

# 2008 Election Preview — A Brief Look at the Races

**FLEISHMAN**  
INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS  
**HILLARD**



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## **Election Overview**

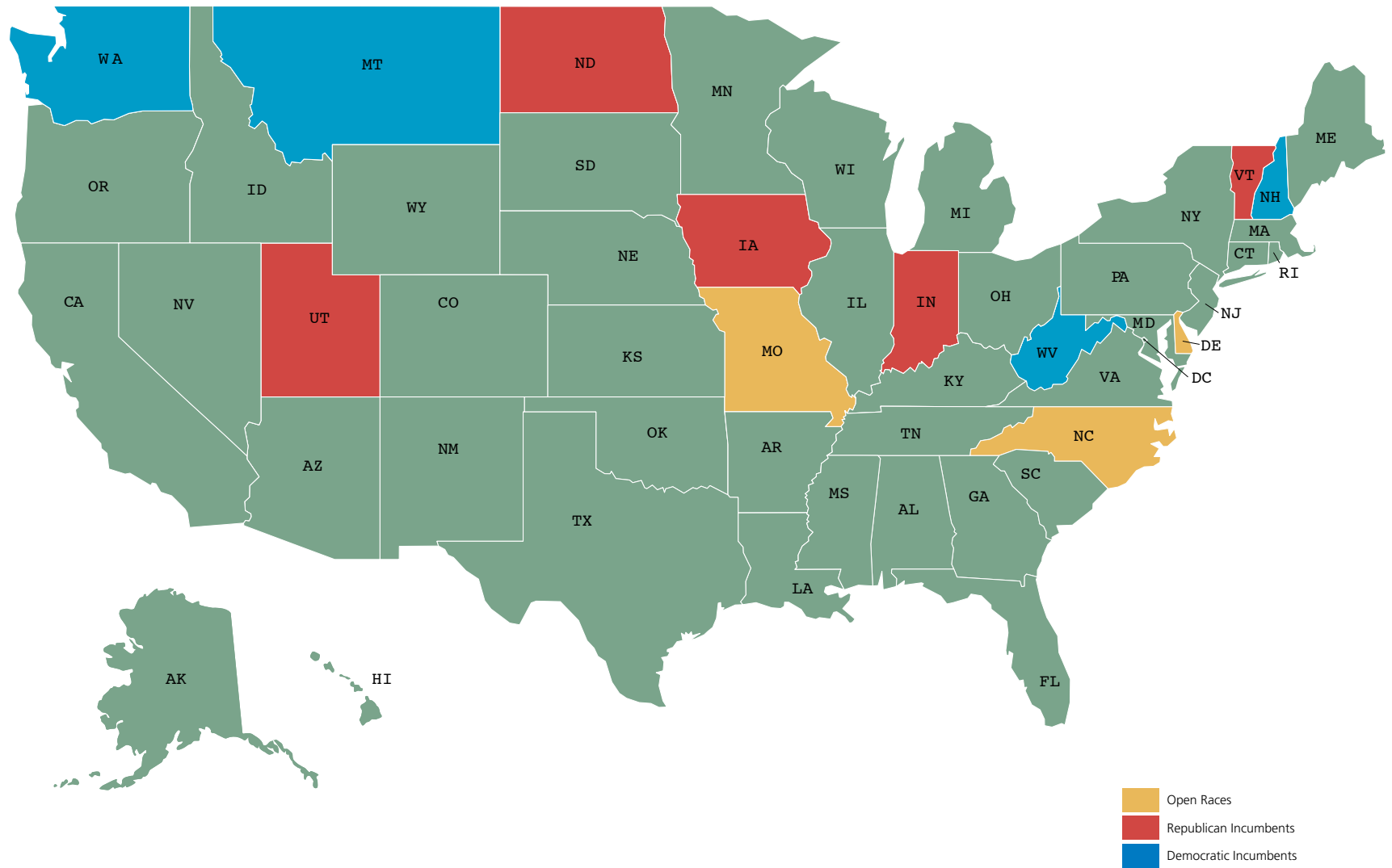
Eleven of the nation's 50 Governorships are up for election in 2008. Of these 11 offices, six are currently held by Democrats and five are currently held by Republicans.

