

OBAMA CAMPAIGN'S TAKE: WE'RE DOING WHAT WE NEED TO

I'm listening to an Obama campaign conference call on the state of the race. Some of the eye-popping details:

Sporadic and First-Time Voters Are Voting Early

I've been focusing on the early voting numbers, though the McCain team has questioned whether or not the high Democratic turnout really just amounts to voters who would have voted anyway coming out early.

No.

The Obama campaign is quite confident that at least one fifth of these early voters are either first-time or sporadic Democratic voters—basically, the kind of voters that push outcomes into Gallup's more Obama-friendly turnout model.

That optimism was particularly true of Florida, where David Plouffe thinks that a quarter of sporadic Democratic voters—people who didn't vote in 2004—have already voted. He also noted that Florida has one of the largest pools of sporadic voters.

Hmm, I guess that's another reason to bring Clinton and Gore to the sunshine state.

Arizona

Not surprisingly, there were a number of questions about Arizona.

Plouffe didn't commit to going to Arizona (sorry bmaz)—when referring to Saturday's trip out west, he said only that they were going "back out west" with no details about locations (though the campaign has already released the schedule showing a Henderson, NV event followed by a Pueblo, CO event). He also said that, with the big map Obama has, it's really tough getting

every place they need to go. If they had "a few more days," he suggested, he might have made a visit to Arizona.

He attributed the closing race in Arizona—indeed, Obama's strength in the west more generally—to two things: western Latinos supporting Obama in large numbers, and suburban independents leaning towards Obama. (Note, he said of CO's almost equally split early voting margins that he thought many of the Independents had voted Obama.) He also said, specifically, that a lot of sporadic voters in Maricopa (Phoenix metro area) are voting Obama.

He emphasized the closing polls are real and that they might be able to pull this off.

Finally, Plouffe was very careful to note that the campaign's new advertising in Arizona is all positive; I guess he's heard McCain yell "get off my lawn" enough time he doesn't want to infuriate him.

Georgia and North Dakota

It was pretty funny. Plouffe also got asked about Georgia a lot. Every time he answered about these late-breaking states, Plouffe was careful to mention North Dakota, in addition to Arizona and Georgia (no one mentioned Louisiana, which had a poll yesterday showing a close race as well). Plouffe talked about the early work the campaign did in these states, which seems to be coming to fruition, particularly since they were the only campaign in the race.

And about that 35% turnout among African-Americans in Georgia's early voting? Plouffe said they're doing "extremely well" in early voting. I should say so.

Why Bother?

Finally, Plouffe had a funny answer to the question "why bother" with these late-closing states, Arizona, North Dakota, and Georgia.

Plouffe emphasized that they're doing everything they need to in the big swing states. He

emphasized that they're just trying to accomplish the most important task—getting 270 electoral votes. He did say it would help Martin in the GA Senate race to have the presidential race close in that state.

But I don't think Plouffe ever answered the "why bother" question.

Me, I think they're probably not going to visit Arizona because they don't need it to win and they're trying to be gracious with McCain. But I think they're bothering to advertise there because the close race is real.

Update: I confess, I came in late to this conference call. Joe Sudbay has a description of the "news" Plouffe led with: ad buys in GA, AZ, and ND.

On a conference call to give the state of the race, Obama campaign manager David Plouffe just announced that the campaign is going on the air in three additional states: Georgia, North Dakota and Arizona. The campaign has organizations on the ground in all of those states and has seen "movement."

In Georgia and North Dakota, the campaign will be running the "Rear view" ad. In Arizona, it's the positive closer.