

Virginia May Hold the Key for Obama, Romney

Less than an hour's drive out of Washington, D.C., when commuter traffic isn't jamming Interstate 66, a new Battle of Bull Run is underway. Obama campaign volunteers, armed with clipboards, have spent weeks registering voters at a modern campus on the hill where a famous general gained the nickname "Stonewall."

Despite painstakingly slow progress—three students signed onto Virginia's rolls during a recent five-hour period—the Democrats are working to fortify a demographic barricade against Mitt Romney that could be decisive in this battleground state. President Obama's reelection depends heavily on young and minority voters, and Northern Virginia Community College, with students from more than 180 countries, makes an obvious recruiting target.

The school's diversity reflects changes that have swept the fast-growing suburbs outside the nation's capital over the last decade, fed by explosive population increases among Latinos and Asians.

Candidate Obama capitalized on these demographic shifts four years ago, mobilizing an army of newly registered voters and becoming the first Democratic presidential nominee to carry the Old Dominion since 1964.

"There's nothing quite like it in any of the other Southern states. There's no region that big that has as many people who don't identify with the old Southern culture," said Paul Goldman, a strategist who in 1989 helped Virginia's Douglas Wilder become the nation's first elected African American governor. "Northern Virginia is much wealthier than the rest of the state. It has much more of a connection to Washington,

and so it's unlike any other part of the country."

Click here to read the rest of the story from the *Los Angeles Times*.