Center for American Progress

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New Progressive America

Twenty Years of Demographic, Geographic, and Attitudinal Changes Across the Country Herald a New Progressive Majority

Ruy Teixeira March 2009

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THE GLASER PROGRESS FOUNDATION

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Introduction and summary

During the 2008 presidential campaign, Barack Obama ran on a strongly progressive program that included a promise of universal health care coverage, a dramatic transformation to a low-carbon economy, and a historic investment in education—alongside broad hints that substantial government spending and regulation would be required to deal with the economic and financial crises. He also promised a new, more cooperative approach to international relations. Obama received 53 percent of the popular vote to 46 percent for his conservative opponent John McCain and carried the electoral vote by an even more substantial 365-to-173 margin.

Obama's 53 percent of the popular vote is the largest share of the popular vote received by any presidential candidate in 20 years. The last candidate to register that level of support was conservative George H.W. Bush, who won by an identical 53 percent-to-46 percent margin. So, separated by 20 years, we have two elections that are practically mirror images of one another, but with conservatives on the winning end of the first and progressives on the winning end of the second.

What happened? How did conservatives do so well in one election but progressives so well in the other? The answer: In those intervening 20 years, a new progressive America has emerged with a new demography, a new geography, and a new agenda.

The new demography refers to the array of growing demographic groups that have aligned themselves with progressives and swelled their ranks. The new geography refers to the close relationship between pro-progressive political shifts and dynamic growth areas across the country, particularly within contested states. The new agenda is the current tilt of the public toward progressive ideas and policy priorities—a tilt that is being accentuated by the strong support for this agenda among growing demographic groups.

All this adds up to big change that is reshaping our country in a fundamentally progressive direction. Consider some of the components of the new demography. Between 1988 and 2008, the minority share of voters in presidential elections has risen by 11 percentage points, while the share of increasingly progressive white college graduate voters has risen by four points. But the share of white-working class voters, who have remained conservative in their orientation, has plummeted by 15 points.

That's a repeated pattern—state after state—helping send them in a progressive direction. In Pennsylvania, for example, the white working class declined by 25 points between 1988 and 2008, while white college graduates rose by 16 points and minorities by eight points. And in Nevada, the white working class is down 24 points over the time period, while minority voters are up an amazing 19 points and white college graduates by 4 points.

These trends will continue. The United States will be majority-minority by 2042. By 2050, the country will be 54 percent minority as Hispanics double from 15 percent to 30 percent of the population, Asians increase from 5 percent to 9 percent and African Americans move from 14 percent to 15 percent.

Other demographic trends accentuate progressives' advantage. The Millennial Generation—those born between1978 and 2000—gave Obama a stunning 66 percent-to-32 percent margin in 2008. This generation is adding 4.5 million adults of voting age every year. Or consider professionals, who are now the most progressive occupational group and increase that support with every election. Fast-growth segments among women like singles and the college-educated favor progressives over conservatives by large margins. And even as progressives improve their performance among the traditional faithful, the growth of religious diversity—especially rapid increases among the unaffiliated—favors progressives. By the election of 2016, it is likely that the United States will no longer be a majority white Christian nation.

Geographical trends are equally as stunning. Progressive gains since 1988 have been heavily concentrated in not just the urbanized cores of large metropolitan areas, but also the growing suburbs around them. Even in exurbia, progressives have made big gains. Progressive gains were only minimal in the smallest metropolitan areas and in small town rural America and only in the most isolated, least populated rural counties did progressives actually lose ground.

Within states, there is a persistent pattern of strong pro-progressive shifts in fast-growing dynamic metropolitan areas. In Colorado, Obama in the 2008 presidential election improved over Sen. John Kerry's margin in 2004 by 14 points in the fast-growing Denver metropolitan area and made his greatest gains in the super fast-growing Denver suburbs. Sen. Kerry lost Colorado to President Bush; Obama defeated Sen. John McCain.

And so it went across key swing states. In Nevada, Obama carried the Las Vegas metro by 19 points, which was 14 points better than Kerry in 2004 and 35 points better than Michael Dukakis in 1988. In Florida, Obama carried the Orlando metropolitan area in the I-4 corridor by nine points, a 17-point gain over 2004 and an amazing 48 point shift since 1988. In Virginia, Obama dominated the state's northern suburbs across the Potomac River from the District of Columbia by 19 points—15 points better than Kerry and 38 points better than Dukakis. There are many other examples, but the story is the same from state to state: where America is growing, progressives are gaining strength and gaining it fast.

As the country is growing and changing, so are the American people's views on what government can and should do. This is shaping a new progressive agenda to go with the new demography and the new geography, starting with the likely diminution in the culture wars that have bedeviled American politics for so long. While cultural disagreements remain, their political influence is being undermined by the rise of the Millennial Generation, increasing religious and family diversity and the decline of the culturally conservative white working class. Culture wars issues, which so conspicuously failed to move many voters in the last couple of elections, will lose even more force in years to come.

Instead, we will see more attention paid to issues such as health care, energy and education, where government has a positive role to play. The public holds distinctly progressive views in each of these areas, backing health care for all, a transition to clean energy and building a 21st-century education system, including a major infusion of resources to improve kindergarten-through-12th grade education and college access. In each of these areas, ongoing demographic change is likely to intensify the public's commitment to progressive goals, since rising demographic groups tend to be especially supportive.

In the pages that follow, this report will document the emergence and current state of this new progressive America through intensive analysis of election, demographic and public opinion data. As we will demonstrate, at this point in our history, progressive arguments combined with the continuing demographic and geographic changes are tilting our country in a progressive direction—trends should take America down a very different road than has been traveled in the last eight years. A new progressive America is on the rise.

The new demography

The 2008 election saw strong shifts toward progressives among almost all growing demographic groups in the United States. Conversely, conservatives typically retained strength only among stagnant or declining groups. The result is a demographic landscape sharply tilted toward progressives—a tilt that is only likely to increase in years to come.

There are many components to the new demography. One of the most important, if not the most important, is the rise of minorities. Minorities' rapid rise has been paralleled by slower growth among increasingly progressive white college graduates and sharp declines among the conservative white working class. The increasingly strong alignment of professionals with progressives is also important, as is the continuing growth of strongly progressive subgroups of women, chief among them singles and the college-educated. The rising Millennial Generation is also providing a demographic boost—an exceptionally potent one—to progressives. Finally, the growth of religious diversity, especially rapid increases in the unaffiliated, favors progressives. Each of these factors is discussed in detail below.

Minorities

Minorities are progressives' strongest constituency. A variety of minorities in the United States are drawn to progressives' strong stand against discrimination and programmatic support for low-income and foreign-born Americans. Minorities are also a rapidly-growing constituency.

Minority share of voters over the past 20 years

Overall, the minority share of voters in the national exit poll rose to 26 percent in 2008 from 23 percent in 2004. Back in 1988, that share was just 15 percent[1]. That is a rise of 11 percentage points over the 20–year period, or about half a percentage point a year.

Between 2004 and 2008, the share of African American voters rose to 13 percent from 11 percent—hugely impressive for a group whose share of the overall population is growing very slowly. And the share of Hispanic voters rose from to 9 percent from 8 percent over the same period. Blacks voted 95 percent to 4 percent for Obama in 2008, up from 88 percent to 11 percent for Kerry in 2004. Hispanics voted 67 percent to 31 percent for Obama in 2008, a 36 percentage point margin that was double Kerry's margin in 2004.

Some observers speculated that racial frictions between Hispanics and blacks would prevent Hispanics from giving Obama their wholehearted support, but that most emphatically was not the case. Finally, Asians supported Obama by 62 percent to 35 percent, up from the 56 percent-to-44 margin for Kerry in 2004. Overall, the minority vote was an impressive 80 percent-to-18 percent margin for Obama, a 62-point margin, significantly greater than Kerry's 44-point margin in 2004 (71 percent to 27 percent).

These minority gains figured greatly in many key states carried by Obama. In Ohio, for example, the minority share of voters rose from 14 percent to 17 percent, with black voters supporting Obama by a stunning 95-point margin (97 percent to 2 percent), compared to Kerry's 68-point margin (84 percent to 16 percent). In Nevada, the minority share of voters rose by eight points—to 31 percent from 23 percent of voters—driven by a five-point increase in the Hispanic share of voters. Obama's black support in the state was 95 percent to 4 percent—up from Kerry's 86 percent-to-13 percent margin in 2004—alongside 76 percent-to-22 percent Hispanic support, up from 60 percent to 39 percent in 2004.

Other key states with significant increases in the minority vote included: Colorado (up five points); Minnesota (up three points); New Mexico (up seven points); Oregon (up four points); Virginia (up two points); and Washington (up six points). And in Florida, while the minority share of voters did not increase, blacks supported Obama by 96 percent to 4 percent in 2008 compared to 86 percent-to-13 percent support for Kerry, while Hispanics, whom Kerry lost by 56 percent to 43 percent, supported Obama by 57 percent to 42 percent. The latter is truly a sign of change in Florida as Hispanic voters, spearheaded by relatively conservative Cuban Americans, have long been a key conservative voting bloc in that state.

The advantage progressives derive from minority voters will continue to grow. As mentioned, from 1988 to 2008 the percent of minority voters increased to 26 percent from 15 percent. And there is no sign that growth is likely to slow. In 10 battleground states studied by political demographers William Frey and Ruy Teixeira[2]—Arizona, Colorado, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Michigan, Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Virginia—the percent of minority voters grew in every single one between 2000 and 2006, including spectacular growth of a percentage point a year in Nevada. More generally, minorities have grown by 19 percent in this decade, accounting for more than four-fifths of U.S. population growth[3].

This is mostly driven by growth in the Hispanic population. Hispanics have grown by 32 percent since 2000 and account for about half of U.S. population growth this decade[4]. Of course, it is true that the population strength of Hispanics is not currently matched by its voting strength, due to the large proportion of Hispanics who aren't citizens and therefore can't vote or are simply too young to vote. As a result of these factors, only 39 percent of Hispanics overall are eligible to vote, compared to 77 percent of non-Hispanic whites and 66 percent of African Americans.[5]

Still, the proportion of Hispanics among the voting electorate has grown steadily and will continue to grow: Only 2 percent of voters in the early 1990s, they were 9 percent in 2008 and within 10 years they may be approaching the level of black voters, whose share of the population is growing very slowly as a proportion of actual voters.[6]

The other significant contributor to minority growth is Asians. Looking at the growth rate, Asians were America's fastest-growing minority group—even faster than Hispanics—in the 1990s (59.4 percent to 57.9 percent in the 1990s). In this decade, Asians have not been far behind—30 percent[7] vs. 32 percent for Hispanics. Right now Asians are 5 percent of the population and about 2 percent of voters.[8] Both figures will increase in the next ten years, due to this group's fast rate of growth. Because they start from a much smaller base than Hispanics, Asians' impact on the population and voting pool will be far more limited.

Looking more long term, we are rapidly becoming a majority-minority nation. People tend to think of 2050 as the year America will become majority-minority, but it's closer than that: the latest U.S. Census projections put the tipping point dates at 2042 for the entire population, and at 2023 for the population under 18. By 2050, the United States will actually be a 54-percent minority. Right now, four states and 303 counties are majority-minority. With every passing year these totals will grow, making it more and more likely the average American will either live in such a state or county or live right next to one.

Above all, minority growth will be driven by Hispanics. Their numbers will triple to 133 million by 2050—from 47 million today—while the numbers of non-Hispanic whites will remain essentially flat. Moreover, as a percentage of the population, Hispanics will double from 15 percent to 30 percent. Asians will also come close to doubling, going from 5 percent to 9 percent. Blacks, however, will grow only from 14 percent to 15 percent of the population, making them only half the size of the Hispanic population by 2050. Reflecting the growth of non-black minorities, the percentage of foreign-born in the population will also grow. By 2050, about one-in-five Americans will be foreign born, up from one-in-eight today.

White college graduates

Progressives fare much more poorly with white voters, but they have doing much better among some white voters than others. In particular, they have been gaining strength among white college graduates. In 2008, Obama only lost white college graduates by four points, compared to an 11-point deficit for Kerry in 2004 and a 20-point deficit for Dukakis in 1988.

In addition, white college graduates are a growing constituency, especially in the suburbs of America's most dynamic metropolitan areas where they are marked by relative social liberalism and strong interest in effective public services. Since 1988, their share of voters has gone up by four points, even as the share of white voters overall has declined.

The shift of white college graduates to Obama played a crucial role in his victories in many important states. For instance, college-educated whites in Pennsylvania swung Obama's way by 17 points, turning a 12-point deficit in 2004 into a five-point advantage in 2008. And they increased their share of voters over the two elections by 13 points. As a result, white college graduates now outnumber white, working-class—non-college graduate—voters in Pennsylvania's electorate.

In Colorado, Obama turned Kerry's two-point deficit among white college graduates into a 14-point advantage. Colorado's white college graduates, who also outnumber white, working-class voters in their state's electorate, increased their share of voters by four points over the two elections. In Ohio, Obama lost white college graduates by only a single percentage point, but that's 15 points better than Kerry did, losing this group by 16 points in 2004. Similarly, in Michigan, Obama lost white college graduates by a point, 16 points better than Kerry's 17-point loss among the group in 2004.

More broadly, there are 18 states plus the District of Columbia, adding up to 248 electoral votes, which Obama won and which Kerry, Dukakis and Bill Clinton, also won twice. In every single one of these states, except two—Michigan and, oddly enough, Illinois—Obama carried white college graduates. Moreover, his margins were quite spectacular in a number of these states. He carried white college graduates by 11 points in California, 10 points in Delaware, 30 points in Hawaii, 24 points in Maine, 26 points in Massachusetts, 13 points in Minnesota, 18 points in New Hampshire, 15 points in New York, 28 points in Oregon, 49 points in Vermont, 26 points in Washington and 12 points in Wisconsin.

Looking more long-term, Obama's 2008 performance among white college graduates was startlingly better than Dukakis' 1988 performance in many key states. Case in point: Obama's white college graduate margin in Ohio was 34 points better than Dukakis' in 1988. Other large shifts among white college graduates over the time period include: 25 points in Florida, 24 points in Michigan and Pennsylvania and 20 points in Nevada.

Recent trends suggest that white college graduates should continue to increase as a share of voters in the immediate future, which should benefit progressives. In the 10 battleground states studied by Frey and Teixeira, the percent of white college graduate voters grew in every one of them between 2000 and 2006, with Pennsylvania recording the highest growth rate.

