



Messina's Mistakes

Once Safe Bets For Obama, Battleground States Are Proving "Dicey" For The Campaign

IN DECEMBER 2011, OBAMA CAMPAIGN ADVISER JIM MESSINA LAID OUT FIVE PATHS OBAMA COULD TAKE TO GET TO 270 ELECTORAL VOTES

Obama Has Set Five Paths To Getting The 270 Electoral Votes He Will Need In Order To Win 2012.

"During a briefing for reporters at the DNC yesterday, Obama 2012 campaign manager Jim Messina outlined five paths that would get President Obama to 270 electoral votes. Each starts with Sen. John Kerry's 2004 map (246 EVs): West Path: Win Colorado, New Mexico and Nevada, plus Iowa (272 EVs); Florida Path: Win the Sunshine State (275 EVs); South Path: Win North Carolina and Virginia (274 EVs); Midwest Path: Win Ohio and Iowa (270 EVs); Expansion Path: Win Arizona (272 EVs)." (Mike Allen, *Politico's Playbook*, 12/14/11)

NOW, THE OBAMA CAMPAIGN IS PLAYING DEFENSE IN STATES IT PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED SAFE

WISCONSIN

In All Five Paths To 270 Laid Out By Jim Messina, Wisconsin Was Considered Safe. ("Jim Messina: Paths To 270 Electoral Votes," [YouTube](#), 12/29/11)

- **Obama's Path To Victory Does Not Allow Him To Lose Any States He And Kerry Carried In 2004 And 2008, Including Wisconsin.** "That means that Obama could lose none of the states he and Kerry carried in 2004 and 2008 — including swing states like New Hampshire and Wisconsin — and have the numbers add up. The paths are ranked from most likely to least likely for Obama." (Chris Cillizza and Aaron Blake, "How President Obama Gets To 270," [The Washington Post](#), 12/14/11)

The Obama Campaign Wasn't Expecting Wisconsin To Be A Battleground

Obama Was Set To Campaign In Wisconsin On Tuesday, October 30. "President Obama has cancelled a trip to Green Bay, Wis. scheduled for Tuesday, in order to stay in Washington and monitor Hurricane Sandy." (Rachel Weiner, "Obama Cancels Wisconsin Campaign Trip," [The Washington Post](#), 10/29/12)

- **The Green Bay Trip Would Have Been Obama's Second Visit To Wisconsin In October.** "Obama, whose Green Bay stop will be his second trip to Wisconsin in October, has a narrow lead

in statewide tracking polls. While Democratic officials have expressed confidence in the race's ultimate outcome, they've also acknowledged that the contest will be far tighter this time in a state that hasn't voted for a Republican presidential nominee since 1984." (Alan Blinder, "Romney, Obama Heading To Suddenly Competitive Wisconsin," [Washington Examiner](#), 10/26/12)

Los Angeles Times: "Battleground Map: Wisconsin Moves To Tossup." (David Lauter, "Battleground Map: Wisconsin Moves To Tossup," [Los Angeles Times](#), 8/24/12)

- **Obama's Campaign Has Added Wisconsin To A List Of Targeted States, A Sign That The State Is More Competitive Than The Campaign Had Expected.** "President Obama's re-election campaign on Tuesday added Wisconsin to its list of targeted states. The campaign's first television advertisements there are set to begin on Thursday, a sign that the state is more competitive than the Obama campaign had once expected." (Jeff Zeleny, "Obama Plans Wisconsin Advertising, Signaling The State Is Now In Play," [The New York Times' The Caucus Blog](#), 9/11/12)

National Finance Chairman For Priorities USA: Wisconsin Has "Suddenly Become Dicey." "Teddy Johnston, the national finance chairman for the official Obama super PAC, Priorities USA Action, confessed to donors that he is afraid Mitt Romney will win Wisconsin. Johnston said that Wisconsin has "suddenly become dicey" during a fundraiser at the Democratic National Convention, according to the Sunlight Foundation. Wisconsin is a perennially-tempting, but historically-disappointing, battleground state for Republicans. The Romney team hope that vice presidential candidate Paul Ryan, who hails from a swing-district of Wisconsin, will help flip that traditionally-blue state into the red column this November." (Joel Gehrke, "Obama Super PAC Exec Says Romney Could Win Wisconsin: 'Suddenly Become Dicey,'" [The Examiner](#), 9/6/12)

