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A CANADIAN PRIMER TO THE 2012 US PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

A Policy Update Paper

By

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A CANADIAN PRIMER TO THE 2012 U.S. PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

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INTRODUCTION

Canadians often think that we know all about America, while Americans think that they know all they need to know about us. As US Ambassador David Jacobson has observed, we are both wrong.

This primer to the US primaries is intended to provide some basic background for Canadians who see the American election as both entertaining and an education in the politics of our southern neighbour. Ties of history, culture and geographic propinquity, which facilitate trade and investment, mean that the US will always be primordial to Canadian interests. We always have an agenda with the United States and because of the asymmetries in our relative interests and global positioning, the responsibility for initiative and action lies with us.

As Barack Obama will be the Democratic nominee, this primer focuses on the race for the Republican presidential nomination. The occupant of the Oval Office is still the most powerful leader in the world. In pursuit of Canadian interests in the US the presidency is also our main entry point into the American system, itself a spaghetti bowl of competing interests and factions.

These include the members of Congress and their staff, the Administration and its agencies, the lobbyists (there are now over 33,000 in Washington), the lawyers, the think tanks, the media and the other special interests that are constantly shifting, aligning and realigning on and around Capitol Hill. The internet and the rise of YouTube, blogs, and tweets have further 'democratized' and 'atomized' the political process.

The American political process has become polarized and even more partisan. "It's not just a tug of war between left and right", writes *New York Times* columnist Charles Blow, "It's a struggle between the mind and the heart, between evidence and emotions, between reason and anger, between what we know and what we believe." American politics, observes the *National Journal's* Ron Brownstein "increasingly resembles a kind of total war in which each party mobilizes every conceivable asset at its disposal against the other. Most Governors were once conscientious objectors in that struggle. No more." Or Newt Gingrich told ABC News on the weekend before the Iowa caucuses, "'Politics has become a really nasty, vicious, negative business and I think it's disgusting and I think it's dishonest."

Within this fractious and often confusing context, a foreign power is just another special interest and, without the tools of money or votes, not particularly special. Working this system has become even more complicated because of the continuing dispersal of power in the US and the legions of special interests armed with cheque books.

It makes it more difficult to build the necessary coalitions of cross-party support that we usually require to either prevent passage of legislation contrary to our interests or support for an initiative. But it starts with an appreciation of the American system. This primer is intended to contribute to that understanding and to the understanding of why it matters to Canada. When we get it right we advance not only our own interests, but we gain additional leverage from our ability to explain America to the rest of the world and, when we properly manage our international diplomatic network, the rest of the world to America.

Who's running for the Republicans and what are their platforms?

Michelle Bachmann is the Representative for Minnesota's 6th district. Newt Gingrich is the former Georgia Representative and Speaker of the House of Representatives. Jon Huntsman is the former Utah Governor and US Ambassador to China. Ron Paul is the Representative from Texas' 14th district. Rick Perry is Governor of Texas. Mitt Romney is a former Massachusetts Governor. Rick Santorum is a former Pennsylvania Senator.

On the eve of the Iowa caucuses, Gallup reports that the lead in the GOP nomination race has changed seven times during 2011 with Mitt Romney, Rick Perry, Herman Cain, and Newt Gingrich having held top spot along with Mike Huckabee and Sarah Palin (both of whom declined to run).

Businessman Herman Cain, Representative Thad McCotter from Michigan's 11th district, and former Minnesota Governor Tim Pawlenty have all dropped out of the race or suspended their campaigns. Gary Johnson, the former New Mexico Governor, has also dropped out, but says he will run as a Libertarian.

Where do they stand?

Each of the candidates have websites which outline their positions on the issues.

Michelle Bachmann recently published her autobiography, *Core of Conviction (2011)*. Newt Gingrich is a prolific author with 17 books outlining his views, the most recent being *To Save America: Stopping Obama's Secular-Socialist Machine (2010)*. He has also written half-a-dozen historical fiction novels. Ron Paul is also a prolific author, the most recent being *Liberty Defined: 50 Essential Issues That Affect Our Freedom (2010)*. Rick Perry has written two books: *On My Honor: Why the American Values of the Boy Scouts are Worth Fighting For (2008)* and *Fed Up! Our Fight to Save America from Washington (2010)*. Mitt Romney wrote a memoir of his experience with the 2002 Olympics, *Turnaround: Crisis, Leadership, and the Olympic Games*, and *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness (2010)*. Rick Santorum wrote *It Takes a Family: Conservatism and the Common Good (2005)*.

President Obama has a couple of best sellers: *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance (1995)* and *The Audacity of Hope: Thoughts on Reclaiming the American Dream (2006)*.

What's the difference between a primary and a caucus?

A caucus brings together the party faithful for a discussion before they 'caucus' for their candidates. You have to be present to vote. Supporters can cajole other candidates' backers over to their side during this discussion. Barack Obama turned out a lot of atypical caucus voters in his 2008 victory as the candidate for 'change', something Ron Paul is hoping to emulate.

A primary is now the most common form by which parties chose delegates for each state. Voting is conducted as in a national election allowing, for example, absentee ballots.

Is the process starting earlier than usual?

Sort of. Once upon a time the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary were held in February and they were the only contests before March. Frontloading began in 1996 when California decided to move its primary to March from June because the later date meant the nomination was essentially sewn up; ultimately 29 states chose to move their primaries to March or earlier. The cycles have advanced and, in an effort to provide a regional

perspective, the Nevada caucuses, and Florida and South Carolina primaries will also be held in January.

Are the Iowa caucuses (January 3) important?

The Iowa caucuses are perceived as the opening 'game' in the presidential nomination process for both the Democrats and Republicans. Turnout will likely top 100,000 (in 2008 it was nearly 120,000), all registered Republicans.