Yet the durability of this trend—in contrast to the minority voter trend—is open to debate. The basic issue is how long educational upgrading of the white adult population will continue to outweigh the decline of whites overall, producing a net increase in the white college graduate share of voters. Educational upgrading of the white adult population depends on two factors. The first is whether and at what rate the educational credentials—in this case, attaining a four year degree or more—of younger whites are increasing. The second is the replacement of older, less-educated whites in the white population by younger, more educated whites.

Shifting state vote patterns

White college graduate margins by state in the 2004 and 2008 presidential contests

PENNSYLVANIA	Obama	+5
	Kerry	–12
COLORADO	Obama	+14
	Kerry	–2
OHIO	Obama	–1
	Kerry	–16
MICHIGAN	Obama	–1
	Kerry	–17

U.S. Census Bureau data indicates that both factors continue to be relevant—the educational credentials of younger whites are still rising[9]—albeit more slowly than in the 1990s—and generational replacement is still exerting significant upward pressure on education credentials.Therefore, it seems likely that the white college graduate share of the adult population will continue to increase for quite some time,[10] which amplified by the relatively high turnout of this group should result in significant ongoing increases in the white college graduate share of voters.

Moreover, since college completion rates can potentially be boosted by public policy—and there is plenty of economic room to do so, as Massachusetts Institute of Technology labor economist Paul Osterman[11] points out—these projected increases in white college graduate voters could be even stronger than they appear today.

White working class

Progressives' improvement has been slower, however, among white, working-class voters—defined here as whites without a four-year college degree. These voters tend to be conservative on social and foreign policy issues and to be suspicious of government's ability to solve their economic problems, despite holding populist views on many economic issues.

In 2008, Obama lost the white working class by a very large 18 point margin, somewhat better than Kerry's 23-point deficit in 2004 but actually a little worse than Al Gore's 17-point deficit in 2000. Moreover, going back to 1988 progressives' continuing difficulties with the white working class are thrown into stark relief. In that year, the progressive deficit among the white working class and white college graduates was identical: 20 points. This year, the respective deficits were 18 points and four points. Thus, Obama only improved over Dukakis by two points among white, working-class voters, but by 16 points among white college graduates.

That's the overall story, but there were still some notable progressive successes among this group in specific states. Obama did very well, for example, among white-working class voters in four of the five highly competitive states that were won by Gore and Kerry (Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon and Wisconsin). The average white, working-class deficit for Kerry in these states in 2004 was eight points. But in 2008 Obama had an average advantage in these states of six points, a progressive swing of 14 points.

Nevertheless, in Pennsylvania—the other highly competitive state the Democrats won in 2000 and 2004—Obama did worse than Kerry, losing the white-working class by 15 points as opposed to Kerry's 10-point deficit. And in the highly competitive states lost by both Gore and Kerry—Florida, Missouri, Nevada and Ohio—progressives also lost ground among the white-working class. In 2004, the average progressive white-working class deficit in these states was 13 points; in 2008, the average deficit was actually slightly worse at 14 points.

Progressives' continuing difficulties with white-working class voters are mitigated by the fact that there are now far fewer of them in the voting pool. According to the exit polls, the proportion of white-working class voters is down 15 points since 1988, while, as discussed above, the proportion of white college graduate voters is up four points, and the proportion of minority voters is up 11 points. This general pattern—a sharp decline in the share of white, working-class voters accompanied by increases in the shares of minority voters and white college graduate voters—has been replicated in state after state since 1988.

Consider these results from contested states in the 2008 election.[12] Since 1988, the share of white, working-class voters in Florida has declined 17 points, while the white college graduate share has risen four points and the minority share is up by 12 points. Even more spectacularly, in Pennsylvania white-working class voters are down 25 points over the time period, while white college graduate voters are up 16 points and minorities have increased by eight points.

Moving to the Midwest, in Ohio the share of white-working class voters fell by 15 points between 1988 and 2008, while white college graduates rose by eight points and minorities by six points. In Iowa, white-working class voters are down 18 points, while white college graduates are up 12 points and minorities are up six points. In Minnesota, white-working class voters have fallen by 17 points, while white college graduate voters have increased by 11 points and minorities by six points. In Indiana, the share of white-working class voters is down by 14 points over the time period, while white college graduate and minority voters are up six points and nine points, respectively. Finally, in Missouri, which Obama lost by only one-eighth of a percentage point, white, working-class voters have declined by 15 points, while both white college graduate and minority voters have risen by eight points.

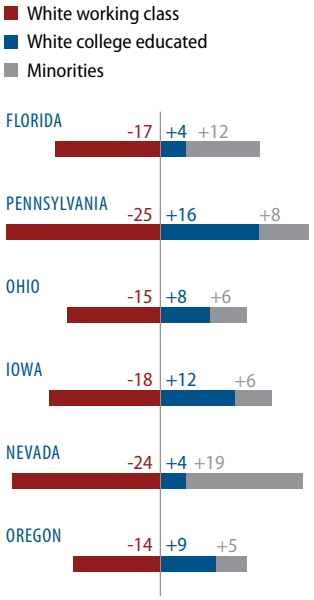
In the Southwest, the changes in Nevada have been remarkable. White, working-class voters are down 24 points since the 1988 election, while white college graduate voters are up four points and minorities an amazing 19 points. New Mexico has also seen big changes, if not quite as dramatic as in Nevada. The white-working class vote share in that state has fallen 17 points, while white college graduate and minority voters have increased by five and 11 points, respectively.

In the Northwest, both Oregon and Washington have seen substantial shifts that follow the general pattern. In Oregon, white, working-class voters have declined by 14 points since 1988, while white college graduate voters are up by nine points and minority voters by five points. And in Washington, white, working-class voters are down 16 points over the time period, while white college graduate and minority voters have risen by eight and seven points, respectively.

Clearly, these shifts tell us a great deal about how our country has changed since 1988 and why progressives are now doing so much better in presidential elections. Indeed, on a very broad level, you can account for the 15-point pro-progressive swing between the 1988 and

White working class losing clout

Change in white working class share of voters as compared to white college educated and minorities, 1988–2008



2008 elections simply by factoring in the decline of white, working-class voters along with the rises in minority voters and increasingly progressive white college graduate voters.

Moreover, it is inevitable that the white working class will continue to decline. The combination of a shrinking white population share combined with continued educational upgrading among whites ensures that outcome. The only question is the rate of decline.

Over the last two decades, the exit polls have shown three-quarters of a percentage point per year decrease in the white, working-class share of voters. A slowdown in educational upgrading among whites could certainly reduce this rate of decline, though this has not happened so far. Even if the rate falls to, say, a half a percentage point per year, that's quite enough to chip away significantly at the white, working-class share of voters every election cycle. Overtime, these seemingly modest decreases add up. By 2020, for example, the white, working-class share would still be six points lower than it was in the last election—even under this reduced rate of decline.

As a result, progressives have benefited and are likely to continue to benefit from the decline of the white working class, but it does not follow that this group should therefore be ignored. According to the exit polls, it is still an enormous group of voters—still larger than white college graduate voters—and there are good reasons to suspect that the exit polls may significantly underestimate the size of this group. Census voter supplement data regularly show a share of white, working-class voters as much as eight percentage points higher than that indicated by the exit polls. Applying that pattern to this year's exit poll results—39 percent white, working-class voters—would suggest that this group's share of voters could still be as high as 47 percent.

Progressives ignore that large a group at their peril. First and most, obviously, increased support among this group could dramatically expand the progressive coalition. These voters, by virtue of their economic position, have clear potential to be a greater part of this coalition, if their suspicions about government ineffectiveness can be overcome. Secondly, progressives' already large deficit among the white working class—clearly their biggest political vulnerability—could easily become larger. If that happens, any fall-offs in support among their core and emerging constituencies could put the progressive majority at risk, despite continuing demographic trends in their favor. Therefore, reducing the progressive deficit among white, working-class voters should remain a key objective.

Professionals

Progressives do unusually well among professionals, a huge chunk of the burgeoning white college graduate population. This occupational group typically has forthrightly liberal views on social issues as well as moderate, reformist tendencies on economic issues and distaste for aggressive militarism in foreign policy.

Fifty years ago, professionals were actually the most conservative occupational group. But over time, especially the last couple of decades, they have shifted to a strongly progressive stance.[13] In the 1988 and 2000 presidential elections, professionals supported the progressive candidate by an average of 52 percent to 40 percent. And in 2004, they moved still farther in this direction, supporting Kerry over Bush by a 63 percent-to-37 percent margin, according to the University of Michigan's National Election Study.

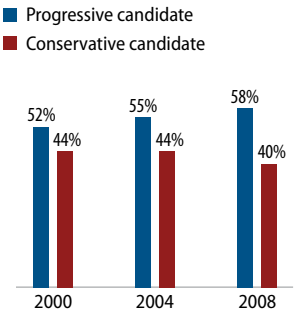
The 2008 election was no exception to this pattern. Using those with a postgraduate education as a proxy for this group—the exit polls have no occupation question—Obama received 58 percent-to-40 percent support, up from 55 percent to 44 percent for Kerry in 2004, and 52 percent to 44 percent for Gore in 2000. The 2008 figure included 54 percent-to-44 percent support among white postgraduates.

This is especially good for progressives because professionals are a rising group in American politics and society. In the 1950s they made up about 7 percent of the workforce, but as the United States has moved away from a blue-collar, industrial economy toward a post-industrial one that produces more ideas and services, the professional class has expanded. Today it constitutes just under 17 percent of the workforce. In another 10 years, they will be 18 percent to19 percent of the workforce.

Moreover, reflecting their very high turnout rates, they are an even larger percent of voters—and not just of employed voters but of voters as a whole. Nationally, they account for about 21 percent of voters. In many Northeastern, Intermountain West and Far Western states, they are likely one-quarter of the electorate, with even higher representation in these states' most dynamic metropolitan areas.

Professionals go progressive

Professionals' support for progressive and conservative candidates in recent elections



Women

Progressives typically do better among women than men. And in 2008, women voted 56 percent to 43 percent for Obama, compared to a very slim one-point margin for Obama among men—49 percent to 48 percent.

Nonetheless, women voters are a vast group and the true areas of strength for progressives are among three subgroups: single, working and highly-educated. In 2008, single women went for Obama by 70 percent to 29 percent, up from a 62 percent-to-37 percent margin for Kerry in 2004. Working women, who voted for Kerry by a slender 51 percent-to-48 percent margin in 2004, voted for Obama by an impressive 60 percent to 39 percent. Exit poll data for college-educated women in 2008 have not yet been released, but in all likelihood Obama's support among this group was significantly higher than Kerry's 57 percent-to-42 percent margin in 2004.

While the balance of women relative to men is changing little, trends within the female population are quite favorable to progressives. Single women are now almost half, 47 percent, of adult women, up from 38 percent in 1970.[14] Their current size in the voter pool—more than a quarter of eligible voters[15]—is nearly the size of white evangelical Protestants, conservatives' largest base group. Since the current growth rate of single women is so fast—double that of married women—the proportion of single women in the voting pool will continue to increase.[16]

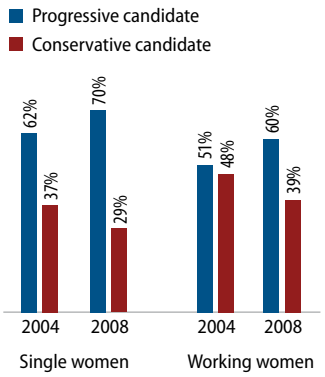
There is every expectation that this burgeoning population of single women will resolutely remain progressive in their politics. Survey data consistently show this group to be unusually populist on economic issues and generally opposed to the conservative agenda on foreign policy and social issues.[17]

Single, working women tend to be a particularly progressive group among single women. In 2004, this group gave Kerry 65 percent-to-35 percent support, higher than his support among single women as a whole (data not yet available for 2008). Single working women are also a rapidly growing group, increasing from 19 percent of the adult, female population in 1970 to 29 percent today.[18] That is even faster than the growth among single women as a whole.

Finally, college-educated women are also a rapidly growing population group. They have tripled from just 8 percent of the 25-and-older, female population in 1970 to 28 percent today.[19] This trend should continue in the future, due to continued educational upgrading and because college attendance and completion rates are increasingly skewed toward women. Right now, more young women are attending college than young men: 56 percent of today's undergraduates are women, compared to 44 percent who are men. Reflecting this disparity, women now earn 170,000 more bachelor's degrees each year than men do.

Progressives gain among key groups of women

Single and working women's support for progressive and conservative candidates in recent elections



The Millennial Generation

The youth vote was huge for Obama. This is the first year the 18- to 29-year-old age group was drawn exclusively from the strongly progressive Millennial Generation[20]—those born 1978 or later[21]—and they gave Obama a stunning 34-point margin, 66 percent to 32 percent. This compares to only a nine-point margin for Kerry in 2004.

Obama's support among 18- to 29-year-olds was remarkably broad, extending across racial barriers. He carried not just Hispanics in this age bracket (76 percent to 19 percent) and blacks (95 percent to 4 percent) but also whites (54 percent to 44 percent). Obama's 10-point advantage among white 18- to 29-year-olds starkly contrasts with his 15-point deficit among older whites.

Another way of looking at the strength of Obama's support among Millennials is how many electoral votes he would have carried if just 18-to-29–year-olds had voted. Based on exit poll results, Obama would have received at least 448 electoral votes and probably more like 475. The higher figures incorporate the electoral votes of Colorado, Oregon, and Washington, where the exit polls did not report results for this age group but which were highly likely to have had an 18- to 29-year-old majority for Obama.

It's also worth noting that Obama got 60 percent of the youth vote or more in every swing state in the 2008 election with the sole exception of Missouri. That was also the only swing state Obama lost by a very slim margin. Had Missouri's margin for Obama among this age group been just a little closer to his average swing state margin among 18- to 29-year-olds—about 30 points—he would have won that state as well.

The youth share of voters also increased from 17 percent to18 percent across the last two presidential elections. Based on extrapolations from these data[22] (the Census Voter Supplement data for this election will not be available for many months), 18-to-29-year-old turnout increased four to five percentage points in 2008 compared to 2004. This is quite an impressive performance in an election where overall turnout went up only a little over 1 percent.[23] Indeed, 18- to 29-year-old turnout performance was so relatively strong that it accounts for about 60 percent of the overall increase in votes in this election.

