



OBAMA 1961
August 4
Born in Hawaii to a white American woman and a black economist from Kenya

1988-1991
Studies law at Harvard.
First black president of the Law Review

1992
Marries Michelle Robinson. They have 2 daughters, in 1998 and 2001

1992-2004
Attorney and law professor at the University of Chicago

1997-2004
Elected to the Illinois senate

2005-2008
Elected to the US Senate, representing Illinois

2008
Become the Democrats' presidential candidate, beating Hilary Clinton

2009
Wins Nobel Peace Prize

2012
Wins a second Democratic presidential nomination

US Poll: Legal jitters loom again

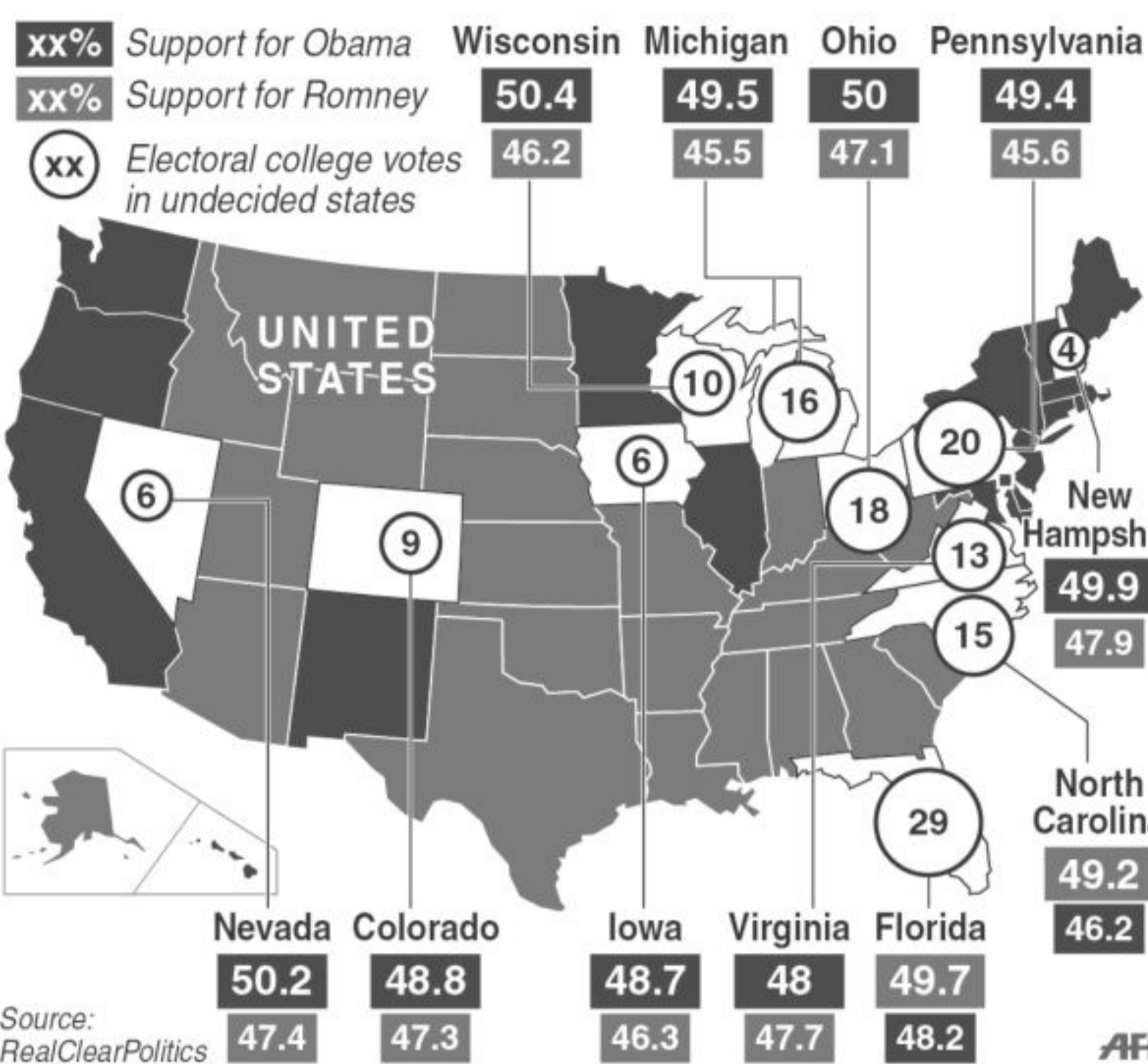
AGENCIES

The down-to-the-wire presidential contest is spawning fears that the race won't end on Election Day — but will simply move from the voting booths to the courts.

Barack Obama and Mitt Romney's campaigns are setting the stage for legal battles in key swing states, particularly Florida and Ohio, if the election result is close enough to be challenged in court.

Already, political operatives and other election watchers are having flashbacks to the disputed 2000 presidential contest. TV screens showed sprawling lines at early voting locations in Florida over the weekend, and groups have headed to court for pre-election jockeying.

Florida — the scene of recount chaos 12 years ago — seemed to hint at possibilities of a repeat. Yet if yesterday's election gets mired in legal wrangling, experts say Ohio is the most likely focal point this time. Such a scenario hinges on how close the vote is there, and whether Ohio lives up to its billing as a critical state for both sides in 2012.



