democrats now have the governorship, both U.S. Senate seats, both houses of the state legislature, and five of the seven congressional seats. With the help of Barack Obama's ground force, Democrats erased a 170,000 Republican voter registration advantage and are now dead even. The icing, of course: the state's nine electoral votes go to Obama." Floyd Ciruli, Rocky Mountain News, 11-8-08*

	<u>1998</u>	<u>2008</u>
Governor	Owens	Ritter
U.S. Senate	Campbell	Salazar
U.S. Senate	Allard	Udall
Congress	4R, 2D	2R, 5D
Colorado House	40R, 25D	25R, 40D
Colorado Senate	20R, 15D	15R, 20D
President	Dole 2% (1996) Bush 8% (2000)	Obama 8%
Registration gap	131,000 for R	10,000 for R

# Colorado Congressional Seats

## Democrats Run the Table, Now Must Hold On



DeGette (1) 72% • Polis (2) 62% • Salazar (3) 61% • Markey (4) 56%  
• Lamborn (5) 60% • Coffman (6) 60% • Perlmutter (7) 63%

# Colorado's Shift Foretells National Trend

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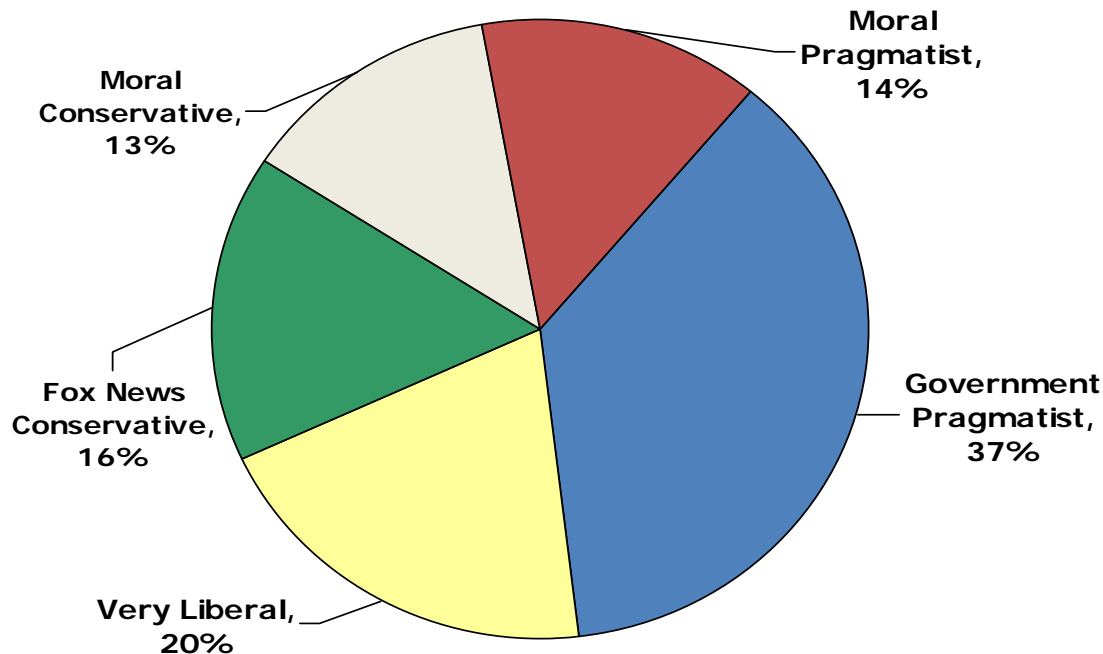
- Gary Hart: Manifesto: Democrats and the West, Fall 2006
- Fred Barnes: The Colorado Model, Weekly Standard, 7/21/08
- Ryan Lizza: The Code of the West, New Yorker, 8/22/08

- Colorado economic downturn shifts agenda to left and away from social issues, limited government spending and tax cuts
- Growth of Democratic bench and support infrastructure (money, think tanks, blogs). Candidates position in the middle (Salazar/Ritter).
- Rapid growth of new voters in suburbs, exurbs and I-70 corridor. Split tickets and register more independent, Hispanic and young voters. Republicans lose registration edge (1,060 Republicans, 1,061 Unaffiliated, 1,046 Democrats).
- Colorado Republicans divided on fiscal and social issues (Referendum C). Good vote-getters leave office. Face tough primaries.
- National Republican fortunes decline