The Enthusiasm Gap That Has Plagued Democrats Nationally "Appears To Still Be A Real Issue For Them In Wisconsin." "A big reason Wisconsin remains so competitive for the GOP is that the electorate looks like it will be considerably more Republican leaning than it was in 2008, reflecting the continued high energy level of the party's voters after its victory in June's recall election. We find an electorate that's 34% Republican and 32% Democratic. Exit polls in 2008 showed Democrats with a 6 point turnout advantage, 39% to 33%. Although the enthusiasm gap that plagued Democrats nationally in 2010 has dissipated some places, it appears to still be a real issue for them in Wisconsin." ("Romney Slight Ahead In Wisconsin," [Public Policy Polling](#), 8/21/12)

MINNESOTA

In All Five Paths To 270 Laid Out By Jim Messina, Minnesota Was Considered Safe. ("Jim Messina: Paths To 270 Electoral Votes," [YouTube](#), 12/29/11)

Minnesota Had Not Been On The Swing State List, But A New *Star Tribune* Minnesota Poll Showed Obama Only Leading Romney By 3 Percentage Points, Within The Margin Of Error. "Minnesota has not been on that swing state list but a Star Tribune Minnesota Poll, published Sunday, shows a newly tight race between Obama and Republican Mitt Romney. The poll found Obama with a 3 percentage point lead over Romney, an advantage that is within the poll's margin of error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points." (Rachel E. Stassen-Berger, "As Presidential Race Tightens, President Clinton Plans A Minnesota Visit," [Star Tribune](#), 10/29/12)

- **ABC News Has Moved Minnesota From "Safe" Obama To Only "Lean" Obama.** "With one week to go, states that were once considered Obama strongholds now look less solid. Republican groups are putting resources into Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Team Obama brushes off these incursions as wishful thinking by Republicans, but noticeably they are putting money and muscle into both states. Minnesota has been added to Bill Clinton's schedule. And, Obama campaign officials admitted that they will once again start running ads in Pennsylvania." (Amy Walter, "ABC News Moves

Pennsylvania, Minnesota From 'Safe' To 'Lean' Obama," [ABC News The Note](#), 10/29/12)

The Obama Campaign's Investment In Minnesota Suggests The Campaign Is Playing "Defense"

The Decision To Invest In Minnesota Suggests That Obama Is Now Playing Defense In A Place That Had Long Been Considered "A Lock" For Him. "But the decision to invest in Minnesota will stir talk that the president is now playing defense in a place that had long been considered a lock for him." (Scott Conroy, "Romney, Obama Buy TV Ads In Minnesota," [CBS News](#), 10/26/12)

The Obama Campaign Sent Former President Bill Clinton To Minnesota. "Clinton will visit the University of Minnesota's McNamara Alumni Center in Minneapolis Tuesday morning and then make a stop at Duluth's Kirby Ballroom at the University of Minnesota Duluth for a noontime event." (Rachel E. Stassen-Berger, "As Presidential Race Tightens, President Clinton Plans A Minnesota Visit," [Star Tribune](#), 10/29/12)

- **Obama's Campaign Has Also Purchased Television Ads In The State.** "In a move that will spark speculation about Mitt Romney mounting a late challenge in states that had appeared out of reach, President Obama's campaign has purchased television advertisements in Minnesota, according to an Obama source." (Scott Conroy, "Romney, Obama Buy TV Ads In Minnesota," [CBS News](#), 10/26/12)

PENNSYLVANIA

Pennsylvania Was A Safe Obama State On Four Paths To 270 Laid Out By Jim Messina. ("Jim Messina: Paths To 270 Electoral Votes," [YouTube](#), 12/29/11)

