

Election FOCUS 2004

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FAST FACTS:

- ✓ **Democratic presidential candidates spent more than \$100 per caucus voter on television ads aimed at Iowa residents.**

— (Wisconsin Advertising Project Study, 2004)

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Kerry Wins Iowa Democratic Caucuses; New Hampshire Primary Next



Democratic presidential hopeful Senator John Kerry acknowledges his supporters at a victory party Monday, January 19, 2004 in Des Moines. Kerry was declared the winner of the Iowa Caucus. © AP/WWP

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry captured the first stage in the long race to determine the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee January 19 by winning 38 percent of the votes cast in the Iowa precinct caucuses.

With this “Iowa bounce,” Kerry has momentum going into the nation’s first primary election, January 27 in New Hampshire.

Most political observers also note that North Carolina Senator John Edwards gained politically with his strong 32 percent of the vote in second place, and former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, the third-place finisher with 18 percent, lost momentum.

Just hours before the caucuses, pollsters said the race was too close to call among those three and Missouri Congressman Dick Gephardt. A disappointed

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A Look Ahead: The New Hampshire Primary

Since 1920, the New Hampshire primary election has occupied a unique place in the presidential campaign as the first official primary in the country. Those candidates who do well in New Hampshire gain substantial momentum for their campaigns that helps them in later primaries and may carry them to eventual success in securing their party’s nomination at the national convention. This year, the primary will be held on January 27.

According to Charles Cook, editor and publisher of the Cook Report, a respected political newsletter, “If you look at the last seven presidential elections,” he says, “[of] the last 14 Democratic and Republican nominations, 13 out of 14 have gone to a candidate who won either the Iowa caucuses or the New Hampshire primary or both.”

Presidential candidates understand

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Gephardt, who came in fourth with just 11 percent of the vote, is ending his presidential aspiration and dropping out of the race. He has stated that he would support the eventual Democratic nominee.

Another Democrat on the ballot who was not a factor with just one percent of the vote was Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich.

State officials said turnout for the caucuses exceeded 100,000, which was high but not the record. In 1988, there were 126,000 attendees.

Entrance polls taken by news organizations indicated that 40 percent of voters waited until the last week to make up their minds on who to support.

According to veteran political observer Morton Kondracke, the Iowa voting was "strategic," as citizens supported candidates they believed could beat President George W. Bush, the expected Republican nominee. Republican National Committee chairman Ed Gillespie said that while whomever the Democrats nominate will be a strong challenger, it won't matter who that will be and the president is prepared to run on his record.

Earlier in the year, Kerry was considered the Democratic favorite to challenge Bush's reelection bid. Kerry then faded in public opinion polls as Dean moved up to the front-runner position, but the Massachusetts senator started to climb again in Iowa as the battle between Dean and Gephardt

turned negative with personal attacks in television ads and on the campaign trail, and citizens were turned off.

As he campaigned furiously throughout Iowa, Kerry had the support of his Massachusetts colleague, Senator Ted Kennedy, a popular figure among Democratic voters. The bounce enabled the self-proclaimed "Comeback Kerry" to tell his cheering supporters he intends to "give America back its soul."

Dean, who also campaigned intensively in the state, brought in several thousand activist volunteers in his unsuccessful effort. The former Vermont governor stressed an anti-Iraq war theme in his speeches and that resonated well in the early days. But as political observer Michael Barone pointed out, the recent capture of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein undermined Dean's message.

Still, Dean pledged to continue his challenge and tried to put a positive spin on his third-place finish. In 1988, Republican George H.W. Bush and Democrat Michael Dukakis each finished third in their respective Iowa caucuses and both went on to win their parties' presidential nominations.

While most states hold primary elections to choose their convention delegates and determine candidates' popularity, Iowa is one of a few that uses the caucus system. It is part of the fabric of Iowa politics, dating back to 1846, when Iowa gained statehood. Iowa will send 56 delegates to the Democratic National Convention.

At each of the 1,993 precincts in the state, on the Democratic side a candidate needed to win the support of at least 15 percent of those in attendance in order to be viable. On the Republican side, where the Democrats' 15-percent rule does not apply, things were much more quiet as Bush did not have any primary opposition.

On January 13, Washington, D.C. held a non-binding Democrat primary which city leaders organized to be first in the nation. Most of the presidential candidates opted out of the popularity race however, in deference to the traditional roles played by Iowa and New Hampshire in the process. The District's 39 national convention delegates will be apportioned later in the year at a caucus.

Dean had a symbolic victory in Washington, gaining 43 percent of the vote, but only eight percent of registered voters showed up at the polls. The Reverend Al Sharpton came in second with 34 percent and former Illinois Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun was a distant third. Shortly before the Iowa caucuses, Moseley Braun, whose campaign never got off the ground due to debt and organizational difficulties, dropped out of the race, throwing her support to Dean.

