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International Herald Tribune

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GLOBAL.NYTIMES.COM

Democrats see gains in diversity of key states

WASHINGTON

Obama strategists hope
new demographics will
overcome blue-collar loss

BY JACKIE CALMES
AND MARK LANDLER

With his support among blue-collar white voters far weaker than among white-collar independents, President Barack Obama is charting an alternative course to re-election should he be unable to win Ohio and other industrial states traditionally essential to Democratic presidential victories.

Without conceding ground anywhere, Mr. Obama is fighting hard for Southern and Rocky Mountain states he won in 2008, and some he did not, in calculating how to assemble the necessary 270 votes in the Electoral College. He is seeking to prove that those victories on formerly Republican turf were not flukes but the start of a trend that will make Democrats competitive there for years.

“There are a lot of ways for us to get to 270, and it’s not just the traditional map,” said David Axelrod, Mr. Obama’s chief strategist. “That’s why we’re laying the groundwork across the country to compete on the widest possible playing field next year.”

Although Mr. Obama’s approval ratings have slid across the board as unemployment remains high, what buoys Democrats are the changing demographics of formerly Republican states like Colorado, where Democrats won a close Senate race in 2010, as well as Virginia and North Carolina.

With growing cities and suburbs, they are populated by increasing numbers of educated and higher-income independents, young voters, Hispanics and African-Americans, many of them alienated by the Republicans’ Tea Party agenda.

“The biggest challenge” for Republicans, said Tad Devine, a senior strategist for the Democratic presidential campaign, is that the Tea Party agenda is a major force of forest destruction.



Barack Obama in Ohio last week, where Republicans say their prospects are good.



A forest in Montana attacked by the mountain pine beetle, left, and blackened by wildfires, right, two major forces of forest destruction.

The Earth’s forests in distress

WISE RIVER, MONTANA

A wide range of ills
linked to climate change
is causing deep concern

BY JUSTIN GILLIS

The trees spanning many of the mountainsides of western Montana glow an earthy red, like a broadleaf forest at the beginning of autumn.

But these trees are not supposed to turn red. They are evergreens, falling victim to beetles that used to be controlled in part by bitterly cold winters. As the climate warms, scientists say,

that control is no longer happening. Across millions of hectares, the pines of the northern and central Rocky Mountains are dying, just one among many types of forests that are showing signs of distress these days.

The great euphorbia trees of southern Africa are succumbing to heat and water stress. So are the Atlas cedars of northern Algeria. Fires fed by hot, dry weather are killing enormous stretches of Siberian forest. Trees are under stress across the rim of southern Europe, and the Amazon recently suffered two “once a century” droughts just five years apart, killing many large trees.

Experts are scrambling to understand the situation, and to predict how serious it may become.

Scientists say the future habitability of the Earth could depend on the answer. The reason is that, while a majority of the world’s people now live in cities, they depend more than ever on forests, in a way that few of them understand.

Scientists have figured out — with the precise numbers deduced only recently — that forests have been absorbing more than a quarter of the carbon dioxide that people are putting into the air by burning fossil fuels and other activities. It is an amount so large that trees are effectively absorbing the emissions from all the world’s cars and trucks.

Without that disposal service, the level of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere would be rising much faster. The forests, said Mr. Obama, are the world’s lungs.

U.S. drone strike kills Qaeda leader

SANA, YEMEN

Death of firebrand cleric
who had American roots
is a ‘blow’ to Yemen unit

BY LAURA KASINOF,
MARK MAZZETTI
AND ALAN COWELL

Anwar al-Awlaki, a U.S. citizen who was a leading figure in Al Qaeda’s Yemen affiliate and considered its most dangerous English-speaking propagandist and plotter, was killed Friday by a U.S. drone strike on his vehicle, officials in Washington and Yemen said. They said the strike had also killed a fellow American radical who edited Al Qaeda’s online jihadist magazine.

Many details of the strike were unclear, but one U.S. official said that Mr. Awlaki, whom the United States had been hunting in Yemen for more than two years, had been identified as the target in advance and was killed with a Hellfire missile fired from a drone operated by the Central Intelligence Agency. The official said it was the first C.I.A. strike in Yemen since 2002. Yemen’s Defense Ministry confirmed Mr. Awlaki’s death.