When Iowa joined the union in 1846, the state's political parties adopted a caucus and convention system that has mostly endured in the 99 counties and 1774 precinct caucuses (about 900 of which are combined). They were largely overlooked nationally until 1972, when Iowa moved its caucuses from late spring to January, thereby kick-starting the political season. Even though neither placed first in Iowa, George McGovern, then a South Dakota Senator, successfully used the 1972 caucuses to gain national attention and the subsequent Democratic nomination and Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter did the same in 1976,

Half of Iowa winners since 1976 (Gerald Ford, Bob Dole, and George W. Bush) have gone on to win the GOP nomination. In 2008, the ultimate nominee, John McCain, placed fourth. Some candidates, including Jon Huntsman, chose not to campaign in Iowa. Mitt Romney originally made the same decision but changed his mind.

Iowa is a small, homogeneous, midwestern farm state with small towns, not exactly representative of the rest of America. The *Atlantic* notes that GOP caucus-electorate in 2008 was 70 percent rural or exurban; 60 percent born-again or evangelical Christian; and majority male. Iowa will send 28 delegates (out of approximately 2300) to the Republican convention.

What about the Iowa Straw Poll held last August?

Straw polls are held in the year before the presidential election. They give the media a lot of copy and satisfy the party faithful but they don't mean much. In this cycle there were at least 57 reported straw polls for the Republican candidates.

The Iowa straw poll is held in August, fifteen months before the election, at the University of Iowa in Ames. It is primarily a fundraiser for the state Republican Party. It gives profile to the winning candidate – Mitt Romney in 2007 and Michele Bachmann in 2011. It's also an early barometer of organization. Candidates have to bus supporters to the straw poll and get them to turn out which makes it an early exercise in Get Out The Vote (GOTV) preparation.

And the New Hampshire primary (January 10)?

Like the Iowa caucuses, the importance of the New Hampshire primary (the second Tuesday in January) lies in being the 'season opener' for the presidential primary campaign. Extraordinary media coverage is given to these races.

Turnout in New Hampshire is expected to be between 200-250,000. Approximately 240,000 Republicans showed up to vote in 2008 and 2000 – the last two cycles with an open nomination. New Hampshire is a "semi-open" primary ie. independents can vote in either party's primary, but registered Democrats and Republicans must vote in their own party's contest. In 2008, 34% of those who participated in the New Hampshire GOP primary were independents.

After Iowa and New Hampshire there is usually a culling of the trailing candidates as reality sets in and they find they have no ability to raise new money and sustain their organizations for the longer haul.

New Hampshire has held a presidential primary since 1916. The New Hampshire primary was traditionally held the second Tuesday in March, a date that lasted through the 1968 campaign before moving earlier and earlier in the year until landing on the second Tuesday in January. It gained attention in 1952 when Republican Dwight Eisenhower (who would later win the nomination and presidency) defeated Robert Taft. Democrat Estes Kefauver defeated incumbent president Harry Truman and Truman would abandon his campaign for re-election (Adlai Stevenson would win the Democratic nomination). Eugene McCarthy's showing in the 1968 primary helped persuade President Lyndon Johnson not to seek re-election. Winning the New Hampshire primary does not guarantee the nomination: Paul Tsongas beat Bill Clinton in 1992, John McCain beat George W. Bush in 2000 and Hillary Clinton beat Barack Obama in 2008.

Do the parties do their primary process differently?

Democrats have national standards while the Republicans give the states wide latitude in drawing up their delegate selection.

Haven't there been a lot more candidate debates?

Yes, party debates to help voters select their presidential nominees took off in the lead-up to the 2008 conventions when the Democratic candidates met 25 times, while the Republican candidates met 21 times.

In this cycle, Republican candidates have met in various configurations on eighteen occasions in 2011. They are scheduled to meet another ten times in 2012, resuming on January 7 and 8 in New Hampshire, then on January 16 and 19 in South Carolina, January 23 and 26 in Florida, February 22 in Arizona, March 1 in Georgia, March 5 in California, and March 19 in Oregon.

Not every candidate has participated in every debate. A minimum polling support threshold requirement kept Jon Huntsman out of an Iowa debate and he chose to skip the Las Vegas debate. In November, Herman Cain met Newt Gingrich in Houston, Texas and in December while Newt Gingrich debated Jon Huntsman in Manchester and New Hampshire.

Do the debates matter?

Yes. Viewership of the Republican debates (all available on the Internet) gradually grew with 7.6 million viewers tuning in the penultimate December 10 debate in Des Moines and 6.7 million watching the final debate of the season in Sioux City, according to Nielsen.

PBS news anchor Jim Lehrer, who has just published an excellent book *Tension City: Inside the Presidential Debates from Kennedy-Nixon to Obama-McCain*, says debates are "probably the single most important events of a Presidential campaign." Lehrer, who moderated 11 presidential debates, says they are an essential element in how citizens decide their presidential choice. The debates give them a "final measure" of the candidate and whether they can see "that person sitting behind a desk in the Oval Office." Rick Perry's debate performance is seen to have damaged his candidacy. His 'Oops' moment in the November 9 Michigan debate, when he could not remember the third Federal Agency that he would eliminate as President, became a YouTube hit.

Are all of the Republican presidential candidates on every ballot?

Not necessarily. They must first qualify according to each state's rules.

Virginia, for example, requires that all those gathering signatures be state residents. Additionally, at least 400 signatures must come from each of the state's 11 congressional districts. Currently, only former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney and US Representative Ron Paul have qualified to get on the Virginia ballot. Former Speaker Newt Gingrich and Texas Governor Rick Perry failed to secure the 10,000 valid signatures necessary for inclusion on the ballot. The campaigns for US Representative Michele Bachmann, former Pennsylvania Senator Rick Santorum, and former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman each failed to submit signatures, automatically disqualifying them from getting on the March ballot.

Are the primaries just for presidential nominees?

No. They are for all major offices, including Governor and Senator. In Virginia, for example, eight candidates are currently vying for the seat of retiring Senator Jim Webb, a Democrat.

How are delegates apportioned?

