

# Experts predict Easley win

BY KRISTIN BOSTIC  
STAFF WRITER

As ballots are cast today, Gov. Mike Easley and his Republican opponent, Patrick Ballantine, will join thousands of politicians across the country anxiously awaiting the day's results.

But the state's gubernatorial race hasn't left many experts wondering about the outcome.

Easley leads Ballantine by as many as 20 points in some polls — leading some to speculate that the Democrats' historical stranglehold on the office will continue.

In the 20th century, North Carolina elected only two Republican governors: Jim Holshouser, who was sent to office in 1972, and Jim Martin, who was elected in 1984 and re-elected in 1988.

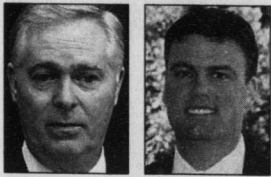
In a state that typically sends its electoral votes to the Republican candidate for president, the lack of GOP leadership at the state level might appear puzzling.

But pundits agree that Democrats in North Carolina have an edge over their Republican counterparts because they focus on major issues that affect the state.

Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life, said that in order to win, Democratic candidates must focus on two major issues and never campaign as national, liberal Democrats.

"To win (the candidates must) focus on education and economic development ... (and not stray) dramatically from the cultural conservatism of the state," he said.

Both Holshouser and Martin won under similar circumstances, said Jack Fleer, professor of political science at Wake Forest



Experts expect Democratic Gov. Mike Easley to defeat Republican challenger Patrick Ballantine.

University.

"Both instances had a united Republican Party headed by an incumbent president seeking reelection who takes (North Carolina) by a landslide."

Fleer also said that in both instances, the Democratic Party was heavily divided on the state level because it faced contested primaries.

When Holshouser was elected in 1972, Fleer said he was riding on the coattails of President Nixon's landslide victory over Democrat George McGovern.

Nixon won almost 70 percent of North Carolina's vote in that election, compared to McGovern's 29 percent.

Martin also benefited from the strength of an incumbent presidency when President Ronald Reagan defeated Walter Mondale in 1984.

That year, Reagan took North Carolina, 62 percent to 38 percent, en route to a blowout victory in which he garnered the electoral votes of 49 states.

But while Republicans hope Ballantine and other statewide candidates can get a similar boost this year, most pundits say that if the help does come, it won't be as dramatic.

Fleer said that although President Bush has a lead in North Carolina, the margin is not significant enough to affect the governor's race. Bush leads Democratic Sen. John Kerry by as many as 10 points, depending on what poll one chooses to believe.

He also said Easley won his primaries without any opposition, something that was absent in past elections resulting in Republican governors.

Ballantine, on the other hand, faced a tough primary campaign in which he came from behind to capture a narrow victory.

He also was thrown into a general election a month early after Richard Vinroot, the second-place finisher, backed out of a scheduled runoff.

"This year the Republican Party was divided at the gubernatorial level," Fleer said.

"... (It has taken Ballantine) a fairly significant amount of time to get his personal agenda in order, and while he was preparing to campaign, Easley filled the void by simply being the incumbent."

Although the recent polls have shown Easley far ahead, Democrats have yet to congratulate Easley.

"(We are) not taking anything for granted. The only poll that matters is that on Election Day," said Schorr Johnson, communications director for the N.C. Democratic Party.

"We're certainly not going to sit back and rest on our laurels."

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

# Election's outcome may affect electoral college

States might consider system reform

BY MEGAN MCSWAIN  
STAFF WRITER

After the last presidential election, Americans learned that a candidate could be chosen to lead the country without the majority's support.

Now, thanks to a system put in place by the nation's Founding Fathers more than 200 years ago, pundits and political officials fear that a presidential candidate again might be sworn into office without winning the popular vote.

"There is a very real possibility," said L. Kinvin Wroth, a professor of law at Vermont Law School.

The confusion stems from the United States' unique system of determining who wins the presidency: the Electoral College.

Under the system, voters don't directly pick the president; 538 handpicked party loyalists called electors do. States have a designated number of electors equal to their representation in the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives, and in most states, the candidate with greater popular support also takes home every electoral vote.

The winning candidate has to receive 270 electoral votes — one vote more than half.

This scheme played a key role in 2000, when Democrat Al Gore

beat George W. Bush by more than 500,000 votes in the popular contest but wound up losing in the Electoral College.

In that race, Bush won 271 electoral votes to Gore's 267 by capturing some states — most famously Florida — by razor-thin margins.

That election, and the equally close race this year between Bush and Democratic Sen. John Kerry, has many wondering whether the Electoral College is a proper system for choosing the president.

