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The Latino Vote and Obama's Reelection Possibilities: A Quantitative Assessment of its Possible Impact on Nine Swing States

Justine Calcagno
Center for Latin American, Caribbean, and Latino Studies

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The Latino Vote and Obama's Reelection Possibilities

A Quantitative Assessment Of its Possible Impact on Nine Swing States

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The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at <http://web.gc.cuny.edu/lastudies/>

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OVERVIEW

Based on extensive data on electorates (citizens 18 years of age and older), registered voters, and the actual voting populations by race/ethnicity for the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential elections in nine U.S. swing states (Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia) some tentative projections may be made for the possible impact of the Latino vote on the 2012 presidential election.

The extant data for the 2000, 2004, and 2008 may be used to calculate annual growth rates for electorates, registered voters, and voting populations by race/ethnicity. These annual growth rates have been used in this report to project possible outcomes for the 2012 presidential race in nine critical swing states in the absence of precise demographic or political data on voter demographics for 2012.

Assuming that current polling data are somewhat accurate, Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote may not be as meaningful in determining the outcomes of the 2012 presidential election in each state. However, if support for Obama in these states shifts even slightly among other racial/ethnic groups, both Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote could potentially impact the outcome of the election.

Colorado

President Obama won the popular vote in Colorado in 2008 by 8.6 percentage points.¹ According to exit polls, 61.1% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.² Current polls suggest that 45% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 69% of all other racial/ethnic groups will vote for Obama in 2012 in Colorado. If these data are accurate, Obama will obtain 50.05% of the popular vote in Colorado if at least 68.4% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him.³ (See Table 1).

Table 1
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Colorado 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	2,299	45.0%	1,034
Non-Hispanic Black	99	69.0%	68
Asian	235	69.0%	162
Latino	217	69.0%	149
Other	62	69.0%	43
Total	2,912	50.05%	1,457

Note: All population values given in thousands

¹ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

² Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008.

³ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on September 20, 2012.

What if Colorado Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.⁴ If Latinos eligible to vote turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama would obtain approximately 50.3% of the vote in the state, assuming the accuracy of current polling. (See table 2).

Table 2
Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in Colorado 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	2,299	45.0%	1,034	
Non-Hispanic Black	99	69.0%	68	
Asian	235	69.0%	162	
Latino	262	69.0%	181	
Other	62	69.0%	43	
Total	2,957	50.3%	1,489	

Colorado Summary

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in Colorado in 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 10.8% of the electorate, 8.8% of all registered voters, and 7.9% of those who will actually vote. Assuming current polling numbers, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Colorado, at least 68.4% of Latinos who vote must vote for Obama.

These findings also highlight the potential importance of Latino voter turnout. If fewer Latinos turn out to vote than currently projected, or if support for Obama among Latinos declines, Obama could lose the popular vote in Colorado. These findings suggest that Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote could substantially shape the outcome of the 2012 presidential election in Colorado.

Florida

President Obama won the popular vote in Florida in 2008 by 2.5 percentage points. According to exit polls, 54.8% of Latinos voted for him.⁵ Current polls suggest 38% of Non-Hispanic Whites, 95% of Non-Hispanic Blacks, and 47% of Latinos will vote for Obama in the state⁶. These polls do not report support for Obama among Asians or racially unidentified voters. Assuming current polls among Non-Hispanic Whites, Non-Hispanic Blacks, and Latinos, and using 2008 exit poll figures for support for Obama among Asians and racially unidentified voters, Obama will receive 47.5% of the popular vote

⁴ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

⁵ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>; Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008.

⁶ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 11th, 2012

in Florida if participation rates are the same as in 2008.⁷ (See table 3). These data suggest that Obama may lose the popular vote in the state unless 61.1% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him or there is a substantial error in the voting projections according to polling data for other race/ethnic groups.

Table 3
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Florida 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	6,198	38.0%	2,355
Non-Hispanic Black	1,255	95.0%	1,192
Asian	109	45.8%	50
Latino	1,651	47.0%	776
Other	25	57.7%	14
Total	9,237	47.5%	4,387

What if Florida Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.⁸ If Latinos eligible to vote in Florida turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama would still obtain approximately 47.5% of the vote, assuming the accuracy of current polling. If all Latinos who are eligible to vote in Florida turn out to vote at 66%, and 61.7% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for Obama, he would obtain the majority vote in Florida, assuming accuracy of current polling data. (See table 4).

