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Cracking the Undecided Buckeye

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With just one week to go before Election Day, Barack Obama and John McCain are making their final appeals to voters, especially those in swing states like Ohio. Recent polls show between 2 and 8 percent of Ohio registered voters are undecided on their choice for president of the United States. These same polls show a close race between the two candidates, with a slight lead for Obama. Convincing the undecided Buckeyes could be the key to victory in Ohio for either candidate.

But it may be a fruitless pursuit, according to faculty experts at the University of Dayton, Ohio's largest private university and one of the top-10 Catholic universities in the U.S.

Here's why:

They Won't Vote

"The idea that somehow they're engaged, they plan to vote, yet they're still undecided strikes me as a bit of a stretch. What last piece of information or data do you need after watching these candidates run for the last two years to say, 'Aha, that's the thing I was waiting for?'" — Christopher Duncan, professor and department of political science chair; 937-229-3648 or christopher.duncan@notes.udayton.edu.

An Ohio Win May Not Be Enough

"I'm not sure there is anything the candidates can do at this point to crack the undecided Buckeye. The race is still close, but barring any major event, I don't see McCain pulling a win out. Even if McCain does win, Obama has several options for winning the presidency without Ohio, but McCain needs Ohio if he is going to win it all. From all accounts, it appears that McCain may not have the organization on the ground that is going to translate into the votes he needs on election day." — Nancy Martorano, associate political science professor; 937-229-3650 or nancy.martorano@notes.udayton.edu.

They Vote on Feelings

"From what we saw in the primaries, Obama has trouble sealing the deal. Many times the results would be much tighter than the lead he had in the polls. That means those who made up their minds in the last hours voted for Hillary Clinton. I'm not sure there's anything he can do about that. They know his positions, they just still have some reservations about him, a gut-level feeling." — The Rev. John Putka, S.M., political science lecturer; 937-229-2594 or john.putka@notes.udayton.edu.

The Economy has Hardened Them

"With the last month's tremendous destruction of personal wealth in both housing values and pensions, Ohio's middle class is peering into the faces of the poor and seeing themselves. Ohio's 7.2 percent unemployment rate is up sharply from 5.7 percent a year ago. Manufacturing jobs continue to bleed out of Ohio, down another 13,600 in the last year, a total of 262,000 since 2001. Average annual earnings of the remaining manufacturing jobs fell by an inflation-adjusted $3,305 to just $40,862. On average, factory workers in Ohio barely make it into the lower middle class. In Ohio, "class warfare" is the war on the middle class." — Richard Stock, director of UD's Business Research Group; 937-229-2453 or richard.stock@notes.udayton.edu.

For more information, contact Cameron Fullam, assistant director of media relations, at 937-229-3256 or fullam@udayton.edu.