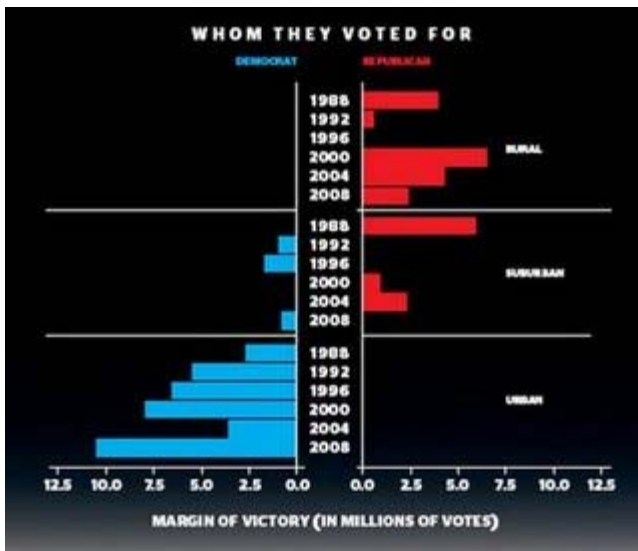




Wednesday, February 18, 2009



[How Important is the Urban Vote and What Does the Future of Urban America Look Like???](#)



Two recent articles about the nature of urban America and urban voting caught my attention. [The first](#), in the recent Esquire by Nate Silver of [fivethirtyeight.com](#) looks at the 2008 election through the prism of urban/suburban/rural voters. Its pretty straightforward stuff, showing that not only did Obama win the urban vote (as expected) but that he did so with such margins that his deficits in rural areas were rendered meaningless. 2008 also saw Obama win the suburbs, the first Democrat to do so since Clinton. What is of interest here is not the numbers, per se, but the trends. Recent demographic data shows an America that is becoming increasingly suburban and urban. Whereas the 1960's and 70's saw the phenomenon of "white flight" out of the cities, much of that movement is being reversed. While the big cities are still not as large as they were during their industrial boom times, there is reason to wonder whether a "re-urbanization" is underway and ask what is driving it.

The [second article](#) on this topic is by Richard Florida in the March issue of The Atlantic. In looking at the potential ramifications of the current economic crisis on our country's urban landscape, Florida wonders what changes will be brought about--how will Detroit fare? Whither the Sun Belt? How does the type of work done in a particular place affect its current health and its future? For comparison's sake, he creates this series of

[interactive maps](#) showing changes in income, population, and innovation over the last 30 years. The follow up question to this discussion--which Florida doesn't address--relates to the political ramifications of these changes. What type of politics do we see in areas that are growing, adapting, innovating, and prospering as opposed to those areas that are shrinking, stagnating, and suffering? Does one party benefit? Does a certain type of politics--message, tone, style--become more prevalent? When opening up this line of thinking, I'm reminded of the argument of Judis and Teixeira in "The Emerging Democratic Majority." Their model for Democratic resurgence was based on the notion of "ideopolises"--urban/suburban centers composed of highly educated, innovative, and diverse individuals. When following some of Florida's trends you can't help but see some parallels. The important question, though, is whether these trends continue.

Posted by CBMurray at [1:10 PM](#)  

Labels: [American voting](#), [Nate Silver](#), [Richard Florida](#), [U.S. elections](#), [urban voting](#)