

© 2008, CBS Broadcasting Inc. All Rights Reserved.

*PLEASE CREDIT ANY QUOTES OR EXCERPTS FROM THIS CBS  
TELEVISION PROGRAM TO "CBS NEWS' FACE THE NATION."*

CBS News

# FACE THE NATION

Sunday, November 2, 2008

**GUESTS: Mr. DAVID AXELROD**  
**Chief Strategist, Obama Campaign**

**Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM**  
**Republican, South Carolina**

**Senator CHUCK SCHUMER (D-NY)**  
**Chairman, Democratic Senatorial Campaign  
Committee**

**Senator JOHN ENSIGN (R-NV)**  
**Chairman, National republican Senatorial  
Committee**

**MODERATOR/PANELIST: Mr. Bob Schieffer – CBS News**

*This is a rush transcript provided  
for the information and convenience of  
the press. Accuracy is not guaranteed.  
In case of doubt, please check with*

**FACE THE NATION - CBS NEWS**  
**(202)-457-4481**

BOB SCHIEFFER, host:

Today on FACE THE NATION, from CBS News election headquarters in New York, it's the final weekend of the longest, most expensive presidential election ever.

Barack Obama and John McCain are campaigning nonstop in these final days, but which states will make the difference? We'll talk with Senator McCain's closest friend, Senator Lindsey Graham of South Carolina; and Barack Obama's chief strategist, David Axelrod. We'll take a Campaign Quick Check on the Senate races with each party's top strategist: Democratic senator Chuck Schumer of New York, and Republican senator John Ensign of Nevada. Then I'll have a final word on why my mother said you ought to vote.

But first, coming down to the wire on FACE THE NATION.

Announcer: FACE THE NATION, with CBS News chief Washington correspondent Bob Schieffer. And now, from CBS News election headquarters in New York, Bob Schieffer.

SCHIEFFER: And good morning again. Joining us from Springfield, Missouri, to start us off this morning, the chief strategist for Barack Obama, David Axelrod.

Well, Mr. Axelrod, if you look at these polls, it's all looking pretty good at this point for Barack Obama, I would have to say.

Mr. DAVID AXELROD (Chief Strategist, Obama Campaign): Well, we feel good, Bob. And it's not just the polls, it's the--it's the early voting that we've seen. About a third of the country's going to vote before Tuesday. And those numbers are coming in very strong for us and reversing some historical patterns. In states like North Carolina, it looks like as many as three million people may vote before Tuesday, and where that vote is coming from and the addition of so many new voters is something we're encouraged by. And the crowds we're seeing--I'm here in Springfield, Missouri, which is a traditionally Republican part of the state. We got--we had a crowd of 40,000 people here last night, very enthusiastic crowd, late at night. Three times as large as any crowd anybody's ever gotten here. And those things are encouraging. But we still have to win this thing. We have to vote and we can't be complacent. We have to fight to the end, and we will.

SCHIEFFER: If Obama does win, what do you think the one thing will be that tipped it toward Barack Obama?

Mr. AXELROD: Well, I mean, I think that we started with the theory of the case, which is that we really need change from the Bush policies, that they've led us in the wrong direction here and abroad and that we need a new direction; and not just in our policies, but in our politics, that we had to get beyond the big divisions in our country and start actually solving problems. One of the heartening things about what's going on right now, Bob, is that we're campaigning in states that were so-called red states. We're spending all our time there because we feel we have a chance to win many of them. And one of the things that we wanted to do from the beginning was shatter this red state/blue state paradigm and emphasize the fact that we have a common--we have a common destiny, common interests, and we have to work together to solve these things. So it would be a healthy thing if we could do well in these states on Tuesday.

SCHIEFFER: Well, let's talk about one that the Democrats won the last time, and that is Pennsylvania. John McCain...

Mr. AXELROD: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: ...and Sarah Palin have spent a lot of time in Pennsylvania. They still believe that they can take it, that Pennsylvania would be key if they do put together a coalition that gets them to 270 votes. What do you think about Pennsylvania right now?

