

COUNTDOWN 2008

Our Countdown 2008 column provides the latest data on youth participation in the 2008 Presidential Contests. Please visit www.civicyouth.org for most up-to-date figures on youth turnout in the 2008 primaries and caucuses.

OVER THREE MILLION YOUNG VOTERS PARTICIPATE IN SUPER TUESDAY PRIMARIES

More than 3 million eligible citizens under the age of 30 participated in the Super Tuesday contests, according to preliminary estimates by CIRCLE. Over 2 million young people participated in the Super Tuesday Democratic contests compared to roughly 900,000 in the Republican contests. Of the eight states that were also part of Super Tuesday in 2000, seven saw increases in youth turnout, and in some of these states, youth turnout tripled or quadrupled. In the Democratic contests, Obama won the largest share of the youth vote in ten Super Tuesday states. Clinton won the youth vote in three states (MA, CA, and AR). In the Republican contests, youth support varied by state. (See Table 2.)

"Young Americans have been turning out to vote at remarkable rates in these primaries. This reflects their deep concern about the critical issues at stake and the impact of this election on our country's future," said CIRCLE Director, Peter Levine. "Since 2000, young people have been volunteering at high rates and are becoming more interested in news and public affairs. Now they are

ready to consider voting as a way of addressing major problems. The Millennials are beginning to make their distinctive and lasting mark on American politics."

The results from the Super Tuesday contests punctuate the findings of national focus groups that CIRCLE conducted last fall. The research showed that college students are deeply concerned about issues, involved personally as volunteers, and ready to consider voting. But they want political leaders to be positive, to address real problems, and to call on all Americans to be constructively involved.

Comparisons to previous caucuses and primaries must be made with caution, because turnout is affected by the date of the primaries and by the nature of the Democratic and Republican presidential campaigns, which are different in every state. "Closed" primaries and caucuses tend to depress turnout since Independents cannot participate. Because there is no actual count of the number of votes cast by young people in the primaries,



TABLE 1- SUPER TUESDAY PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY PARTICIPATION, 18-TO 29-YEAR-OLD CITIZENS

| Super Tuesday Primary | YOUTH TURNOUT RATE | YOUTH TURNOUT RATE IN 2000 | NUMBER OF YOUTH WHO VOTED | YOUTH AS A SHARE OF ALL VOTERS |
|-----------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------------|
| AL | 19% | N/A | 135,597 | 13% |
| AK | 11% | N/A | 48,112 | 9% |
| AZ (17-29) | 7% | N/A | 59,267 | 7% |
| CA | 17% | 13% | 873,508 | 14% |
| CT | 12% | 7% | 51,436 | 10% |
| GA | 21% | 7% | 281,724 | 14% |
| IL | 18% | N/A | 377,996 | 13% |
| MA | 25% | 11% | 231,022 | 14% |
| MO | 21% | 7% | 190,863 | 14% |
| NJ | 18% | N/A | 187,889 | 11% |
| NY | 12% | 12% | 311,833 | 13% |
| OK | 14% | 4% | 82,609 | 13% |
| TN | 15% | 3% | 139,831 | 12% |
| UT | 15% | N/A | 66,248 | 16% |
| TOTAL | | | 3,037,935 | |

Source: The share of primary voters is obtained from the states respective Republican and Democratic National Election Pool exit polls conducted by Edison/Mitofsky. The numbers of votes cast are obtained from the CNN.com (2/ 6 /2008; vote counts represent at least 95% of precincts reporting.) Estimated voter turnout is obtained by taking the estimated number of votes cast and dividing it by the estimated population of 18-to 29-year-old citizens from the Current Population Survey (2007). ID, KS, MT, WV and NM are not included in Table 1 because they only held a Democratic or a Republican contest. AK, CO, ND, and DE are not included because they did not have exit polls for both races. MN was not included because no vote tally was available.

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TABLE 2- SUPER TUESDAY YOUTH VOTE CHOICE, BY PARTY

| STATE | CLINTON | OBAMA | HUCKABEE | MCCAIN | PAUL | ROMNEY |
|------------|---------|-------|----------|--------|------|--------|
| AL | 32% | 64% | 51% | 22% | 4% | 24% |
| AK | 56% | 43% | 68% | 16% | 6% | 7% |
| AZ (17-29) | 37% | 59% | 15% | 32% | 9% | 43% |
| CA | 51% | 47% | 22% | 34% | 8% | 31% |
| CT | 39% | 58% | 11% | 51% | 18% | 9% |
| GA | 23% | 75% | 43% | 23% | 8% | 24% |
| IL | 29% | 69% | 28% | 30% | 13% | 22% |
| MA | 49% | 48% | 4% | 36% | 7% | 52% |
| MO | 30% | 65% | 43% | 27% | 9% | 18% |
| NJ | 39% | 59% | 8% | 46% | 17% | 19% |
| NY | 43% | 56% | 15% | 43% | 11% | 21% |
| OK | N/A | N/A | 38% | 26% | 3% | 28% |
| TN | 44% | 53% | 38% | 25% | 14% | 15% |
| UT | 25% | 70% | 2% | 6% | 4% | 88% |

Source: CNN.COM

we can only estimate their level of participation. Our turnout estimates are based on early vote tallies reported by the media, the share of voters who are young calculated by the National Election Pool exit/entrance polls, and an estimate of the eligible voting population obtained from the Census Current Population Survey (CPS). The 2008 voter turnout rate may rise as more votes are tallied. (The early vote tally does not include such votes as absentee ballots and provisional ballots.) As a result, our 2008 turnout rates likely underestimate the level of participation in the 2008 Super Tuesday primaries. Table 2 provides estimates of youth participation in the each primary by party.

This increase in youth turnout in the early primary season continues a trend observed in other elections since 2000. In the 2006 congressional elections, the voter turnout rate among 18- to 29-year-olds increased by three percentage points compared to the previous congressional election of 2002. And in the 2004 presidential election, the national youth voter turnout rate rose 9 percentage points compared to 2000, reaching 49 percent. In 2004, under-30-year-olds were registered to vote at the highest rate in 30 years. ■