# The Code of the West

## One Theory of Colorado Electorate

- Core conservatives and liberals don't shift
- Government pragmatists, want solutions/mild pro-choice
- Moral pragmatists like tradition/boundaries, but minimum conflict



### *Gary Hart*

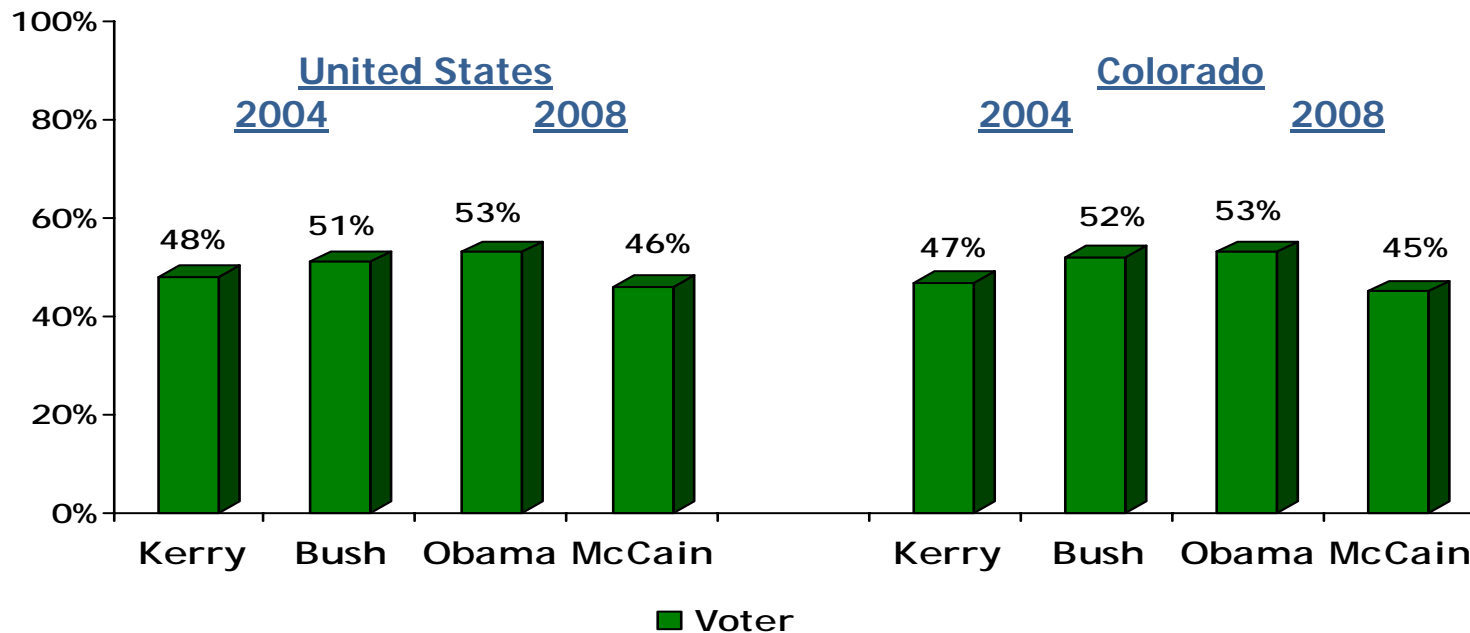
*"We are now at the cusp...of the end of the Nixon-Reagan-Bush era. Obama is poised, if he is bold enough, to be a transformational president..."*

New Yorker, Ryan Lizza, July 10, 2008  
Pollster David Beattie

# Obama Wins Colorado by More Than U.S., But No Coattails



- Obama wins U.S. by 6.9% and Colorado by 8.5%
- But Udall wins by 10%
- Markey beats Musgrave by 12%
- Democrats lose state house seat
- Republican county commissioners win