Mr. AXELROD: Well, I agree that it would be a key. I think it's a state that we've both worked very hard to win. I feel good about what I see in Pennsylvania, starting with the fact that we have a registration edge that's twice as large as we had four years ago. It went from 300,000 in favor of Democrats to 600,000. So that right away gives me encouragement. But everything we see from the state is encouraging. And I know that there've been a couple of late polls that suggest otherwise, but I've seen many more that work in our direction. And beyond which I just feel, based on the organization we have on the ground, the reaction that we're getting, that we're going to do very well in Pennsylvania. We're going to work really hard at it. And we've got great supporters like Ed Rendell and Bob Casey and others working day and night there for us. But I feel good about Pennsylvania. That's a state, Bob, that's felt the lash of these Bush economic policies very, very harshly, and they understand we can't keep doing the same thing. We can't keep doing the same trickle-down deregulation policies that have really led us into a ditch and that John McCain wants to continue. They know that. I think they're going to come out for Barack Obama on Tuesday.

SCHIEFFER: Do you really believe these polls that--we hear all this stuff about the Bradley effect. Do you believe, David, that there is a Bradley effect, and that is people telling pollsters one thing and then going into the voting booth and doing something else when a minority candidate is on the ticket?

Mr. AXELROD: Look, I don't want--I don't know about 1982, when that happened in California. There are a lot of pollsters who tell you that was sort of an illusory interpretation. But--and I--and I don't deny that there are some voters who are motivated by race yet in our country. But the big story is not how much race has been a factor, but how little it's been a factor. We're--I mentioned we're in Springfield here. This is not a very racially diverse area, and yet, you know, 40,000 people out last night. I think people are recognizing that we have bigger issues in this country to tackle and they're--they affect all of us, and they want to come together and solve these problems. In the primaries, Bob, I--we didn't see any of that. In fact, we never under polled our number in any primary that I can think of. And so I see no reason to believe that's going to happen on Tuesday, and I think it'll be good to shatter that myth once and for all.

SCHIEFFER: All right, David Axelrod, thank you so much.

Mr. AXELROD: Thanks for having me.

SCHIEFFER: And watching this here in the studio with us in New York, Senator Lindsey Graham, who has been, I would think, every step of the way with John McCain on this...

Senator LINDSEY GRAHAM (Republican, South Carolina): Pretty much. And I'm about to fall over. I don't know how he does it.

SCHIEFFER: Well, you heard what David Axelrod said.

Sen. GRAHAM: Mm-hmm.

SCHIEFFER: We see all these polls out there.

Sen. GRAHAM: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: It's going to be an uphill fight for John McCain.

Sen. GRAHAM: Well, what we've seen in the last two weeks is a very much tightening of the race in the states that matter. I really believe that Senator Obama's the virtual incumbent, and if he's not at 50 percent today in North Carolina he's not going to win. We see closing in Nevada, New Mexico and Colorado. Missouri, Pennsylvania and Ohio we have him under 50 in the margin of error. The intensity level in the last couple weeks has been unbelievable on our side. Senator Obama's being defined for the most liberal senator in the Senate. That's his voting record. "Joe the Plumber" kind of put Obama policies on a real face. Senator Biden said we're likely to be tested by foreign enemies if he becomes president, and people thinking about who has the most experience. So without a doubt, in the last two weeks this race--weeks this race has really closed, and if Senator Obama's under 50 now, I think the undecided voter in these key states will come our way. We're taking nothing for granted, we're campaigning hard.

SCHIEFFER: Well, what about Pennsylvania?

Sen. GRAHAM: That's...

SCHIEFFER: You've spent a lot of time there.

Sen. GRAHAM: Yeah...

SCHIEFFER: A lot of people said that you shouldn't have spent so much time there.

Sen. GRAHAM: Well, I think we're going to spend more time there. We're going to be there a lot. Senator Clinton was ahead by two and won by 10. The voter demographics in Pennsylvania set up very much for the centrist candidate that Senator McCain is. Senator Obama's becoming more and more a out of the mainstream, left-leaning economic candidate when it comes to redistribution of the wealth. And we see in our narratives that that's sticking, that people have a second look at Senator Obama in Pennsylvania and they question his economic policies, his role of the court and his experience to make us safe. And you know, I really do believe Pennsylvania is going to be very indicative of Missouri and North Carolina. The voter in North Carolina and Missouri that's coming our way is also coming our way in Pennsylvania.