Republican delegates are apportioned on the number of Republicans elected to the State Legislatures, Governors, US House seats, and US Senate seats through December 31, 2011. California is the largest with a projected 172 delegates, Texas is second with 149, then New York with 95, Georgia with 76 and Pennsylvania with 72 and Illinois with 69. Vermont and Delaware bring up the rear with 17 each.

Ex-officio or 'super' delegates include the party leadership, members of each party's national committee, all elected and former members, and Governors. They make up approximately 16% of the Democratic total and about 14% for the Republicans.

Does the primary winner 'take all'?

No. Republican primary rules were changed in 2010 to apportion delegates on a proportional basis in Republican caucuses and primaries that are conducted prior to April 1st. One notable exception to this rule is Florida, which got approval to remain a "winner take all" state. The Republicans decided to go to such a system after watching the extended battle between Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama in 2008. This will make it difficult for any candidate to wrap up the Republican nomination early in 2012. In 2008, John McCain did very well in early "winner take all" primaries and wrapped up the Republican nomination quickly.

Does President Obama have to go through the primary process?

Incumbent presidents rarely face a primary challenge by an established contender in their own party. Obama will join the recent ranks of George W. Bush in 2004, Bill Clinton in 1996 and Ronald Reagan in 1984 as incumbents who did not face a primary challenge.

Pat Buchanan challenged President George H. W. Bush for the 1992 GOP nomination. Jimmy Carter faced a strong challenge from Teddy Kennedy in 1980. Eugene McCarthy's decision (and subsequently that of Bobby Kennedy) to challenge Lyndon Johnson in 1968 helped persuade Johnson not to seek re-nomination.

The Democratic primaries select candidates for other offices and select delegates to the party convention. Organizing for America, the Democratic grass-roots organization, has

been on the ground in both Iowa, New Hampshire and other states. Since Obama announced his re-election bid in April, 2011 it has organized house parties, surrogate campaign stops, local organizing meetings, phone banks. In Iowa, President Obama will address those who attend Democratic caucuses through streaming video software Adobe Connect, an example of how campaigns often pioneer outreach techniques that are later adapted for general use.

When are the conventions?

The Republican convention takes place August 27-30 at St. Pete Times Forum in Tampa, Florida. The Democrat convention will be held in the Time Warner Cable arena in Charlotte, North Carolina from September 3-6.

What are the chances of a convention fight?

Slim, unlike Canada where brokered conventions have been the norm.

In the US, one or two candidates usually draw away from the pack during the primary/caucus process and the combination of media attention, money, and bandwagon effect usually creates a clear winner before the end of the process. Party strategists would also prefer to have their party nominee organizing the national campaign well before the summer conventions. The last time a Republican presidential convention opened without the nominee having already been decided in the primaries was 1976, but by the time of the first ballot President Gerald Ford had sufficient votes to win on the first ballot over challenger Ronald Reagan.

If a candidate does not win enough delegates during the primary and caucus election to secure a majority, or win, over another candidate's delegates before the first ballot at the convention then the convention is considered 'brokered': the nomination is settled by political horse-trading and additional votes. All regular delegates hitherto pledged to the candidate who had won their respective state's primary or caucus election are usually "released" after the first ballot and can vote accordingly.

Notwithstanding Hollywood's portrayal in *The Best Man* (1964) with Henry Fonda and Cliff Robertson or *West Wing's* selection of Matthew Santos played by Jimmy Smits, the introduction of primaries effectively ended brokered conventions. The most recent brokered convention candidates were Democrat Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and Republican Thomas Dewey in 1948. The last time a brokered convention produced the winning presidential candidate was Franklin Roosevelt in 1932. The 1924 Democratic convention took a record 103 ballots to nominate presidential candidate John Davis (who lost to incumbent Republican President Calvin Coolidge).

What about a third party candidate?

This time more than a half dozen 'third party' candidates are running under various party labels including Americans Elect, Prohibition, Boston Tea Party, Constitution, Socialist, Green and Libertarian. Five-time candidate (1992-2008) Ralph Nader has not indicated a desire to run in 2012. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg ruled out running announcing in late 2010: "I am not running for president. I couldn't be clearer about that." Asked later if he would change his mind, he replied, "No way, no how".

In 1992, Ross Perot running on the Reform Party ticket, garnered 18.9% of the vote. It was the second best placing for a third party candidate since Theodore Roosevelt in 1912 and ahead of George Wallace who garnered 13.5% of the vote in 1968. In 1996, Perot won 8% of the popular vote.

Supporters of those who lose, as with President George H.W. Bush who lost to Bill Clinton in 1992 and Al Gore who lost to George W. Bush in 2000, argue that the third party candidates - Ross Perot in 1992 and Ralph Nader in 2000 - played the role of spoiler for their candidate.

What about Senate and House races?

Senators are normally elected for six-year terms. There are 33 Senate seats up for election this year: 10 are held by the Republicans and 23 are held by the Democrats or those who caucus with them (Independents Bernie Sanders of Vermont and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut).

With Democrats holding a 53-to-47 majority, Republicans need to pick up four seats to win a majority and 13 to gain a filibuster-proof majority of 60 seats.

So far nine Senators have said they will not be running for reelection in 2012: Democratic Senators Daniel Akaka of Hawaii, Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico, Kent Conrad of North Dakota, Herb Kohl of Wisconsin, Ben Nelson of Nebraska, Jim Webb of Virginia, Independent Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut and Republican Senators Jon Kyl of Arizona, and Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas.