Ciruli Associates, Nov. 5, 2008

# Between 2002 and 2008, Republicans Lose a 180,000 Vote Advantage

Democrats, unaffiliated and Republicans now tied

## Colorado Voter Registration 1992-2008

<u>Year</u>	<u>Republican</u>	<u>Democrat</u>	<u>Unaffiliated</u>	<u>Registered (Millions)</u>
1992	33%	34%	33%	2.0
2000	35	30	34	2.9
2004	36	31	33	3.1
2006	36	30	34	3.0
2008	33	33	33	3.2

Ciruli Associates, Secretary of State, Oct. 2006

**Unaffiliated voters gain in both Democratic and Republican counties**

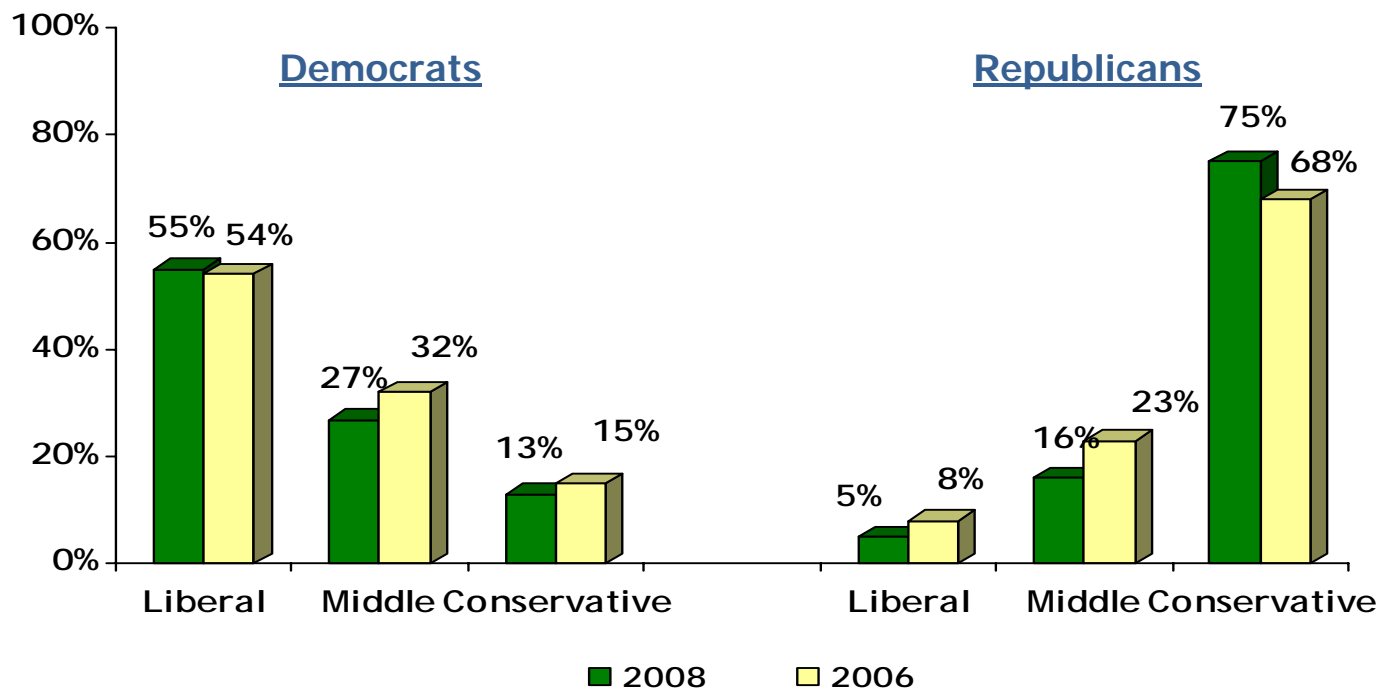
# True to Principles or Find Solutions Move to Right or Get to Center



- Voters 29% liberal, 25% middle, 41% conservative
- Voters 38% Democrat, 21% unaffiliated, 40% Republican



