

# STATE AND LOCAL

## Same Sex Marriage -- An Important Tide Is Turning

Dr. Steven Benko, Assistant Professor of Religious and Ethical Studies

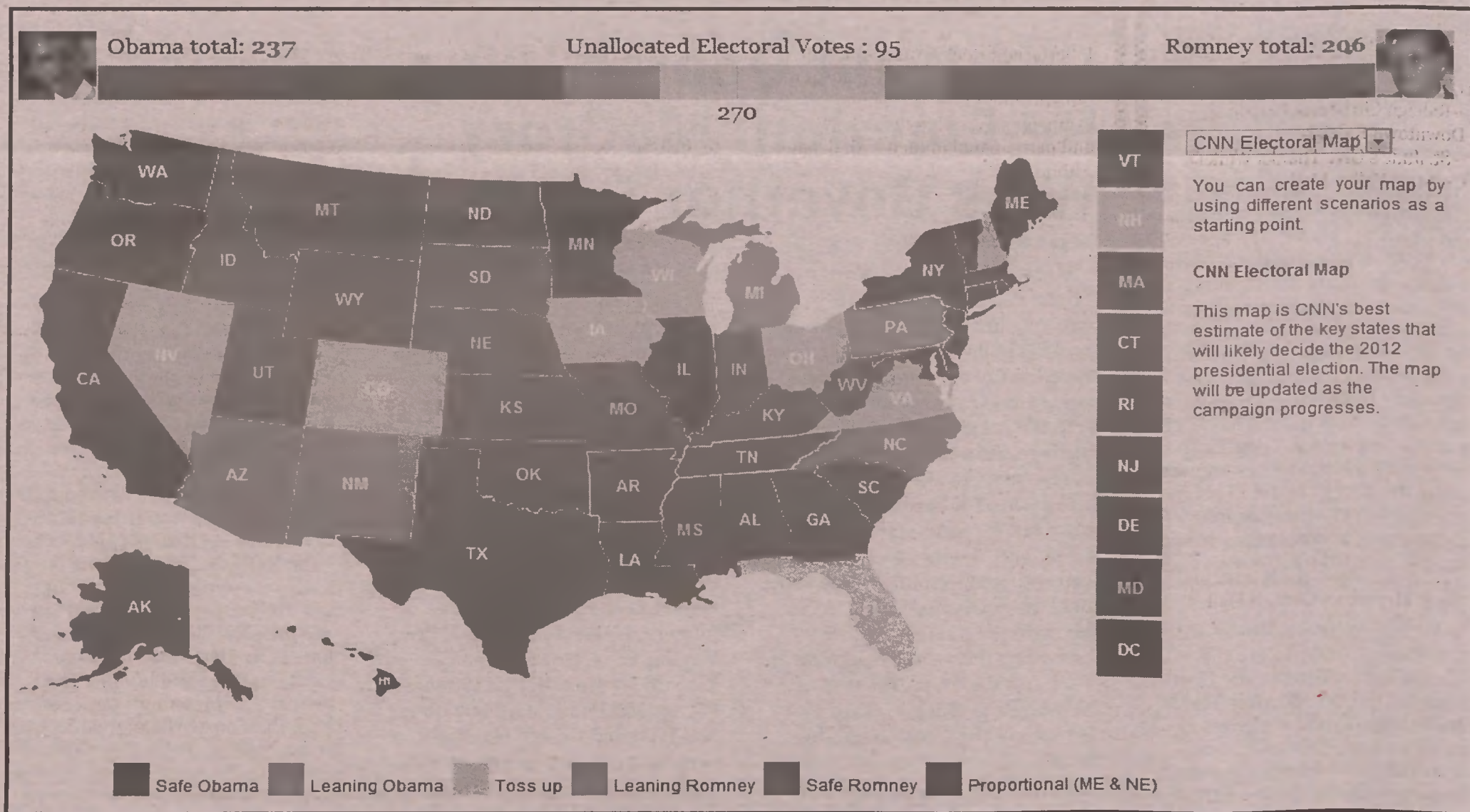
**Issue Analysis** – When is a winning streak a losing streak? Since 1998 32 states have had ballot initiatives on same sex marriage and each time any measure that would extend marriage rights to homosexuals has been defeated. The ballot measures have been varied. Most of the ballot measures have defined marriage as the union between a man and a woman. Amendment 1, the amendment to the North Carolina state constitution said, in convoluted language, that the only legally recognized union was between a man and a woman. Each time an exclusionary definition of marriage won, we lost. How did we lose? We lost because we denied our fellow citizens access to the important rights and benefits that come with marriage (there are 1,138 of them). And we

denied them the very meaningful and important social meaning of marriage. Nothing makes family, friends and strangers take a relationship more seriously than the efforts two people make to perpetuate their relationship into the future. Marriage is the single most convincing and public way for people to signal their intent to work together to be together than marriage. However, in 32 states, some 60 times, voters have been convinced that extending marriage equality—which is the same thing as extending equality—to same sex couples would undermine marriage, threaten the stability of the family, harm children, offend God, cause catastrophic weather events, and initiate a zombie apocalypse (OK, I made that last one up). Uncritically accepting bad argu-

ments that have no basis in fact that marginalize and malign our fellow citizens is how you lose when you win.

An important tide turned on election night. As of this writing, it looks like in all 5 races that marriage equality (in some form) will win. In Maryland and Washington the state legislatures approved same sex marriage. Opponents of marriage equality thought that putting these laws to a popular vote would ensure their defeat. That was a safe bet. They lost. Maryland has become the first state to legalize same sex marriage through a popular vote. A similar measure in Maine is on its way to passing. In Minnesota, a constitutional amendment similar to North Carolina's is too close to call as of this writing (the editor would like to send the Herald

to press, so I can't wait around until all the results are in). Washington is poised to follow Maryland's lead. These votes are in line with the changing attitude toward same sex marriage in this country. More and more people are endorsing marriage equality for all people. In doing so they are recognizing the common humanity we all share and rejecting the claim that sexual orientation excludes someone from the civil and legal rights that heterosexuals have long enjoyed. Marriage equality is poised to go on a long and consistent winning streak. If and when it does, nothing will be lost and something more important will be gained.



CNN's Electoral Map as of 1 a.m. on Nov. 7  
CNN was the first to call the presidential race around 11 p.m. on Nov. 6

### STAFF

HERALD@EMAIL.MEREDITH.EDU

**Editors:** Amy Hruby, Julia Dent — **Advisor:** Dr. Rebecca Duncan — **Layout Editor:** Emily Hawkins

**Staff Writers:** Alexis Stout, Cheyenne Williams, Christa Riley, Cody Jeffery, Lizzie Wood, Helen Kenney, Jennifer Cash, Jessica Feltner, Larissa Icard, Leslie Bunch, Mary Ryan, Mary Baines, Marzia Nawrozi, Monique Kreisman, Sarah Haseeb, Shanna Alley, Shea Pierson, Vicky Pivitsiripakde

The *Meredith Herald* is produced by the College throughout the academic year and published by Hinton Press. The paper is funded by the College and through independent advertising. The opinions expressed in the editorial columns do not necessarily reflect those of the College administration, faculty, or student body. The policy of this paper requires that submissions be made by 5 p.m. the Thursday before publication and that contributors sign all submissions and provide necessary contact information. The editors and staff welcome submissions meeting the above guidelines.