



Palin effect not 'long lasting'

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By: Andy Barr

According to an analysis of the 2008 women's vote released Tuesday, Alaska Gov. Sarah Palin's impact on the presidential campaign is "settling out" has not enabled John McCain to shrink the traditional gender gap favoring Democrats.

"The affect of Sarah Palin is not one that has been long lasting in terms of shifting the dynamics of the gender gap," said Susan J. Carroll, a political science professor at Rutgers University's Center for American Women and Politics, in a conference call for Women's Vote Watch.

Women's Vote Watch is a joint effort between CAWP and the Communications Consortium Media Center, a public interest group, which analyzes polling data related to the women's vote.

Shortly after John McCain's announcement that Palin would be his running mate, several polls a showed a strong swing of white women toward McCain. An ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted immediately after the Republican convention showed a 20-percent swing among white wom toward McCain. White women went from supporting Barack Obama 50-42 percent to supporting McCain 53-41 percent, a swing that helped McCain close a six percent gap in the poll in only a week.

But Obama has since regained his lead with white women in most polls.

And Obama now leads among all women voters "despite all the talk of disaffected Hillary Clinton voters and the fact that Sarah Palin might pull some women voters from the Republican ticket to the Democratic ticket," Carroll said.

The shift back toward Obama reflects that "the gender gap is not about the gender of the candidate, it's about the issues," said Debbie Walsh, CAWP's director.

Walsh pointed to the economy which for women, like all other demographic groups of late, is the top concern.

"We certainly have seen that the gaps have been widening during the economic issue," Walsh said, adding that "women are more economically vulnerable even in the best of times."

The reemergence of the traditional gender gap has boosted Obama's lead in many states crucial to both candidates.

Obama now holds a double-digit lead with women voters in Colorado, Florida and Nevada while maintaining a seven percentage point advantage wit women in Ohio and a nine point edge in Pennsylvania, according to the latest Quinnipiac University polls.

Obama has a 13 percent edge over McCain with women voters nationally according to the latest Gallup Daily tracking poll.