SCHIEFFER: David Axelrod's also talking about winning North Carolina, which no Democrat has carried since, what, '64, I guess.

Sen. GRAHAM: Right.

SCHIEFFER: You've got a Republican candidate there, Elizabeth Dole...

Sen. GRAHAM: Yes.

SCHIEFFER: ...who's in terrible trouble.

Sen. GRAHAM: Yeah.

SCHIEFFER: Are--how do you feel about North Carolina?

Sen. GRAHAM: I'm from South Carolina. The water's not that much difference. I said in Fayetteville that I would beat Michael Phelps in swimming before Barack Obama wins North Carolina, and I can't swim. I'm standing by that. I know North Carolina. John McCain will win North Carolina. John McCain's politics is--fits North Carolina like a glove.

Senator Obama's a fine man, but he is indeed the most liberal senator in the United States Senate on economic policy, this redistributing the wealth, in moving numbers all over the board of who will get taxed, increased spending. And people like checks and balances. Police--Pelosi and Reid unchecked is not a very good feeling for the people of North Carolina, Pennsylvania or Ohio. You don't want the most liberal Democratic senators marrying up with the most liberal United States senator to become president. There will be no checks and balances.

SCHIEFFER: How does Florida look to you right now?

Sen. GRAHAM: Florida looks good. We have moved--in the north our vote was lagging. The intensity by Republicans in our poll now exceeds that by Democrats. The one things we lacked for a long time was intensity by Republicans, and I've never seen movement like this in my life. Every office we have throughout these states I've just talked about are being overflowed. People are excited about Senator McCain, and quite frankly they're afraid of the liberal policies that would come from Pelosi, Reid and Obama.

SCHIEFFER: Do you think Sarah Palin turned out to be a drag on the ticket, like some of the polls suggest?

Sen. GRAHAM: She has really helped. Look at the numbers. David was talking about numbers. Wherever she goes, she fills up the place. A lot of base intensity. At the end of the day, it will be up to John McCain to persuade the independent voter. The undecided, independent voter will decide this race. John McCain has a 24-year record of being a centrist, well prepared to be commander in chief, and Senator Obama has been in the left lane of politics all of his life, and that is breaking through. The contrast between McCain and Obama is now taking shape vs. Bush. We're looking forward instead of looking backwards, and that's been very good for us.

SCHIEFFER: All right, Senator Graham...

Sen. GRAHAM: Thanks.

SCHIEFFER: ...thanks for being with us this morning.

Sen. GRAHAM: Thanks.

SCHIEFFER: We'll be keeping up with you along the way.

And we'll be back in one minute to talk about all those races for the Senate, and there are some hot ones out there, in just a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And we're back now at CBS News election headquarters in New York. And joining us for our Campaign Quick Check this morning, Senator Chuck Schumer, who is the chairman of the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee. He's with us here in the studio.

Senator CHUCK SCHUMER (Chairman, Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee): Good morning.

SCHIEFFER: With us in Las Vegas, Senator John Ensign, his Republican counterpart.

And basically you two senators--I think a lot of people don't understand this. In the Senate, the Republicans pick one person, the Democrats pick one person and they sort of chart the national strategy for Senate campaigns and do a lot of the fundraising for the Senate candidates. And you are the two gentlemen who do that.

Well, let's start off with you, Senator Schumer. Most of these polls are suggesting Democrats going to have a pretty good night.

Sen. SCHUMER: I think we are going to have a pretty good night. If you would've told me a year ago that we'd be where we are now, I'd be very surprised. I mean, the bottom line is I think Wednesday morning Democrats are going to be very happy, because we're going to pick up a whole lot of seats. As for 60, that's very, very difficult. It's possible but unlikely. And the reason is because the terrain is so tough. In other words, of the 11 contested states, none are deeply blue, a whole bunch are deeply red. So even though the wind is at our back, it's hard. But I will say this, with 56, 57, 58 we'll be able to get a lot done in the Senate to help change the country.

SCHIEFFER: So you think you might pick up as many as seven or eight seats?