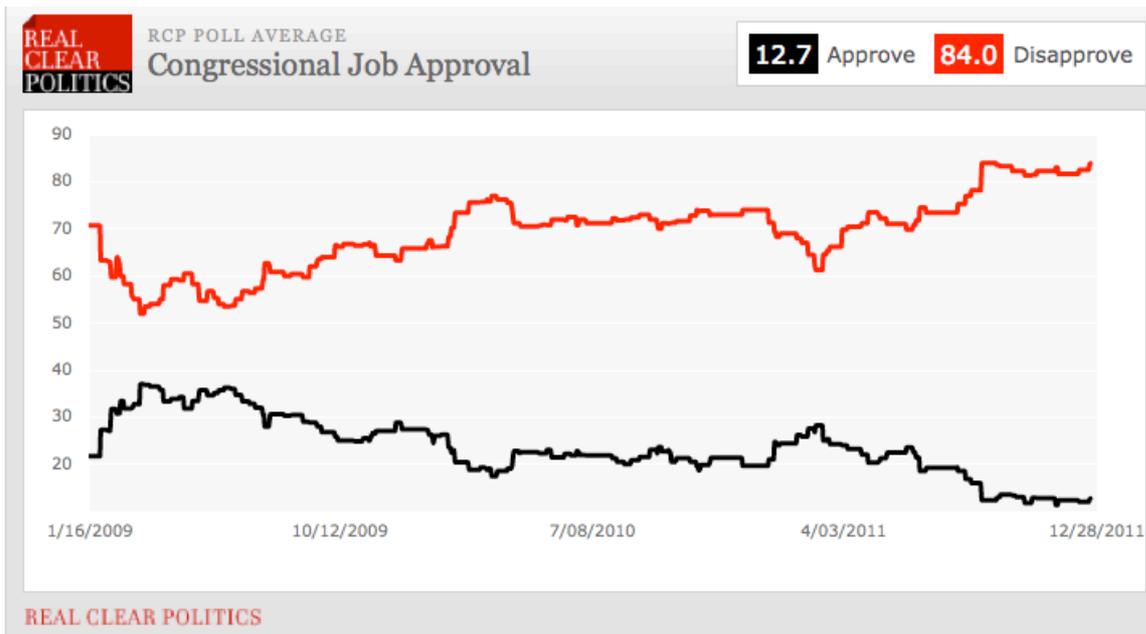
Representatives are elected for two year terms. That means all 435 seats in the House of Representatives are up for election every two years. The Republicans under Speaker John Boehner currently hold a fifty seat majority with 242 Republicans to 192 Democrats (and one vacancy).

Democrats need a net gain of 25 seats to retake the majority, which would require something of a wave.

According to Karl Rove, in the ten presidential re-elections since 1936, the party in control of the White House has added House seats in seven contests and lost them in three. The average gain has been 12 seats. The largest pickup was 75 House seats by Harry Truman in 1948, considered by many pundits the most remarkable come-back election of the 20th century. Truman had campaigned against a 'do-nothing' Republican Congress that had opposed his initiatives and he not only won re-election but the Democrats regained control of both the House and Senate. The lessons of 1948 are not lost on President Obama.

Public discontent with Congress has reached record levels and in the most recent Pew poll (December 15), two out of three voters say most members of Congress should be voted out of office in 2012, a record high for Pew. Importantly, the number who said their own member should be replaced matches the all-time high recorded in the 2010 midterms, when 58 members of Congress lost reelection bids – the most in any election since 1948.

The Republican Party receives more of the blame than the Democrats for a 'do-nothing' Congress. A record-high 50% say that the current Congress has accomplished less than previous Congresses, and by nearly two-to-one (40% to 23%) more blame Republican leaders than Democratic leaders for this.



And elections for Governor?

There will be 13 elections for Governor in 11 states (Montana, New Hampshire, Washington, Indiana, Missouri, North Carolina, West Virginia, Delaware, Vermont, North Dakota, Utah) and two territories (American Samoa and Puerto Rico). There are currently 29 Republicans, 20 Democrats and 1 Independent holding the office of Governor in the states.

Governors matter. Four of the last five presidents – George W. Bush (Texas), Bill Clinton (Arkansas), Ronald Reagan (California), Jimmy Carter (Georgia) did executive service in their states.

Amongst this years GOP contenders, Mitt Romney served as governor of Massachusetts, Rick Perry is governor of Texas, Jon Huntsman served as governor of Utah, while retired candidates Tim Pawlenty was governor of Minnesota and Gary Johnson was governor of New Mexico. There are a number of former governors in the current Administration including Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano (Arizona), Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack (Iowa), Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sibelius (Kansas) and former Commerce Secretary Gary Locke (Washington), who is now US Ambassador to China (replacing Jon Huntsman).