The majority of these elections are considered "safe" for the incumbents running; however several governors are not running for re-election due to term limits or retirement. These races are considered "toss up" and will provide the majority of the suspense in the 2008 gubernatorial elections.

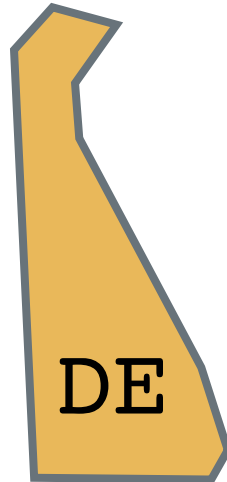
Polling data comes from various sources, and is cited on each respective state page.

For more information about this election overview, or any other service provided by the Fleishman-Hillard Public Affairs Task Force, contact Bill Black at 202-828-8889 or [bill.black@fleishman.com](mailto:bill.black@fleishman.com).

# 2008 Gubernatorial Races



# DELAWARE



## Incumbent

None – open seat

## Challengers

Lt. Governor John C. Carney, Jr — Democrat  
State Treasurer Jack Markell — Democrat  
William “Bill” S. Lee — Republican

## Recent Poll

Carney	32%
Markell	22%
Other/Unsure	46%

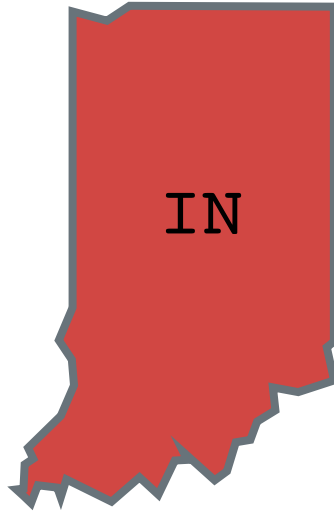
## 2004 Results

Dem – Ruth Ann Minner	185,531	51%
GOP – William “Bill” S. Lee	166,991	46%

## Overview

This is an open race because Governor Ruth Ann Minner is term limited, and not seeking re-election. Delaware is often considered a solid “blue” state and Democrats have controlled the Governor’s office for 16 years running, but several factors may make this race more competitive than in recent years. To start, Governor Minner only secured 50% of the vote during her 2004 re-election campaign, and a hotly contested Democratic primary may split that party’s base. Lt. Governor Carney, Jr. and State Treasurer Jack Markell are running in the Democratic primary election, which will be held on September 9th. Former state Superior Court Judge Lee is expected to win the Republican primary, and came within 5 percentage points of victory in 2004.

# INDIANA



## 2004 Results

GOP – Mitch Daniels	1,301,454	53%
Dem – Joe Kernan	1,112,071	45%

## Incumbent

Governor Mitch Daniels — Republican

## Challenger

Jill Long Thompson — Democrat

## Recent Poll

Daniels 51%

Thompson 35%

*(Indiana Legislative Insight 6/12/08)*

## Overview

Indiana's gubernatorial election may be closer than many expect this year. While Indiana has not voted for the Democratic presidential candidate since 1964, Governor Daniels was the first Republican elected to Governor in 20 years. His approval ratings have not risen above 50 percent since 2005, largely due to his unpopular decision to privatize the Indiana toll road through a foreign consortium in 2006. Many speculate this decision led to the loss of three Republican seats in the House of Representatives that year. Former Congresswoman and Undersecretary of Agriculture Jill Long Thompson narrowly won her party's primary and may benefit from Governor Daniels' low approval ratings.

