

# Romney Isn't There Yet

✘ I wish I could be as optimistic as Dick Morris, the former Clinton aide turned GOP pundit. Morris believes that Mitt Romney has a strong chance to win the electoral votes of Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, all of which voted decisively for President Obama in 2008.

By my reckoning, if Romney can win either Pennsylvania or Michigan and just one of those other states, he will eke out a victory in the Electoral College.

Morris is an incredibly astute political analyst – I don't think even Karl Rove can top him – but he tends to get carried away. For example, during the 2010 midterm elections, in which the Republicans won a historically large percentage of the Democrat-held seats in the House, Morris predicted that they would do even better than they did.

Judging by the state-by-state presidential polls conducted by the Rasmussen organization, I find it difficult to believe that Romney is there yet. My analysis of those polls – which have been conducted in twenty-three states – indicates that right now Romney is likely to win the majority of the popular vote cast for himself and Obama, but probably no more than 50.3 percent.

Such a squeaky-close margin is not likely to translate into a victory in the Electoral College, because so much of Romney's support is spread among states where he holds a lopsided edge – states such as Idaho in the Old West, Nebraska in the Midwest, or Alabama in the Deep South. Alas, it won't make a difference in his electoral total if he wins staunchly Republican Utah by 100 percent rather than 51 percent.

Obama, on the other hand, holds the edge in several states where the vote is likely to be relatively close. He won Colorado, Iowa, Ohio and New Hampshire by less than 55 percent

last time, and he could very well win them all this time by less than 51 percent. But winner takes all in the Electoral College.

I figure that Romney might have to win as much as 51.5 percent of the major-party vote to get the necessary 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency. That is better than George W. Bush did against John Kerry in 2004. Right now I can't see Romney winning more than 248 electoral votes.

To go from his present (estimated) 50.3 percent to 51.5 percent of the major-party vote, he will have to change the minds of perhaps 1.7 million voters who currently lean to Obama. With 16 days remaining until Election Day, that is more than 100,000 minds per day. Perhaps he can do it if he absolutely creams Obama in tomorrow's Debate #3, but otherwise???

Romney's task would be considerably easier if it weren't for the annoyingly stubborn voters of Ohio. Obama won Ohio, which has 18 electoral votes, with just 52.3 percent of the popular total last time, and based on the net shift to the Republicans that the polls show in other states, Ohio should now be in Romney's column. Yet Rasmussen, in a poll taken three days ago, showed Obama still leading in Ohio by one percentage point.

Some observers have speculated that Ohioans are more tolerant of the incumbent than your average voters because his rescue of General Motors helped the auto-parts industry, which employs huge numbers of Ohioans. The unemployment rate in Ohio is lower than unemployment nationally – but that isn't entirely due to GM. The new governor of Ohio, Republican John Kasich, has pushed through several economic measures that have created new jobs.

How sad it will be if the efforts of a highly effective Republican governor inadvertently make the difference in a victory for Obama.