

## Campaign 2008

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### **Clinton, Romney to feel major repercussions in N.H.**

**By Alexander Bolton**

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Political experts say the Iowa caucuses will cause serious damage to Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-N.Y.) and former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney (R) in New Hampshire because both candidates failed to meet expectations.

Clinton finished in third place in Iowa with 29 percent of the vote, eight percentage points behind Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) and less than a point behind former Sen. John Edwards (D-N.C.).

Romney lost to former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee (R-Ark.) by nine points in the Republican race, despite spending vastly more than his rival and leading in statewide polls for much of last year.

Obama's margin of victory was greater than any lead he held over Clinton in a major Iowa poll, according to Real Clear Politics, a website that tracks survey data. A *Des Moines Register* poll released earlier this week gave him a seven-point lead.

Huckabee's decisive victory upended claims that a negative advertising campaign by Romney had slashed a lead Huckabee established in recent weeks. Huckabee's victory Thursday night capped a remarkable come-from-behind sprint.

Political experts say these results will have a major impact on Clinton's and Romney's standing in New Hampshire. The so-called Granite State will host the year's first presidential primary election on Tuesday, giving those candidates little time to recover from their showings in Iowa.

Clinton and Romney have led their respective fields in New Hampshire for most of past few months, but that will have little political relevance in the wake of Iowa, say experts.

“The loser of Iowa has a lot of explaining to do,” said Andrew Smith, the director of the University of New Hampshire Survey Center. “Losing a primary contest is a sign that you have problems with electability, especially if you are expected to do well. If Clinton’s third [in Iowa], she’s going to have a very difficult time in New Hampshire.”

In recent weeks, Clinton’s campaign has labored to downplay a disappointing finish in Iowa. Bill Clinton announced last month that he never thought his wife would win Iowa. Clinton herself said she faced an uphill battle because Obama represents a neighboring state and Edwards has spent more time in Iowa than any other candidate.

Clinton campaign manager Patti Solis Doyle said Thursday night the race against Obama and Edwards has only just begun.

“Our campaign was built for a marathon and we have the resources to run a national race in the weeks ahead,” she said in a statement.

Experts, however, say that it will be difficult for Clinton — or Edwards, for that matter — to catch Obama in New Hampshire.

“If Edwards does not win in Iowa, his campaign starts to falter here [in New Hampshire] and it becomes a two-person race between Obama and Clinton,” Dante Scala, an expert on presidential politics at the University of New Hampshire, said in an interview Thursday. “If Obama has a breakout victory [in Iowa] and Clinton slumps to third, he would have the inside track in New Hampshire.”

Several recent polls show Edwards trailing Clinton and Obama by 10 to 15 points in New Hampshire. Local political analysts say Edwards would have faced a difficult challenge erasing that deficit even if he had won in Iowa.

Experts say Clinton and Romney have suffered political damage because poll after poll showed them either leading or tied for the lead in Iowa. Several pundits had contemplated the possibility that the Democratic candidates would finish in a virtual dead heat, rendering the caucuses almost meaningless.

Linda Fowler, a professor of government at Dartmouth College, predicted that the

Iowa results would have a dramatic impact on the upcoming primary because many New Hampshire voters were undecided as of earlier this week.

She said much will depend on how voters view the results of the Iowa caucuses and warned that the losing candidates have little time to mold perceptions.

“If someone does better or worse than expected, that will have an impact,” she said.

Fowler noted a recent poll showing that nearly 60 percent of likely Democratic primary voters had not made a final decision on whom to support.

She also predicted disappointment for Romney, who has seen his once commanding lead in New Hampshire evaporate as Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) has gained ground. McCain carried the state in the 2000 GOP primary.

“I expect that Romney will have two disappointing days given what he hoped,” said Fowler, in reference to the Iowa and New Hampshire election dates.

Romney supporters had expected their candidate to win Iowa after polls showed him ahead of the field by 10 to 20 points at various times in the fall.

Romney put a positive spin on Thursday’s outcome.

“You think about where we started – an unknown governor from the bluest state in America comes to Iowa running against, well at that time three household names – [former New York City mayor] Rudy Giuliani, John McCain, [former Sen.] Fred Thompson [R-Tenn.] – and somehow tonight we beat all of them,” he said. “We’ve just got to make sure we keep that up state after state after state.”

Experts believe that McCain, who has surged to a tie with Romney in several New Hampshire polls, stands to gain the most on Tuesday because of Iowa.

Analysts say they do not expect Huckabee’s victory to help him finish any higher than third place in New Hampshire.

“Most New Hampshire residents don’t relish a Huckabee nomination because he is Christian, Southern, and conservative,” said Scala. “New Hampshire Republicans prefer socially moderate, fiscally conservative candidates who are hawkish on national security.”

Such a description fits McCain well.

**“If Huckabee wins Iowa, that opens the door for McCain,” said Scala.**

**Smith of the UNH Survey Center said that a strong showing by Huckabee in Iowa would likely erode Romney’s support among some conservatives in New Hampshire.**

**Experts estimate that 10 to 20 percent of New Hampshire Republicans are evangelical Christians. Nearly 60 percent of the Republicans who attended Thursday’s caucus identified themselves as evangelicals, according to early news reports.**

**Fergus Cullen, chairman of the New Hampshire Republican Party, predicted that a big win by Obama in Iowa could help Romney by luring independents to vote in New Hampshire’s Democratic primary.**

**Cullen said that may hurt McCain because McCain leads Romney among independent voters, albeit by less than an overwhelming margin. About 60 percent of New Hampshire independents said they would vote in the Democratic primary, said Dartmouth’s Fowler.**