Table 4
Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in Florida 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	6,198	38.0%	2,355
Non-Hispanic Black	1,255	95.0%	1,192
Asian	109	45.8%	50
Latino	1,560	61.7%	963
Other	25	57.7%	14
Total	9,147	50.01%	4,574

⁷ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

⁸ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

Florida Summary

These findings suggest that Latinos may be a critical swing vote in Florida. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 17% of the electorate, 18.5% of all registered voters, and 18% of those who will actually vote in Florida. Assuming current polls, Obama must obtain at least 61.1% of the Latino vote to win the popular vote in Florida if the other race/ethnic groups vote at rates indicated in the polls.

These findings also highlight the potential importance of Latino voter turnout. If a greater percentage of the Latino electorate (66%) turned out to vote than in 2008, and a higher percentage would vote for Obama, this would impact the outcome of the election.

Iowa

President Obama won the popular vote in Iowa in 2008 by 9.3 percentage points.⁹ According to exit polls, 74.7% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.¹⁰ Assuming current polls, which suggest that 50% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 79% of all other voters will vote for Obama in Iowa, Obama will receive approximately 52.2% of the popular vote in the 2012 election in Iowa.¹¹ (See table 5). This suggests Obama will win the popular vote in Iowa even if no voting Latinos cast their ballots for him.

Table 5
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Iowa 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	1,460	50.0%	730
Non-Hispanic Black	47	79.0%	37
Asian	11	79.0%	9
Latino	21	79.0%	16
Other	41	79.0%	32
Total	1,579	52.2%	824

Iowa Summary

Latinos in Iowa are projected to comprise approximately 1.3% of those who will vote in 2012 and thus their impact on the overall results will be much less critical than in Colorado and Florida. However, if support for Obama declines even slightly among the other racial/ethnic groups, then Latino voter turnout may be important despite comprising such a small share of potential voters. In this scenario, if fewer Latinos turn out to vote than currently projected or if support for Obama among Latinos declines, Obama could lose enough votes to lose the popular vote in Iowa.

⁹ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

¹⁰ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

¹¹ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 18th, 2012

Nevada

President Obama won the popular vote in Nevada in 2008 by 12.4 percentage points.¹² According to exit polls, 76% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.¹³ Current polls suggest that 41% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 67% of all other racial/ethnic groups will vote for Obama in Nevada.¹⁴ Assuming current polls, Obama will obtain 49.6% of the popular vote in Nevada. (See table 6). This suggests at least 70.2% of voting Latinos must cast their ballot for Obama in order for him to win the popular vote in Nevada, a higher rate than the polls (67%) suggest. This would be a lower level of support than the 76% of Latinos who voted for him in 2008 and is entirely feasible.

Table 6
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Nevada 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	889	41.0%	365	
Non-Hispanic Black	168	67.0%	113	
Asian	49	67.0%	33	
Latino	194	67.0%	130	
Other	30	67.0%	20	
Total	1,329	49.6%	659	

What if Nevada Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.¹⁵ If Latinos who are eligible to vote in Nevada turned out to vote at 66%, and 67.9% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for Obama, he would obtain the majority vote in Nevada, assuming accuracy of current polling. (See table 7).

Table 7
Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in Nevada 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	889	41.0%	365	
Non-Hispanic Black	168	67.0%	113	
Asian	49	67.0%	33	
Latino	214	67.9%	145	
Other	30	67.0%	20	
Total	1,350	50.01%	675	

¹² <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

¹³ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

¹⁴ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 27, 2012. Current polls do not break down support for Obama by race/ethnicity for Non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, Asians, or racially unidentified individuals.

¹⁵ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

Nevada Summary

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in Nevada in 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 16% of the electorate, 14.2% of all registered voters, and 14.9% of those who will actually vote in Nevada. Assuming current polls, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Nevada, at least 70.2% of Latinos who vote must vote for Obama. These findings underscore the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote.

These findings also highlight the potential importance of Latino voter turnout. If fewer Latinos turn out to vote than currently projected or if support for Obama among Latino voters declines, Obama could easily lose enough votes to lose the popular vote in Nevada.

New Hampshire

President Obama won the popular vote in New Hampshire in 2008 by 9.5 percentage points, with approximately 78.7% of Latinos voting for him.¹⁶ Current polls suggest that 51% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 49% of all other racial/ethnic groups intend to vote for Obama in 2012 in New Hampshire. If this is the case Obama will obtain approximately 50.9% of the popular vote in the state.¹⁷ (See table 8). These data indicate Obama will win the popular vote in New Hampshire even if 0% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him.