Source: RealClearPolitics

Adding to the potential for Election Day trouble: the massive disruption and dislocation caused by Hurricane Sandy in states such as New Jersey and New York. Both

states' officials have authorized voters to cast provisional ballots at any polling place in the state.

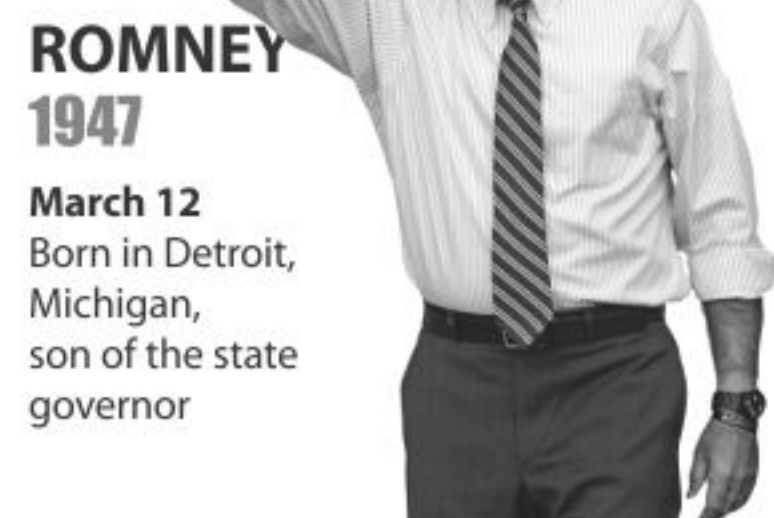
New Jersey has gone a step further by authorizing e-mail voting.

Computer security experts say e-mail balloting is far from secure, but New Jersey officials say it's a system they've used for overseas voters in the past, albeit on a much smaller scale.

Polls put New Jersey and New York firmly in President Barack Obama's column, so it seems highly unlikely that Election Day trouble in those states will muddy results of the presidential contest.

The far more likely flashpoint: provisional ballots in Ohio expected to easily exceed 200,000.

"If we've got a margin that's over 100,000 votes [in Ohio], none of this stuff will matter," said Dan Tokaji, a law professor at Ohio State University. "Over 50,000 votes, it probably won't matter. But if we've got an election margin in the low tens of thousands on election night, especially with [Mitt] Romney ahead by the low tens of thousands, then in that situation provisional ballots will matter, and these fights could make a difference in terms of who's president."