# MISSOURI



## 2004 Results

GOP – Matt Blunt	1,380,200	51%
Dem – Claire McCaskill	1,296,362	48%

## Incumbent

None – open seat

## Challengers

State Attorney General Jay Nixon — Democrat

Congressman Kenny Hulshof — Republican

State Treasurer Sarah Steelman — Republican

## Recent Poll

Nixon 54%

Hulshof 34%

Nixon 56%

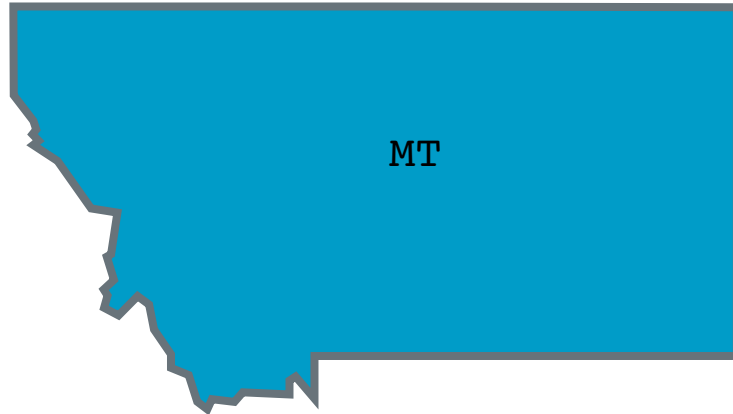
Steeleman 34%

*(Rasmussen 6/9/08)*

## Overview

This election was expected to be competitive even before incumbent Governor Matt Blunt announced in January that he would not seek re-election, saying he had already “achieved virtually everything I set out to accomplish” and that “there is not the same sense of mission for a second (term).” Some pundits pointed to his negative polling numbers (the second-lowest in the nation throughout 2007) as another driving factor in his decision, and it remains to be seen if this negative sentiment will carry over with voters to the 2008 election. 9th District U.S. Representative Hulshof and Treasurer Steelman are engaged in a spirited race for the Republican nomination, and will face off in the August 5 primary. Attorney General Nixon is the only serious contender in the Democratic primary, and leads both potential GOP challengers by wide margins

# MONTANA



## Incumbent

Governor Brian Schweitzer — Democrat

## Challenger

State Senator Roy Brown — Republican

## Recent Poll

Brown 30%

Schweitzer 55%

*(Mason-Dixon 5/26/08)*

## 2004 Results

Dem – Brian Schweitzer	224,506	50%
GOP – Bob Brown	204,863	46%

## Overview

This race is not expected to be competitive because incumbent Governor Schweitzer, a rancher who is running for his second term, has enjoyed approval ratings in the 70 percent range, is well-funded, and has gained national exposure on energy and environmental issues. Still, any assumed advantage should be tempered by the fact that he only garnered slightly over 50% of the vote in the 2004 open seat election, and Montana has traditionally been regarded as a solid “red” state (Bush carried MT 59%-39% in 2004). On the Republican side, State Senator Brown won his party’s primary by a wide margin and will face Schweitzer in the general election.

# NORTH CAROLINA



## 2004 Results

Dem – Mike Easley	1,908,268	55%
GOP – Patrick J. Ballantine	1,480,446	43%

## Incumbent

None – open seat

## Challengers

Mayor Pat McCrory — Republican  
Lieutenant Governor Bev Perdue — Democrat

## Recent Poll

McCrory 46%

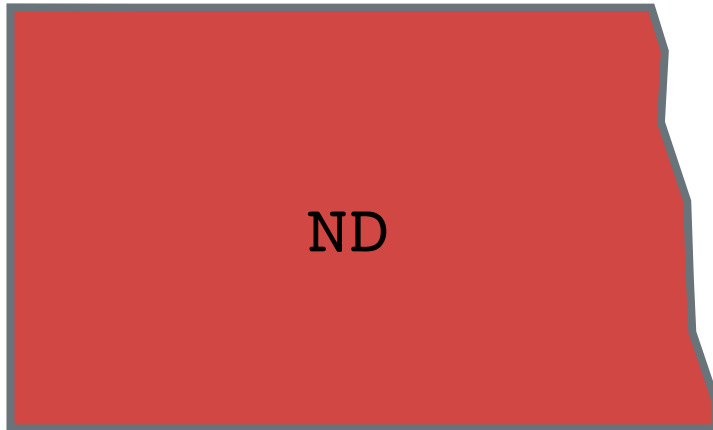
Perdue 47%

*(Rasmussen 6/12/08)*

## Overview

This race is generally considered extremely competitive and too close to call at this point. Although North Carolina has heavily voted Republican in the last two presidential elections, Democrats have won the governorship in nearly every election since 1876. Incumbent Governor Easley is term-limited and cannot run in 2008. As is often the case with open seat elections, both parties had crowded primaries for their nominations. On the Democratic side, Lt. Governor Purdue won with a comfortable margin after two terms in her former office. Should she win election, Perdue is considered a potential future presidential candidate. For the Republicans, Charlotte Mayor McCrory leveraged his standing as mayor of North Carolina's largest city to a close victory in a five-way primary. McCrory has enjoyed high popularity ratings, was comfortably re-elected in 2007, is the longest-serving mayor in Charlotte's history, and presents a formidable opponent to the Democratic incumbency streak in the governor's mansion.

