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COLUMN ONE

Elation, doubts on the day after

For Americans young and old, the magnitude of Barack Obama's history-making victory begins to sink in.

After the fireworks stopped, the tears of joy or despair dried and the jubilant crowds straggled home, the magnitude of what happened on election day 2008 began to set in. Barack Obama was president-elect, the first black man in the country's history to claim the Oval Office.

The response was as complex and varied as America itself: elation, shock, doubt, wonder and some hard feelings.

Older folks put their trust in children they decided knew better. College students paid homage to the civil rights heroes upon whose shoulders Obama stood. A struggling businessman took heart that things might start to turn around. A woman opposed to abortion feared damnation.

When the nation awoke Wednesday, it was, for better or for worse, "a whole new world."

LONGMONT, COLO.

The succulent smell of fresh pan dulce permeated Vicente Fuentes' bakery Wednesday morning, almost as sweet as the joy he felt in contemplating the nation's first black president.

As customers trickled in, Fuentes, 43, was still talking about what he had seen Tuesday night, when Obama delivered his victory speech to as many as 200,000 people in Chicago's Grant Park.

"I said to my wife, 'Watch the TV — in Chicago, in the park.' The white people, black people, Hispanic people," Fuentes said. "All races in the same park. And they wait for a [See Reaction, Page A18]"

California gives GOP the blues

CATHLEEN DECKER

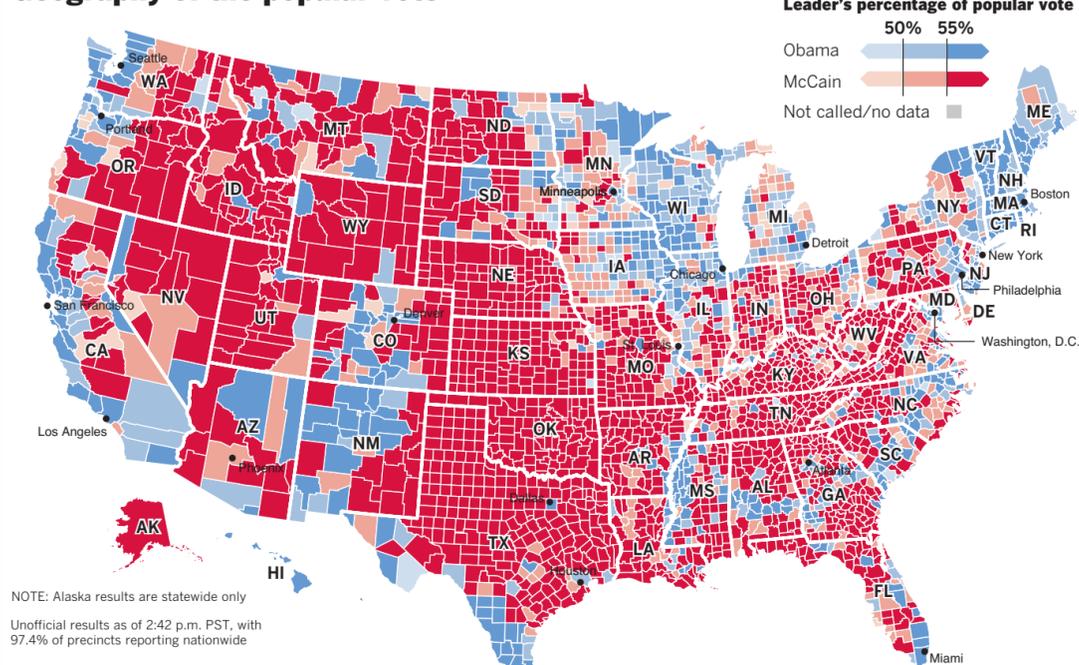
The cobalt blue of California's electoral map masks conflicting hues of political ideology, and Tuesday's election results were an emphatic reminder. Barack Obama won the biggest victory in modern state history, smashing the record set in 1964 in Lyndon B. Johnson's landslide election, but not a single Republican member of Congress was defeated.

Voters sided with animal-rights activists, but not with proponents of gay marriage. They narrowly are supporting a redistricting measure backed by the Republican governor, and opposed a measure he endorsed to inform parents of a minor's abortion.

Those unpredictable decisions by voters, however, were accompaniments to the election's main theme: the demographic and ideological shifts that have delivered the state into Democratic hands and demonstrated anew the tough road ahead for the Republican minority.

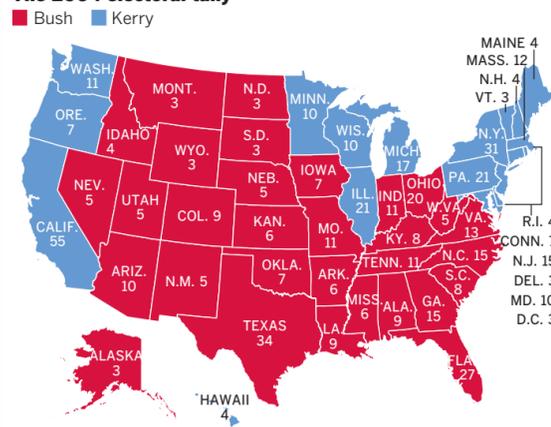
In growth areas such as Riv- [See California, Page A22]

Geography of the popular vote

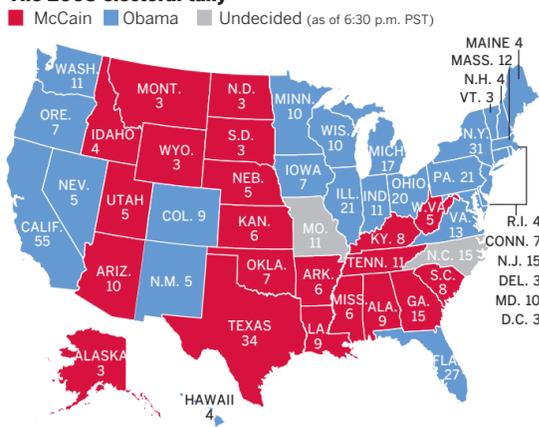


NOTE: Alaska results are statewide only
Unofficial results as of 2:42 p.m. PST, with 97.4% of precincts reporting nationwide

The 2004 electoral tally



The 2008 electoral tally



Sources: Associated Press; USGS; Census Bureau

Los Angeles Times

Obama begins to form a team

The president-elect names a transition crew and asks Rep. Rahm Emanuel to fill a key White House role.