Sen. SCHUMER: Well, look, I think that, you know, we're doing really well. Everyone always asks about 60 and, as I said, possible but unlikely. But to pick up a whole bunch, that's likely.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Ensign, I'll give you the floor here for a second. What do you think's going to happen?

Senator JOHN ENSIGN (Chairman, National Republican Senatorial Committee): Well, there's no question we are facing a fairly strong political headwind at this point, and the Democrats are poised to pick up some seats. The exact number we don't know, because there's so many races that are within the margin of error. There's six or seven races out there right now, including the

race in Louisiana where the Democrats are defending down there. That's--we have that race dead even now. So it's going to be an interesting night on election night. The bottom line is, though, this is the most liberal, left-wing, radical group of candidates the Democrats have ever put up, and if they get in, if they get the kind of numbers that Chuck Schumer's talking about, they're going to take this country way left. They're going to increase taxes, they're going to increase spending, they're going to make us more dependent on foreign sources of oil.

SCHIEFFER: Well, that's exactly what Senator Graham said just a minute ago if Barack Obama is elected. So is this going to be the most liberal, left-wing bunch of senators ever brought to the Senate?

Sen. SCHUMER: Absolutely not. The Senate candidates are thoughtful, they're moderate, they're nonideological, Bob. Look, they come from deeply red states. These are just the people America wants, people aimed at the middle class. Not too far right, not too far left. But unlike the Republican incumbents they're running against, they do want change. They don't believe in Bush's policies.

SCHIEFFER: Well, Senator Ensign, why--when you said that, you said it looks like the Democrats are going to pick up a bunch of seats. Why is that all of a sudden, that Democrats have such a good chance in so many places?

Sen. ENSIGN: Well, first--well, first of all, Al Franken up in Minnesota, to say that he's a moderate, thoughtful candidate is laughable. He has, you know, joked about rape. He has been a partisan, left-wing liberal for a long time. And the candidates they have around the country in--from Oregon, North Carolina, New Hampshire, you name it--have voted for tax increase after tax increase after tax increase. To call those thoughtful, moderate people, it really is not believable.

But the reason that we're--Republicans have a tough time right now is because we do have an unpopular president. We also are defending a lot more seats than the Democrats are. But having an unpopular president, we have an unpopular war. And we were starting to do very, very well, but when the financial crisis hit, that financial crisis really is--has been a--almost a body blow to Republicans.

And unfortunately, it was allowed to be portrayed that this was somehow the result of deregulation when, in fact, this was a result of overregulation. The fact that Bill Clinton allowed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to get into the subprime market and then encouraged every single year for Fannie and Freddie to increase the amount of these subprime loans, these high risk loans under the Community Reinvestment Act, it required banks to lend more and more of their money to these high risk loans. And then on a party line vote the Democrats blocked a strong regulator with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Party line vote. Literally every Democrat voted against a strong regulator which could've stopped this whole financial crisis.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Sen. SCHUMER: Bob, let me...

SCHIEFFER: Take your point...(unintelligible).

Sen. SCHUMER: Let me say one thing. My good friend John said the reason the Republicans are in trouble is George Bush is an unpopular president. Well, just about to a person, every one of these incumbents has voted with George Bush up and down the line. So if the public doesn't like George Bush's policies, they're not going to like the policies of Elizabeth Dole or Norm Coleman or Gordon Smith, and that's why they're having such trouble. The bottom line is these folks, when Bush said, 'Jump,' they said, 'How high?' Everyone sees the mess in the war in Iraq, everyone sees the mess in the economy, and they say we need change. And that's why we're winning, very simply. And you can't say, as my good friend John did, 'Well, Bush is an unpopular president,' and then try to separate the Senate candidates. They've been with them up and down the line.

SCHIEFFER: Let me ask you one other question, Senator Ensign. I'm told that you said the other day in an interview that Governor Palin has been a drag on the Republican ticket, and that in fact that you thought that Joe Biden was more qualified to be a vice president. Did you in fact say that?

Sen. ENSIGN: No, I did not say that. What I said was Sarah Palin has brought out record crowds; that she, I believe, was mishandled by the campaign, but she has actually energized a large part of our base. But the presidential campaign is about the top of the ticket. Barack Obama does not have the experience to be president of the United States. That was the point I was making in those comments the other day. John McCain has the experience and he has the judgment to be president of the United States, and I believe that he will support the policies--keeping our taxes low. Barack Obama wants to raise our taxes, redistribute wealth, punish success. Right now that is the wrong agenda. When you're in a recession, you don't want to raise taxes.