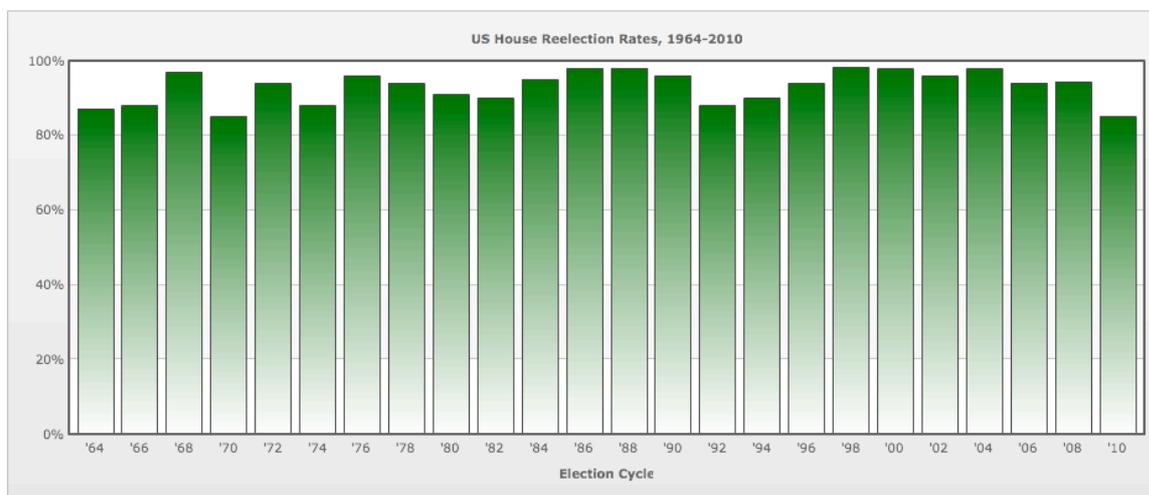
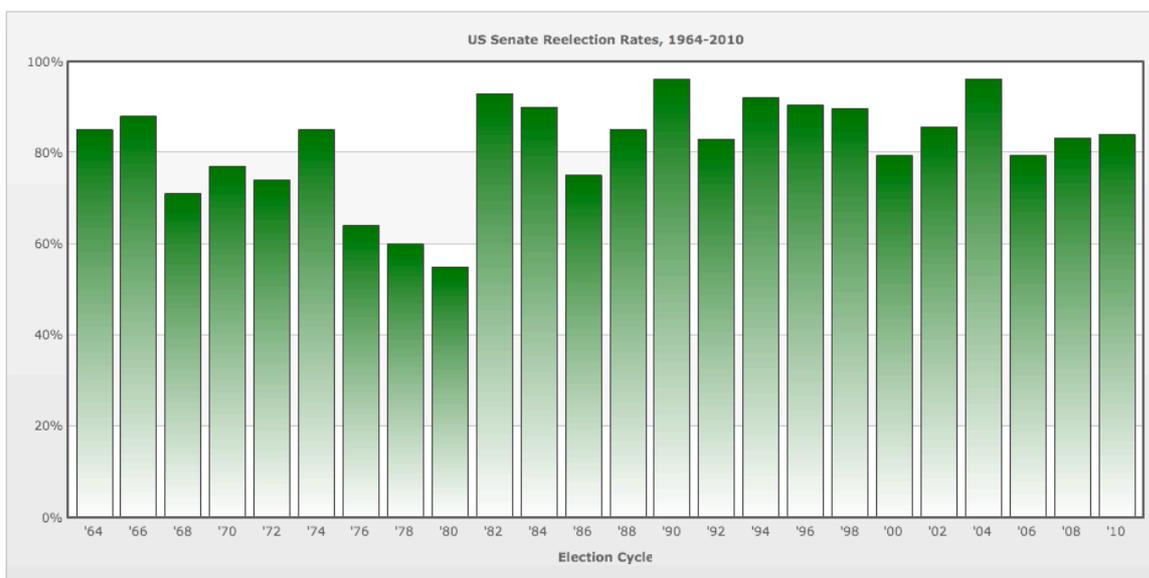
Do incumbents have an advantage?

Usually. Unlike Canada, where between 1/4 and 1/3 of the Members of Parliament are first time MPs (108 newly elected MPs of 308 in the 2011 election), there is less turnover in the US Congress.

Incumbents enjoy an enormous financial advantage. The Centre for Responsive Politics estimates Senate incumbents have already raised an average of \$6.6M to \$479,000 for their challengers while in the House, incumbents outpace challengers \$570,000 to \$110,000.

'Gerrymandering' to increase their party majority is common practice when boundaries are adjusted after each decennial census. Voter unhappiness about lack of choice led Californians to pass an initiative in 2010 giving an independent commission authority to adjust boundaries. This may make more competitive some of the 2012 House races in California.

Pundits reckon that House incumbents usually enjoy a 8-10% advantage, but this dropped to 5% in the 2010 midterms, partly accounting for the GOP net gain of 63 seats and erasing the gains Democrats made in 2006 when they recaptured both the House and the Senate and 2008. It was the highest midterm loss for a party since 1938. A weaker advantage for incumbents in House races would mean an easier task for Democrats to retake the 25 Republican-held seats they need to regain control. From 2002 through 2008, incumbent Senators of both parties enjoyed an average advantage of eleven points. In 2010, the Senate incumbency effect was ten points.



Source: Centre for Responsive Politics

How much does this all cost?

A lot of money. By the end of 2011, the Centre for Responsive Politics estimates candidates have already spent \$287 million for this electoral cycle.

The Centre estimates the race for the White House and Congress in 2008 cost a total of \$5.3 billion – about 25% more than 2004. The campaign for the White House cost about \$1.6 billion; double the presidential race in 2004.

By contrast, Canadian elections cost approximately \$300 million - the Chief Electoral Officer estimates the 2011 election cost was \$291 million.

Over the years there have been various efforts to reform campaign financing but with little apparent effect.

In January 2010, the Supreme Court struck down a major portion of a 2002 campaign-finance reform law, saying it violates the free-speech right of corporations to engage in public debate of political issues. "Government may not suppress political speech on the basis of the speaker's corporate identity," Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in the majority opinion. "No sufficient governmental interest justifies limits on the political speech of nonprofit or for-profit corporations... If the First Amendment has any force it prohibits Congress from fining or jailing citizens, or associations of citizens, for simply engaging in political speech."