The deliberate effort to kill a citizen has raised contentious constitutional issues in the United States. Mr. Awlaki, a leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, was considered the inspirational or operational force behind a number of major plots aimed at killing Americans in the United States in recent years, most notably the deadly assault at a U.S. Army base in Fort Hood, Texas.

“The death of Awlaki is a major blow to Al Qaeda’s most active operational affiliate,” President Barack Obama said in remarks at a swearing-in ceremony for the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Martin Dempsey. Mr. Obama

said the cleric had taken “the lead role in planning and directing the efforts to murder innocent Americans.”

Yemen’s official news agency, Saba, reported that the attack also killed Samir Khan, a U.S. citizen of Pakistani origin who was editor of Inspire, Al Qaeda’s English-language Internet magazine. A U.S. official said Washington also believed Mr. Khan had been killed. It was not clear whether Mr. Khan, who proclaimed in the magazine last year that he was “proud to be a traitor to America,” was also a deliberate target of the strike.

A Yemeni Defense Ministry statement said that a number of Mr. Awlaki’s bodyguards had also been killed.

Neither the Americans nor Yemenis explained precisely how they knew that Mr. Awlaki was dead.

An Awlaki family member, reached by telephone, said Mr. Awlaki’s father, Nasser al-Awlaki, was en route from Yemen’s capital, Sana, to the site of the attack in northern Yemen on Friday afternoon. **YEMEN, PAGE 7**



Anwar al-Awlaki was killed along with several others riding in his vehicle.

IN KILLING, AN ISSUE OF DUE PROCESS

The killing of Anwar al-Awlaki reignited a difficult debate over terrorism, civil liberties and the law. **PAGE 7**

In the tweets you send, clues to circadian rhythm and blues

NEW YORK

BY BENEDICT CAREY

However grumpy people are when they wake up, and whether they stumble to their feet in Madrid, Mexico City or Minneapolis, they tend to brighten by breakfast time, a large-scale study of posts on the social media site Twitter found. They feel their moods taper gradually to a low in the late afternoon, before rallying again near bedtime.

Drawing on messages posted by more than two million people in 84 countries, researchers discovered that the emotional tone of people’s messages followed a similar pattern not only through the day

but also through the week and the changing seasons. The new analysis suggests that our moods are driven in part by a shared underlying biological rhythm that transcends culture and environment.

The report, by sociologists at Cornell University in New York and appearing in the journal Science, is the first cross-cultural study of daily mood rhythms in the average person using such text analysis. Previous studies have also mined the mountains of data pouring into social media sites, chat rooms, blogs and elsewhere on the Internet, but looked at collective moods over broader periods of time, in different time zones or during holidays.

TWITTER, PAGE 16

WORLD NEWS

Sarkozy’s ‘homme sérieux’

Alain Juppé is the quiet, strong center of Nicolas Sarkozy’s effort to secure re-election as president next year. **PAGE 3**



North Korean rising Kim Jong-un, center, appeared in Pyongyang on Oct. 9, 2010, as part of his debut as leader-in-waiting. The process continues. **PAGE 4**

Turkey’s rise, NATO’s concern

NATO’s secretary general expressed disquiet about Turkey’s more assertive Mediterranean foreign policy. **PAGE 3**

BUSINESS

Austria signs off on euro fund

After a bruising debate in Parliament, the country on Friday became the latest in the euro zone to approve the expansion of the European bailout fund for heavily indebted countries. With the decision, only three of the 17 euro zone members are still left to vote on whether to increase the size and the powers of the bailout fund. **PAGE 14**

Lifting speed limit and spirits

The British transport secretary said the government was considering raising the highway speed limit to improve economic efficiency and personal satisfaction by shaving valuable minutes from some journeys. **PAGE 16**

SPORTS

Kicking woes at World Cup

Kickers at the Rugby World Cup this year have been stricken by a particular inability to hit the ball straight. Some blame the wind, some the stadiums and some the ball for their troubles. **PAGE 11**