Table 8
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in New Hampshire 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	760	51.0%	388
Non-Hispanic Black	3	49.0%	1
Asian	6	49.0%	3
Latino	11	49.0%	6
Other	13	49.0%	6
Total	793	50.9%	404

What if New Hampshire Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.¹⁸ If Latinos who are eligible to vote in 2012 in New Hampshire turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama would obtain approximately 50.9% of the vote, assuming the accuracy of current polling. Yet, if support for Obama among voting Non-Hispanic Whites in New Hampshire were to decline by approximately 1 percentage point (50.1% support among voting Non-Hispanic Whites) Obama would not win the popular vote in New Hampshire. In this scenario, if all Latinos who are eligible to vote in New Hampshire turn out to vote at 66% and 49% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for Obama, he would obtain the majority vote in New Hampshire. (See table 9).

¹⁶ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>.

Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

¹⁷ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on September 27, 2012. Current polls do not break down support for Obama by race/ethnicity for Non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, Asians, or racially unidentified individuals.

¹⁸ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

Table 9
 Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in New Hampshire 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	760	50.1%	381
Non-Hispanic Black	3	49.0%	1
Asian	6	49.0%	3
Latino	14	49.0%	7
Other	13	49.0%	6
Total	796	50.05%	398

New Hampshire Summary

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in New Hampshire in 2012, if support among other racial/ethnic groups declines. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.2% of all registered voters, and 1.4% of those who actually vote. Assuming current polls, Obama will win the popular vote in New Hampshire even if 0% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. However, if support for Obama among other racial/ethnic groups declines then the direction of the Latino vote could impact the election.

North Carolina

President Obama won the popular vote in 2008 in North Carolina by 0.4 percentage points.¹⁹ According to exit polls, 75.3% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state.²⁰ Assuming current polls are accurate, which suggest 33% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 87% of all other voters will vote for Obama in 2012 in North Carolina, Obama will obtain 48.2% of the popular vote in North Carolina.²¹ (See table 10). This suggests even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for Obama, he will only obtain 48.5% of the popular vote in North Carolina. Hypothetically, If support for Obama increases among Non-Hispanic Whites by approximately 2.5 percentage points (35.6% support among Non-Hispanic Whites), or non-Hispanic black voter turnout is larger than projected, Obama may win the popular vote in North Carolina, assuming current polling data are correct.²²

¹⁹ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

²⁰ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

²¹ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 18, 2012. Current polls do not report the break down in support for Obama by race/ethnicity for Non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, Asians, or racially unidentified individuals

²² Projections regarding the impact of greater Latino voter turnout cannot be made in this case due to the outcomes of the 2012 projections. In the case of North Carolina, the projected figure for Latinos who will be eligible to vote is smaller than the projected figure for the Latinos who will actually vote. Projections derived from annual growth rates are approximations only. Because these data come from aggregated US Census Reports they cannot be person weighted.

Table 10
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in North Carolina 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	3,902	33.0%	1,288
Non-Hispanic Black	1,113	87.0%	969
Asian	199	87.0%	173
Latino	144	87.0%	125
Other	68	87.0%	59
Total	5,427	48.2%	2,615

North Carolina Summary

The present findings suggest it is less likely Latinos will be a swing vote in North Carolina 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.4% of all registered voters, and 2.7% of those who actually vote in North Carolina. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama will not win the popular vote in North Carolina even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. Only if support for Obama increases among other racial/ethnic groups could the Latino vote push the election in Obama's favor. The present findings suggest Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote may not be particularly impactful on the 2012 election in North Carolina.

Ohio

President Obama won the popular vote in 2008 in Ohio by 4 percentage points.²³ According to exit polls, 66.7% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.²⁴ Assuming current polls, which suggest that 44% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 87% of all other voters will vote for Obama in Ohio, Obama will obtain 50.5% of the popular vote in the state.²⁵ (See table 11). This suggests at least 49.7% of voting Latinos must cast their ballots for Obama in order for him to obtain the majority vote in Ohio.

Table 11
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Ohio 2012

	Projected Voting	Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population
Non-Hispanic White	4,651	44.0%	2,046
Non-Hispanic Black	630	87.0%	548
Asian	51	87.0%	44
Latino	74	87.0%	64
Other	77	87.0%	67
Total	5,483	50.5%	2,770

²³ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

²⁴ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

²⁵ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 11, 2012. Current polls do not report the break down in support for Obama by race/ethnicity for Non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, Asians, or racially unidentified individuals.

What if Ohio Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.²⁶ If all Latinos who are eligible to vote in Ohio turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama will obtain approximately 50.7% of the vote in the state, assuming the accuracy of current polling. (See table 12).