Pennsylvania Reflects A National Trend, Giving Romney "New Opportunities In States Seen As Prime Democratic Terrain." "What's happening in Pennsylvania reflects a national trend: Romney has risen in the polls following his first debate performance, giving him new opportunities in states seen as prime Democratic terrain. And a rapidly shifting Senate landscape has prompted GOP leaders to reassess Democratic-leaning states like Connecticut and Pennsylvania, putting the Northeast suddenly at the heart of the GOP's dwindling hopes of winning a Senate majority." (Manu Raju, "Republicans Find New Hope In Pennsylvania," [Politico](#), 10/20/12)

- **ABC News Has Moved Pennsylvania From "Safe" Obama To Only "Lean" Obama.** "With one week to go, states that were once considered Obama strongholds now look less solid. Republican groups are putting resources into Minnesota and Pennsylvania. Team Obama brushes off these incursions as wishful thinking by Republicans, but noticeably they are putting money and muscle into both states. Minnesota has been added to Bill Clinton's schedule. And, Obama campaign officials admitted that they will once again start running ads in Pennsylvania." (Amy Walter, "ABC News Moves Pennsylvania, Minnesota From 'Safe' To 'Lean' Obama," [ABC News The Note](#), 10/29/12)

Victory In Pennsylvania Is "Crucial" For Obama

Victory In Pennsylvania Is "Crucial" For Obama. "Victory in Pennsylvania is probably more crucial to Obama than Romney. In 2008, Obama beat Republican John McCain by 10 percentage points in Pennsylvania, and the state has supported the Democrat in each presidential election since 1988." ("PA. Finally Gets Some Campaign Ad Money," [TribLive](#), 10/29/12)

Biden Was Set To Campaign In Pennsylvania On Thursday. "Vice President Joe Biden is scheduled to return to Scranton on Thursday. An Obama/Biden campaign spokesperson said Sunday that Biden will hit the campaign trail this week - starting in Florida but making stops in Iowa and Pennsylvania as well." ("Update: Biden Visit To Scranton Canceled," [CitizensVoice](#), 10/29/12)

The Obama Campaign Will Start Running Ads In Pennsylvania. “President Obama will also start to run ads in Pennsylvania, campaign manager Jim Messina said in a conference call with reporters Monday morning. David Axelrod, Obama's senior campaign adviser, said the Democratic ads are a ‘precaution.’” (“PAC Putting Big Bucks Into Pa. TV Ads For Romney,” [The Inquirer](#), 10/30/12)

- **ABC News’ Michael Falcone:** “Initial Size Of Obama Camp’s PA Ad Buy: \$650,000 In The Philly And PGH Media Markets From 10/31-11/6.” (Michael Falcone, [Twitter Feed](#), 10/30/12)

The Economy, Unemployment, And Obama’s War On Coal “All Spell Trouble For The Obama Campaign In The Keystone State.” “Those who suggest the GOP should cede the Keystone State to Mr. Obama are turning their backs on a real opportunity. In addition to the national political salience of the floundering economy, persistent unemployment and the startling erosion of middle-class financial assets, the local Pennsylvania impact of the president's ill-considered war on coal and booming shale gas development, the perception that he’s weak on the Second Amendment and his attacks on religious rights and the traditional family all spell trouble for the Obama campaign in the Keystone State.” (Sam Rohrer, Colin Hanna, “Pennsylvania May Undo Obama,” [Pittsburgh Post-Gazette](#), 7/5/12)

Former Gov. Ed Rendell (D-PA): Obama “Could Lose” Pennsylvania. “‘They asked me a question. How’s the President going to do in Pennsylvania? I said it’s a toss-up. Are you saying the President won’t win Pennsylvania? I said, no, but I’m saying he could lose. Well, people jumped all over me for that,’ Rendell said.” (“Rendell: “Pennsylvania Too Close To Call In Presidential Race,” [KDKA](#), 6/26/12)

- **Rendell: “I’m Not Going To Lie. It’s Too Close To Call In Pennsylvania.”** “‘I’m not going to lie. It’s too close to call in Pennsylvania. There are a lot of things that could happen. But, number, two, as someone who wants President Obama to win, I don’t want to say, “Oh it’s in the bag for the President,” because that’s a terrible message for our people. I want our people to be worried and nervous so they give an all-out effort to get out the vote,’ Rendell said.” (“Rendell: “Pennsylvania Too Close To Call In Presidential Race,” [KDKA](#), 6/26/12)