Moreover, the 18-percent figure for the Millennial Generation actually understates the current level of their influence on the electorate. This is because the 18- to 29-year-old group does not include the oldest Millennials, the 30-year-olds who were born in 1978. Once they are figured in, a reasonable estimate is that Millennials were around 20 percent of the vote in this election.

This figure will steadily rise as more Millennials enter the voting pool. In 2008, about 55 million Millennials were of voting age and roughly 48 million were citizen-eligible voters. Between now and 2018, Millennials of voting age will be increasing by about 4.5 million a year. And in 2020, the first Presidential election where all Millennials will have reached voting age, this generation will be 103 million strong, of which about 90 million will be eligible voters. Those 90 million Millennial eligible voters will represent just less than 40 percent of America's eligible voters.[24]

These trends mean that every election until 2020 will see a bigger share of Millennial voters—both because more of them will be eligible to vote and because the leading edge of the Millennials will be aging into higher turnout years. Thus, in 2012, there will be 74 million Millennials of voting age and 64 million Millennial eligible voters, 29 percent of all eligible voters. Assuming that Millennials' relatively good turnout performance continues—but not that it gets any better—that should roughly translate into 35 million Millennials who cast ballots in 2012 and an estimated 26 percent of all voters.

Youth vote solidly progressive

Percentage of youth supporting presidential candidates in 2004 and 2008

OBAMA **34%** over McCain

KERRY **9%** over Bush

By 2016, there will be 93 million Millennials of voting age and 81 million Millennial eligible voters, 36 percent of all eligible voters. This should produce an estimated 46 million voting Millennials, representing 33 percent of all voters. And in 2020, those 90 million Millennial eligible voters should translate into 52 million Millennial votes, representing 36 percent of all votes cast in that election.

Moreover, because more and more Millennial voters will be aging into their higher turnout years after 2020, the proportion of Millennials among actual voters should continue to rise for a number of elections, despite the fact that all Millennials will already be in the voting pool. By 2028, for example, when Millennials will be between the ages of 28 and 50, their share of voters should be about 38 percent, or two points higher than in 2020.

These trends could hardly be more positive for progressives. Indeed, if Millennials remain oriented as they are and maintain the generational consistency they have shown so far, the simple process of cohort replacement—more Millennials moving into the electorate and taking the place of older voters—will increase progressives' margin over conservatives by an additional 2.5 percentage points in 2012 and then by another 2.5 points in 2016.

Religious diversity

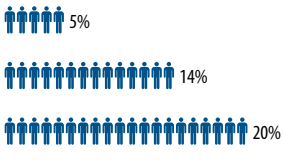
In U.S. politics, over the last couple of decades, there has been a strong relationship between how often you attend religious services and how you vote, with those who attend most frequently being much more conservative than those who attend least often. This relationship did not go away this year but it did become less strong.

Obama ran the same relatively modest 12-point deficit among those who attend services more than once a week as he did among those who attend weekly. In fact, Obama's 17-point improvement to a 43 percent-to-55 percent deficit in 2008 from a 35 percent-to-64 percent deficit for Kerry among the most frequent attenders in 2004 was Obama's largest improvement among the different attendance groups in 2008. Besides improving so much among the most observant, he also improved the progressive margin by eight points among those who attend services a few times a month, winning such group by 53 percent to 46 percent, by 10 points among those who attend a few times a year—59 percent to 39 percent in favor of Obama—and by 11 points among those who never attend—67 percent to 30 percent for Obama.

The very strong results for Obama among those who attend services only a few times a year or less—44 percent of voters—are consistent with voting patterns from earlier elections; the least frequent attenders tend to vote heavily progressive. It is the non-observant who have been growing in numbers since the late 60s and early 70s. According to the University of Chicago's General Social Survey, those who attend services once year or less have risen to 42 percent in 2006, the last year for which data are available, from 29 percent of adults in 1972.

Secular voters on the rise

Percentage of adults reporting no religious affiliation



In terms of religious affiliation, Obama improved the progressive margin among Catholics by 14 points, from a five-point deficit in 2004 to a nine-point advantage in 2008. He also reduced the Democratic deficit among Protestant-other Christian voters by 10 points, compressing it from 19 points to nine points. He also carried Jewish, other religions and religiously unaffiliated voters by astronomical margins: 78 percent to 21 percent; 73 percent to 22 percent; and 75 percent to 23 percent, respectively.

Speaking of unaffiliated or secular voters—this group, not white evangelical Protestants, are the fastest-growing "religious" group in the United States. From 1944 to 2004 the percentage of adults reporting no religious affiliation almost tripled, rising from 5 percent to 14 percent. Projections indicate that by 2024 about 20 percent of adults will be unaffiliated.[25]

This trend, combined with growth among non-Christian faiths and race-ethnic trends, will ensure that in very short order we will no longer be a white Christian nation. Even today, only about 55 percent of adults are white Christians. By 2024, that figure will be down to 45 percent.[26] That means that by the election of 2016—or 2020 at the outside—the United States will have ceased to be a white Christian nation. That will provide yet another long-range boost to progressive prospects.

Union households

Union household voters have been a consistently strong constituency for progressives and the 2008 election was no exception. These voters supported Obama by 59 percent to 40 percent, essentially identical with Kerry's margin in 2004. Yet their representation among voters—21 percent—was three points less than in 2004. Even this 21-percent figure is impressive, however, in light of the fact that union membership in the United States now stands at only 12 percent of workers.

Clearly, the union vote has little potential for growth and considerable potential for further decline without significant changes in labor law such as those proposed in the Employee Free Choice Act, or EFCA, which would make it easier for unions to organize workers and is expected to be pushed by Congress on the coming year. However, if EFCA or other significant changes are made then consequent rises in union density might produce a substantial increase in the union vote. Given the progressive proclivities of union household voters, that would be of great benefit to the progressive coalition.

The new geography

It is not just growing demographic groups that are tilting toward progressives—it is also growing areas of the country. By and large, progressives received their strongest increases in support in the fast-growing, dynamic metropolitan areas of states, particularly the largest ones. This pattern swelled their majorities in states that already leaned progressive and pushed many other states into the progressive column. Conversely, improvements in conservative performance were generally confined to stagnant or declining areas in rural or small town America. The result is a political map with a distinct lean toward progressives, a lean that should increase in coming years.

This new geography can be looked at in several different ways. One is to look at the broad national picture—the location and types of states carried by progressives compared to conservatives. Another is to look at types of areas within states, comparing how progressives did in areas of different population sizes and densities, from the urban cores of large metropolitan areas down to the most thinly-populated rural areas. Finally, one can look at specific states that were contested in the 2008 election and see where within those states shifts toward progressives have occurred. Each of these aspects of the new geography is explored below.

The national picture

Let's first consider the tally of states Obama won. He carried all 18 states—plus the District of Columbia—that Kerry won in 2004, plus nine states that he did not: Colorado, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio and Virginia. Moreover, in each of the states that had been previously won by Kerry—some by very narrow margins—Obama won by more than 10 percentage points.

Another way of looking at the state tally is that there were five states where the average margin of victory for Gore and Kerry was below five points: Michigan, Minnesota, Oregon, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. Obama carried them by an average of 13 points. And there were three states that split their support between Gore and Kerry: Iowa, New Hampshire and New Mexico. Obama carried them all by an average of 11 points. Finally, there were four states that Gore and Kerry lost by a five-point below average: Florida, Missouri, Nevada and Ohio. Obama carried them all except Missouri, where Sen. John McCain (R-AZ) won by the extraordinarily small margin of one eighth of a percentage point.

By region, this pattern of progressive victories has reduced conservative strength to the Upper Mountain West, the plains states, and the South. And in the South, conservatives lost their political monopoly, as the three fast-growing "new South" states of Virginia, North Carolina and Florida went progressive. Progressives now solidly control the northeast, the Midwest (with the exception of Missouri), the southwest (with the exception of Arizona) and the West.

The states that conservatives won tended to be rural and lightly populated. Sixteen out of 28 states carried by Obama had 10 or more electoral votes, while just 4 of 21 carried by McCain had that many electoral votes. Obama also carried seven of the eight most populous states: California, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Michigan. Only Texas of the eight most populous went for McCain.

From large metropolitan areas to rural areas

This population density pattern can be seen even more clearly by looking at the types of areas that Obama and McCain did well in. Obama ran strongest in large metropolitan areas—those with over a million in population—winning these areas by 58 percent to 41 percent, a 17-point margin that is 10 points better than Kerry's margin in 2004.[27] More than half—54 percent—of the U.S. population lives in these 51 large metropolitan areas.

Obama also carried medium metropolitan areas—those with 250,000 to 1 million in population—by four points, 11 points better than Kerry, who lost these areas by seven points in 2004. Medium metropolitan areas contain another 20 percent of the U.S. population.

But in small metropolitan areas—9 percent of the country—where population dips below 250,000, Obama lost to McCain by six points. And outside of metropolitan areas, where population density continues to fall, McCain did even better. In micropolitan[28] areas—or the small town part of rural America—McCain beat Obama by 11 points. Micropolitans are another 10 percent of the population. In the rest of rural America, the part that is most isolated from population centers and most spread out, McCain bested Obama by 16 points. These areas, despite the vast land area they cover, contain only 6 percent of the population.

The same density-related patterns of support for Obama and McCain can be observed within large metropolitan areas. Here we can use a typology[29] developed by Virginia Tech's Metropolitan Institute and Brookings Institute's Metropolitan Policy Program to break these areas down by density and distance from the urban core. In large metropolitan areas,[30] Obama did best in densely-populated urban cores—9 percent of the country—carrying counties in this classification by a whopping 53 points, 76 percent to 23 percent. Moving out from pure urban core counties to the densest, closest-in suburban counties[31]—classified as inner suburban in the typology—Obama carried these

counties by a wide margin—21 points. That margin was a 12-point improvement over Kerry's performance in 2004. Almost a fifth—19 percent—of the nation's population is contained in these inner suburban counties.

Obama also carried mature suburban counties (16 percent of the population), counties that are somewhat less dense than inner suburbs and typically contain no part of the central city, by 15 points. That was a 10-point improvement over Kerry's margin in 2004.

Moving out to the emerging suburbs, it is important to distinguish between these areas and true exurbs, which together constitute what people usually think of as "exurbia." Geographers Robert Lang and Thomas Sanchez[32] describe the true exurbs as:

> *[T]he most far flung [metropolitan] counties with the lowest—essentially rural—population densities. Large-scale suburbanization is just about to take hold in these places, as they offer even better bargains, and more land (but longer commutes) than emerging counties. Exurban counties are included in metropolitan areas by the census because they share a functional relationship with neighboring counties via commuting. But by appearance, these places are barely touched by urbanization.*

The emerging suburban counties are more consequential, though the actual numbers of exurban counties are 60 percent greater in the MI/Brookings typology. Lang and Sanchez describe these counties as:

> *...the new 'it' county of today. They are mostly the fastest growing counties in the region, and are often found in even slow growing regions such as St. Louis (St Charles County, MO) and Cincinnati (Boone County, KY). Emerging suburbs are almost wholly products of the past two decades and are booming with both people and the beginnings of commerce (although they remain mostly commuter zones). Emerging suburbs are both upscale and downscale and may feature everything from McMansions to trailer parks. Residents in emerging suburbs typically see these places as bargains compared to mature suburbs. That is true for households that buy a McMansion over an older and smaller tract home in a mature suburb, or a first-time homebuyer that 'drives to qualify' by finding a modest attached dwelling at the edge of the region.*

Today's true exurbs contain only 3 percent of the nation's population. In contrast, emerging suburbs contain 8 percent of the nation's population and, on average, are growing faster than any other type of county in the United States, including true exurbs. Emerging suburbs include such well-known counties as Loudoun County, VA, outside of Washington, DC; Scott County, MN, outside of Minneapolis; Warren County, OH, outside of Cincinnati; and Douglas County, CO, outside of Denver.

It is these emerging suburban counties that had emerged as the great conservative demographic hope in the early 2000s. It was believed that rapid growth in this part of exurbia would provide a growth demographic category that could balance the many growth demographic categories that are benefiting progressives. With the latest election results, it has become apparent that this hope was misplaced.

In 2008, Obama lost to McCain in the emerging suburbs by just 53 percent to 46 percent, a seven-point deficit that did not come close to erasing Obama's hefty advantages in the more densely populated inner suburbs—21 points—and mature suburbs—15 points. And Obama's seven-point deficit was a strong 11-point improvement over Kerry's performance in these counties in 2004.

Indeed, the only part of large metropolitan areas where McCain turned in a strong performance was in the true exurbs. He carried these areas by 16 points, but these true exurbs boast only 3 percent of the nation's population and under 6 percent of the population of large metros.

Looking back to 1988, even stronger progressive trends in these geographical categories are apparent over the past two decades. The progressive margin has increased by 29 points in core counties, 27 points in mature suburban counties, and 25 points in inner suburban counties. Even in emerging suburban counties, progressives did 13 points better in 2008 than in 1988. And in medium metropolitan counties the swing to progressives was 15 points. Only in true exurban (one point), small metro (seven points) and micropolitan (two points) counties were progressive gains modest over the time period. And only in the deep rural counties did progressives actually lost ground (six points).

The trends in large metropolitan areas deserve particular comment. As noted, there is a strong relationship between density and support for progressives in these areas: with increasing distances from the urban core and declining density, progressive support declines. The political battle line in large metropolitan areas therefore comes down to how far out in the suburbs the dividing line falls between progressive and conservative dominance. In earlier elections, the dividing line was relatively close into the metropolitan core, while in 2008 it was much farther out, with progressives dominating the suburban rings out through the mature suburbs and being very competitive in the emerging suburbs. If the battle line is drawn that far out in the future, then a decisive advantage will be bestowed upon progressives.

This advantage is underscored by the fact that, while both components of the metropolitan fringe—emerging suburbs and exurbs—are significantly growing faster than the closer-in urbanizing suburbs—inner and mature suburbs—the combined population weight of the metropolitan fringe in these large metropolitan areas is still much smaller than that of the urbanizing suburbs—20 percent of these areas compared to 65 percent. Moreover, the inner suburbs in particular are so populous that despite their relatively slow growth rates

they are actually adding more people to these areas than either the exurbs or the emerging suburbs. This situation is unlikely to change anytime soon.