ROMNEY 1947
March 12
Born in Detroit, Michigan, son of the state governor

1966-1968
Missionary in France for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons)

1969
Marries Ann Davies. They have 5 children, born between 1970 and 1981

1975
Obtains MBA/law degree from Harvard

1984
Co-founds Bain Capital asset management, which makes him a multi-millionaire

1999-2002
Rescues the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Olympic from bankruptcy

2003-2007
Governor of Massachusetts

2008
Tries and fails to become the Republican presidential candidate

2012
Wins the Republican presidential nomination.

Cliffhangers

BBC ONLINE

The year 2012 may be remembered as one of the tightest US presidential election races in history as campaign closes.

Here are few other examples:

1960: Kennedy vs Nixon

The race between the Republican Richard Nixon and the younger, Catholic Democrat John F Kennedy was one of the closest in history.

In the event, Kennedy scraped victory with 49.7% of the vote compared with Nixon's 49.6% - a mere 113,000 votes separating the two men in the popular vote of 68 million cast. But the electoral college margin was wider - 303 to 219.

1976: Carter vs Ford

Democrat Carter won with 50.1% percent of the popular vote compared to Republican Ford's 48% and an electoral college margin of 297-240. The 27 states that Ford won remain the most ever carried by a losing candidate.

2000: Bush and Gore

It was the closest - and most controversial - vote in US history. Democrat Al Gore won 48.38% of the nationwide total vote to Bush's 47.87%. But, after the US Supreme Court halted a recount in the state of Florida, Bush had won the state vote by the slimmest of victories - just 537 ballots of some six million cast - and with it the Sunshine State's decisive 25 electoral college votes, which gave him a winning total of 271.

2004: Bush and Kerry

As incumbent in 2004, George W Bush faced Massachusetts Democratic Senator John Kerry. Bush secured 50.7% popular vote and 286 electoral votes to Kerry's 48.3% popular vote and 251 electoral votes.

The world's wishlist

THE TELEGRAPH

Whoever wins the US presidential election, be it Barack Obama or Mitt Romney, their allies and foes have a number of demands and wishes awaiting the victor.

RUSSIA: What Vladimir Putin's Russia craves most of all from the United States is recognition of its equal status as a world power.

Ideally, the Kremlin would like the US to back off its planned missile defence system in Europe, to withdraw support from Syrian rebels fighting the Assad regime (a Moscow ally), to stop lecturing it about human rights and to allow Russia a free reign in its former Soviet backyard.

UK: British Prime Minister David Cameron has remained studiously neutral during the presidential race, but privately, allies admit that an Obama victory would be easier for his government to deal with.

Beyond the obvious advantage of continuity, there is a personal concern about a victory for Mitt Romney.

When Romney visited London in July, he and Cameron did not get along famously: the Republican's comments on the London Olympics were seen as unhelpful, and Cameron publicly retorted.

The spat, while minor, would mean Cameron had ground to make up with a newly inaugurated President Romney.

ISRAEL: Like Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, most of his voters believe Israel would fare better with Romney in the White House. Israel's right wing doesn't want

'light' between them and the US, they want a 'special relationship'.

What Netanyahu wants more than anything is wholehearted support in his war against a nuclear Iran, but even Mitt Romney can't offer that.

PAKISTAN: Pakistan desperately wants a change in its relationship with the US. The first change would be to stop the secret CIA drone strikes. More importantly, Pakistan wants to be treated as a grown-up, an equal, not a failed state in waiting.