NEW HAMPSHIRE

New Hampshire Was A Safe Obama State On Four Paths To 270 Laid Out By Jim Messina. (“Jim Messina: Paths To 270 Electoral Votes,” [YouTube](#), 12/29/11)

- **Obama’s Path To Victory Does Not Allow Him To Lose Any States He And Kerry Carried In 2004 And 2008, Including New Hampshire.** “That means that Obama could lose none of the states he and Kerry carried in 2004 and 2008 — including swing states like New Hampshire and Wisconsin — and have the numbers add up. The paths are ranked from most likely to least likely for Obama.” (Chris Cillizza and Aaron Blake, “How President Obama Gets To 270,” [The Washington Post](#), 12/14/11)

The Electoral Map Has Narrowed And The Obama Campaign Is “Circling The Wagons” Around New Hampshire

The Electoral Map Has Narrowed And Obama’s Team Is “Circling The Wagons” Around Ohio, Iowa, New Hampshire, And Nevada. “What also became clear after the dust began to settle from the rumble on Long Island was the electoral map has narrowed and Obama's team, while conceding nothing publicly, is circling the wagons around Ohio, Iowa, New Hampshire, and Nevada. Plouffe said that Obama remains strong in all four states, but he would not discuss the specifics of internal polling or voter-contact analytics, saying only that Obama has ‘significant leads’ in all four places.” (Major Garrett, “The Four Ls And Four States: What’s Next In The Obama-Romney Duel,” [National Journal](#), 10/17/12)

Obama Had Planned To Return To New Hampshire Just A Week And A Half After His Last Visit There. “Democratic President Barack Obama announced plans to return to New Hampshire this Saturday - just a week and a half after the president’s last visit to the Granite State.” (Shira Schoenberg, “Barack Obama, Joe Biden And Mitt Romney All Plan Trips To New Hampshire,” [MassLive](#), 10/25/12)

- **Biden Had Planned To Visit New Hampshire Two Days After Obama’s Visit.** “Obama won’t be the state’s only Democratic visitor. His running mate, Vice President Joe Biden, plans to visit New Hampshire just two days later, on Monday. Details of that visit have not yet been released. This Friday, Biden’s wife, Jill Biden, will visit Obama campaign field offices in Concord, Berlin, Conway and Laconia.” (Shira Schoenberg, “Barack Obama, Joe Biden And Mitt Romney All Plan Trips To New Hampshire,” [MassLive](#), 10/25/12)

In New Hampshire, Pro-Obama Ads Have Outnumbered Pro-Romney Spots By More Than Three To One. “In New Hampshire, which has four electoral votes, pro-Obama ads outnumbered pro-Romney spots by more than three to one, 3,469 to 1,166. The Romney campaign supplied just 211 ads, or fewer than one-fifth of the Republican spots. Obama ran ads in Manchester, New Hampshire’s biggest city, as well as in Boston, Portland and Burlington, where the television markets take in part of New Hampshire. Romney’s campaign ran ads in the Manchester market only.” (Gregory Giroux, “Obama Tops Romney In TV Ads – New Hampshire In Particular,” [Bloomberg](#), 10/3/12)

Democrat Strategist Nick Clemons: In New Hampshire, “You Could Put A Piece Of Paper Between The Two Candidates Right Now.” “‘You could put a piece of paper between the two candidates right now,’ Nick Clemons, a Democratic strategist with long ties to New Hampshire politics, said of the presidential race. ‘Both congressional races are very tight. The governor’s race is neck-and-neck. It’s a classic New Hampshire election.’” (Dan Balz, “For Obama And Romney, Small New Hampshire Could Have A Big Impact,” [The Washington Post](#), 10/18/12)

Democrat Strategist Terry Shumaker: The Race Is “Unstable” And Republicans Are “More Energized.” “Even longtime Democrats concede that Romney has found his way into contention again. ‘They’re more energized,’ said Terry Shumaker about New Hampshire Republicans. Shumaker, a Concord attorney and close friend of the Clintons, described the race three weeks out as ‘unstable.’” (Jonathan Martin, “Tiny New Hampshire Could Punch Above Weight,” [Politico](#), 10/18/12)