

Voter turnout

The critical factor that will determine the outcome of the presidential election in 2016 is voter turnout. Always important, it becomes determinative in a race where significant segments of the electorate harbor hatred for both of the major party candidates. Hillary Clinton continues to suffer from an enthusiasm gap propelled by a lengthy and continuing series of revelations about her abuse of public office for private gain, and Donald Trump continues to suffer from allegations of sexual harassment, albeit many of those allegations have not risen beyond mere conjecture.

Hillary Clinton has the benefit of a well-organized get-out-the-vote machine but she has been a lackluster candidate plagued by substantial evidence of Espionage Act violations and public corruption and a duplicitous public versus private position on issues. She remains distrusted by the vast majority of the electorate and with good reason. Her hidden agenda (including her refusal to reveal her Wall Street speeches) and her profound character flaws illustrated by the great number of false public statements that she has made and continues to make repulse many who would otherwise vote Democratic. She is among the most disliked people in politics. In the end, if she wins it will be because she has inspired enough people to vote on the basis of a hatred for Trump, rather than a fondness for her. In short, most people do not trust or like Hillary Clinton; if motivated to vote for her, a substantial number will do so in large measure because they dislike Trump even more than they do Clinton.

While Donald Trump lacks a get-out-the-vote operation comparable to Clinton's, he has something she lacks in spades: charisma. His supporters are enthusiastic and can be counted upon to vote. The issue for Trump is whether his enthusiastic supporters are enough to overcome those who favor Clinton. The answer will depend on whether Trump's message, come election

day, has a strong enough draw to cause his supporters to go to the polls in very high numbers and to cause those independents who might be tempted to vote for Clinton to refrain from doing so to avoid condoning Clinton's history of law violation for which she has not been made to account. Trump must depend on a very high voter turnout among those predisposed to vote for him and a very low voter turnout for those predisposed in favor of Hillary.

Logically, the charges of boorish behavior against Trump pale in comparison to the facts of public corruption against Clinton. Trump's rude comments about women do not have the same gravity as Hillary's chronic abuse of public office to achieve private gain, conflicts of interest that expose her desire for financial aggrandizement to exceed her willingness to defend the national interest. Indeed, when Clinton Foundation donors are enemies of the United States and received favors from Secretary Clinton, her actions imperil our national security.

Hillary depends on a campaign of hate and an electorate willing to condone her abuse of public office. She vilifies Trump and engages in fear mongering in an effort to stem his popularity. She does offer a plan, but it is one that expands upon the very same failed policies of the Obama Administration. Hillary has positioned herself to the left of Obama on domestic policy (a rather hard thing to do) and to the right of him on foreign policy (apparently favoring greater interventionism than President Obama).

Trump depends on a campaign of fundamental change, one that promises to take on the establishment and institute tax reduction and deregulation along with a more profound military effort to eliminate ISIS and create border security for America. He remains quite popular among those who identify the economy as their primary election issue. He also remains the overwhelming favorite among active duty personnel and veterans.

While most polls reveal an advantage for Hillary Clinton, polls cannot tell us who will actually vote. Particularly in this election, the outcome will largely depend on relative levels of enthusiasm among those who favor Clinton and Trump. Which candidate's negatives will cause more voters to stay at home? Which candidate has succeeded in reducing those negatives enough to win the popular vote? And then, what will the electoral college decide? Will they vote consistent with the popular outcome, or will they deviate from the popular vote?

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