Table 12

Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in Ohio 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	4,651	44.0%	2046	
Non-Hispanic Black	630	87.0%	548	
Asian	51	87.0%	44	
Latino	94	87.0%	82	
Other	77	87.0%	67	
Total	5,503	50.7%	2788	

Ohio Summary

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in Ohio in 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 1.7% of the electorate, 1.4% of all registered voters, and 1.3% of those who will actually vote in Ohio. Assuming current polls are accurate, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Ohio, at least 49.7% of voting Latinos who vote must cast their ballot for Obama. These findings underscore the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote.

These findings also highlight the potential importance of Latino voter turnout. If fewer Latinos turn out to vote in Ohio than currently projected or if support for Obama among Latinos declines, Obama could easily lose enough votes to lose the popular vote in Ohio. These findings suggest that Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote could substantially shape the outcome of the 2012 presidential election in Ohio.

Pennsylvania

President Obama won the popular vote in Pennsylvania in 2008 by 10.4 percentage points.²⁷ According to exit polls, 81.7% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.²⁸ According to current polls, 51% of voters in Pennsylvania are likely to vote for Obama.²⁹ (See table 13). This suggests that 26.2% of voting Latinos must cast their ballots for Obama in order for him to win the popular vote in Pennsylvania.

²⁶ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

²⁷ <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

²⁸ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

²⁹ http://www.rasmussenreports.com/public_content/politics/elections/election_2012/election_2012_presidential_election/pennsylvania/election_2012_pennsylvania_president. Current polls by race/ethnicity are not available at the time of this report.

Table 13
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Pennsylvania 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	5,291	51.0%	2,699	
Non-Hispanic Black	579	51.0%	295	
Asian	28	51.0%	14	
Latino	248	51.0%	126	
Other	70	51.0%	36	
Total	6,217	51.0%	3,170	

What if Pennsylvania Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.³⁰ If all Latinos who are eligible to vote in Pennsylvania turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama would obtain approximately 51% of the vote, assuming current polling. (See table 14).

Table 14
Hypothetical Election Scenario Assuming 66% Latino Electorate Voter Turnout by Race/Ethnicity in Pennsylvania 2012

	Projected Voting		Projected Voting for Obama	
	Population	% of Total	Population	
Non-Hispanic White	5,291	51.0%	2,699	
Non-Hispanic Black	579	51.0%	295	
Asian	28	51.0%	14	
Latino	279	51.0%	142	
Other	70	51.0%	36	
Total	6,248	51.0%	3,186	

Pennsylvania Summary

The present findings suggest Latinos could potentially be a swing vote in 2012 in Pennsylvania. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 3.5% of the electorate, 2.9% of all registered voters, and 2.8% of those who will actually vote in Pennsylvania. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama needs to obtain 26.2% of the Latino vote in order to win the popular vote in Pennsylvania. This underscores the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote for the outcome of the 2012 election in Pennsylvania.

Latino voter turnout may also have some impact. If fewer Latinos turn out to vote than currently projected or if support for Obama among Latinos declines, Obama could potentially lose enough

³⁰ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

votes to lose the popular vote in Pennsylvania. These findings suggest that Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote could substantially shape the outcome of the 2012 presidential election in Pennsylvania.³¹

Virginia

President Obama won the popular vote in 2008 in Virginia by 6.3 percentage points.³² According to exit polls, 74.3% of Latinos voted for Obama in the state in 2008.³³ Assuming the accuracy of current polls, which suggest 34% of Non-Hispanic Whites and 78% of all other voters will vote for Obama in 2012, Obama will receive approximately 45.3% of the popular vote in the state.³⁴ (See table 15). This suggests even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for Obama, he will obtain 45.7% of the popular vote in Virginia.

Table 15
Election Scenario Assuming Current Polls by Race/Ethnicity in Virginia 2012

	Projected Voting		
	Population	% of Total	
			Projected Voting for Obama
			Population
Non-Hispanic White	2,716	34.0%	923
Non-Hispanic Black	686	78.0%	535
Asian	136	78.0%	106
Latino	74	78.0%	58
Other	38	78.0%	30
Total	3,650	45.3%	1,652

What if Virginia Latinos Voted at the Same Percentages as Non-Hispanic Whites and Blacks?

In 2008, Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks turned out to vote at approximately 66% of all eligible voters, while Latinos turned out at approximately 50%.³⁵ If all Latinos who are eligible to vote in 2012 in Virginia turned out to vote at similar rates as Non-Hispanic Whites and Non-Hispanic Blacks (66%), Obama would obtain approximately 45.4% of the popular vote, assuming the accuracy of current polling. If support for Obama among voting Non-Hispanic Whites in Virginia were to increase by approximately 6 percentage points (40.3% support among voting Non-Hispanic Whites) and 66% of Latinos who are eligible to vote turn out to vote at 78% for Obama, he could win the popular vote in Virginia. (See table 16).