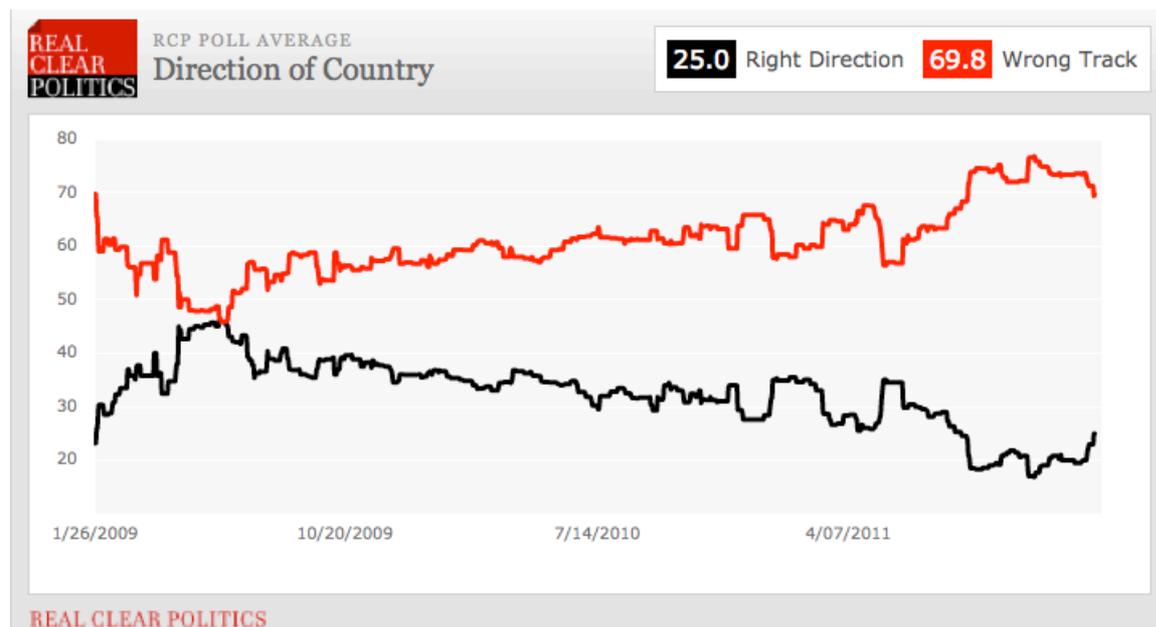
President Obama declared the decision "a major victory for big oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans."

What is the mood of America?

The faltering US economy continues to be the main preoccupation for voters and the number one story in the American news media.

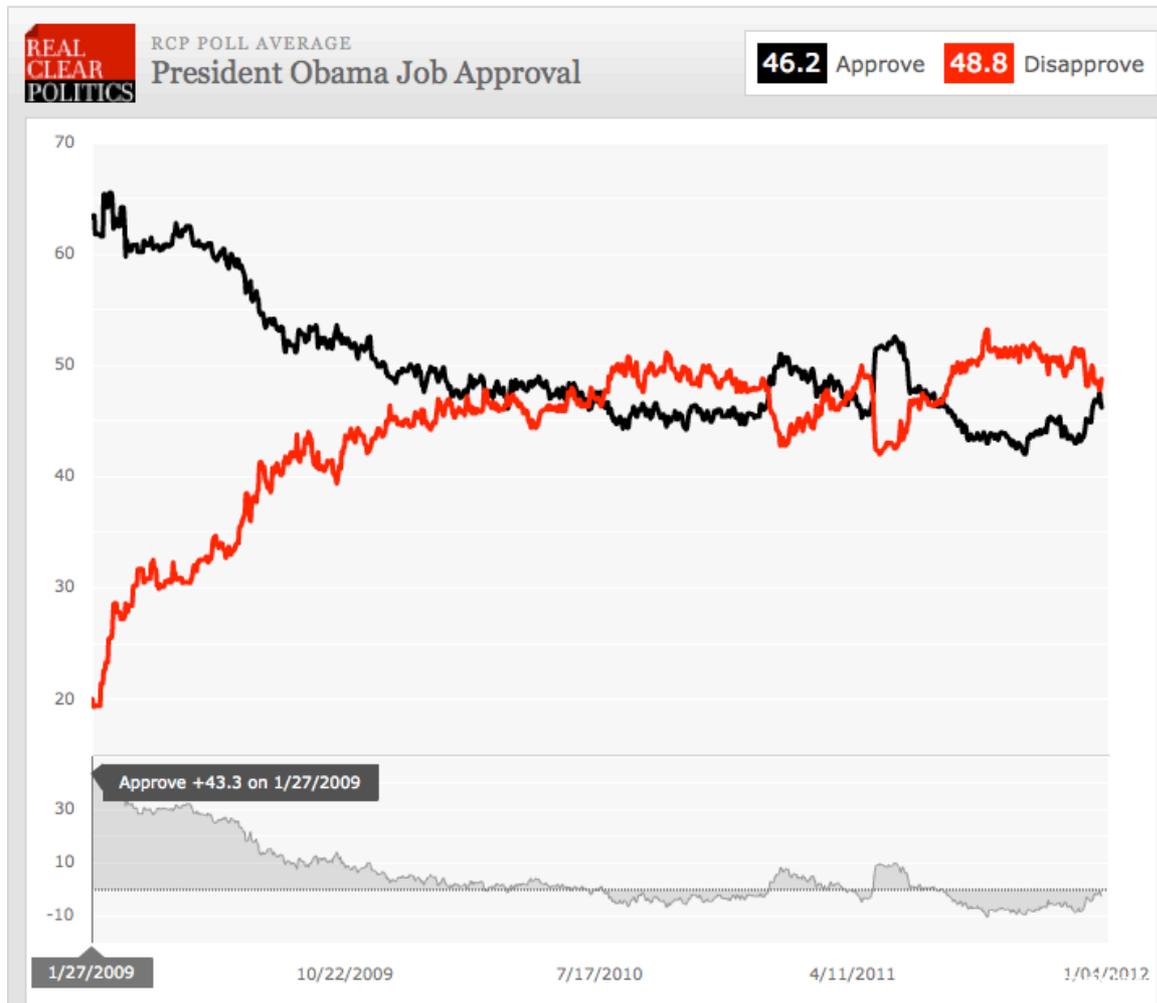
According to the Pew Research Centre (December 21, 2011), as the recovery weakened and partisan warfare continued in Washington over the debt ceiling and deficit, economic news became the main story. Pew estimates that the economy was the subject of 20% of the space in newspapers and online as well as time on television and radio news.

Most Americans think the country is headed in the wrong direction.



Over the past two decades, Pew has also found a majority of respondents agree with the statement that "this is a country in which the rich get richer and the poor get poorer." Since the late 1980s, a growing number of citizens have begun to see the US as a nation divided

into two groups: the “haves” and the “have nots” and this has been a driving force for both the Tea Party and Occupy Wall Street movements.



Americans are also less positive and more critical of government these days. In April, 2011 a Pew Research Center survey found a “perfect storm of conditions associated with distrust of government – a dismal economy, an unhappy public, bitter partisan-based backlash, and epic discontent with Congress and elected officials.”