Indeed, as large metropolitan areas continue to grow—we will add our next 100 million people by 2037, a rate faster than in China, with that growth heavily concentrated in our large metropolitan areas, particularly the very largest—the percent of these population gains that will be located at the metropolitan fringe is likely to drop significantly. This will be due to changing consumer preferences, more singles and childless couples and greater land use regulation and resource constraints. This in turn means that fewer very low-density suburbs of the kind that have favored conservatives are likely to get built.[33] This factor will enhance the political importance of urbanizing suburbs, which will benefit progressives.

The picture in the states

The big picture clearly favors progressives and disadvantages conservatives. In order to get the full flavor of how our political geography is changing, we must take the analysis down to the state level. By doing so, we can see the close correlation between pro-progressive political shifts and the dynamic growth areas within states. It is this relationship that is driving the increase in progressive strength in state after state and shaping the already-discussed big picture advantages.

This paper confines the state discussion to states that have been recently contested between progressives and conservatives, leaving out states such as Illinois and California that have moved so heavily progressive since 1988 that were not seriously contested in recent elections. Most of these states fall into two broad categories:[34] The first comprises states where progressives now have a dominant position, moving up from a situation where they had only a modest edge over the conservatives, whereas the second are composed of states where progressives have made breakthroughs, turning a slight or even stronger conservative advantage into a progressive edge. We'll now discuss the most important examples from each category.

Pennsylvania

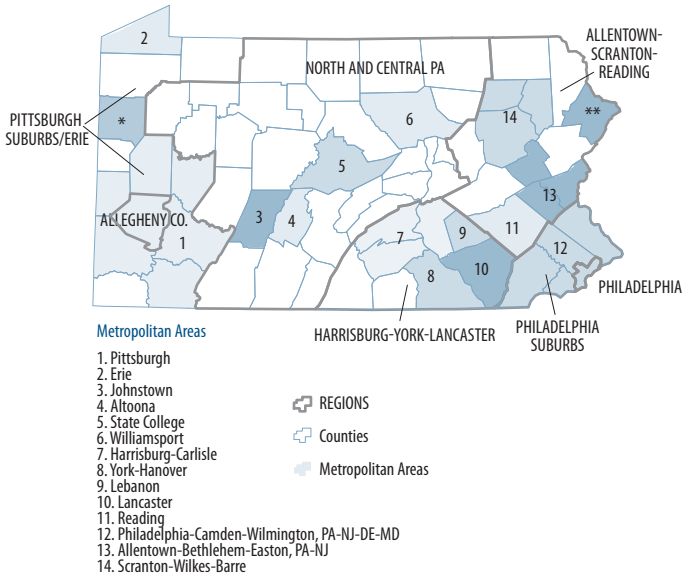
The two new, most important progressive dominance states are Pennsylvania and Michigan. Pennsylvania was a state McCain had high hopes for and in which he invested considerable resources toward the end of his campaign. But in the end, Obama scored an easy 10-point victory in the state.

This progressive dominance reflects trends that have been unfolding for quite some time. In a nutshell, progressives' strength has been increasing in growing areas of the state, while conservatives have only done well in the declining parts of the state.

The growing areas of Pennsylvania are mostly located in three regions,[35] all in the eastern part of the state: the Northeast, containing the Allentown and Reading metropolitan areas; the Southeast, containing the York, Lancaster and Harrisburg metropolitan areas; and the Philadelphia suburbs. These regions are all notable for having added large numbers of minority and white college graduate voters[36] this decade.

In 2008, Obama carried the Philadelphia suburbs by 16 points, a nine-point improvement over Kerry's margin in 2004. Over the long-term, the shift is even more impressive: progressives have enjoyed a spectacular 39-point improvement in their margin in the Philadelphia suburbs since 1988.

Pennsylvania metropolitan areas and regions



* Mercer County, PA is an outer county in the Youngstown-Warren-Boardman, OH-PA Metropolitan Statistical Area.
** Pike County, PA is an outer county in the New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metropolitan Statistical Area.

In the northeast region, Obama improved his performance compared to Kerry's, carrying the region by 10 points, an 11-point shift toward progressives in 2008. This shift included progressive swings of 16 points and 11 points, respectively, in the relatively fast-growing Reading and Allentown metropolitan areas. Since 1988, the entire Northeast region has moved toward progressives by 22 points.

Progressives got their largest increment of support in Pennsylvania's fastest-growing region, the Southeast, where they improved over Kerry's performance by 16 points, with pro-progressive shifts of 20, 16 and 15 points, respectively, in the three metropolitan areas that dominate the region: Lancaster, Harrisburg and York. The overall shift reduced the progressive deficit in the region to 12 points, down from 28 points in 2004—a huge blow to conservative efforts in the state. Since 1988, this formerly rock-ribbed conservative region has shifted toward progressives by 20 points.

Together, these three growing regions contributed 52 percent of the Pennsylvania vote. Add in Philadelphia itself, where progressives dominate by lop-sided margins—67 points in 2008—which drives the statewide vote to 64 percent. That leaves only 36 percent of the vote in the rest of Pennsylvania, which has been losing population but where conservatives have experienced some favorable trends.

In 2008, however, conservatives could not improve on how they did in 2004 in Allegheny County—containing Pittsburgh—as well as in the Pittsburgh suburbs and Erie region. Both regions shifted toward conservatives over the 1988-2004 period—five points in

Allegheny County and 18 points in the Pittsburgh suburbs and Erie—but conservatives managed no further improvement in this election. Finally, in the conservative north and central region McCain actually did nine points worse than Bush did in 2004.

These geographic trends show how progressives managed to turn Kerry's narrow two-and-a-half point win in 2004 into Obama's easy 10-point stroll in 2008. If the growth trajectories in Pennsylvania's regions continue—with those in the East fueled by minorities and white college graduates providing all the growth—then the future looks bright indeed for progressives in this state.

Michigan

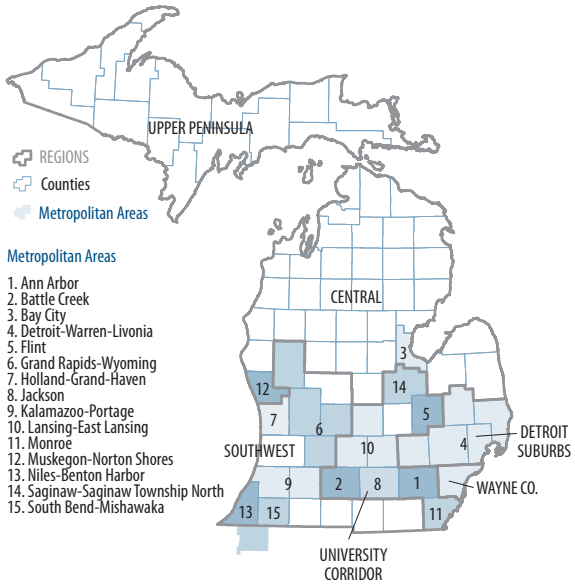
Michigan was a state McCain thought he could compete in but had to give up on early. Obama wound up running away with the state by 16 points.

The exceptionally lousy state economy had a lot to do with this, but the shifting political geography of Michigan made a big contribution as well. Consider the two fastest-growing regions of this slow-growing state: the Detroit suburbs and the Southwest.[37] The Detroit suburbs are notable for showing the sharpest trends in the changes affecting all Michigan regions: declining shares of white, working-class voters and increasing shares of minority and white college graduate voters. The latter have been trending exceptionally sharply toward progressives in this region. In 2008, Obama carried the Detroit suburbs by 54 percent to 45 percent—that nine-point margin was 12 points better than Kerry did in 2004.

Looking back to 1988, progressives have made an impressive 33-point improvement in their margin in the Detroit suburbs. This is even greater than their 28-point gain over the time period in Wayne County, the urban core of the Detroit metro. These improvements translate into overwhelming dominance—62 percent to 36 percent—of the Detroit metropolitan area as whole—44 percent of the statewide vote.

Interestingly, in the Southwest region—which is generally considered the most conservative in Michigan—the shift toward progressives was larger than in the relatively liberal Detroit suburbs. Kerry lost the Southwest by 16 points, so Obama's modest one- point victory in the region actually represented an 18-point swing toward progressives. Even in the conservative anchors of the region, the Grand Rapids and fast-growing Holland metropolitan areas, Obama posted big 18-point and 20-point improvements, respectively. Over the entire 1988-2008 period,

Michigan metropolitan areas and regions



progressives have improved their position by 27 points in the Southwest. The region contributes about a fifth of the statewide vote.

Another fifth of the statewide vote is contributed by the University Corridor, a cluster of counties to the immediate west and south of the Detroit metropolitan area that includes the Lansing (Michigan State University) and Ann Arbor (University of Michigan) metropolitan areas. It is also the other region of the state where some growth is taking place, particularly in the fast-growing Ann Arbor metropolitan area. Obama carried the University Corridor by a very strong 61 percent-to-38 percent margin, a 13-point improvement over Kerry's performance. Looking back to 1988, there has been a 23-point pro-progressive swing in this region.

Indeed, only in the lightly populated Central region and even more lightly-populated Upper Peninsula region, progressive gains have been under 20 points since 1988. In the Central region, the gain has been 16 points and in the Upper Peninsula, conservatives have managed to stay almost even, slipping only two points in the time period. But the latter region is only 3 percent of the statewide vote and has been losing population this decade.

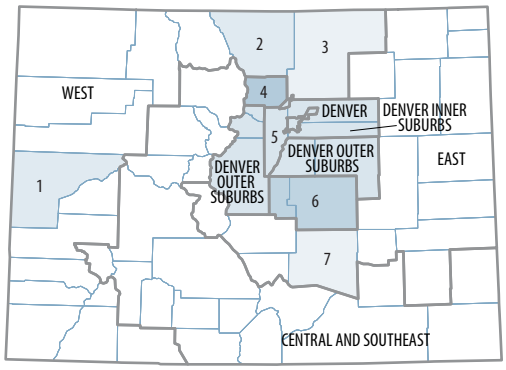
These geographic trends clarify how Obama could turn Kerry's narrow three-point victory in Michigan in 2004 into a 16-point wipeout in 2008. Current patterns of population growth, shifting voter demographics and the increasingly progressive leanings of white college graduates seem likely to only reinforce these trends in the future.

Colorado

Turning to progressive breakthrough states, Colorado is a fast-growing state, with its population up 14 percent in the 2000-2007 period.[38] Progressives have been improving their position where Colorado has been growing. In 2008, Obama brought this trend to fruition, turning Kerry's five-point loss in 2004 into a nine-point victory.

Consider first the Denver metropolitan, far and away the largest area in the state and accounting for half the statewide vote. The area stands out from the rest of Colorado in the speed at which the share of white, working-class voters is declining and the shares of white college graduate and, particularly, minority voters are increasing. To examine trends in the Denver metropolitan area, it is useful to divide it into three parts:[39] Denver County, the urban core of the city; the inner suburbs—Arapahoe, Jefferson, and Adams counties—and the outer suburbs—the extremely fast-growing emerging suburb of Douglas plus several small true exurban counties.

Colorado metropolitan areas and regions



Metropolitan Areas
1. Grand Junction
2. Fort Collins-Loveland
3. Greeley
4. Boulder
5. Denver
6. Colorado Springs
7. Pueblo

REGIONS
Counties
Metropolitan areas

Obama carried Denver county by 52 points, 12 points better than Kerry in 2004. But he improved his margin even more in the relatively fast-growing inner suburbs (16 points), which provide 30 percent of the statewide vote, and the still faster-growing outer suburbs (15 points). The latter gain included a 17-point improvement in Douglas County, which has grown 55 percent since 2000.

Altogether, Obama carried the Denver metropolitan area by 17 points, a 14-point improvement over 2004 and a 20-point improvement over 1988. By themselves, these would be huge progressive advances. But Obama's gains were by no means limited to the Denver metropolitan area.

Unsurprisingly, Obama did well in the liberal Boulder metropolitan area, carrying it by 72 percent to 26 percent, a 12-point margin gain over 2004. More surprisingly, he made bigger gains in the very conservative, fast-growing Colorado Springs metropolitan area (12 percent of the statewide vote), bettering Kerry by 16 points and shaving the progressive deficit to 19 points. Since 1988, progressives have improved their performance in this metropolitan area by 22 points.

Obama also made good progress in the very fast-growing north and west regions of the state (up 20 percent in population since 2000), a fifth of the statewide vote, which includes the relatively liberal Fort Collins metropolitan area and the very conservative Greeley metropolitan area, the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the state. In Fort Collins, there was a progressive swing of 16 points between 2004 and 2008. But in the Greeley metropolitan area, the swing was even larger: 18 points. The latter result is particularly significant because prior to the 2008 election, that metropolitan area (in contrast to most of Colorado) was trending conservative. Now, over the 1988-2008 period, this metropolitan area is also trending progressive, albeit modestly (four points).

The one region in the state that has trended conservative since 1988 is the thinly populated east region where, unlike the rest of Colorado, the white, working-class share of eligible voters is actually increasing and the minority share is decreasing. This is by far the slowest-growing part of Colorado (up only 4 percent since 2000) and contains a fair number of counties that are losing population. Conservatives are doing 10 points better in this region today than they were in 1988. But this region only casts 6 percent of the statewide vote.

The combination of these changes appears very felicitous for progressives. There are very few indicators that would provide the basis for a conservative countertrend.

Nevada

Nevada is an even faster-growing state than Colorado. In fact, is the fastest-growing state in the United States, adding 29 percent to its population since 2000. This growth is being driven by the Las Vegas metropolitan area (Clark County), which has grown by 33 percent

since 2000 due to huge infusions of minorities and white college graduates. As a result, the demographic profile of this area has been changing dramatically, especially the minority share of voters (going up by a percentage point each year) and the white, working-class share of voters (declining by a point a year). Here progressives have been making huge strides.

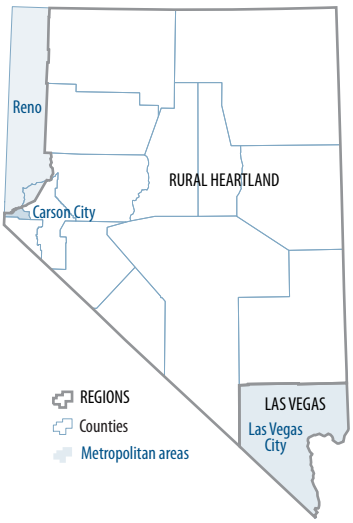
In 2008, Obama carried the Las Vegas metropolitan area, which is 67 percent of the statewide vote, by 19 points, 58 percent to 39 percent. This margin was 14 points better than Kerry's performance in 2004. And compared to 1988, there has been a 35-point swing toward progressives in the Las Vegas metropolitan area.