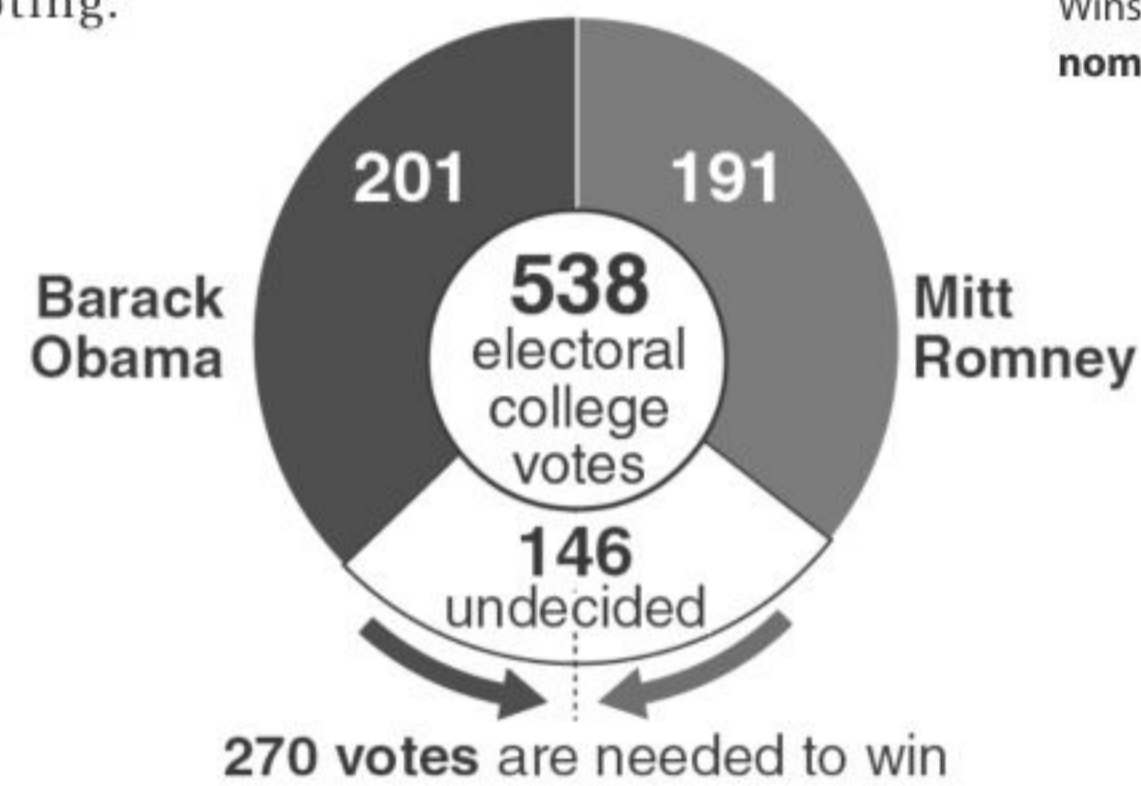
AFGHANISTAN: Being deprived of US aid and support and the possibility of resulting civil war are what many Afghans fear most.

The last thing Hamid Karzai's government wants is for the US to take its money and support and leave Afghanistan to the mercy of its neighbours.

Whoever the new president is, Afghans hope they won't be abandoned.

CHINA: In their wildest dreams, China's leaders might hope for many things from the next US president: the relaxing of trade barriers, an end to the US 'strategic military pivot' towards Asia, a hushing of Washington's criticism of Beijing's human rights record.

AFRICA: After the initial euphoria of seeing a black man in the White House, Africans have been largely disillusioned by Obama's presidency and lack of interest in the continent. As such, they are unlikely to be overly concerned if Mitt Romney wins because the Grand Old Party is more inclined to liberalise global trade and cut agricultural subsidies.



SENATE POLLS Democrats favoured to retain majority

HUFFINGTON POST

As Election Day arrives, Democrats are in a strong position to maintain their majority in the Senate. But for much of 2012, Democratic control of the chamber looked unlikely.

Republicans need to win a net gain of four seats to achieve a majority, which once seemed achievable.