VIEWS

Putin’s wrong reset

Vladimir V. Putin may pursue some reforms, but his return to the Kremlin will diminish the possibility that Russia will evolve into a stable democracy, writes Samuel Charap. **PAGE 8**

India on wheels

Upwardly mobile Indians increasingly aspire to cars, and not the clunky ones of yore. But roads are awful, drivers are erratic, and traffic is worse than ever, writes Siddhartha Deb. **PAGE 8**

WEEKEND

A secret about Bordeaux

Château Gruaud-Larose? This way, monsieur. This is no ordinary day at Carrefour. The wine fair, an autumn institution at French supermarkets, is under way. Every year, French chains like Carrefour, Auchan and E. Leclerc sell hundreds of millions of euros’ worth of wine during these promotions, which take place in September and October. **PAGE 26**

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CURRENCIES NEW YORK, FRIDAY 1:30PM

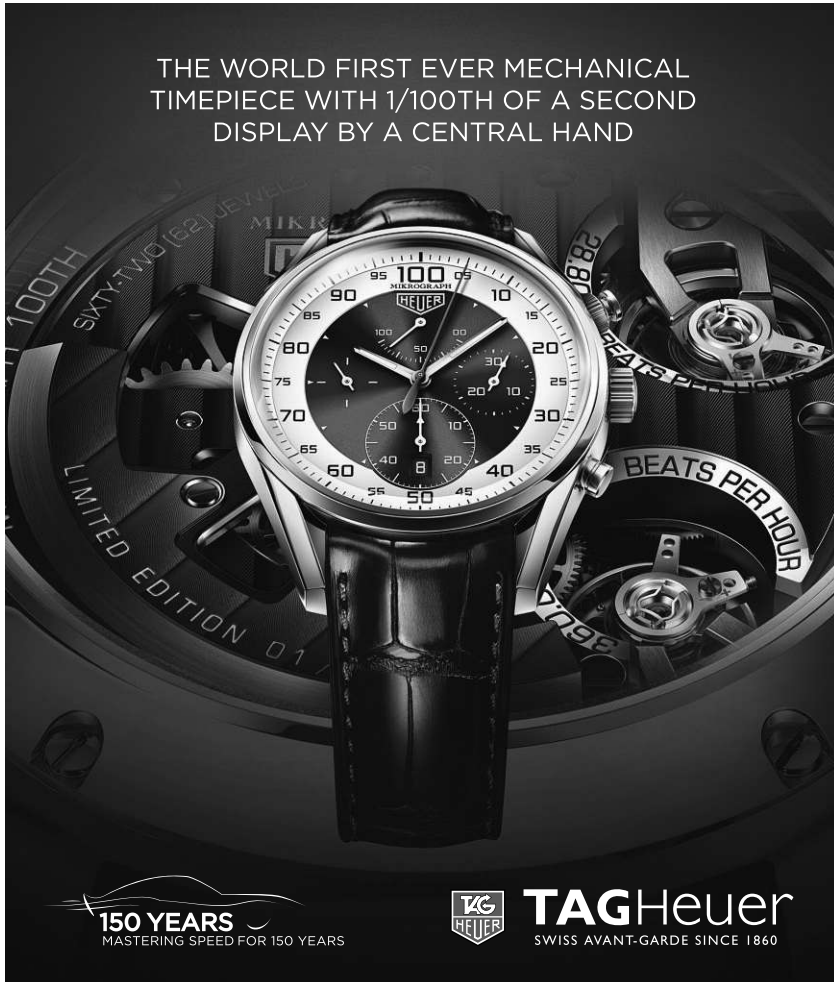
	NEW YORK, FRIDAY 1:30PM	PREVIOUS
▼ Euro	€1= \$1.3450	\$1.3590
▲ Pound	£1= \$1.5650	\$1.5620
▼ Yen	¥1= ¥77.110	¥76.820
▼ S. Franc	₣1= SF0.9040	SF0.8970

Full currency rates Page 18

STOCK INDEXES FRIDAY

▼ The Dow 1:30pm	11,059.72	-0.85%
▼ FTSE 100 close	5,128.48	-1.32%
▼ Nikkei 225 close	8,700.29	-0.01%

OIL NEW YORK, FRIDAY 1:30PM
▼ Light sweet crude \$80.80 -\$2.64



WORLD NEWS UNITED STATES

Forests’ woes, with potentially grave consequences

FORESTS, FROM PAGE 1

gas traps heat from the sun, and human emissions are causing the planet to warm.