"It ends up forcing the race for a national office into a very small number of states," said Philip Klinkner, a government professor at Hamilton College. "Basically, both Bush and Kerry are running for governor of 10 states simultaneously."

He said that if Kerry were to win the electoral vote but lose the popular vote, it would be the most likely catalyst to Electoral College reform.

Colorado already is trying to instigate such reform. An amendment on today's ballot would make the state split its electoral votes based on the percentage of votes candidates obtain in the statewide popular vote.

If this had been in place during the 2000 election, Gore would have won enough electoral votes to become president.

"Colorado is a microcosm of how a proposed amendment would fare on the national level," Wroth said.

Two states, Maine and Nebraska, already have similar electoral processes in place. Two electoral votes go to the candidate who wins the majority, and the remaining votes are split proportionally.

"I would prefer that electors from each state be divided other than winner-take-all," said Charles Winfree, a member of the N.C. Board of Elections. "But I am not aware of any efforts in North Carolina."

Also of concern are possible "nightmare scenarios" in which Bush and Kerry could tie in the Electoral College, 269-269.

In that case, the decision of who would become the next president would fall into the hands of the Republican-controlled House, likely sparking protests nationwide.

But electoral reform on the national level would require a constitutional amendment — something seen as an important deterrence, said Bruce Altschuler, political science professor at the State University of New York-Oswego.

"Unless there is a crisis that makes the Electoral College a critical issue, it is very unlikely it will change."

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# Presidents often seek Constitutional changes

Proposals stem from society, politics

BY BROOKE M. GOTTLIEB  
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Although President Bush has sparked controversy by endorsing an amendment that would ultimately ban same-sex marriage, he is not the first president who has sought to modify the U.S. Constitution.

President Bill Clinton supported the Equal Rights Amendment, which would have provided equal rights to men and women; President George H.W. Bush called for an amendment to prohibit defacing the U.S. flag; and President Ronald Reagan promoted the School Prayer Amendment, which would have allowed prayer to be conducted in public schools.

"Amendments tend to flow out of the issues of the time," said Ferrel Guillory, director of UNC's Program on Southern Politics, Media and Public Life.

"The great 13th, 14th and 15th amendments reflected the aftermath of the Civil War."

The current Congress has faced amendments that would make such changes as lowering the minimum age of members of the Senate and the House of Representatives and securing the word "God" in the Pledge of Allegiance and national motto.

But the Federal Marriage Amendment, which would define marriage as existing only between a man and a woman, arguably has provoked the most heated debate.

"The Republican strength in the election has rested with cultural issues," Guillory said.

He added that social and cultural changes affect who people support during elections.

"You find in data that economic class doesn't explain as much anymore."

Tony Welch, press secretary for the Democratic National Committee, said Congress likely would not pass the Federal Marriage Amendment and accused Bush of advocating the amendment to create a wedge issue for today's election.

"It's kind of strange coming from a guy wanting to unite America," he said.

Welch also questioned the president's recent announcement that he believes individual states should decide whether to permit civil unions.

"I think the flip-flop here happened to the Bush side."

The Republican National Committee did not respond to calls by press time.

Guillory said that while Democrats have resisted amending the Constitution for what they see as political goals, they try to appeal to the public and its values.

"Democrats, particularly in the South, try to show a desire to maintain certain social customs in tradition," he said.

Congress has dealt with more

than 10,000 proposals that would amend the Constitution since its creation in 1789, according to a study conducted by C-SPAN in 2000.

Most recently, the 27th Amendment, ratified in 1992, prohibits midterm salary increases for the members of Congress.

"(Political parties) are sort of catering to their constituents," said Thad Beyle, a UNC political science professor.

He said in some cases, changes stem from a real need. At other times, they stem from court cases or political purposes.

Every amendment has been added to the Constitution through winning two-thirds of the votes of each chamber of Congress before being ratified by the states.

According to a nationwide CNN/USA Today/Gallup poll conducted from July 19-21, 48 percent of Americans favor a Constitutional amendment that would ban same-sex marriage, while 46 percent oppose it.

"The country is very much divided in these kinds of issues," Guillory said. "We are a broad middle-class country that yearns for stability."

Contact the State & National Editor at [stntdesk@unc.edu](mailto:stntdesk@unc.edu).

BY SARAH SCHWARZ  
STAFF WRITER

Everyone has something riding on this election.

For many, it's homeland security or the economy, abortion rights or tax cuts — but at least 40,000 people worldwide stand to instantaneously gain or lose literally millions of dollars today.

The popularity of online betting sites such as [www.tradesports.com](http://www.tradesports.com) has risen dramatically, averaging \$10 million wagered on the 2004 presidential election alone. Total wagers on Tradesports top \$16 million.