Another fifth of the statewide vote is contributed by the Reno metropolitan area, also fast-growing (20 percent since 2000) though lagging far behind Las Vegas. Obama carried the Reno metropolitan area by 12 points, 55 percent to 43 percent, which is a 17-point improvement over 2004. Reno, like Las Vegas, has experienced a 35-point shift toward progressives since 1988.

Conservatives do by far the best in the vast rural heartland that lies between the Las Vegas and Reno metropolitan areas. Here McCain beat Obama by 58 percent to 39 percent. But this area is far by the slowest-growing in Nevada (14 percent since 2000) and contributes only 14 percent of the statewide vote. And even here progressives have gained 15 points since 1988.

Nevada will likely continue to change very rapidly in the future.But there is no reason to think these changes will benefit conservatives and very good reasons to think they will benefit progressives, as they clearly have for the last 20 years. Therefore, it seems reasonable to suppose that progressives' 12-point victory in 2008 is an indicator of how Nevada is likely to behave in the future, rather than a temporary downturn in conservatives' fortunes.

Nevada metropolitan areas and regions



Ohio

Ohio, where Obama turned a two-point Kerry defeat into a five-point victory, has to be very far up on the list of progressive breakthrough states—if not at the very top. Ohio, in contrast to Colorado and Nevada, is a slow-growth state, up just 1 percent since 2000. But there is quite a bit of variation within the state, with some areas growing fairly rapidly and others barely growing at all or declining. It is in the growth areas that progressives have been making their biggest gains.

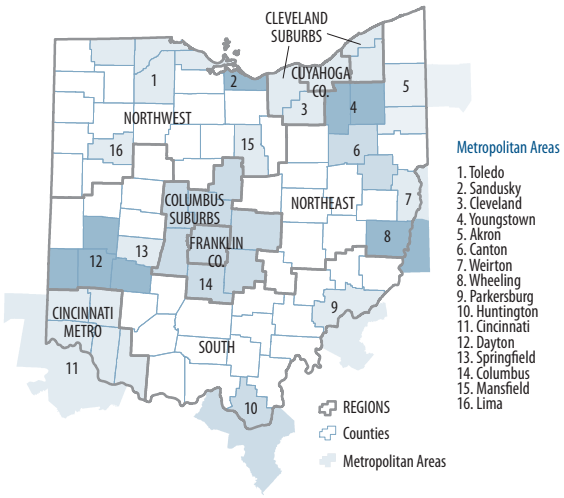
Start with the Columbus metropolitan area (15 percent of the statewide vote), which is easily the fastest-growing metropolitan area in the state, up 9 percent since 2000. Compared to other parts of Ohio, the Columbus metropolitan area has seen the biggest decrease in the share of white, working-class eligible voters and the sharpest increases in

the shares of white college graduate and minority voters. In 2008, Obama carried the area by four points, a nine-point improvement over Kerry in 2004.

Obama also improved about the same amount in the very fast-growing Columbus suburbs (up 17 percent since 2000) as he did in Franklin County, the central county of the metropolitan area that contains the urban core. Indeed, in the emerging suburb of Delaware County, by far the fastest-growing county in the Columbus suburbs and in Ohio as a whole (up 46 percent since 2000), Obama did especially well, improving on Kerry's performance by 13 points.

Since 1988, there has been a 31-point pro-progressive swing in the Columbus metropolitan area. This includes an incredible 40-point swing in Franklin County and a 20-point swing in the Columbus suburbs.

Ohio metropolitan areas and regions



The second fastest-growing metropolitan area in the state is the Cincinnati metropolitan area (14 percent of the statewide vote), up 5 percent since 2000. Here Obama also registered a nine-point improvement over 2004, including not only an 11-point shift in Hamilton County, the central county that contains Cincinnati, but also substantial shifts in the conservative suburb of Butler (nine points) and even the ultra-conservative emerging suburb of Warren (eight points), the second fastest-growing county in Ohio (29 percent growth since 2000). Since 1988, the Cincinnati metropolitan area as a whole has swung toward progressives by 18 points.

The other part of Ohio where progressives made substantial progress is the northwest region,[40] which includes the Toledo metropolitan area, several smaller metropolitan areas, and many rural counties, which are mostly declining. Here, there was a progressive swing of 11 points between 2004 and 2008, so that Obama split the region evenly with McCain. Since 1988, this region has experienced a 17-point swing toward progressives.

Shifts between 2004 and 2008 were more modest in the rest of Ohio. Both Cuyahoga County (the central county of the Cleveland metropolitan area) and the Cleveland suburbs had pro-progressive margin shifts of just four points. Even with this modest shift, however, the Cleveland metropolitan area as a whole (18 percent of the statewide vote) still went for Obama by 25 points, which is a 15-point progressive swing relative to 1988.

The northeast region, which includes the Akron, Canton, and Youngstown metropolitan areas, had a progressive swing of only three points and the south region, which includes the Dayton metropolitan area and a great many rural counties, a mere two points. The northeast region, which still leans progressive (53 percent to 45 percent in 2008) has also

experienced the least change since 1988—a comparatively tiny five-point improvement in progressive support.

Since the northeast region still casts a fifth of the statewide vote, perhaps conservatives can take some comfort in how the northeast has lagged behind general trends in Ohio. But this seems a slender reed in light of how these trends have been swiftly moving the rest of Ohio toward progressives, particularly the parts of the state that exhibit the most growth and dynamism.

Florida

Florida, where Obama turned Kerry's five-point deficit into a three-point victory, is right up there with Ohio at the top of the progressive breakthroughs list. Florida, in contrast to Ohio, is a high-growth state, up 14 percent since 2000. Progressives have been making impressive gains in the state's most important growth areas.

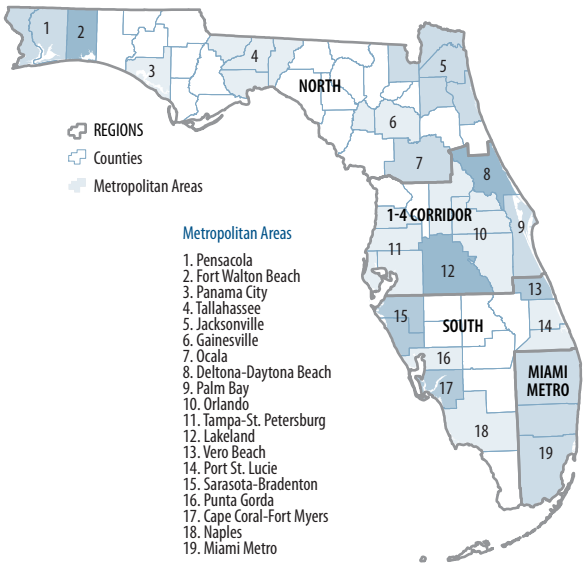
Start with the Orlando metropolitan area, the fastest-growing large (over 1 million in population) metropolitan area in the state, which has grown by 24 percent since 2000. In 2008, Obama carried the Orlando area by nine points, a 17-point gain over Kerry's margin in 2004. Going back to 1988, there has been an astonishing 48-point swing toward progressives in this metropolitan area. Not surprisingly, progressives have done particularly well in urbanized Orange County, the central county of the metropolitan area, gaining 18 points over 2004 and 55 points over 1988. But they have actually made even larger gains (25 points and 56 points, respectively) in the very fast-growing emerging suburb of Osceola, which has grown by 48 percent since 2000.

Progressives have also done well in Tampa-St. Petersburg, another one of Florida's large metropolitan areas, which is growing at a healthy 14-percent clip. Obama carried this metro by five points, a 10-point margin gain over 2004.

Both the Orlando and Tampa metropolitan areas are located in the I-4 corridor,[41] where white college graduates and particularly minorities are rapidly increasing their shares of eligible voters, while white, working-class voters steadily decline. Obama carried the I-4 corridor as a whole by three points, a 10-point improvement over 2004 and 28 points better than 1988. Since the I-4 corridor is growing so fast (17 percent since 2000) and accounts for 37 percent of the statewide vote, these progressive shifts are highly significant.

The fastest-growing region in Florida is the south, which includes all of Florida's metropolitan areas below the I-4 cor-

Florida metropolitan areas and regions



ridor except for the Miami metropolitan area.This region, which casts 12 percent of the statewide vote, has grown by 20 percent since 2000. In 2008, Obama lost this region by nine points, but that was an eight-point improvement over Kerry's performance in 2004. Going back to 1988, there has been a 25-point pro-progressive swing in the region.

In the Miami metropolitan area, 26 percent of the statewide vote, the progressive swing from 2004 to 2008 was slightly less (six points) but Obama still beat McCain by a 62 percent-to-38 percent margin. In addition, the overall swing from 1988 to 2008 has been an impressive 32 points. The Miami metropolitan area has grown at a comparatively modest 8 percent since 2000, but almost all of that growth has been from minorities. This has produced a very rapid increase in the minority share of eligible voters this decade—up by a percentage point a year.

The conservatives' best region in Florida is the north, a quarter of the statewide vote. This region has grown by 15 percent since 2000, a pace which is strong but not as strong as either the south or I-4 corridor. Here, Obama lost to McCain by 14 points, though that still represented a seven-point improvement over the progressive margin in 2004. And in Jacksonville, the region's large metropolitan area, there was an 11-point progressive swing from 2004 to 2008. Looking back to 1988, the progressive shift in the region has been 17 points. This is less than other regions in Florida but that is perhaps cold comfort to the conservatives.

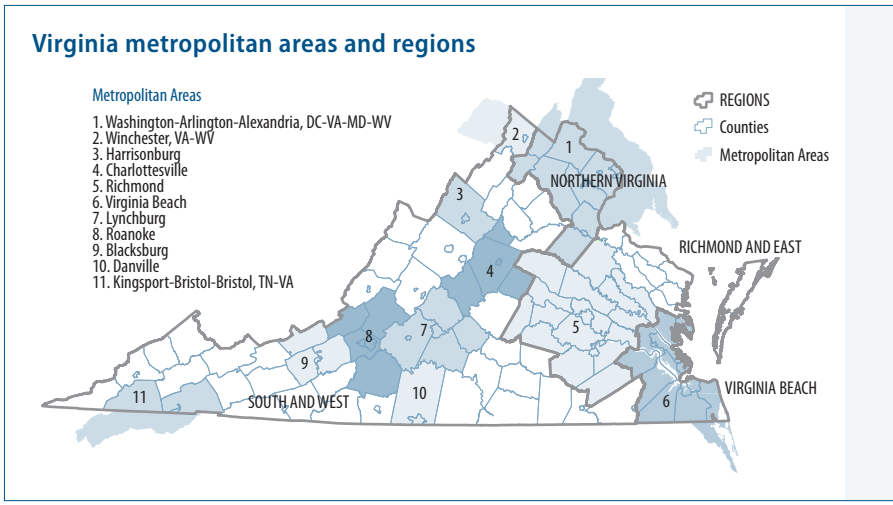
These trends, particularly in the I-4 corridor and the Miami metro, suggest a Florida that will likely become more and more progressive for years to come. Indeed, the only part of Florida where progressives are not making any headway is in small non-micropolitan rural counties. Here Obama lost to McCain by 37 points, which is four points worse than Kerry and eight points worse than Dukakis. But these counties are a mere 2 percent of the statewide vote.

Virginia

Virginia, where progressives went from an eight-point defeat in 2004 to a six-point victory in 2008, is also a fairly fast-growing state, though not as fast as Florida (9 percent since 2000 versus 14 percent). Virginia's growth is driven first and foremost by Northern Virginia, the Northern Virginia suburbs of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. That area has grown by 16 percent since 2000, fueled by rapid increases in minorities and white college graduates, and it casts a third of Virginia's ballots. This is also the area where progressives have made their greatest gains.

In 2008, Obama carried Northern Virginia by 59 percent to 40 percent, 15 points better than Kerry and a staggering 38 points better than Dukakis. These trends included not only a strong performance in the large mature suburb of Fairfax (up 14 points and 44 points, respectively, over the two time periods) but also huge gains in the two emerging suburbs of Prince William (22 points and 50 points) and Loudoun (20 points and 42 points). The

latter county has grown by 64 percent since 2000, the fifth-fastest county growth rate in the country.[42]



Progressives have also gained strength in the Richmond and east region.[43] This region has grown by 10 percent since 2000 and accounts for 19 percent of the statewide vote. In 2008, Obama won the region by five points, 17 points better than the progressive margin in 2004 and 31 points better than 1988. This result is driven by gains in the Richmond metropolitan area, including the urban core of Richmond City. But progressives have also made big gains in the Richmond suburbs, up 20 points and 51 points, respectively, in the mature suburb of Henrico and 18 points and 44 points in the emerging suburb of Chesterfield.

Obama also carried the slow-growing Virginia Beach metropolitan area, 21 percent of the statewide vote, by 12 points, 56 percent to 44 percent. That was an 18-point improvement over Kerry's performance in 2004 and 30 points better than Dukakis in 1988.

The south and west regions, which account for 28 percent of the statewide vote, are the most slow growing (only 4 percent since 2000) and by far the most rural of Virginia's regions. Indeed, many of the rural counties in this region are declining. Here Obama only gained nine points over 2004 and lost to McCain by 11 points. The nine-point gain, however, while modest, reverses the 1988 to 2004 trend in these regions, which leaned slightly conservative. Now, over the full 1988 to 2008 period, these regions are also trending progressive, albeit modestly (eight points).

The political geography of Virginia has clearly shifted to the progressive side, bolstered by ongoing demographic trends, especially in Northern Virginia, which should continue increasing progressives' strength in the future. In contrast, conservatives appear reliant on the least dynamic, slowest-growing areas of Virginia and even there their hold is slipping.

North Carolina and Indiana

North Carolina and Indiana were the two most unlikely breakthrough states for progressives in 2008. Both of these states went for George W. Bush by double-digit margins in 2004—12 points in North Carolina and a whopping 21 points in Indiana. And both states tilted progressive in 2008 by razor-thin margins (a third of a point in North Carolina and

slightly over a point in Indiana). North Carolina is a fast-growth state (14 percent since 2000) and Indiana is a slow-growth state (5 percent) but the trends that have led these states into the progressive column are similar in both cases.