The combination of returning senators and candidates currently leading by at least three points in the current HuffPost Pollster estimates in 2012 contests would give the Democrats 50 seats. Additionally, one independent candidate that is likely to caucus with the Democrats will give them outright majority.

Either scenario would result in a 50-50 tie in the Senate, which would amount to a majority if Mitt Romney is elected president, with Paul Ryan casting the tie-breaking vote as vice president. They would need to win an additional Democratic-leaning seat if President Barack Obama is reelected.

EARLY VOTING RESULTS

2012

AP, Washington

About 30 million people have already voted in 34 states and the District of Columbia, either by mail or in person.

Colorado
Votes: 1.6 million
Democrats: 35 percent
Republicans: 37 percent

Florida
Votes: 4.3 million
Democrats: 43 percent
Republicans: 40 percent

Iowa
Votes: 614,000
Democrats: 43 percent
Republicans: 32 percent

Nevada
Votes: 702,000
Democrats: 44 percent
Republicans: 37 percent

North Carolina
Votes: 2.7 million
Democrats: 48 percent
Republicans: 32 percent

Ohio
Votes: 1.6 million



People prepare to cast their ballots inside polling booths just after midnight yesterday, the very first voting to take place in the 2012 US presidential election.

PHOTO: AFP

Wall Street backs Romney

CNN ONLINE

President Obama and Mitt Romney may be in a dead heat as Americans head to the polls on Election Day, but the former Massachusetts governor is an overwhelming favourite of Wall Street.

Twelve out of 18 investment strategists and money managers surveyed by CNNMoney said the market would perform better with Romney.

Romney would be better for the stock market, they said, pointing to the candidate's promises to loosen regulatory reins in Corporate America and slash tax rates.

Gulf arms sales 'legitimate'

Says UK PM David Cameron

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

David Cameron has defended British arms sales to Gulf countries as "entirely legitimate" but insisted that the Arab spring was a positive development and there were no "no-go areas" in talks with autocratic allies who are fretting about changes elsewhere in the region.

Speaking on the first day of a three-day Middle East tour, the prime minister rebuffed critics unhappy with the idea of UK defence exports and said his discussions in the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, both irritated by rows with Britain, would show "respect and friendship".

The trip is aimed at drumming up business in both countries for BAE Systems, the defence manufacturer. An important BP oil deal in Abu Dhabi has run into trouble



recently. Thirty thousand jobs in the UK were at stake, sales were "legitimate and right" and his purpose was "to help Britain compete and thrive in the global race" he said. Cameron wants to persuade the UAE to buy Eurofighter Typhoons

to replace their ageing fleet of French Mirage jets. The Emiratis have expressed interest in ordering 60 jets. Oman has expressed interest in 12, while the Saudis are considering a second order on top of the 72 they already have.

Amnesty International criticised what it described as a "deeply-disturbing trade-off" between trade and strategic interests and the promotion of rights and democratic reform. The Campaign Against the Arms Trade condemned what it called "a very clear UK message of support for these authoritarian regimes".

We've got the votes to win: Obama

AGENCIES

US President Barack Obama yesterday congratulated Republican rival Mitt Romney for running a hard-fought race for the White House and expressed confidence he would win re-election during a stop at a local campaign office in Chicago to thank volunteers.

"We feel confident we've got the votes to win, but it's going to depend ultimately on whether those votes turn out. And so I would encourage everybody on all sides just to make sure that you exercise this precious right that we have that people fought so hard for us to have."

Obama made calls to volunteers from the campaign office to thank them for working for his re-election.

Romney casts vote
Earlier yesterday, Romney cast his ballot near his Massachusetts home. Asked who he voted for, Romney replied, "I think you know."

Opinion polls show Obama and Romney in a virtual dead heat, although the Democratic incumbent has a slight advantage in several vital swing states that could give him the 270 electoral votes needed to win the state-by-state contest.

Obama has already voted last month, becoming the first sitting president to take advantage of early voting operations.

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