Yet the forests have only been able to restrain the increase, not halt it. And some scientists are worried that as the warming accelerates, the trees themselves could become climate-change victims on a massive scale. If enough died, they would not only stop absorbing carbon dioxide, they might also start to burn up or decay at such a rate that they would spew huge amounts of the gas back into the air. That, in turn, could speed the warming of the planet.

It is clear that the point of no return has not been reached yet — and it may never be. Despite the troubles of recent years, forests continue to take up a large amount of carbon, with some regions, including the Eastern United States and parts of Europe, being especially important as global carbon absorbers.

“I think we have a situation where both the ‘forces of growth’ and the ‘forces of death’ are strengthening, and have been for some time,” said Oliver L. Phillips, a prominent tropical forest researcher with the University of Leeds in Britain. “The latter are more eye-catching, but the former have in fact been more important so far.”

Many researchers say the best way to ensure the health of the world’s forests is to slow emissions of greenhouse gases. Most nations committed to doing so in a global environmental treaty in 1992, yet two decades of negotiations have yielded scant progress.

In the near term, experts say, more modest steps could be taken to protect

“The amount of area burning now in Siberia is just startling — individual years with 10 million hectares burned.”

forests. One promising plan calls for wealthy countries simply to pay those in the tropics to halt the destruction of their immense forests for agriculture and logging. But even that limited plan is at risk for lack of money.

Many scientists had hoped serious forest damage would not set in before the middle of the 21st century, and that people would have time to get emissions of heat-trapping gases under control before then. Some of them have been shocked in recent years by what they are seeing. “The amount of area burning now in Siberia is just startling — individual years with 10 million hectares burned,” the equivalent of nearly 25 million acres, or larger than Portugal, said Thomas W. Swetnam, a researcher at the University of Arizona. “The big fires that are occurring in the American Southwest are extraordinary in terms of their severity, on time scales of thousands of years.”

CARBON CYCLES

In the 1950s, when a scientist named Charles David Keeling first obtained accurate measurements of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a mystery presented itself. Only about half the carbon that people were releasing into the sky seemed to be staying there. It took scientists decades to figure out where the rest was going.

As best researchers can tell, the oceans are taking up about a quarter of the carbon emissions arising from human activities. That is causing the sea to become more acidic and is expected to damage marine life. But the chemistry is at least somewhat predictable, and scientists are confident the oceans will keep absorbing carbon.

Trees are taking up a similar amount of carbon, but whether this will continue is far less certain.

Carbon dioxide is an essential part of

the cycle of life on Earth, but geologic history suggests that too much can cause the climate to warm sharply. With enough time, the chemical cycles operating on the planet have a tendency to bury excess carbon.

In the 19th century, humans discovered the usefulness of some forms of buried carbon — coal, oil and natural gas — as a source of energy. The concentration of the gas in the atmosphere has jumped 40 percent since the Industrial Revolution, and scientists fear it could double or even triple this century, with profound consequences.

While all types of plants absorb carbon dioxide, known as CO₂, most of them return it to the atmosphere quickly because their vegetation decays, burns or is eaten. It is mainly trees that have the ability to lock carbon into long-term storage, and they do so by making wood or transferring carbon into the soil. The wood may stand for centuries inside a living tree, and it is slow to decay even when the tree dies. But the carbon in wood is vulnerable to rapid release. If a forest burns up, much of the carbon stored in it will re-enter the atmosphere.

Destruction by fires and insects is a part of the natural history of forests, and in isolation, such events would be no cause for alarm. Indeed, despite the recent problems, the new estimate, published Aug. 19 in the journal *Science*, suggests that when emissions from the world’s forests are subtracted from the carbon they absorb, they are, on balance, packing more than a billion tons of carbon into long-term storage every year.