## Partisanship and Ideology



Ciruli Associates, N501, Sept. 2008

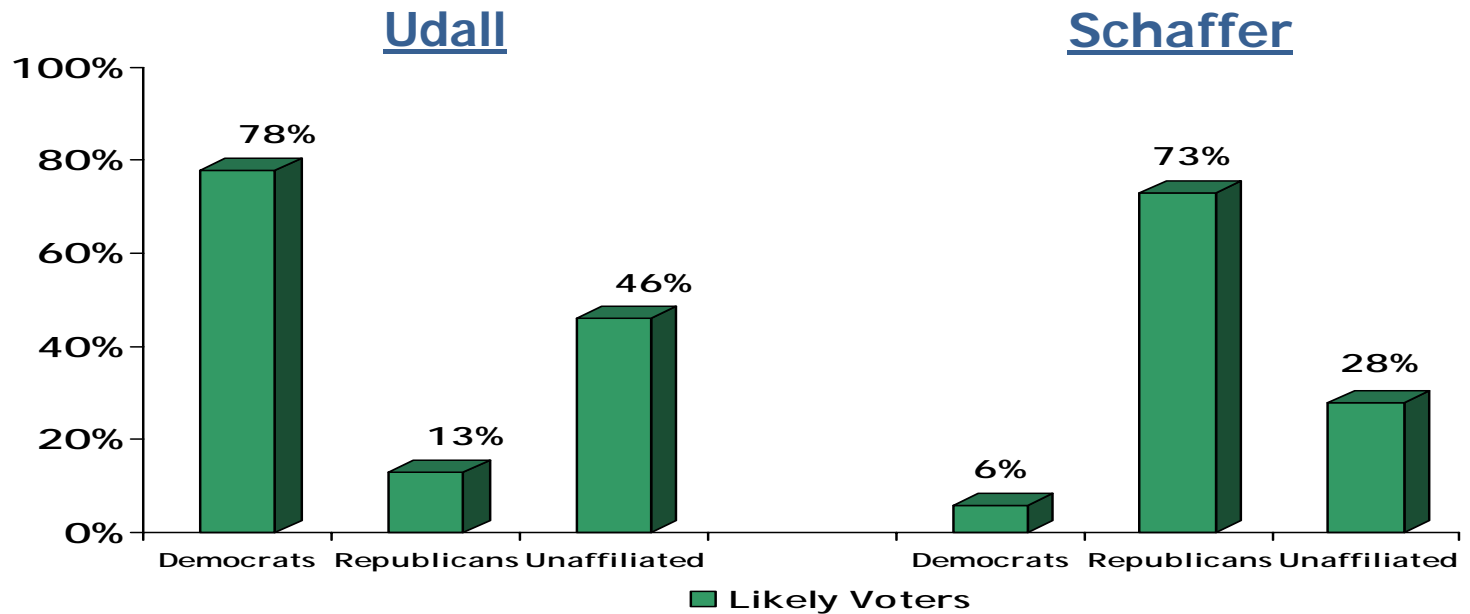
# Senate Seat Switches

## Udall Wins 52.8% to 42.5%



Schaffer Loses Independents 2 to 1

Udall Ahead With  
Partisans and Unaffiliates



Ciruli Associates, N501, Sept. 2008

\*Oct. 2006 registration: 1,066,956 Republican, 896,861 Democrat and 999,552 unaffiliated.