# NORTH DAKOTA



## Incumbent

Governor John Hoeven — Republican

## Challengers

State Senator Tim Mathern — Democrat

## Recent Poll

Hoeven 42%

Mathern 35%

*(Dakotapolitics.com, 6/17/08)*

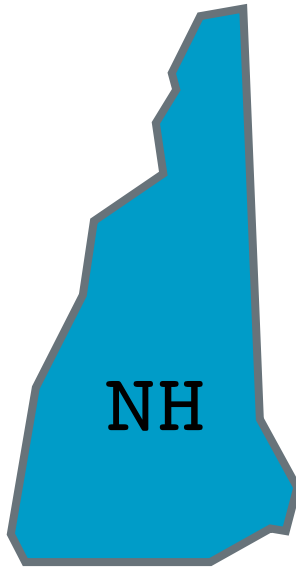
## 2004 Results

GOP – John Hoeven	220,133	71%
Dem – Joseph A. Satrom	84,632	27%

## Overview

Many factors indicate the North Dakota governor's mansion will be safely retained by the Republican Party. Governor Hoeven is running for his third term, is considered the nation's most popular governor, and enjoyed the highest approval rating of any governor in 2006. North Dakota is considered the 6th most conservative state in the country, voting 24.9% more Republican in the 2004 presidential elections than the national average. However, recent polling has shown neither Hoeven nor his challenger, State Senator Mathern, over 50 percent in their hypothetical matchup. Mathern has served over twenty years in the State Senate, and represents a Fargo district.

# NEW HAMPSHIRE



## 2004 Results

Dem – John Lynch	339,773	51%
GOP – Craig Benson	326,007	49%

## Incumbent

Governor John Lynch — Democrat

## Challenger

State Senator Joe Kenney — Republican

## Recent Poll

Lynch 68%

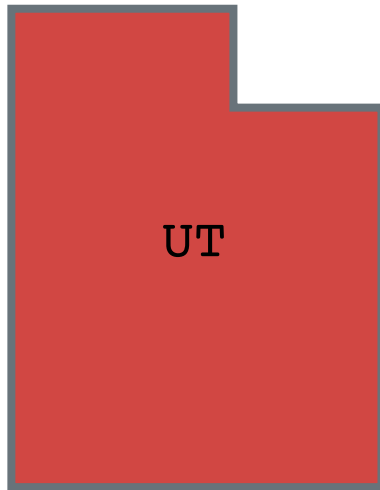
Kenney 17%

*(Granite State Poll, 4/30/08)*

## Overview

Governor Lynch is expected to win his race for a third term by a comfortable margin. He won re-election in 2006 by a nearly three-to-one margin, and his considerable margin provided an extensive coattail effect that helped win both the state's congressional seats and take back control of the state legislature for the first time in almost 100 years. Lynch enters the election with a 74% approval rating and is well-funded. He leads his challenger, State Senator Kenney, by a wide margin in polling. Kenney is a fourteen-year veteran of the State Senate, is a Lieutenant Colonel in the U.S. Marine Corps, and served a term in Iraq last year.

# UTAH



## 2004 Results

GOP – John Huntsman	531,190	58%
Dem – Scott Matheson	380,359	41%

## Incumbent

Governor John Huntsman – Republican

## Challenger

Bob Springmeyer – Democrat

## Recent Poll

Huntsman 77%

Springmeyer 13%

*(Deseret News 5/25/08)*

## Overview

This race is considered the safest of all the Republican governor seats up for election in 2008. Governor Huntsman is the son of a billionaire philanthropist, has served in the administrations of the last three Republican presidents, and leads by wide margins in all polling to date. Huntsman was also an early supporter of John McCain's presidential candidacy, and he should benefit from McCain as the presidential nominee in a state that has voted overwhelmingly Republican in 13 of the last 14 presidential elections. On the Democratic side, Utah native and community activist Bob Springmeyer won his party's primary and will face Huntsman in November.