One major reason is that forests, like other types of plants, appear to be responding to the rise of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere by growing more vigorously. The gas is, after all, the main food supply for plants. Scientists have been surprised in recent years to learn that this factor is causing a growth spurt even in mature forests, a finding that overturned decades of ecological dogma.

Climate-change contrarians tend to focus on this “fertilization effect,” hailing it as a boon for forests and the food supply. “The ongoing rise of the air’s CO₂ content is causing a great greening of the Earth,” an advocate of this position, Craig D. Idso, said in Washington in July.

Dr. Idso and others assert that this effect is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, ameliorating any negative impacts on plant growth from rising temperatures. More mainstream scientists, while stating that CO₂ fertilization is real, are much less certain about the long-term effects, saying that the heat and water stress associated with global warming seem to be making forests vulnerable to insect attack, fires and many other problems. “Forests take a century to grow to maturity,” said Werner A. Kurz, a Canadian scientist who is a leading expert on forest carbon. “It takes only a single extreme climate event, a single attack by insects, to interrupt that hundred-year uptake of carbon.”

MEASURING TWIGS

So far, humanity has been lucky. While some forests are starting to release more carbon than they take up, that effect continues to be outweighed by forests that pack carbon away. Whether those healthy forests will predominate over coming decades, or will become sick themselves, is simply unclear.

The other day, deep in a healthy New England thicket of oaks, maples and hemlocks, two young men scrambled around on their hands and knees measuring twigs and sticks that had fallen from the trees. “What was the diameter on that?” asked Jakob Lindaas, a Harvard student holding clipboard.

Leland K. Werden, a researcher at the university, called out a measurement, and they moved to the next twig. It was one of thousands they would eventually



Diana L. Six, an insect expert from the University of Montana, stripping bark from a whitebark pine near Wise River to see the fatal damage done by beetles and an invasive fungus.

have to measure as part of an effort to tell how fast the wood, knocked off the trees in an ice storm in 2008, was decaying. The work the men were doing, in a forest owned by Harvard University, will become a small contribution toward solving one of the biggest accounting problems of modern science.

Meticulous measurements over the decades have established that the Harvard Forest is gaining weight, roughly four tons per hectare per year, on average. It is characteristic of a type of forest that is playing a big role in limiting the damage from human carbon emissions: a recovering forest.

Not so long ago, the land was not a forest at all. Close to where the men were working stood an old stone fence, a telltale sign of the land’s history.

“When the European colonists came to America, they saw trees, and they wanted fields and pastures,” explained J. William Munger, a Harvard research fellow who was supervising the measurements. The colonists chopped down the forest and built farmhouses, barns, paddocks and sturdy stone fences.

By the mid-19th century, the Erie Canal and the railroads had opened the interior of the country, and farmers plowing the stony soils of New England could not compete with produce from the rich fields of the Midwest. So the fields were abandoned, and trees have returned.

Today, the re-growing forests of the Eastern United States are among the most important carbon sponges in the world. As in much of the world, the temperature is warming there — by an average of 1.3 degrees Celsius, or 2.34 degrees Fahrenheit, in the last 40 years — and that has led to longer growing seasons, benefiting this particular forest more than hurting it, at least so far.

“We’re actually seeing that the leaves are falling off the trees later in the fall,” Mr. Werden said.

Scientists say that something similar may be happening in other forests, particularly in cold northern regions that are warming rapidly. In some places, the higher temperatures could aid tree growth or cause forests to expand into zones previously occupied by grasslands or tundra, storing more carbon.

Forests are re-growing on abandoned agricultural land across vast reaches of Europe and Russia. China, trying to slow the advance of a desert, has planted many trees on nearly 40 million hectares — or , and those forests, too, are absorbing carbon. But, as a strategy for managing carbon pollution, these recovering forests have one big limitation: the planet simply does not have room for many more of them. “We’re basically running out of land,” Dr. Kurz said.

BEETLE INVASIONS

Stripping the bark of a tree with a hatchet, Diana L. Six, a University of Montana insect scientist, pointed out the telltale signs of infestation by pine beetles: channels drilled by the creatures as they chewed their way through the juicy part of the tree.