The April survey concluded that the public now wants government reformed rather than an activist government to deal with the nation’s top problems. Growing numbers want the power of government curtailed. There is less appetite for government solutions to the nation’s problems, with the exception of greater regulation of major financial institutions.

Public dissatisfaction with the tax system has grown over the past decade, but a December Pew survey concluded that the public’s frustration is not in how much they themselves pay, but rather the impression that wealthy people are not paying their fair share. Republicans and Democrats agree on the need for tax reform. They see the system as unfair and requiring an overhaul but, like the super-committee on the deficit, they do not agree on how to do it.

Has Canada been a factor in the Republican race?

Canadian issues do not usually figure prominently in either the primary process or election campaign.

This election cycle, however, the decision by the State Department to delay to 2013 consideration of the request for a presidential permit for the construction of TransCanada's XL pipeline has become a partisan issue. Recent legislation extending a 2 percent cut in the Social Security payroll tax includes a requirement, the price of Republican support, that the president decide on the pipeline request before the end of February, 2012.

The XL pipeline has also featured in the debates and campaign platforms of the GOP candidates. Mitt Romney references it in his economic plan: "Our failure to move forward as quickly as possible with this project hurts our own energy supply and helps our competitors." Romney advocates building more pipelines to accommodate expected future development of Canadian tar sands. Rick Perry told talk show host Sean Hannity, "This is not an environmental issue. There are pipelines all across that part of the United States that have been safely movin' petroleum products for years...This is about catering to [Obama's] base and the radical environmental base out there. And it is about American jobs, but even more importantly it is about the security of America." During the final debate of 2012, Newt Gingrich said it "was utterly irrational to say, 'I'm now going to veto a middle-class tax cut to protect left-wing environmental extremists in San Francisco, so that we're going to kill American jobs, weaken American energy, make us more vulnerable to the Iranians, and do so in a way that makes no sense to any normal, rational American.'" Michelle Bachman said, "This pipeline is one that would have brought at least 20,000 jobs, at least \$6.5 billion worth of economic activity."

The XL pipeline controversy also divides two key constituencies in the Democratic coalition – environmentalists and the union movement. The energy, money and active support of both will be vital to President Obama's re-election.

The myth of the 9-11 terrorists coming from Canada has also been a recurrent challenge. At one time or another, prominent political figures including Newt Gingrich, Hillary Clinton, John McCain and Janet Napolitano have voiced this belief. In the 2010 election campaign GOP Nevada Senate candidate Sharon Angle declared, "Our Northern border is where the terrorists came through... That's the most porous border that we have." As Ambassador Gary Doer responded, "There have been no terrorist attacks on the United States coming from Canada. None of the 9/11 hijackers entered the United States from or through Canada."

Does all this matter to Canada?

Very much so.

The issue matrix is different depending on who controls the agenda. Democrats tend to be more protectionist and emphasize environmental issues (eg. Waxman-Markey would have potentially assessed a surcharge on oil sands products) while the Republicans put a higher priority on security, (eg. Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative which obliges a passport or a 'smart' driver's licence for cross-border travel.)

In the 2008 primaries, both major Democratic candidates, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama promised to renegotiate NAFTA because of labour and environmental concerns. The subsequent leak of a Canadian diplomatic dispatch reporting that Obama campaign advisor Austan Goolsbee suggested that this was mere electioneering on the part of candidate

Obama caused considerable embarrassment. Goolsbee later became chair of President Obama's Economic Advisory Council,

Deepening economic integration, including the new border initiative and ongoing regulatory reform means that more and more of the decisions that count take place at the state level, underlining the need for a Canadian 50 state strategy to complement our congressional outreach. Most of our trade disputes eg. lumber, beef, originated at the local level or have a local dimension (eg. the XL pipeline and the original route through the Nebraska Sandhills) before they developed into issues on Capitol Hill.

Another example of how a local interest can stymie a bilateral issue is the long-planned second crossing between Detroit and Windsor. The business owner of the Ambassador Bridge has blocked approval of the second crossing in the Michigan state legislature, notwithstanding the strong support of Governor Rick Snyder and the continuing efforts of Ontario and federal government authorities who have offered to fund Michigan's \$550-million share of the new bridge (with the money to be paid back through subsequent tolls). The thousands of trucks that cross the Ambassador Bridge each day carry about 25 percent of the annual merchandise trade between Canada and the United States.

The success of the new border initiative will require the collaborative efforts of the federal, state and province and municipal authorities on both sides of the border. The bailout and restructuring of Chrysler and General Motors, making possible the subsequent recovery of our auto industry, is a good example of tri-level and cross-border collaboration on the auto trade that dates back to the 1965 Autopact.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

I start my morning with Mike Allan's [Politico Playbook](#) and the Politico's series of emails on issues like energy and defense, and with Congressional Quarterly/Roll Call's [Dailybriefing](#).

My favourite sites include Nate Silver's Political Calculus [Five Thirty Eight](#) on the *New York Times* website (the NYT has several good blogs including [Campaign Stops](#)), the *National Journal's* [2012 Decoded](#), the *Washington Post's* [Behind the Numbers](#), the *Atlantic's* [Politics Daily](#) and Taegan Goddard's [Political Wire](#), the *Economist's* [Democracy in America](#), MSNBC's [First Read](#), [Fox News politics blog](#), and the *Wall Street Journal's* [Election 2012](#). Lots more sites – [Google](#), for example, has just set up an aggregator - will sprout in the coming months.

I look at [Real Clear Politics](#) for its polling aggregator and its polls on direction of the country (still, along with the unemployment rate, the most telling indicators on the public perception of the incumbent in the White House). There are lots of polls. While I like [Gallup](#) and its daily track of the president, the gold standard for polling generally is [Pew Research Center](#) and Andy Kohut. For polling analysis look to Charlie Cook and his [Cook Report](#), Larry Sabato of the University of Virginia and his [Crystal Ball](#), and Stanley Greenberg's [Democracy Corps](#).

