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2004 Election

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2004 Election
Special Coverage

As of 5:42 a.m. on Wednesday, November 3....

The winner declared. White House Chief of Staff Andrew Card just appeared at the Bush Victory Center in the Ronald Reagan Building in Washington, DC, to declare President George W. Bush the winner of the 2004 election. He said that the president's lead in Ohio is statistically insurmountable, and so those 20 Electoral College votes will go to the president, as will the 5 Electoral College votes of Nevada, making a total of 286 votes. The president, Mr. Card said, will give Senator Kerry time to absorb the results and respectfully refrain from giving a victory speech.

NBC reports that Mr. Bush went to bed about a half hour ago, confident of victory.

Michigan was just called and went to Kerry, 51 percent to 48 percent. Nader got 1 percent of the vote.

As of 5 a.m. on Wednesday, November 3....

All eyes are on the Great Lakes. No one has seen President George W. Bush since 9:30 last night, but Chris Matthews on MSNBC is reporting that some in the White House are eager for their boss to give a victory speech. They are confident of the outcome, and want John Kerry to call the president to concede and spare the nation a long, drawn-out election. But the Kerry camp apparently wants to wait for the provisional votes in Ohio to be counted first -- they certainly have that right -- and they are considering sending a team of lawyers to the Buckeye State.

Michigan, remarkably, is still too close to call. Most people just assumed that it would go into Kerry's column. It probably will, as Kerry is holding about a 100,000 vote lead. But the fact that the Great Lakes State is in play this late in the game must be disheartening to Democrats.

Wisconsin, too, is still up in the air.

As of 3 a.m. on Wednesday, November 3....

President George W. Bush has won -- he cannot lose the election at this point. True, he has 269 Electoral College votes -- technically, one short of the 270 needed to win the presidency. The must-win states of Florida and Ohio have gone into his column; and Iowa, New Mexico, and Nevada are trending his way; while New Hampshire, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are trending toward Senator Kerry. Even if Kerry caught up in the Electoral College in the next hours, and there were a 269-269 tie, the race would be thrown into the House of Representatives, where Red state delegations would give President Bush a decisive advantage; he would win by about a 30-20 vote. (To this point, Bush has won 28 states to Kerry's 17.)

President Bush has also won the popular vote by several million -- not a mandate -- but a huge moral victory for him considering that he did not win the popular vote in 2000. Adding significance to the popular vote is the fact that 60 percent of eligible voters cast ballots. That compares to 54 percent in 2000, and 49 percent in 1996, when Bill Clinton won his second term. (The modern record was in 1960, when 65 percent of the electorate cast ballots.) This means that both the Republicans and Democrats did a good job of registering voters who would support their guy. But most pundits got it wrong when they claimed that most of the increase in new youth voters (remember Rock the Vote?) would break Bush's way. Exit polls show that only 17 percent of youth voted yesterday -- the same percentage as in 2000.

The Kerry campaign has not conceded, but the cold rain falling on Boston reflects the dampened spirits inside Democratic headquarters there.

Michigan, which has voted strongly Democratic in recent presidential elections, is much closer this year.

The U.S. Senate, significantly, is picking up Republican seats. It appears that Tom Daschle will lose in South Dakota. This would be a terrible blow to Democrats. In the first place, it has been 52 years since a Senate leader has lost his seat. Second, it will be more difficult for Democratic senators to block President Bush's judicial nominees.

The U.S. House is also picking up Republican seats. President Bush will have a larger majority to work with, which will no doubt embolden him to pursue his agenda of (1) staying the course in Iraq, (2) cutting taxes further, (3) setting up health savings accounts, and (4) privatizing a portion of Social Security for America's youngest workers.

To sum up at this point, this is a four-sided win for President Bush:
- In contrast to 2000, Bush won the popular vote, and in a high turn-out election;
- Bush's coattails helped the GOP pick up House seats, which will embolden the president;
- Bush's coattails helped the GOP pick up Senate seats, which will have a huge impact on the next item,
- the federal judiciary, which will become more conservative.

The fact that President Bush made a relatively good showing when there was a controversial war in Iraq and a sluggish economy at home is demoralizing to Democrats:
- true, Bush has not poached a single blue state as of this writing, but...
- the Democrats' strategy -- counting on a majority of Americans being extremely angry at Bush -- did not work;
- a view of the map showing the huge bloc of red states (Republican strongholds) and the narrow bloc of blue states in the Northeast and on the West Coast has got to make party leaders re-evaluate why their candidates, policies, and tactics are not reaching middle America and rural voters in sufficient numbers to be a governing majority;
- Democrats, for example, have been abandoned by the South -- not even VP nominee John Edwards could deliver North Carolina, nor Bill Clinton's late campaigning deliver Arkansas;
- they lost their Senate leader -- the first time that's happened in more than a half century;
- they have lost the opportunity to determine who new Supreme Court nominees will be;
- they lost big on one of their lead cultural issues -- expanding the definition of marriage to include same-sex unions -- in 11 of 11 states that had referenda on the ballot;
- they have to get away from nominating Northern or "Massachusetts liberals" again; Bill Clinton should have taught the party that it helps to have a Southern accent;
- the question Democrats have to answer is whether Senator Hillary Clinton becomes the de facto leader of the party now, and whether her leadership can attract a majority of Americans to the party in national elections.

As of 6 p.m. on Tuesday, November 2....

Well at least election news out of Michigan has been consistent so far today. Lots of people have showed up at the polls despite the weather, and the lines have been long, some as long as two hours currently.
But late in the afternoon the Associated Press reported that poll workers have been dealing with 'a few power outages,' voting machine issues, and complaints about poll watchers.

More details have been revealed about MoveOn.org members attempting to make their mugs the last thing seen by voters: "several local election clerks complained about MoveOn.org, saying its representatives wanted tables at polling places... (they) also wanted voters redirected in some cases so they passed in front of MoveOn.org representatives."

As of 12 p.m. on Tuesday, November 2....

"The rain is not turning Michigan voters away. A report from Bush country. Colleagues of the Hauenstein Center for Presidential Studies are reporting heavy voter turnout in the affluent suburbs of Grand Rapids: in East Grand Rapids, Forrest Hills, and Grand Rapids Township. "Meanwhile traffic has been equally heavy in Wyoming, Michigan, a working-class suburb of Grand Rapids. At Kent County precinct 17 volunteer workers talked about being overwhelmed by an overflowing parking lot and a three-hour line early this morning.

"Gleaves Whitney, director of the Hauenstein Center, reported a thirty-minute wait shortly before noon at the relatively liberal college town of East Lansing. He inquired whether any poll watchers had shown up, and officials there said they had not as of noon.

"Judy Putnam and Peter Luke of the Booth Newspapers Lansing Bureau said that "Record-breaking voter turnout could mean record-breaking lines in Michigan today."

"Where the weather has failed to suppress the vote, man is determined to step-in. The Associated Press and the Detroit Free Press are releasing reports of disruptions at the precincts. Secretary of State Land's office told the Associated Press that they had received complaints about members of the liberal group MoveOn.org causing disruptions across the state."