According to some, they might be a more accurate gauge of the outcome than popular opinion polls.

"What does the money say?" said Mark Irvine, chief marketing officer of Tradesports. "There are two types of opinion: who you would like to win, and who you think actually will win."

The company has been operating for three years out of Dublin, Ireland — a necessity for American gamblers because the business wouldn't be legal in the United States.

Sites like Tradesports act as a middleman, placing people together who want to bet on anything from the presidential election to the verdict in Michael Jackson's trial or the outcome of the World Series.

Although the freedom the Internet provides has allowed the political betting market to grow exponentially, wagering money on politics is nothing new.

Paul Rhode and Koleman Strumpf are both UNC professors who have studied the history of political betting in the United States prior to the advent of scientific polling.

"It seems every other person in the country was betting. This is a big deal historically," said Strumpf. He added that even those who didn't have any money took part in the gambling action, placing freak bets.

"You would say, if I win a bet, I get to cart you around in a wheelbarrow, or I get to cut your hair off, all kinds of crazy things," he said.

Between the Civil War and World War II, when political betting was at its peak, bettors picked the winner of the presidential election correctly in every year except 1916, Rhode said. Until George Gallup founded his polling method in 1935, the accuracy of poll predictions were variable at best.

Modern polls, even with the benefit of better technology, aren't always afforded much more faith by voters than their predecessors.

Freshman Lauren Burcal doesn't trust them. "It's hard to know if it's not biased," she said.

Sophomore Matt Field worries that polls negatively influence voter behavior, giving supporters of the leading candidate an opportunity to skip the ballot box, thinking their candidate is already guaranteed a win.

*"What does the money say? There are two types of opinion: who you would like to win, and who you think actually will win."*

MARK IRVINE, CHIEF MARKETING OFFICER OF TRADESPORTS

Irvine maintains that the people who work at Tradesports aren't political activists, but his guess is that this election will be a repeat of 2000, making Kerry the winner of the popular vote but putting Bush back into office for a second term.

"As they say, the Boston Red Sox may have managed to lift the curse, but the Republican Party might be setting its own curse to not win the popular vote again," he said.

Tradesports lists Bush at a slight advantage to win the election, although his lead has diminished greatly.

In the North Carolina betting pool, it's a different story. Figures give Bush an 80 percent probability of winning the state.

"We concede that we're talking mainly affluent traders, not the average Joe who is on his way to the polls," said Irvine about the kind of members Tradesports attracts. The site doesn't have fixed

prices; members set their own. He said that while polls often take 20 to 24 hours to be completed or to show a change, the betting markets online show change in opinion or reactions to events instantaneously.

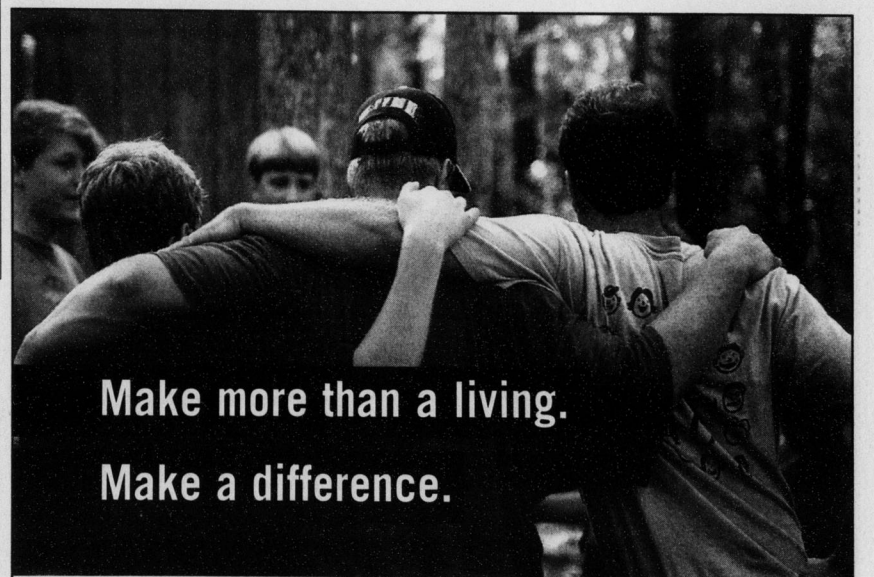
Tradesports successfully predicted Arnold Schwarzenegger as California's winning recall candidate and Kerry's choice of John Edwards as his running mate.

"The basic idea is, people put their money where their mouth is in these markets," said Strumpf, explaining why all of these ventures have so successful.

Once Chapel Hill residents and students have voted, they can begin to look forward to the next election.

"You can, in fact, already bet on the 2008 election," said Irvine.

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