PETER NICHOLAS REPORTING FROM CHICAGO

TOM HAMBURGER REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

President-elect Barack Obama began to assemble his new administration Wednesday, offering the White House chief of staff job to a hard-charging member of the Democratic congressional leadership and announcing the heads of a transition staff that will help fill his Cabinet and lay out an agenda for his four-year term.

A day after his decisive victory over Arizona Republican John McCain, Obama spent a rare day in seclusion, exercising at a private gym near his home and later presiding over meetings and a conference call to thank his campaign staff.

He also made one of the most consequential personnel choices he will face, asking Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-Ill.) to be his chief of staff, according to campaign and congressional officials. There was no indication of Emanuel's response as of Wednesday night.

The White House chief of staff is often a power broker in his own right, making sure the president's decisions are properly executed and acting as a gatekeeper to the Oval Office. As former head of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, Emanuel is credited with the party's success in regaining control of Congress in 2006.

Smart and intense, the 48-year-old Emanuel is a veteran of Bill Clinton's White House. He is among the most charismatic figures on Capitol Hill, revered by many Democrats for restoring the party's clout and loathed by some Republicans for his partisan tactics. In the multitude of Emanuel stories, one stands out: the time he boxed up a dead fish and sent it to a political foe, "Godfather" style.

Obama's transition staff [See Transition, Page A11]

Focused beyond marriage

Prop. 8 supporters shrewdly warned of implications for schools, churches and children, analysts say.

DAN MORAIN AND JESSICA GARRISON

The measure on the ballot was only 14 words long — a simple statement that "only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California."

But supporters of Proposition 8, in what political analysts said was an extremely effective strategy, made the race about much more than that.

They were able to focus the debate on their assertion that without the ban, public school children would be indoctrinated into accepting gay marriage against their parents' wishes, churches would be sanctioned for not performing same-sex weddings and the institution of marriage would be irreparably harmed.

Supporters of gay marriage, along with political leaders including Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-San Francisco) and the state's superintendent of public instruction, denounced those messages as scare tactics, but they were not able to sway voters. Preliminary returns showed Proposition 8 passing 52% to 48%.

"It was masterful of the campaign to raise the implications of what it could mean in terms of the school system," said Republican political consultant Wayne Johnson. He said voters may have started out "thinking that as long as it doesn't affect me, do what you [See Prop. 8, Page A23]"

Change, meet crisis

A frail economy and widening budget deficit may hinder Obama's ambitious spending agenda.

MICHAEL A. HILTZIK

Barack Obama was elected with a mandate for economic change on a scale that hasn't been seen in decades.

So what does he do with it? During two years of campaigning, Obama set forth detailed proposals for tax relief

and enhanced government benefits for the middle class, the poor, college-bound students and the elderly.

He called for new government investments in infrastructure and "green" technologies, as well as a dramatic expansion of health insurance largely by making a Medicare-style program available to all.

He now faces a challenge familiar to every other newly elected political leader: how to transform ideas tailored to win votes into something suitable for the real world.

And he will almost certainly have to adapt some of his proposals to accommodate the

current financial and economic crisis.

The urgency for action was underscored by another sharp drop in stocks Wednesday, with the Dow Jones industrial average plunging 486 points, or 5%. That brings its decline on the year to more than 31%.

"Obviously the agenda's been taken over by economic conditions," said James K. Galbraith, a professor of finance at the University of Texas and an economic advisor to the president-elect. "There's no reason to think these are going away in six months."

But insiders say Obama [See Spending, Page A16]



BRAD ZWEERINK News and Observer

Towering figure in books and film

Michael Crichton, the doctor-turned-author of bestselling thrillers such as "The Andromeda Strain" and "Jurassic Park," has died at 66. CALIFORNIA, B12

Opera group's swan song?

Orange County's Opera Pacific cancels the rest of its season and may fold. CALENDAR, E1

Weather PageB16
Complete IndexA2

TODAY'S INSIDE SECTIONS
California, Business, Sports and Calendar

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A new direction on the world map

A measured approach is expected in Obama's foreign policy shifts.

PAUL RICHTER REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

President-elect Barack Obama is expected to quickly distance himself from the unpopular foreign policy of President Bush, seeking to mend relations with foreign leaders and considering advice to swiftly shutter the controversial Guantanamo Bay prison and inaugurate a new climate change effort.

However, the economic crisis that helped him at the polls also reshuffled his priorities, some advisors acknowledged. The crisis will siphon away his attention and may slow some foreign policy efforts, they said. On more intractable prob-

lems, such as Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, Obama is expected to move gingerly as he reshapes the U.S. approach while preserving his options and accounting for the concerns of allies in the Middle East, advisors said.

"He needs to say, 'I'm listening to our allies, and to our military leaders, and we're developing a plan,'" said an advisor, who discussed deliberations on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to [See Policy, Page A6]

Reaction abroad

Around the world, people rejoice over Obama's victory. WORLD, A6

GOP hangover

The party's factions have different ideas on how to rebound. NATION, A12

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