In North Carolina, the two large metropolitan areas are Charlotte and Raleigh, each with over 1 million in population and each growing rapidly—24 percent and 31 percent, respectively, since 2000. In each of these metropolitan areas, progressives made huge strides in 2008. In the Charlotte metropolitan area, Obama beat McCain 53 percent to 46 percent, a 17-point swing toward progressives since 2004. Since 1988, there has been a 31-point pro-progressive swing in this metro. Mecklenberg County, the fast-growing heart of the Charlotte metropolitan area, has swung even harder toward progressives. In 2008, it went for Obama by 24 points, a progressive swing of 21 points compared to 2004 and an amazing 44 points since 1988.

In the Raleigh metropolitan area, Obama won 54 percent to 45 percent, 16 points better than Kerry's margin in 2004 and 24 points better than Dukakis's in 1988. The leading county in this metro is fast-growing Wake, which supported Obama by 14 points, a progressive margin gain of 17 points since 2004 and 29 points since 1988.

In Indiana, the largest metropolitan area in the state with 1.7 million residents and the only one growing by double digits (11 percent since 2000) is Indianapolis. Indianapolis swung to progressives by 25 points in this election, giving Obama a 51 percent to 48 percent victory. Obama carried the slow-growing urbanized central county of Marion by 28 points, bettering Kerry's margin by 26 points and Dukakis's by 46 points. Even more impressive, Obama benefited from swings of 20 points or more in the traditionally conservative emerging suburbs around Indianapolis: Hendricks, Hancock, Hamilton, Johnson, and Morgan. Of these, the largest and by far the fastest-growing (43 percent since 2000) is Hamilton County. Here Obama did particularly well, bettering Kerry's margin by 27 points and Dukakis's by 39 points.

Thus, with remarkable consistency we see the same story playing itself out in state after state where progressives have gained the upper hand. Progressives have received their strongest increases in support in fast-growing dynamic metropolitan areas, particularly the largest ones. In these areas, the demographic mix is shifting to minorities and white college graduates, while the white working class is in rapid decline. Conversely, trends have been kindest to conservatives where growth is slowest, especially in rural and small-town America. Given the pace of change we have seen in this decade and are likely to see in the next, this is clearly a very promising situation for progressives going forward.

The new agenda

As the country is growing and changing, so are the American people's views on what government can and should do. This is shaping a new agenda to go with the new demography and the new geography. As we shall see, this new agenda is a very progressive agenda, indicating that public policy may be headed in a dramatically different direction than we saw in the Bush era.

One aspect of this new agenda is the likely diminution in the culture wars that have bedeviled American politics for so long. While cultural disagreements remain, their political influence is being undermined by the rise of the Millennial Generation, increasing religious and family diversity, and the decline of the culturally conservative white working class. Culture wars issues, which so conspicuously failed to move many voters in the last couple of elections, will lose even more force in years to come.

Instead, we will see more attention paid to issues such as health care, energy, and education, where government has a positive role to play. The public holds distinctly progressive views in each of these areas, backing health care for all, a transition to clean energy, and building a 21st-century education system, including a major infusion of resources to improve K-12 education and college access. And in each of these areas, ongoing demographic change is likely to intensify the public's commitment to progressive goals, since rising demographic groups tend to be especially supportive.

An end to culture wars

Consider first the likely effects on issue salience from ongoing demographic and geographic changes. One likely shift is an end to the so-called culture wars that have marked American politics for the last several decades, with acrimonious disputes about family and religious values, feminism, gay liberation, and race frequently crippling progressives' ability to make their case to the average American. There are several factors that are leading us in this direction. One big one is the rise of the Millennial Generation.

A strong majority (58 percent[44]) of Millennials favor allowing gays to marry, compared to 35 percent who are opposed. Among older Americans, it is the reverse: 60 percent are opposed and only 31 percent in favor. Millennials' views on issues such as gay mar-

riage are so liberal that their increasing weight in the adult population and the declining weight of older generations will, by itself, make a huge impact on taking these divisive culture issues off the agenda.

Millennials also are the most diverse generation in U.S. history—almost 40 percent of Millennial adults are minorities (the next generation will be even more diverse). Related to this, Millennials' attitudes about and experiences with race are dramatically different from earlier generations. There is essentially universal acceptance among Millennials (94 percent) of interracial dating and marriage and less concern about the economic or cultural impact of immigration. For them, race is "no big deal," an attitude that will increasingly characterize the society as a whole as the Millennials age and our march toward a majority-minority nation continues. Barack Obama's election is just the beginning—America's postracial future is fast approaching.

Another factor will be the continuing rise of the percentage of foreign-born citizens in the population. By 2050, about one in five Americans will be foreign born, up from one in eight today. This extraordinary change has many implications, not least of which is the coming irrelevance of hard-line anti-immigration politics. Already a failure in recent years, the material basis for such politics will dramatically erode in the future. The debate will be transformed from stopping or accepting immigration to how we should accept it.

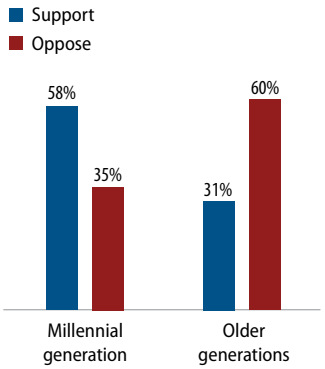
Then there is our changing religious landscape, as we fast approach the day when we are no longer a majority white Christian nation. This increased religious diversity, particularly the rise of secular Americans, is leading us toward a more tolerant, less culturally divisive politics. We are already seeing evidence of this shift. In the new State of American Political Ideology survey that is being released with this report by CAP's Progressive Studies Program, 59 percent agreed that "religious faith should focus more on promoting tolerance, social justice, and peace in society, and less on opposing abortion or gay rights." Just 22 percent disagreed.

Thus, even though the idea that "human life begins at conception and must be protected from that point forward" retains considerable strength (the level of agreement with this statement was just slightly below the previous statement in the Progressive Studies Program survey), the ability of the abortion issue to affect politics is likely to diminish.

The ongoing decline of the white working class, a generally culturally conservative group, is another factor. Members of this group—and the older, more conservative members at that—are being replaced in the electorate by more socially liberal white college graduates and by minorities, particularly Hispanics. Hispanics' overall cultural outlook, despite their conservative views on some specific issues such as abortion, is more liberal than generally supposed. In the Progressive Studies Program survey, Hispanics actually had the highest average score of all racial groups on a 10-item progressive cultural index.[45] And, critically, Hispanics are much less likely than whites to vote on the basis of cultural issues—even where they do hold conservative views.[46]

Millennial generation signals shift in culture war

Millennial and older generations' views on gays' right to marry



Finally, consider the impact of the continuing decline of the traditional family and traditional family values. In the early 1970s, three quarters of American adults were married. That's declined to 55 percent today. Married couples with children now occupy fewer than one in four households, a share that has been cut in half since 1960. And the share of children being raised by continuously married couples has declined to 50 percent from 73 percent since 1972, while the proportion being raised by single parents has increased to 16 percent from 5 percent over the same period.[47]

At the same time, there has been a huge decline in the traditional gender role family, where the husband works and the wife keeps house. In 1972, 53 percent of all married couples fit that definition, but just 26 percent do today. And over the same time period, the proportion of married couples where both work outside the home has risen to 52 percent from 32 percent. Even among married couples with children, the traditional gender role family has declined to 32 percent from 60 percent, while the modern arrangement has increased to 62 percent from 33 percent.

Accompanying these structural shifts have been dramatic changes in attitudes toward sexuality, marriage, and gender roles. In every case, they have moved from less tolerant, traditional views to more tolerant, less traditional views, with much greater openness toward sexuality outside of heterosexual marriage and a strong belief that women are equal in every respect and should work outside the home if they wish.

This evolution away from traditional family forms and family values will continue unabated in the future. This is because the trends away from tradition reinforce one another—nontraditional family forms promote nontraditional values and vice versa—and because younger generations such as the Millennials are so much more likely to embrace nontraditional values than older generations. This dynamic will push most family values in a nontraditional direction for many years to come. The political appeal of positions based on traditional values will therefore steadily diminish in the future.

This means appeals to family values will themselves have to evolve to be effective. There will simply be fewer and fewer voters from traditional families to respond to traditional appeals and, more broadly, the family values of the 21st century will not be our parents' family values. Future family values will reflect the needs of 21st-century families, especially the nontraditional ones whose weight in the population is large and increasing. Thus, issues such as quality, affordable daycare, afterschool programs, financial and other assistance for single parents, and workplace nondiscrimination toward those in nontraditional families are likely to loom larger than pro-marriage incentives, divorce-avoidance programs, and faith-based initiatives.

The latter point is critical. It is not just that demographic/geographic changes are dialing down the influence of culture wars issues. It is also that these changes, as with the growth of nontraditional families, are dialing up the influence of specific economic and domestic

issues that generally favor progressives. For instance, the needs of urbanizing suburbs for investment in education and infrastructure are likely to become increasingly important as their domination of our nation's growing metropolitan areas intensifies. And changes in the race-ethnic and class structure are likely to increase the demand for programs that promote upward mobility (access to college and advanced training, affordable homeownership) and that remedy obstacles to upward mobility (lack of access to health care, poor or no retirement options). This all plays to progressives' core policy strengths.

A positive role for government

Not only are changes in issue salience promoting an agenda where active government has a natural role to play, but the public's view of government is itself changing toward a more positive conception. An earlier sign of this receptivity to active government was provided in the Pew Research Center's massive study "Trends in Political Values and Core Attitudes: 1987-2007" released in early 2007. In the survey conducted for that study, 69 percent agreed that "the government should guarantee every citizen enough to eat and a place to sleep," and an identical 69 percent agreed that "it is the responsibility of the government to take care of people who can't take care of themselves." These figures were up 10 points and 12 points, respectively, relative to their recent low point in 1994.

Even back in 2004, when Bush was getting re-elected to his second term and way before the current crisis in the financial markets, the University of Michigan's National Election Studies found that 67 percent of those surveyed said we need a strong government to handle complex economic problems, rather than the free market can handle complex economic problems without government involvement (33 percent). The study also found that 58 percent believed that there are more things that government should be doing, rather than "the less government the better" (42 percent).

Surveys taken when Obama was elected confirm this view that government has a vital and positive role to play. In last November's exit poll, for example, voters were asked whether government should be doing more to solve problems or whether government is doing too many things best left to businesses and individuals. By an eight-point margin, 51 percent to 43 percent, voters endorsed more government involvement in solving problems. And in a large-scale (2,000 voters) Democracy Corps/Campaign for America's Future survey taken on election night and the night after, 56 percent of voters thought "government regulation of businesses and corporations is necessary to protect the public" rather than "government regulation of businesses and corporations frequently does more harm than good" (38 percent).

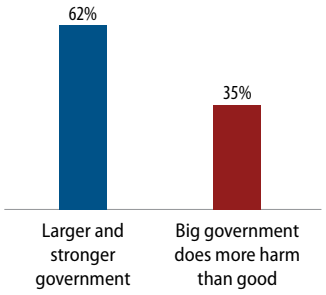
More recently, the Progressive Studies Program ideology survey had an abundance of findings about the public's positive view of government. On the survey's progressive government index, the average score for the public was 54 out of 100, so the public leans toward

a progressive view of the role of government.[48] And on several specific items in the survey, the public's views were strongly positive.

Case in point: 69 percent agreed, compared to 15 percent who disagreed,[49] that "government has a responsibility to provide financial support for the poor, the sick, and the elderly." And 73 percent agreed that "government regulations are necessary to keep businesses in check and protect workers and consumers," while just 12 percent disagreed. Even more impressive, 79 percent agreed that "government investments in education, infrastructure, and science are necessary to ensure America's long-term economic growth" compared to a mere 9 percent who disagreed.

In the same survey, given a choice between the two statements, "government should do more to promote the common good" and "government should do more to promote individual liberty" the public selected the common good statement by a 60 percent-to-37 percent margin. Another statement choice elicited an even more positive reaction and one particularly interesting in light of the current economic debate between progressives and conservatives. The choice was between "it's time for government to take a larger and stronger role in making the economy work for the average American" and "turning to big government to solve our economic problems will do more harm than good." By 62 percent to 35 percent, the public opted for a larger and stronger government. Evidently, the big government meme promoted by conservatives doesn't pack the same punch it once did.

Support for government action



None of this should be taken to mean, of course, that the public has no negative views about government. They most certainly do, as documented in numerous surveys, including the Progressive Studies Program ideology survey. Government waste and inefficiency, for example, remains a powerful conservative counterargument, as does a lack of accountability.[50] But at this point, positive views of government's role are outweighing negative views and that is of great significance moving forward.

This is especially so since it is growing groups that hold the most positive views of government. In the 2008 exit poll, Millennial (18- to 29-year-olds) voters felt by a 69 percent-to-27 percent margin (compared to 51-43 overall among all voters) that government should be doing more to solve problems rather than that government is doing too many things best left to businesses and individuals.

Similarly, on the PSP survey progressive government index, Millennials scored 56.3—with zero representing the most conservative position and 100 the most progressive—compared to 54 for the public as a whole. Hispanics scored even higher at 59.9. Professionals[51] and single women also had high scores, with 57.2 and 56.8, respectively. White college graduates scored slightly lower than the overall average (53.5) but still significantly higher than the white working class (51.9), chiefly because they are much less persuaded by conservative counterarguments on government.

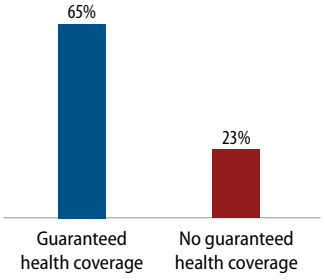
Health care for all

The public's support for the $787 billion economic stimulus program certainly suggests a progressive public that believes the government has a large and positive role to play. But the public's support for progressive measures goes far beyond economic stimulus, embracing the ambitious policy priorities articulated by President Obama in his recent budget. Chief among these is health care reform.

In a February CBS News/*New York Times* poll, respondents were asked what domestic policy area besides the economy they wanted Congress to concentrate on most. Health care was the leading choice by 13 points. And the public by a 62 percent-to-34 percent margin explicitly rejects the idea that our current economic problems mean we can't afford to take on health care reform, according to the February 2009 Kaiser Health Care tracking poll.

