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## EXTRA

### "BLUE" IN THE RACE

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*As Election Day approaches Democrats and Republicans are both battling to woo voters in traditionally "blue," or democratic states, states that could decide the outcome of the race.*

In 2000, Democratic candidate Al Gore won twenty states to George Bush's 30. The Pacific coast, the Northeast (except New Hampshire), and a handful of states in between voted "blue" – or Democratic – some by less than a percentage point.

With American voters again divided almost evenly between the Republican and Democratic nominees for president, and more states than ever promising a close finish, the race to reaffirm—or win over—voters is at a crucial stage.

#### Wooing blue states

For John Kerry, this year's Democratic nominee, that means working hard to motivate and energize the party's traditional supporters to be sure they turn out on Election Day. Among blue-collar workers and minorities, though, two groups that traditionally vote Democratic, his privileged Boston upbringing and twenty years in Washington's inner circle aren't necessarily pluses.

But, with his choice of charismatic Southerner John Edwards as a running mate and lots of campaign stops aimed at small-town voters in blue-collar towns, Kerry hopes to solidify his grip on "blue" states while strengthening his position in states that went for Gore by a narrow margin in 2000, states like Iowa, Minnesota, Oregon & New Mexico.

To remind voters in these and other closely contested states to vote Democratic once again, Kerry has spent a good deal of money on television advertising. Combined with additional ads run by political groups opposed to Bush's re-election, the Kerry campaign is out-advertising George Bush by 2-1.

#### Choosing blue for the conventions

One worry for the Kerry campaign could be that these blue states have lost seven electoral votes since 2000 because of population changes. Electoral votes are votes cast by members of each state's electoral body to elect the president and vice president. On the plus-side, a recent endorsement by the NAACP could help motivate more African-

American voters to visit the polls—which would be sure to help the Democratic candidate.

For their part, Republicans are heading for New York City – a Democratic stronghold – to hold their nominating convention at the end of August. By selecting the site of the 9/11 attacks, George Bush’s party hopes to strengthen his image as a strong leader in dangerous times. The Democrats held their convention in Boston, another “blue” city, where John Kerry could bank on finding support among left-leaning citizens who, like him, tend to value a firm divide between church and state, stronger protections for civil liberties, environmentalism, gun control, labor unions, and – perhaps most importantly – opposition to the way the United States went into Iraq without United Nations backing.

### **Republicans fight back**

The GOP, or Grand Old Party as the Republican Party is sometimes referred to, is also mobilizing a virtual army of volunteers to rally grass-roots support for their candidate in Democratic-leaning states like Wisconsin, which the President recently visited for the first time since 2001. The Bush campaign has also touched down recently in Oregon, Iowa, and Michigan, states they think they may have a chance to win back in November.

New York may be a lost cause for any Republican hopeful, convention or no convention, but California’s recent selection of Arnold Schwarzenegger as governor has bolstered Republican hopes there--even though the former action hero has a more liberal stance on social issues than most Republicans.

In fact, it may be social issues that sway voters one way or the other. Democratic voters may be concerned about security at home and abroad and may be drawn to the policies of George Bush, but when it comes to gay rights, abortion rights, and civil rights, they're firmly behind their party's candidate.

On the other hand, the President’s appeals to his far-right, conservative support base -- for a Constitutional amendment banning gay marriage, for example, and his financial support for “faith-based” community initiatives may hurt him in “blue” America as much as it helps him elsewhere.