There are lots of excellent pundits and commentators in the Canadian media, which is well served by its Washington correspondents. For general US politics, I watch David Brooks and Mark Shields on [PBS Newshour](#) and read [David Gergen](#).

While I was posted in Washington, I relied on Stu Rothenberg and his [Political Report](#), [Norm Ornstein](#) of AEI and [Thomas Mann](#) of Brookings, [Stephen Hess](#) of Brookings (this piece draws on his 1998 *Little Book of Campaign Etiquette*), [Karlyn Bowman](#) of AEI, former Reagan chief of staff Ken Duberstein, [Fred Barnes](#) of the Weekly Standard, [E.J. Dionne](#) of the Washington Post, [Michael Barone](#), co-author of the incomparable Almanac of American Politics, and [David Paul Kuhn](#) of RealClearPolitics.

To see how Canada fits into the picture go to Luiza Savage's [Bilateralist](#) that tracks Canada-US relations. [Chris Sands](#) of the Hudson Institute writes regularly on Canada as do the scholars at the [Canadian Institute](#) of the Woodrow Wilson Centre. David Frum regularly includes Canadian references in his columns and [FrumForum](#) and Danielle Crittenden has done a good job as the new editor of [The Huffington Post Canada](#).

A good read on the last presidential campaign is *Game Change: Obama and the Clintons, McCain and Palin, and the Race of a Lifetime* (2010) by John Heilemann (now national political correspondent and columnist for New York magazine) and Mark Halperin (now editor-at-large and senior political analyst for Time magazine). Teddy White's *Making of the Presidents* covering 1960, 1964, 1968, 1972 and 1980 (and his *Time* essay for the 1984 election) set the bar for telling the campaign stories with colour and panache.

There are lots of good political novels – classics like Robert Penn Warren's *All The King's Men* and Allan Drury's *Advise and Consent* and Gore Vidal's biographical political fiction- but for a more contemporary feel, read *Primary Colors* (1996) by Anonymous (*Time's* Joe Klein later admitted authorship). Based on the 1992 campaign it was made into a movie (1998) starring John Travolta. *West Wing's* fourth and seventh seasons also used the primaries and election campaign as backdrop. *The War Room* (1993) a documentary of the 1992 Clinton campaign remains a must-watch.

2012 ELECTION CALENDAR (subject to change)

January 3: Iowa caucus

January 7 - Republican debate in Manchester, New Hampshire

January 8 - Republican debate in Concord, New Hampshire

January 10, 2012; New Hampshire primary

January 16 - Republican debate in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

January 19 - Republican debate in Charleston, South Carolina

January 21: South Carolina primary

January 23 - Republican debate in Tampa, Florida

January 26 - Republican debate in Jacksonville, Florida

January 31: Florida primary

February 4: Nevada caucus, Maine caucus through February 11

February 7: Colorado and Minnesota caucuses,, Missouri primary but delegates for the convention will not be chosen until March 17

February 22 - Republican debate in Mesa, Arizona

February 28: Arizona and Michigan primaries

March 1 - Republican debate in Georgia

March 3; Washington caucus

March 6 - "Super Tuesday" primaries and caucuses across the country including Ohio, Massachusetts, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Vermont and Virginia; Idaho (Republican), Alaska (Republican) and North Dakota (Republican). Wyoming's caucus begins on March 6 and runs through March 10.

March 10: Kansas and U.S. Virgin Islands caucuses

March 13; Alabama and Mississippi primaries, Hawaii caucus

March 17, 2012: Missouri (GOP caucus, the primary on February 7 does not chose delegates)

March 19 - Republican debate in Portland, Oregon

March 20: Illinois (primary)

March 24: Louisiana (primary)

April 3: District of Columbia, Maryland, Wisconsin, Texas primaries

April 24,: Connecticut, Delaware, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island primaries

May 8,: Indiana, North Carolina, West Virginia primaries

May 15: Nebraska and Oregon primaries

May 22: Arkansas and Kentucky primaries

June 5: California, Montana, New Jersey, New Mexico. South Dakota primaries

June 26,: Utah primary

August 27-30 - Republican convention in Tampa, Florida

September 3-6 - Democratic convention, Charlotte, North Carolina

October 3 - Presidential debate in Denver, Colorado

October 11 - Vice presidential debate in Danville, Kentucky

October 16 - Presidential debate in Hempstead, New York

October 22 - Presidential debate in Boca Raton, Florida

November 6 - Election Day

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

A former Canadian diplomat, **Colin Robertson** is a Senior Strategic Advisor for McKenna, Long and Aldridge LLP living in Ottawa, Canada and working with the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. He is Vice President and Senior Research Fellow at the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs at Carleton University. He is vice chair of the board of Canada World Youth. He is a member of the board of the Conference of Defence Associations Institute and immediate past president of the National Capital Branch of the Canadian International Council. He is an Honorary Captain (Royal Canadian Navy) assigned to the Strategic Communications Directorate.

A career foreign service officer from 1977-2010, he served as first Head of the Advocacy Secretary and Minister at the Canadian Embassy in Washington and Consul General in Los Angeles, with previous assignments as Consul and Counsellor in Hong Kong and in New York at the UN and Consulate General. In his final assignment he directed a project on Canada-US Engagement at Carleton University's Centre for Trade Policy and Law, with the support of the Federal and Provincial Governments and the private sector. A member of the team that negotiated the Canada-US FTA and NAFTA, he is co-author of *Decision at Midnight: The Inside Story of the Canada-US FTA (1996)*. He is co-editor of *Diplomacy in the Digital Age: Essays in honour of Ambassador Allan Gotlieb (2011)*. He has taught at Carleton University, Queen's University Public Executive Program and the Canada School of Public Service. He served as president of the Historica Foundation. He was editor of *bout de papier: Canada's Journal of Foreign Service and Diplomacy* and president of the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers.

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