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## Eight reasons explain Obama's victory

In September, this column made a prediction about the upcoming presidential election: The winner would be the candidate who had his "finger on the spirit of the time, the zeitgeist, and then offers a vision in tune with it ... Understanding the zeitgeist is not just key; it is the key."

And so it seemed that the Republicans, with their early laser-beam focus on the feeble economy, had the upper hand in the election. But such concerns did not carry the day and the former senator from Illinois once again triumphed.

Why? Here are some thoughts:

1. **Zeitgeist:** While the spirit of the times centers on economic concerns, President Barack Obama's campaign was able to successfully supplant it with questions about Mitt Romney's character or issues (or more accurately nonissues) like a purported "war on women." Rather than interpret and react to the zeitgeist, the Democrats molded it — and did so successfully.

2. **The Veep:** Following the third debate, Romney missed an opportunity to keep economics in the mercurial national attention span by failing to take full advantage of his running mate, Paul Ryan.

Ryan should have been placed front and center in several Ross Perot-type, half-hour blocks of television time to allow him to make PowerPoint presentations to the country about the country's economics — Federal Finances 101. Not only would this have provided useful information to the electorate, but it would have added substance to the national dialogue and likely bolstered Romney.

3. It's tough to beat an incumbent. This is self-explanatory. Suffice it to say that in a crisis, the president has the advantage of being able to do

something and be "presidential." A challenger can at best, only try to look "presidential."

4. **Sandy.** Hurricane Sandy was the October surprise. Sandy churned over the Atlantic Ocean and headed towards the East Coast like a plodding Armageddon, a visit from the Gorgon Katrina's hideous sister. Her visit left New York and New Jersey disaster areas. Images of devastation trumped everything else in the public discourse.

Homes were destroyed; a roller coaster plunged into the sea; electric grids down; fear and hopelessness ubiquitous.

5. **Chris.** And there was New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie. In the hurricane's aftermath, he walked arm and arm with the president and readily accepted his succor.

Though I don't think it is fair to overstate Christie's impact here, it should not be understated either. The Republicans had been spending much time and money trying to convince voters that the president couldn't cut it when the chips were down. But Christie, seemingly emotionally overcome by the sheer scope of the disaster, was effusive over Obama's presence. And so Christie's message was clear: In a crisis, you can count on Obama.

In an election with more swings than a preschool play-

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### LAW & POLITICS



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ground, Christie gave the president a running underdog push. MSNBC's Chris Matthews understood Sandy's impact: "I'm so glad we had that storm last week ..." he was quoted as saying on election night. He later apologized.

6. **Ground game.** Several days before the election, my cousin, a prominent history professor at a university in Florida, offered a bet: A box of Godiva chocolates that Obama would take Florida. I had been watching the polling closely and it had consistently put Romney in a strong lead in that crucial state. So I took her on.

Well, Obama is in front in Florida even though the state hasn't officially been put in the Obama column. What did she see that I missed? I'll quote her: "Obama's ground game was pretty awesome here and ... all Romney had were TV ads. Plus, we had a popular Democratic senator up for re-election and our Tea Party governor is highly unpopular."

The chocolates are on their way.

7. **The new demographics.** For the technical analyst, there are some new voting realities out

there that favored the Democrats this election — Latino voters have increased from 8 to 10 percent of electorate; blacks from 11 to 13 percent; and voters under 30 from 17 to 19 percent. Women now comprise 53 percent of the electorate. It appears, as one analyst put it, that these numbers are the new normal.

8. **The candidate.** But in the end, it all boiled down to Romney. He should be commended for making it so close and for his performance during the debates, which on the whole, he won. But he was no perfect candidate and his many bruises from the primaries (some self-inflicted) had not completely healed by Election Day. These led many to consider him a flawed candidate, a Brahman flip-flopper. This was a stigma he never could really shake.

I am still wondering why Romney took a pass on hammering his opponent on Benghazi in the foreign policy debate. With the media giving Obama a pass on that fiasco, Romney should have known that if he didn't do it, no one would.

And so here we are. Obama will soon be sworn in for his second term. The question for our leader is where his focus will lie. As history shows us, second terms are tough (See Nixon, Reagan, Clinton and Bush II). As for me, I hope his attention is fixed upon the fundamental financial problems that our country faces. That would be a change and time well spent on something that will truly move us forward. As Greece demonstrates, national finances matter; they affect everyone and all aspects of society. But if this president does nothing more than get the books under control, he would certainly effectuate the type of change that everyone can believe in.