The tree was already dead. Its needles, which should have been deep green, displayed the sickly red that has become so commonplace in the mountainous Western United States. Because the beetles had cut off the tree’s nutrients, the chlorophyll that made the needles green was breaking down. Pine beetles are a natural part of the life cycle in Western forests, but this outbreak, fed by warming temperatures and under way for more than a decade in some areas, is by far the most extensive ever recorded. The species Dr. Six was pointing out, the mountain pine beetle, has pushed farther north into Canada than ever recorded. Fears are rising that they could spread across the continent.

Flying in a small plane over the

Montana wilderness, Dr. Running said beetles were not the only problem confronting the forests of the Western United States.

Warmer temperatures are causing mountain snowpack to melt earlier in most years, he said. That is causing more severe water deficits in the summer, just as the higher temperatures cause trees to need extra water. The whole landscape dries out, creating the conditions for intense fires and making the trees easy prey for beetles.

Because of the changing climate, experts say some areas in the southwestern United States, which are burning this year at record rates, may never return as forest. They are more likely to grow back as heat-tolerant grasslands or shrub lands, storing far less carbon than the forests they replace.

FOOTPRINTS AMONG THE TREES

Scientists are gradually coming to a sobering realization: There may be no such thing left on Earth as a natural forest.

However wild some of them may look,



A mountain pine beetle, tiny, but capable of inflicting grave damage to forests.

ONLINE: CHANGING FORESTS

lul An interactive graphic that shows the state of forests around the world. global.nytimes.com/science

experts say, forests from the deepest Amazon to the remotest reaches of Siberia are now responding to human influences, including the rising level of carbon dioxide in the air, increasing heat and changing rainfall patterns. That raises the issue of what people can do to protect forests.

Some steps have already been taken in recent years. But other ideas are essentially stymied for lack of money.

Widespread areas of pine forest in the Western United States are a prime example. Human mismanagement has allowed underbrush to grow so thick it creates a likelihood of severe fires, but little money is available to thin the forests.

On an even larger scale, experts cite a lack of money as endangering a program meant to slow or halt the elimination of tropical forests.

Destruction of such forests, usually to make way for agriculture, has been under way for decades, with Brazil and Indonesia being hotspots. Rich countries agreed in principle in recent years to pay poorer countries large amounts of money if they would protect their forests.

The wealthy countries have pledged nearly \$5 billion, enough to get the program started, but far more money was eventually supposed to become available. The idea was that the rich countries would create schemes to charge their companies for emissions of carbon dioxide, and some of this money would flow abroad for forest preservation.

Climate legislation stalled in the United States amid opposition from lawmakers worried about the economic effects, and some European countries have also balked at sending money abroad.

“Like any other scheme to improve the human condition,” said William Boyd, a University of Colorado law professor working to salvage the plan, “it’s quite precarious, because it is so grand in its ambitions.”

BRIEFLY United States



SAN FRANCISCO

Officials warn of penalties for hunger strike at prisons

Corrections officials in California said this week that they would discipline inmates who took part in a renewed hunger strike to protest conditions in the state’s highest-security prisons, where some prisoners have been held in virtual isolation for decades.

More than 4,200 inmates at eight prisons have been refusing state-issued meals since Monday, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

A memo was distributed to prisoners at the state’s 33 correctional institutions warning that if they took part in the hunger strike, they would be subject to disciplinary action. For example, those identified as leaders would also be removed from the general population.

WASHINGTON

Chaplains allowed to do same-sex rites The Pentagon announced on Friday that U.S. military chaplains would be allowed to perform same-sex unions, whether on or off a military installation. The ruling follows the Sept. 20 repeal of a law that had prohibited gays and lesbians from serving openly in the military. (AP)

Democrats see gains in greater diversity of formerly Republican states

OBAMA, FROM PAGE 1

tial campaigns of Al Gore in 2000 and John Kerry in 2004, “is that they have to deal with what I would call the Obama electorate. And the Obama electorate is not the electorate that we have seen in America since I started working on presidential campaigns in 1980.”