The public embraces the idea that health care reform should include making health insurance affordable and accessible to all Americans. Levels of support for this idea vary with the wording of the question, but the basic concept is clearly quite popular.[52] Even a January CBS News/*New York Times* question that referred to the government providing "national health insurance" still elicited 59 percent support, with just 32 percent agreeing that health insurance should be left to private enterprise. Interestingly, the same question was asked exactly 20 years ago when America was approaching the Reagan era; only 40 percent supported the national health insurance idea, compared to 59 percent who backed the private enterprise approach.

Support strong for health care reform



Other recent polls show higher support levels. A Center for American Progress/Half in Ten[53] survey conducted two weeks after the election tested views on providing "affordable quality health care coverage for every American." This formulation elicited overwhelming 82 percent-to-16 percent support. In this February's Progressive Studies Program poll, the role of the government in such a health care program was clearly specified as "the federal government should guarantee affordable health coverage for every American." That description produced a 65 percent-to-23 percent split in favor of guaranteeing coverage.

Besides health insurance coverage, the other big issue in health care reform is cost—and the two are related. If the typical (already-covered) individual believes that their family, not just the country as whole, will be better off from health care reform, then that will firm up public support against the inevitable conservative counterattacks. There are now promising signs in exactly that direction.

In the February Kaiser Health Care Tracking poll, 38 percent said they and their family would be better off if the president and Congress passed health care reform, compared to 11 percent who thought they'd be worse off, and 43 percent who thought there wouldn't be much difference. And 39 percent thought specifically that the cost of health care for

their family would improve, while 16 percent thought it would get worse, and 39 percent thought it would stay about the same. Back in September 1993, just before the Clinton health care plan was formally introduced, views were more negative on the individual effects of health care reform. At that point, just 20 percent thought changing the health care system would make them and their family better off, 21 percent thought they'd be worse off, and 57 percent believed there would be no effect.

As with views on the positive role of government, support for health care reform is generally strongest among the growing demographic groups that are bolstering the progressive coalition. Millennials, for example, are resolute in their support. In the Democracy Corps post-election survey, respondents were offered these two statements:

> *Our health care system needs fundamental reform; we should regulate insurance companies and give everyone a choice between a public plan or what they have right now. OR our health care system needs fundamental reform; we should give American families more choice by giving individuals a tax credit to choose their own coverage.*

Millennials preferred the first over the second statement by a 67 percent to 32 percent margin, a substantially higher margin than among all voters (58 percent to 38 percent). There was also a health care statement pair about how boldly we need to act to solve the problem:

> *On health care, we need to act boldly to address the problems; OR on health care, we need to act step-by-step to address the problems.*

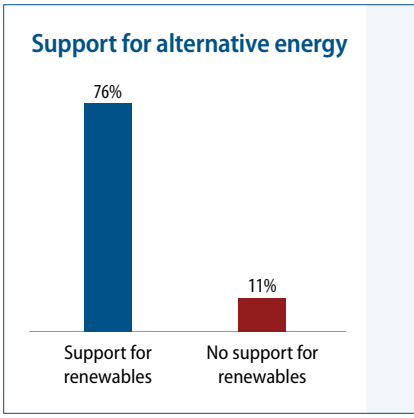
Millennials were solidly on the side of moving boldly, rather than step by step (57 percent to 38 percent), while voters as a whole actually sided slightly with the more incremental approach (46 percent to 50 percent).

In the Progressive Studies Program survey, Millennials backed a federal government guarantee of health care coverage for all Americans by 71 percent to 16 percent, compared to 65 percent to 23 percent among all adults. On the same question, Hispanics reported 85 percent-to-9 percent support, single women reported 77 percent to 12 percent, and professionals reported 66 percent to 21 percent. White college graduates, however, lagged slightly behind the white working class in their support, with 56 percent to 30 percent and 59 percent to 29 percent, respectively.

Clean energy

Another area where the public strongly backs Obama's budget priorities is the move toward clean energy and energy independence. In the Democracy Corps post-election survey, 81 percent put ending "dependence on foreign oil by 2025 by requiring one quarter of U.S. electric power to come from alternative energy where new investments will create new jobs" near the top or higher on the list of policy priorities for the incoming president.

This was actually the highest among 11 policy priorities tested. In the same poll, "investing in alternative energy and getting us off foreign oil" was rated as the second most pressing economic problem the new president should pay attention to (behind reducing unemployment and helping the economy recover). And in a Democracy Corps poll taken in mid-December, 81 percent deemed it extremely or very important to enact a proposal to "invest in alternative energy like wind, solar and bio-fuels to create jobs, and reduce dependence on foreign oil" ranked highest of 33 policy proposals tested.



Consistent with these sentiments, in the November CAP/Half in Ten survey 91 percent backed investing "in green jobs to help build alternative energy needs and make our buildings and homes more energy efficient," with just 6 percent dissenting. Similarly, in the Progressive Studies Program survey, 76 percent agreed that "America's economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar," compared to 11 percent who disagreed.[54] This was the highest level of agreement recorded among the 10 progressive and conservative economic statements tested by the survey.

These levels of support for clean energy are very high but consistent with how public opinion has been evolving on this issue. A late January 2008 survey by WorldPublicOpinion.org found that 88 percent believed that the price of oil will be much or somewhat higher 10 years from now than it is today. Just 7 percent thought it would remain the same, and 6 percent thought it would be lower. In the same survey, 76 percent said that our government should assume that the supply of oil is running out and that we must make a major effort to replace oil with other sources of energy. Just 23 percent believed enough new oil will be found to allow oil to remain a primary energy source in the future.

In a July 2007 BBC World Service poll, the U.S. public said that it will be necessary "[t]o increase the cost of the types of energy that most cause climate change, such as coal and oil/petrol, in order to encourage individuals and industry to use less" by 65 percent to 32 percent. The poll also asked respondents whether they would "favor or oppose raising taxes on the types of energy, such as coal and oil/petrol, that most cause climate change in order to encourage individuals and businesses to use less of these?" While only 46 percent initially supported this, when it was further stipulated that the revenues of the energy tax would be devoted "only to increasing energy efficiency and developing energy sources that do not produce climate change" most of those opposed said they would then support the tax. This produced a final figure of 74 percent either favoring the energy tax to begin with (46 percent) or favoring it if the revenues were used to promote alternative energy (28 percent).

Finally, in an April 2007 CBS New/*New York Times* poll, the American public was almost unanimous (87 percent) in saying that developing alternative energy sources would be a good idea because alternative energy is better for the environment, compared to just 9 percent who thought it would be a bad idea because such sources "are too expensive and can be unreliable."

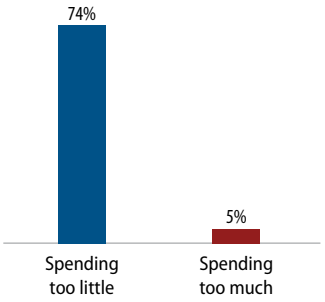
As with a positive role for government and health care for all, support for clean energy tends to be strongest among the growth constituencies who have aligned themselves with progressives. Millennials in the Progressive Studies Program survey endorsed the idea that America's economic future requires a transformation away from oil, gas, and coal to renewable energy sources such as wind and solar by a 78 percent-to-9 percent margin, compared to 76 percent to 11 percent among adults as a whole. Other growth constituencies were even stronger: Postgraduates backed the idea by 80 percent to 11 percent, single women by 81 percent to 8 percent, and college-educated whites also by 81 percent to 8 percent. Hispanics however were slightly below the overall public average at 75 percent to 13 percent.

A 21st-entury educational system

The Obama budget, along with the already-passed stimulus package, put a huge emphasis and unprecedented resources behind improving the American educational system. Here again the progressive agenda of the American public is fully consistent with this emphasis. Americans continue to back school reform and enhanced accountability, but they believe the school system needs a substantial infusion of government resources to adequately meet today's challenges. The public sees education as the single most important contributor to individual upward mobility,[55] as well as central to the nation's long-run economic success, and it doesn't want this area short-changed.

On the most general level, Americans for the last three decades have felt that too little, rather than too much, money is being spent on improving the nation's education system, according to the University of Chicago's General Social Survey. And, just as with support for higher standards and more accountability, support for more spending has strengthened over time—support levels since 1990 are generally higher than in the 1980s and much higher than in the 1970s.The last available survey in that series, conducted in 2006, illustrates well the current strength of support for education spending. Almost three quarters (74 percent) thought the government was spending too little on education, compared to a microscopic 5 percent who thought too much was being spent. This works out to a "net" spending figure (too little minus too much) of +66 percent, a very impressive support level indeed and a full 27 percentage points higher than that recorded by the survey series in 1973.

Support for education spending



Americans claim they would feel roughly the same way about increased education spending, even if their taxes were to go up as a result, as shown by the results of numerous survey questions going back many years. This is especially true if the increased tax revenue were earmarked for improving public schools (67 percent support in a Lake Sosin Perry/Public Education Network 2003 poll; 79 percent support in a 2004 Educational Testing Service, or ETS, poll). Of course, one should never assume that raising taxes for such a purpose would be easy, but it does speak to the intensity of public support for increased education spending.

But the public has doubts—sensibly enough—on the efficacy of simply spending money to solve educational problems. What the public really wants is not just increased education spending in general but increased education spending on reforms and improvements it deems effective. Survey data have consistently shown that the public is more supportive of certain reforms and improvements that cost money than they are of simply increasing funding for education. And in an interesting 2003 finding from the Mellman Group, support for increased education spending actually went up by 13 points in their survey once it was specified what that increased funding was for.

So what are the specific educational improvements the public would like to see funded? Start with more and better teachers and smaller class size, which consistently are at or near the top of the public's priorities in education surveys. For example, in a 2003 Lake Sosin Perry/Public Education Network survey, the top two priorities for improving the educational system were raising teacher quality and smaller class size.

Generally speaking, supermajorities of the public support increased education spending in these two areas. Here are some illustrative findings from a 2001 ETS survey: 89 percent of the public supported hiring more teachers to reduce class size; 89 percent supported raising teacher salaries to hire and retain good teachers; and 81 percent supported raising teacher pay for most teachers and doubling salaries for the top 20 percent of teachers, based on performance and qualifications. In a 2006 ETS survey, the idea to "dramatically increase teachers' salaries to attract more well-qualified teachers" still received 73 percent support even when it was specified that this would entail "a significant increase in taxes."

The public is also heavily in favor of a program of school modernization and construction. In the poll just cited, 78 percent said they supported using more taxpayer funds to build and repair schools. And in a 1998 Gallup/Phi Delta Kappa poll, a proposal on "providing funds to help repair and replace older school buildings" received support from an overwhelming 86 percent of the public, higher even than public support for the very popular idea of class size reduction in the early primary grades (80 percent). While neither the ETS nor the Gallup/PDK question mentioned a specific amount, other polling data show similar levels of support for proposals to spend $22 billion (82 percent in a 1999 Luntz Research poll) or $30 billion (74 percent in a 1998 Greenberg Research/Tarrance Group/American Federation of Teachers/National Education Association poll) on modernization/construction efforts.

Another item that appears to be high on the public's list of education spending priorities is expanding the availability of preschool. According to a 2001 Hart Research/National Institute for Early Education Research poll, 87 percent of the public supported (64 strongly supported) creating state government programs to make preschool universally available to all parents who wish to enroll their children. Similarly, in 2002 Gallup/PDK poll, 82 percent of the public said they favored making pre-K available as part of the public

school system. And, in the 2003 Lake Sosin Perry/PEN poll, early childhood education actually topped a list of nine education areas—including teacher training and pay and reducing class size—that the public wanted protected from budget cutbacks.

The public also shows strong interest in the expansion of afterschool programs. In a 2003 Lake Sosin Perry/Tarrance Group/Afterschool Alliance poll, 88 percent of the public said they favored (58 percent strongly favored) providing comprehensive, five days a week afterschool programs in their community and 77 percent said they favored having the federal government set aside funds to pay for these programs. In the 2006 ETS poll, 81 percent favored expanding afterschool programs and lowering elementary school class sizes, even if this increased the per-pupil cost by thousands of dollars.

Besides spending on the specific items mentioned here, would the public support additional spending specifically designed to improve public schools for disadvantaged children? They say they would. In the 1998 Gallup/PDK poll, two-thirds of the public said they would pay higher taxes just to provide the revenues needed for such spending and 83 percent in a 1998 Peter Harris/Recruiting New Teachers poll agreed strongly that, if necessary, more money should be spent to bring fully qualified teachers to the economically disadvantaged.

Finally, a 2002 Committee for Education Funding survey asked respondents to rate different reasons to increase spending on education. Topping the list was improving recruitment and retention of quality teachers, consistent with findings mentioned above. Intriguingly, though, the second most popular reason was "to give students from low income families equal access to the opportunities education provides" (60 percent saying a very good reason and another 28 percent saying a fairly good reason). This result suggests that the public's support for increased education spending is importantly motivated by concerns that go beyond their own children and community.

Of course, a crucial reason for improving K-12 education is to ensure that students are adequately prepared to attend college. But many cannot attend college for financial reasons, even if they are adequately prepared. The public is strongly supportive of providing federal or state assistance to students who have the ability and desire to attend college but lack the money to do so (86 percent to 12 percent in a 2008 Gallup/PDK poll).

The most recent indicator of support for increased education spending comes from the Democracy Corps post-election survey. In that poll, the following choice was offered:

> *We need to reform our public schools and invest properly so that we can give our children a world class education. OR we need to reform our schools by giving parents vouchers so they have more choice and can send their children to private schools when public schools are failing.*

Voters chose the first statement over the second statement by 68 percent to 28 percent.

Following the pattern we have seen in the other issue areas, Millennials were even more supportive of investing in education than voters as a whole. In the same survey, 45 percent of the Millennials who chose to vote for Barack Obama cited the idea that he "will invest in education and make college more affordable" as one of the top three reasons why they voted for him. This was the top reason for Millennials but only the fourth-ranked reason among all Obama voters. And in terms of the seriousness of specific economic problems, Millennials' top choice was "failure to make the investments we need in education and research to maintain America's leadership" (94 percent cited this either a very serious of serious problem). Among voters as a whole, however, this was only the fifth-ranked choice.