# VERMONT



## Incumbent

Governor Jim Douglas — Republican

## Challengers

State House Speaker Gaye Symington —  
Democrat

Anthony Pollina —  
Democrat/Progressive Party

## Recent Poll

Douglas 53%

Pollina 15%

*(VTticker, 6/3/08)*

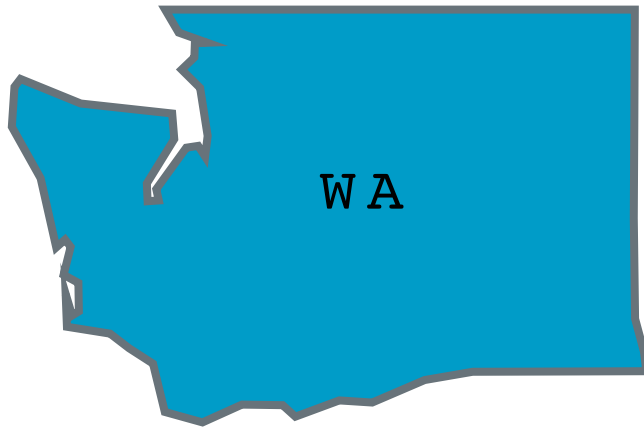
## 2004 Results

GOP – Jim Douglas	181,274	59%
Dem – Peter Clavelle	117,191	38%

## Overview

Incumbent Governor Douglas is considered a relatively safe bet for re-election. He has been governor of Vermont for 6 years, or 3 terms, and enjoys high approval ratings. The Democratic ticket is far from clear, and may portend a split base in the general election. Progressive Party candidate Pollina has been endorsed by several high-profile Democrats, but many party faithful remain bitter about the 2002 race for lieutenant governor in which they say Pollina siphoned support from the Democratic candidate, clearing the way for the Republican candidate to win. State House Speaker Symington is a popular 12-year veteran of the State House of Representatives, has also announced her candidacy for Governor, and will face Pollina in the September 9 primary.

# WASHINGTON



## 2004 Results

Dem – Christine Gregoire	1,373,361	49%
GOP – Dino Rossi	1,373,232	49%

## Incumbent

Governor Christine Gregoire — Democrat

## Challenger

Dino Rossi — Republican

## Recent Poll

Gregoire 50%

Rossi 43%

*(Rasmussen, 6/11/08)*

## Overview

This election was the closest of 2004, and could be the closest of 2008. One of the most hotly contested races in 2004, the gubernatorial race was finally won by Governor Gregoire by 133 votes after three recounts and a court challenge. Former State Senator Rossi will rematch Governor Gregoire and polling has shown a margin of no more than 7% between the two candidates in a hypothetical matchup at any point since 2004. Even though Democrats have controlled the governor's office for the past 24 years, Gregoire has not enjoyed high approval ratings during her tenure, and some polling puts the race at a statistical dead heat.

# WEST VIRGINIA



## 2004 Results

Dem – Joe Manchin	472,758	64%
GOP – Monty Warner	253,131	34%

## Incumbent

Governor Joe Manchin — Democrat

## Challenger

State Senator Russ Weeks — Republican

## Recent Poll

**Polling data unavailable**

## Overview

Incumbent Democratic Governor Manchin is expected to win re-election to a second term in this election. Manchin won the 2004 election by an impressive 63% of the vote, having pushed former incumbent Governor Bob Wise to retire out of the office before the Democratic primary. Manchin has enjoyed high approval ratings (as high as 80% in 2006), and will likely benefit from having popular U.S. Senator Jay Rockefeller on the same ballot in November. On the Republican side, State Senator Weeks, a former Navy veteran and lifelong West Virginia resident, won his party's primary and will face Manchin in November.

2008 Gubernatorial Races

## **Sources**

Larry J. Sabato's Crystal Ball (<http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/2008/senate/>)

Rasmussen Reports (<http://www.rasmussenreports.com>)

Real Clear Politics (<http://www.realclearpolitics.com/>)