The January 27 New Hampshire primary will be the next stop on the campaign trail. Joining the other Democratic hopefuls for the state's 27 convention delegates will be former Army General Wesley Clark, Connecticut Senator Joseph Lieberman and Sharpton, all of whom elected not to compete in Iowa. ■



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The U.S. Department of State is pleased to present its election coverage newsletter, **Election Focus 2004**. The newsletter will provide non-partisan coverage of the U.S. election process, featuring articles, interviews, public opinion polls, and other information on the presidential primaries, debates, conventions and campaign activities of the major presidential candidates.

Election Focus 2004 is produced by the Democracy and Human Rights team in the Bureau of International Information Programs.

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A Look Ahead: The New Hampshire Primary

the importance of the New Hampshire primary and direct their efforts there months before the election takes place. Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean, Senator Joseph Lieberman (Connecticut) and Senator John Kerry (Massachusetts) all attended Independence Day parades in New Hampshire towns on July 4, 2003. Dean ran his first television campaign ad there in August.

Despite New Hampshire's small number of Electoral College votes—the state has only four votes compared to 34 for Texas (270 are needed to win the general election in November)—presidential candidates are aware that doing well in the New Hampshire primary can turn any candidate, even a lesser-known candidate, into a front runner. Former President Clinton, for instance, revived his viability for the nomination only after his strong second place finish in 1992. Clinton was the only candidate in the last seven presidential elections to lose both the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary and still go on to win his party's nomination.

New Hampshire is a geographically small state with a population of about 1.2 million, so candidates are able to meet directly with much of the electorate in local settings such as churches and schools. Such grassroots campaigning is not feasible in large states such as California and New York, where, in order for the candidates to reach large numbers of voters, they need to invest in expensive mass media techniques such as television ads. "If the first primaries were in California and New York, the person with the most money

would win, period," an elected New Hampshire official recently said.

A prime destination for candidates is Dixville Notch, a tiny village in the most northern part of the state. The 23 voters there historically are the first to cast their ballot in the New Hampshire primaries, just after midnight. As such, Dixville Notch's voters pride themselves on having correctly chosen the eventual Republican nominee every year since 1968.

The latest polling results from the American Research Group show former Vermont Governor Howard Dean in the lead with 28 percent support in New Hampshire, Senator John Kerry (Massachusetts) with 20 percent and former General Wesley Clark with 19 percent. However, Kerry's first place finish in Iowa and North Carolina Senator John Edwards' second place finish are expected to give both candidates a boost in the New Hampshire polls.

Other candidates, such as Congressman Dennis Kucinich, and the Reverend Al Sharpton have made a few campaign visits to New Hampshire, but polls indicate that support for these candidates is very low among New Hampshire voters, ranging from zero to two percent.

A strong finish in New Hampshire for any of the leading Democratic candidates will put him in a strong position before the important South Carolina primary on February 3, which is the first primary in a Southern state. The results there may be an indicator of how other southern states with large African American populations will vote in their primary elections. Also Democratic primaries will take place in six other states around the country, including Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, New Mexico, North Dakota, and Oklahoma. Candidates who did not do well in the New Hampshire primary

"Granite Staters [New Hampshire residents] are tough but fair with those who would be President. Toward the end of the race, when the temperature gets colder and the campaigning gets hotter, it takes dedication to survive. Here is democracy at its best, for it takes more than a big bankroll or name recognition to impress us."

--Nackey Loeb, former publisher of Manchester, N.H. Union Leader Newspaper.

will be under some pressure to make a good showing in some of those races.

President Bush will almost surely win the New Hampshire Republican primary, although the Bush-Cheney campaign does not currently have a campaign headquarters there, and the president has not actively campaigned in the state. Other Republicans such as Senator John McCain (Arizona), however, are scheduled to campaign over the next few weeks on Bush's behalf. There are 13 Republican challengers to Bush on the New Hampshire ballot, all

virtually unknown. Many of these Republican challengers are single-issue candidates and are campaigning about trade and tax issues, to name a few.

As the primary draws near, Democratic primary candidates are advocating their positions on important issues in an attempt to distinguish themselves from the Bush administration, as well as their fellow Democratic candidates. The economy will be the most important issue for New Hampshire voters. Nearly all of the Democratic candidates support some

form of tax relief for middle-class Americans, arguing that the Bush administration's tax policies disadvantage that group. On this issue, the administration argues that their tax cuts have benefited the middle class and all Americans by increasing income.

New Hampshire shares an international border with Canada and relies heavily on export and high-tech industries, so trade policy and unemployment will also be significant election issues. ■

Campaign★Highlight

The Role of Foreign Policy in the 2004 Election

A Council on Foreign Relations panel discussion

Washington—"Terrorism is the prism through which the public sees George Bush," said Andrew Kohut, director of the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press on January 14 at a meeting at the Council on Foreign Relations.

Kohut joined Edward Rollins, chairman of the Rollins Strategy Group and campaign advisor to former President Ronald Reagan, and Douglas E. Schoen, a Democratic pollster and campaign advisor to former President Bill Clinton, in discussing the role of foreign policy in the 2004 presidential election.