Even so, Mr. Devine and other Democrats do not expect an easy race.

“It’s not going to be a triumphal march to almost 54 percent of the vote and 365 electoral votes” like in 2008, he said. “It’s going to be a hard slog, like the ones we did in 2000 and 2004 and came up short. The only difference is, Obama has got places to go that we couldn’t go.”

For Republicans, the reality of those changing demographics tempers heightened hopes for beating Mr. Obama. Terry Nelson, a campaign adviser, said he was “pretty optimistic” for 2012, partly because Mr. Obama’s support among lower-income, less-educated white voters, never high, had dropped enough that Republicans saw good prospects for winning industrial-belt states like Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin.

“The country is changing,” Mr. Nelson acknowledged. “In every election cycle, every year, every day, this country becomes more ethnically diverse. And that has an impact on the kind of coalition that you need to put together to win. The truth is, Obama needs fewer white voters in 2012 than he did in 2008.”



President Barack Obama at a high school in Denver this week. His advisers say demographic factors in states like Colorado, Virginia and North Carolina favor Democrats.

Mr. Obama’s recent travel reflects his calculus. On Tuesday, he was in Colorado, at a high school in a heavily Hispanic Denver neighborhood, to promote his jobs plan.

This month he was in Ohio, but also in Virginia and North Carolina; he may return soon on a bus tour of neighboring states, aides say. Vice President Joseph R. Biden Jr. was in Virginia on Thursday.

Virginia, North Carolina and Color-

ado together have more than double the number of Ohio’s votes in the Electoral College — 37 versus 18. And Obama advisers say the same demographic factors at play in those states are also present in states Mr. Obama lost in 2008 — like Arizona (whose senior senator, Mr. McCain, was his rival) and Georgia.

Except for Indiana, a long shot, Obama advisers said the president would be favored or competitive everywhere he won before, including Ohio,

which has voted with the winner in every presidential election since 1964. But polls underscore how tough a task he will have with independents in the industrial belt, where income and education levels are below the national average, compared with those in states like Colorado and Virginia with higher-income, better-educated independents.

The latest nationwide New York Times/CBS News poll this month showed that 51 percent of independents with household incomes below \$50,000 disapproved of Mr. Obama’s performance, as did 57 percent of those with incomes of \$50,000 to \$100,000. But independents with household incomes above \$100,000 approved of his job performance by 50 percent to 43 percent.

In Colorado, the template for a repeat victory is last year’s campaign of Senator Michael Bennet. A Democratic novice, Mr. Bennet defeated a Tea Party Republican in a year when Republicans were triumphant nationwide. He built a coalition of Latino voters, Democrats like himself who are college-educated transplants to Colorado, and independents in Denver and Boulder.

“No candidate can win this state without winning independent voters,” said Mr. Bennet, who joined Mr. Obama on his Denver visit, along with Governor John W. Hickenlooper and Senator Mark Udall; all three will help Mr. Obama’s organization there in 2012.

With independents, Mr. Bennet said, “the question that resonated in 2010 was, Do you want somebody who will go

to Washington and try to work to solve problems, or do you want somebody who will simply be a partisan?”

They will seek a problem-solver again next year, he added, “and I think the president has a strong case to make.”

But appealing to independents will require some deft politics, since Mr. Obama’s recent switch to a more confrontational approach with congressional Republicans could cost independent support.

Virginia and North Carolina, with their respected universities, technology centers and diverse suburbs, are similar enough in their changing demographics that Mr. Devine suggested they could be viewed as a single state for purposes of presidential politics. Their combined 28 electoral votes are nearly equal to the 29 votes of Florida.

And like North Carolina and Florida, Virginia, long nicknamed the Old Dominion, was once firmly anchored in the conservative South but now is a microcosm of the larger forces reshaping key parts of the country.

“It’s the difference between the Old Dominion and the New Dominion,” said Mike Henry, the campaign manager for Tim Kaine, the former Virginia governor and former Democratic Party chairman who is running for the Senate.

Pointing to “an influx of Latinos, African-American families, Asians,” Mr. Henry said, “the demographic characteristics of the state are totally different than what they were 10 years ago.”