Virginia Summary

The present findings suggest it is less likely Latinos will be a swing vote in Virginia 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.4% of all registered voters, and 2.7% of those who will actually vote. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama will not win the popular vote in

³¹ Notably, unlike projection for other swing states, current polls with specific figures for support for Obama by race/ethnicity are not available. Without more precise figures by race/ethnicity, interpretations regarding whether Latinos will be a significant swing vote in Pennsylvania in 2012 should be made with caution.

³² <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/results/president/map.html>

³³ Interuniversity Consortium for Political and Social Research, National Election Pool General Election Exit Polls, 2008

³⁴ The NBC News/WSJ/Marist poll released on October 11, 2012. Current polls do not report the break down in support for Obama by race/ethnicity for Non-Hispanic Blacks, Latinos, Asians, or racially unidentified individuals.

³⁵ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1209/racial-ethnic-voters-presidential-election#end1>

Virginia even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. If support for Obama increases among other racial/ethnic groups, then the Latino vote could push the election in Obama's favor.

Summary

Colorado

This study suggests Latinos could be an important swing vote in Colorado in 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 10.8% of the electorate, 8.8% of all registered voters, and 7.9% of those who will actually vote. Assuming current polling numbers among all race/ethnic groups, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Colorado, at least 68.4% of Latinos who vote must vote for Obama.

Florida

This report indicates that Latinos may be a critical swing vote in Florida. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 17% of the electorate, 18.5% of all registered voters, and 18% of those who will actually vote in Florida. Assuming current polls, Obama must obtain at least 61.1% of the Latino vote to win the popular vote in Florida if the other race/ethnic groups vote at rates indicated in the polls.

Nevada

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in Nevada. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 16% of the electorate, 14.2% of all registered voters, and 14.9% of those who will actually vote in Nevada. Assuming current polls, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Nevada, at least 70.2% of Latinos who vote must vote for Obama. These findings underscore the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote.

Iowa

Latinos in Iowa are projected to comprise approximately 1.3% of those who will vote in 2012 and thus their impact on the overall results will be much less critical than in Colorado, Florida, or Nevada. However, if support for Obama declines even slightly among the other racial/ethnic groups, then Latino voter turnout may be important despite comprising such a small share of potential voters. In this scenario, if fewer Latinos turn out to vote than currently projected or if support for Obama among Latinos declines, Obama could lose enough votes to lose the popular vote in Iowa.

New Hampshire

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in New Hampshire in 2012, if support among other racial/ethnic groups declines. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.2% of all registered voters, and 1.4% of those who actually vote. Assuming current polls, Obama will win the popular vote in New Hampshire even if 0% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. However, if support for Obama among other racial/ethnic groups declines then the direction of the Latino vote could impact the election.

North Carolina

This study suggests it is less likely Latinos will be a swing vote in North Carolina 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.4% of all registered voters, and 2.7% of those who actually vote in North Carolina. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama will not win the popular vote in North Carolina even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. Only if support for Obama increases among other racial/ethnic groups could the Latino vote push the election in Obama's favor. The present findings suggest Latino voter turnout and the direction of the Latino vote may not be particularly impactful on the 2012 election in North Carolina.

Ohio

The present findings suggest Latinos could be an important swing vote in Ohio in 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 1.7% of the electorate, 1.4% of all registered voters, and 1.3% of those who will actually vote in Ohio. Assuming current polls are accurate, in order for Obama to win the popular vote in Ohio, at least 49.7% of voting Latinos who vote must cast their ballot for Obama. These findings underscore the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote.

Pennsylvania

This report suggests that Latinos could potentially be a swing vote in 2012 in Pennsylvania. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 3.5% of the electorate, 2.9% of all registered voters, and 2.8% of those who will actually vote in Pennsylvania. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama needs to obtain 26.2% of the Latino vote in order to win the popular vote in Pennsylvania. This underscores the potential importance of the direction of the Latino vote for the outcome of the 2012 election in Pennsylvania especially if the other race/ethnic groups do not vote as the polls suggest.

Virginia

The present findings suggest it is less likely Latinos will be a swing vote in Virginia 2012. In 2012, Latinos are projected to be 2% of the electorate, 2.4% of all registered voters, and 2.7% of those who will actually vote. Assuming the accuracy of current polls, Obama will not win the popular vote in Virginia even if 100% of voting Latinos cast their ballots for him. If support for Obama increases among other racial/ethnic groups, then the Latino vote could push the election in Obama's favor.