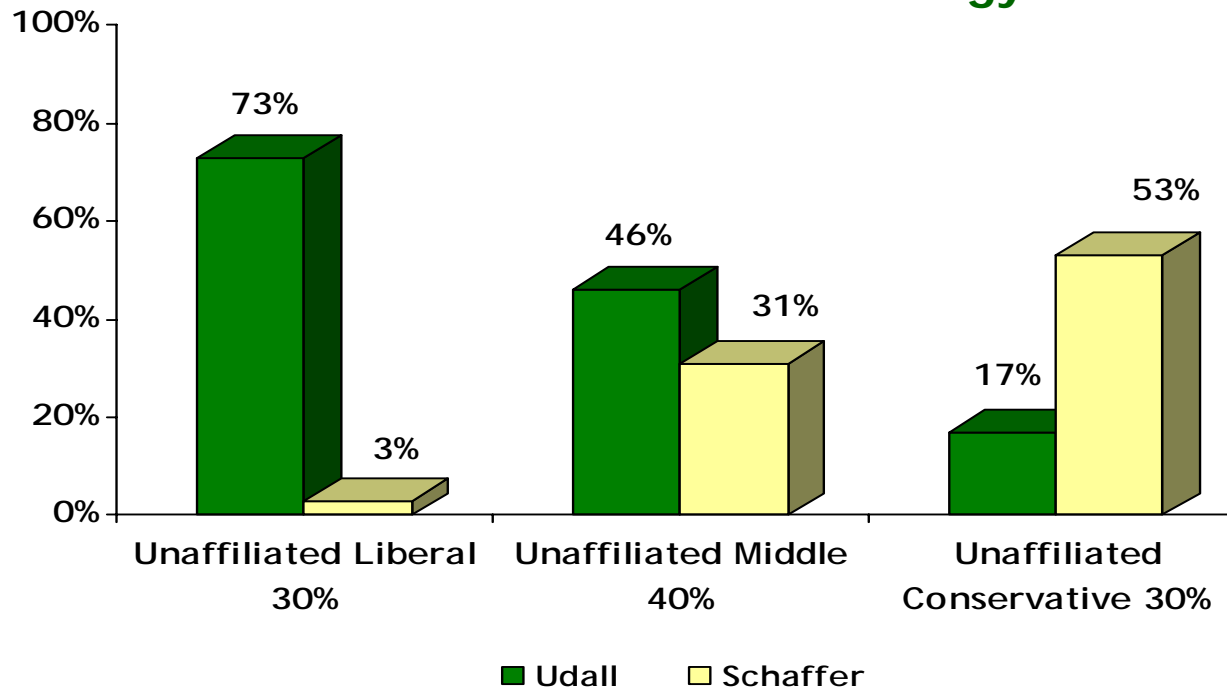
# Unaffiliated Voters Lean Democratic Across Ideology



- Unaffiliated voters less ideological and more pragmatic, avoid labels, vote for person, fiscal responsibility, socially moderate, cautious on security.
- Udall wins unaffiliated voters, including some conservatives



## Unaffiliated Voters and Ideology



Ciruli Associates, N501, Sept. 2008

# Jobs Top State List

## Top Issue for Governor and Legislature to Address

**2008**

Economy	29
%	
Gas and oil issue	10
Health care	9

**2007**

Immigration	26
%	
Health care	15
Education (K-12)	11

Education (K-12)	7
Illegal immigration	7

Transportation	7
Economy	6

**2006**

Immigration	28
%	
Education (K-12)	20
Economy	11

Health care	8
Transportation	6

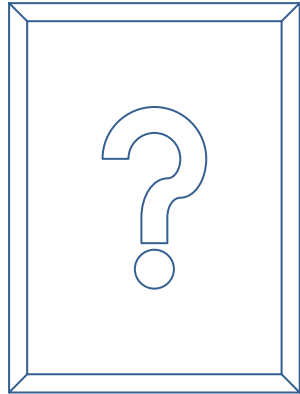
Ciruli Associates, November 1, 2008

Question: What is the top issue you want the governor and state legislature to address?  
[MULTIPLE ANSWERS]

# Colorado Governor's Race

## In Spite of Problems, Govs. Tend to be Re-elected

### Second Term Elections

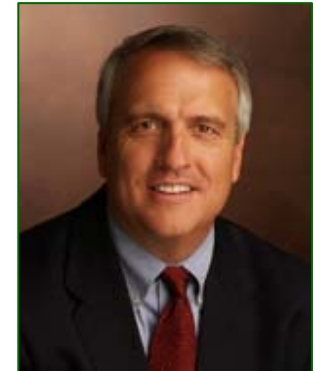


Republican

<u>1978</u>		
Lamm	vs.	59%
Strickland		38%

<u>1990</u>		
Romer	vs.	62%
Andrews		35%

<u>2002</u>		
Owens	vs.	64%
Heath		32%



Gov. Bill Ritter

Severance/tax  
Gas/oil regulation  
Property tax freeze  
Union rules

Energy/economy  
Transportation  
Health care  
Higher Education