

Last primary states now seen as crucial

by UPI

RALEIGH, N.C. -- The May 6 North Carolina primary looms large for both U.S. senators trying to become the Democratic Party's nominee for president, a party analyst says. The state -- in which polls indicate Sen. Barack Obama, D-Ill., has a double-digit lead over Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y. -- "has the potential to be everything," strategist Joe Trippi told USA Today. Because the race is tight, states and territories at the end of the primary season -- Pennsylvania, Indiana, North Carolina, West Virginia, Kentucky, Oregon, Montana and South Dakota, plus Puerto Rico and Guam -- are in the spotlight. "Every day you see increased pressure on Hillary Clinton about why she's staying in, and if she could win in North Carolina it would shut down that kind of talk and open up the possibility she could get" the nomination, Trippi, a strategist for presidential bids of John Edwards this year and Howard Dean in 2004, told USA Today. If Obama wins in North Carolina, "I think you're going to see things close up very quickly. You'll see a lot of superdelegates line up behind him," he said. First among the last series of primaries, though, is the April 22 Pennsylvania election, which Clinton is favored to win, the newspaper said.

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