In the investment-versus-vouchers question cited above, Millennials were also more supportive than voters as a whole of the need to invest in schools, favoring that approach over vouchers by 81 percent to 12 percent. Hispanics were similarly lopsided at 80 percent to 16 percent. Professionals (66 percent to 29 percent), single women (63 percent to 25 percent), and white college graduates (62 percent to 35 percent) however, while supportive, were less so than all voters.

A new approach to national security

Another area where the public's progressive views are leading us toward a break with the recent past is on national security. In a February Democracy Corps survey, 82 percent rated "restoring respect for America in the world as a moral leader, restoring our key alliances, and putting more emphasis on diplomacy" as an extremely or very important goal for Obama's presidency, as high as any other policy goal tested. In the Progressive Studies Program survey, 69 percent agreed that "America's security is best promoted by working through diplomacy, alliances, and international institutions," compared to just 11 percent who disagreed and 73 percent thought "a positive image of America around the world is necessary to achieve our national security goals," while 13 percent disagreed. And in the Democracy Corps post-election survey, 57 percent endorsed the idea that "America's security depends on building strong ties with other nations" rather than "bottom line, America's security depends on its own military strength" (37 percent).

These are strong views and certainly indicate a public that has come a long way since the aftermath of 9/11. But they are fully consistent with how public opinion on America's role in the world has been evolving for a number of years. For instance, in a July 2008 survey by the Chicago Council on Global Affairs, the top foreign policy priority in the public's eyes was improving America's standing in the world, followed by protecting the jobs of American workers.

In the same survey, Americans also wanted to see the United States participate in several treaties and agreements that would signal a change in the United States's role in the world community. By 88 percent to 11 percent, the public wanted to see the United States enter into a treaty that would prohibit nuclear weapons and explosions. By 76 percent to 23 percent, they were supportive of a new international treaty to address climate change. And by 68 percent to 30 percent, they want the United States to enter into an agreement to try individuals for war crimes in the International Criminal Court who wouldn't be tried by their own country.

The public also supported creating several new international institutions to deal with ongoing global problems. By 69 percent to 30 percent, they endorsed a new institution to monitor the worldwide energy market. By 68 percent to 30 percent, they supported a new institution to monitor countries for compliance with treaty obligations on greenhouse gas emissions. By 59 percent to 38 percent, they wanted to see a new institution that monitors worldwide financial markets and seeks to avert impending crises. And by 57 percent to 42 percent, they thought a new institution should be formed to provide information and assistance to countries affected by large-scale migration flows.

Farther back, in a February 2007 Third Way/Penn, Schoen and Berland poll, voters agreed, by a 58 percent-to-39 percent margin, that "the United States should invade other countries only when we have the support of the UN, NATO or both" and, by a 83 percent-to-15 percent margin, they thought that "the United States cannot impose democracy by force on another country." And, by 70 percent to 27 percent, voters agreed that "sometimes, it's better to leave a dictator in charge of a hostile country if he is contained, rather than risk chaos that we can't control if he is brought down."

In the same poll, 76 percent thought that "we are stronger and more able to achieve our goals abroad when we work with alliances and international organizations," rather than "alliances and international organizations tie us down and prevent us from using our power effectively to achieve our goals" (18 percent). And, by 58 percent to 38 percent, voters agreed that "if negotiating with countries that support terrorism, like Iran and Syria, will help protect our security interests, the United States should consider negotiating with them."

Similar findings on public support for international cooperation and diplomacy come from a November 2006 Program on International Policy Attitudes survey. In that survey, the public, by an overwhelming 80 percent-to-17 percent margin, endorsed the idea that goodwill toward the United States was central to fostering international cooperation against security threats, rather than the idea that goodwill was not particularly important because the United States is so much stronger than other countries. And 72 percent deemed it a bad idea for the United States to pressure other countries to change by threatening to remove a country's existing government.

In addition, the public overwhelmingly thought that when dealing with countries who oppose the United States, talking with such countries lessened their tendencies to take provocative action (82 percent) and made it more likely mutually agreeable solutions could be found (84 percent). Finally, in a September 2005 Chicago Council on Foreign Relations/PIPA poll, the public, by more than a 3-to-1 ratio (66 percent to 21 percent), believed that warning a government that the United States might intervene militarily if it does not carry out some democratic reforms does more harm than good, and 72 percent said the experience in Iraq has made them feel worse about the possibility of using military force to bring about democracy in the future.

As with the other issues covered here, support for this new approach to national security is generally stronger among the growing demographic groups that are leaning progressive. In the Progressive Studies Program survey, Millennials had a 55.6 on the progressive international index, compared to 52.3 for all adults. Hispanics (56.3), professionals (59.9), single women (55.4), and white college graduates (54.5) also had high scores. The white college graduate score contrasts sharply with the white working-class score of just 48.4.

Conclusion

Thus, along with a new demography and a new geography, we have a new policy agenda, a notably progressive agenda, that is emerging. This new agenda is clearly consistent with the bold plans and priorities laid out so far by the Obama administration. That does not mean, however, the administration will necessarily have an easy time implementing these plans. Conservatives will vigorously oppose these plans at every turn. And among the public, conservative arguments about government and government programs still retain considerable strength, as the new Progressive Studies Program report on the State of American Political Ideology clearly illustrates.

But at this point in our history, progressive arguments are in the ascendancy. Combined with the continuing demographic and geographic changes tilting our country in a progressive direction, these trends should take America down a very different road than has been traveled in the last eight years. A new progressive America is on the rise.

Endnotes

1 Unless otherwise noted, figures on the demographics of voters or the voting preferences of different demographic groups are based on author's analysis of national and state exit poll data for various years.

2 William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of Pennsylvania: Not Another Rustbelt State " (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, April 2008); William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of the Intermountain West: The New Swing Region" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, August 2008); William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of Ohio, Michigan and Missouri: Battlegrounds in the Heartland" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, October 2008); William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of Virginia and Florida: Bookends of the New South" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, October 2008)..

3 William Frey, "Race, Immigration and America's Changing Electorate." In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2008) and author's analysis of Census population estimates by race.

4 Frey, "Race, Immigration, and American's Changing Electorate" and author's analysis of Census population estimates by race.

5 Roberto Suro, Richard Fry, and Jeffrey Passel, "Hispanics and the 2004 Election: Population, Electorate and Voters"(Pew Hispanic Center, June, 2005) and Frey, "Race, Immigration, and American's Changing Electorate."

6 Author's analysis of CPS and exit poll data.

7 Frey, "Race, Immigration, and American's Changing Electorate."

8 Author's analysis of CPS and exit poll data and Frey, "Race, Immigration, and American's Changing Electorate."

9 This is both because higher percentages of recent cohorts of 25- to 29- year-olds have attained a college degree and because some in these cohorts who have not attained a college degree by 25 to -29 complete the degree later in life.

10 This assessment is consistent with that of a Census Bureau study from the beginning of this decade,. See Jennifer Cheeseman Day and Kurt J. Bauman, "Have We Reached the Top?: Educational Attainment Projections of the US Population."Census Bureau Population Division: Working Paper Series No. 43, (May, 2000), which predicted continued educational upgrading through 2028.

11 Paul Osterman, "College for All?: The Labor Market for College-Educated Workers" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, August 2008).

12 Results are not available from all contested states because the CBS/New York Times state exit polls of 1988 only covered about half of the 50 states.

13 Data in this section from John B. Judis and Ruy Teixeira, *The Emerging Democratic Majority*, Scribner 2002 and author's analysis of National Election Study, exit polls, and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

14 Author's analysis of Census marital status data.

15 Women's Voices, Women Vote, "Unmarried America" (2007).

16 Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, "A New America: Unmarrieds Drive Political and Social Change," October 31, 2007

17 Women's Voices, Women Vote, "Unmarried America" (2007).

18 Author's analysis of Census marital status data.

19 Author's analysis of Census educational attainment data.

20 Much of the data in this section is drawn from Ruy Teixeira, "Generation We and the 2008 Election" which may be found on the Generation We website: http://www.gen-we.com/.

21 In this analysis, I cut off the Millennial generation at birth year 2000, as is common among market researchers and other generational analysts (I emphasize common; there is no consensus on the proper date a this point), so the generation covers birth years 1978-2000. Earlier cutoffs reduce the size of the generation by roughly 4 and a half million a birth year. So, for example, if you cut off the Millennial generation at 1996 instead of 2000, the size of the generation's voting-age population in 2020 would be reduced by about 18 million from the 103 million cited below.

22 Extrapolations from Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE), "Turnout Rises to at Least 52 percent,", November 7, 2008. Exit poll extrapolations of youth turnout have generally tracked the Census data well; see CIRCLE, "The Youth Vote 2004." CIRCLE Working Paper 35, (July 2005) for useful comparisons.

23 Michael McDonald, "2008 Unofficial Voter Turnout," US Elections Project, November 9, 2008.

24 Estimations in this and subsequent paragraphs are based on author's analysis of 2008 Census National Population Projections by single years of age, the 2008 NEP exit poll sample composition, and 2004 Census Voter Supplement data by single years of age.

25 John Green and E.J. Dionne Jr., "Religion and American Politics: More Secular, More Evangelical or Both?" In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2008).

26 Calculations based on author's analysis of data in Green and Dionne, "Religion and American Politics: More Secular, More Evangelical or Both?" The Green and Dionne data include a grab-bag of religions in their other faiths category, ranging from Jews and Muslims to Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses to Unitarians, Humanists, and Ethical Culture. Since these groups cannot be disaggregated from the Green and Dionne data, they are all classified outside of the white Christian category.

27 Unless otherwise specified, all data in this section based on author's analysis of official county-level election returns.

28 The technical definition used by the Census Bureau is as follows: Any nonmetro county with an urban cluster of at least 10,000 persons or more plus any outlying counties where commuting to the central county with the urban cluster is 25 percent or higher, or if 25 percent of the employment in the outlying county is made up of commuters from to the central county with the urban cluster

29 See Robert Lang, Thomas Sanchez, and Alan Berube, "The New Suburban Politics: A County-Based Analysis of Metropolitan Voting Trends since 2000." In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2008) for a thorough explanation of the categories used in the typology.

30 The MI/Brookings typology only covers 50 of the 51 large metropolitan areas (the Raleigh-Cary MSA in North Carolina was not included). Figures given here are based on those 50 metropolitan areas for which the typology is available.

31 Many of these counties include urban core areas as well as the suburbs that immediately surround them.

32 Robert E. Lang and Thomas W. Sanchez, "The New Metro Politics: Interpreting Recent Presidential Elections Using a County-Based Regional Typology," Metropolitan Institute 2006 Election Brief, Virginia Tech (February 2006).

33 Lang, Sanchez and Berube, op. cit.

34 A third intermediate category is states where neither conservatives nor progressives had a clear edge but now appear to be in the progressive camp: Iowa, New Hampshire, and New Mexico.

35 The regional breakdown here is drawn from the work of William Frey and Ruy Teixeira in "The Political Geography of Pennsylvania: Not Another Rustbelt State" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, April 2008).

36 Ibid.

37 The regional breakdown here follows William Frey and Ruy Teixeira in "The Political Geography of Ohio, Michigan and Missouri: Battlegrounds in the Heartland",(Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, October 2008).

38 Based on Census Bureau data; 2007 is latest date for which these data are available.

39 The tripartite division of the Denver metropolitan area and other region breakdowns for Colorado follow William Frey and Ruy Teixeira, "The Political Geography of the Intermountain West: The New Swing Region" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, August 2008).

40 The regional breakdown here follows Frey and Teixeira in "The Political Geography of Ohio, Michigan and Missouri: Battlegrounds in the Heartland."

41 The regional breakdown here follows William Frey and Ruy Teixeira in "The Political Geography of Virginia and Florida: Bookends of the New South" (Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, October, 2008).

42 Among counties with 10,000 or more in population.

43 The regional breakdown here follows Frey and Teixeira in "The Political Geography of Virginia and Florida: Bookends of the New South."

44 See Scott Keeter, "The Aging of the Boomers and the Rise of the Millennials." In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2008).

45 Only a small part of the difference between whites and Hispanics on this index could be accounted for the one immigration question in the battery. Even without that question, Hispanics still scored much higher than whites on this index.

46 Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation, "2002 National Survey of Latinos" (December 2002).

47 Data in this and the next paragraph from Tom W. Smith, "Changes in Family Structure, Family Values and Politics, 1972-2006." In Ruy Teixeira, ed., *Red, Blue and Purple America: The Future of Election Demographics* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2008).

48 The index was constructed by adding responses to ten statements on the role and nature of government. For each item, respondents were asked to rate their level of the agreement with the statement on a 0 to 10 scale. Each statement was a positive expression of either a conservative or progressive argument, with an even mix between conservative and progressive arguments. To construct the index, responses to conservative statements were reverse coded (e.g., a "7" reply to a conservative statement became a "3" for purposes of creating the index).

49 These items were responded to on a 10-point scale, with 10 being the strongest possible agreement and 0 being the strongest possible disagreement. Responses from 6-10 were considered agreement; responses 0-4 were considered disagreement and 5 was treated as neutral.

50 Particularly useful in understanding the continuing strength of these arguments is the report by Al Quinlan, Mike Bocian, Stan Greenberg and James Carville, "Getting the Public to Listen" (February 28, 2007 based on a Democracy Corps survey).

51 Operationalized in these surveys as postgraduates.

52 For more data on this and other aspects of public opinion on health care, including expressed willingness to pay higher taxes to support health care reform, see Ruy Teixeira, "What the Public Really Wants on Health Care" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, December 2006).

53 This refers to a campaign to halve the poverty rate in 10 years.

54 Data on more specific clean energy proposals are consistent with the levels of support reported here. See Ruy Teixeira, "What the Public Really Wants on Energy and the Environment" (Washington, D.C>: Center for American Progress, March 2007).

55 For this and much other data on education and public opinion see Ruy Teixeira, "What the Public Really Wants on Jobs and the Economy" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, October 2006) and Ruy Teixeira, "What the Public Really Wants on Education" (Washington, D.C.: Center for American Progress, September 2006).

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The Progressive Studies Program at CAP is made possible by the generous support and partnership of the Glaser Progress Foundation, created by Rob Glaser, CEO and Chairman of RealNetworks, Inc, and directed by Martin Collier. The foundation is focused on building a more just, sustainable and humane world through its work in four program areas: measuring progress, global HIV/AIDS, independent media and animal advocacy.

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