SCHIEFFER: And what about Senator Stevens, the senior Republican in the Senate? Of course, he was just convicted on seven counts. Do you think that he ought to step down, Senator Ensign? Because he's still on the ballot there.

Sen. ENSIGN: Yeah, I think it would've been better, first of all, for this to have happened last year. The Justice Department had the information, they should've done this last year so that the people of Alaska, if he was convicted like he was, they could've had a clear choice between a Republican and a Democrat. Mark Begich couldn't have won that state if it would've been a clear choice between a Republican--normal Republican running up there. The only way he can win is--possibly win is because Ted Stevens was convicted. I have said that it would be the best thing for Ted Stevens to step down.

SCHIEFFER: For him to step down.

Sen. ENSIGN: Yeah. And I--and I said that last week.

SCHIEFFER: Well, then let me ask you, Senator Schumer, about Joe Lieberman, the Democrat who's been campaigning for John McCain.

Sen. SCHUMER: Right.

SCHIEFFER: Should he leave the Democratic Party now, or should he still--he still votes, in organizing the Senate, with the Democrats. What do you do with Joe Lieberman, one way or the other?

Sen. SCHUMER: Well, Leader Reid, who's a good friend of Joe's, has said we're not going to debate that, discuss it till after Tuesday, and I'm sticking with Leader Reid on that one.

SCHIEFFER: So what...

Sen. SCHUMER: So I'm waiting. We're going to wait till Wednesday to even discuss that. Publicly or privately, there have been no discussions about it among our Senate leadership or in the caucus.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Well, gentlemen...

Sen. ENSIGN: Bob, I will...

SCHIEFFER: Go ahead.

Sen. ENSIGN: Bob, I will say that if Joe wants to leave the Democrat Party and join us, we'd welcome him with open arms.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Sen. SCHUMER: OK.

SCHIEFFER: Well, I want to thank both of you for being with us this morning.

Sen. SCHUMER: Thank you. And let me--let me wish you good luck, John. We may not speak until Tuesday night. Good luck to you.

SCHIEFFER: All right.

Sen. ENSIGN: You, too, Chuck. You've done a great job.

Sen. SCHUMER: It's been a long two years. So have you.

Sen. ENSIGN: It has.

SCHIEFFER: All right. Thank you, gentlemen. Back in a moment with some final thoughts.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: Finally today, several presidential campaigns back I wrote an essay on the joy of voting, and some folks have asked me to repeat it. So here, by I guess what I'd call semi-popular demand, here it is.

Several of my fairly famous colleagues have disclosed they no longer vote as a way of maintaining their neutrality as journalists. I admire their objective, but I don't understand their reasoning. Anyone who knows me knows how much I love my job, but it is a job. I wouldn't equate it with voting, which to me is my duty as a citizen, like paying the water bill.

I remember reading "The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich" as a young man, and how surprised I was to learn the Nazis had used an election as a springboard to power. Had I lived in Germany then, I hope I could have voted against them. I wouldn't have wanted to be neutral on that one. Besides, voting is just so much fun. As a reporter, I have to back up what I say with facts. But I need to give no reason, marshal no argument for why I voted the way I did. Maybe I just didn't like the candidate's attitude; that's reason enough to vote against him. Or maybe I found a candidate really qualified; that's a good reason to vote for him. It is my vote and I can exercise it any way I choose, but no candidate gets my vote unless I believe he or she deserves it.

We take voting so seriously at my house, my wife has instructed me not to tell even her who I voted for. She's afraid I'll disappoint her, oh ye of little faith. But isn't the best part? We can tell everyone or no one. So go vote. It's good for the country and it's good for you. As my mother used to say, 'It makes you feel big and strong.'

Back in a minute.

(Announcements)

SCHIEFFER: And that's our broadcast. We hope you will join us right here on election night, when CBS News will have complete coverage of campaign 2008. Thanks for watching FACE THE NATION. We'll see you.