Despite the various political opinions expressed by the panelists, all agreed that foreign policy, specifically

the war on terrorism, will undoubtedly play a crucial role in the 2004 elections. Drawing on a recent Pew poll, Kohut noted that the war on terror is as high a priority to the American people as the economy this election year. This is a significant finding, according to Kohut, who said that in the 2000 election, foreign affairs had little, if any, importance to the average American voter.

But the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on September 11, 2001, and President Bush's response to those attacks made foreign policy an important issue to the public, the panelists said. "People can't underestimate Bush again," Rollins added. "They see him as a leader."

Foreign affairs will also play a crucial role in the Democratic primaries. According to Rollins, former

Vermont Governor Howard Dean has had the ability as a front runner to shift the Democrats' conversation from what he calls the "bread and butter" issues such as the environment and the deficit, to foreign policy issues such as the war in Iraq.

Following are selected questions asked to the panel of experts by moderator James Lindsay, vice president of the Council on Foreign Relations, about the role of foreign policy in the 2004 election.

Lindsay: How much more prominent are foreign policy issues this election year?

Kohut: The most important thing to recognize is that while people's concerns about terrorism are not as pressing as they were a year ago or two years ago right after the [9-11] attacks, they are still there, and the war on terrorism and protecting the country against terrorism is as high as any national priority. In fact, we are

going to release a poll tomorrow where we ask people to rate 21 priorities. Number one is fixing the economy. Number two is protecting the country against terrorism. And they are actually tied. The president's approval ratings on terrorism have anchored his overall approval ratings, particularly when times have gotten tough for him, when he sunk to 50 percent in the fall of 2003. He was always at 65 and 60 percent on terrorism, and that's good for him at this point.

In fact, if you look at the polls, and if you look at history, foreign policy is an advantage to the Bush side in two very significant ways. One, an incumbent president always has an advantage because of the stature gap, and whoever the Democrat is, he or she is going to have to measure up, and that's a challenge. Secondly, Republicans do better typically—unless things are going very badly—on foreign policy—than Democrats. And so that's two points for Bush.

The other issue, however, that may affect the administration to a certain extent is the way things are going in Iraq. Nonetheless, people have stuck with the idea that this was the right thing to do, even though they have many doubts about the way it was done and the timing of it. The Democrats' opportunity is to exploit those doubts if that situation continues to get worse.

Lindsay: Is Bush vulnerable on foreign policy? If he does have vulnerability, is it simply Iraq, or could it tie into bigger issues?

Rollins: Free elections are always about the incumbent president, and obviously when the country is looking for an alternative, as they were with President Jimmy Carter in '80 and they were with President George H.W.

Bush in '92, someone can rise out of the pack and become a very significant alternative.

I think President Bush today has the most important presidential quality you can have. People can't underestimate him again. They see him as a leader. They see him certainly as someone who has led us into a war. He holds the respect of the military. Obviously he led his party into a midterm election in which they picked up seats, which was unprecedented.

Bush clearly has his own political base that is very solid. There are no Republican defectors. There's no challenge. And I think that's a very, very good place to be.

Kohut: The odds favor Bush. There's no question about it. But there are always wild cards. Another attack is a wild card. A change of mind on the part of the American public about how much of a terrorist threat we really face, in an environment where jobs don't surface, and the domestic agenda takes supremacy, I would really argue against. I think that on balance you are probably right, but you can't rule it out.

Lindsay: The question then becomes for a Democratic candidate: What is your goal on foreign affairs? Are you trying to neutralize the president's advantage there? Are you trying to redefine it? Are you trying to recast the elections?

Schoen: I think there are probably three things the Democrats should try to do. The first thing you try to do is neutralize the nation. I think you want to do that in a couple of ways. First, you want to increasingly raise doubts about the success of the enterprise. And I think the polling that we've seen

suggests that there's real doubt about the way Bush has conducted himself in the international context—the failure to have a multilateral dimension, consult the U.N.—has again raised real doubts. So I think you can begin to undermine the president on that level, and also suggest that the venture in Iraq, however good an idea it might have been, has not been prosecuted successfully—or as successfully as it might have been.

I'm not sure you are going to succeed in winning the issue, but if you neutralize it, you're way ahead of the game.

Lindsay: Does foreign policy as an issue particularly resonate one way or the other with different groups on gender basis or income basis or regional basis?

Kohut: I was just looking at our survey that we're going to release tomorrow, and it has an extraordinary thing in it for Bush and the Republicans. And the fact of the matter is that two very important groups who have been on the Democratic side in most national elections are now giving higher priority than their corresponding demographic groups to strengthening the U.S. military.

Women are now giving strengthening the military a higher rating than men. Older voters are giving strengthening the military a higher rating than younger people. And those have been two core Democratic constituencies. And that's a very, very big problem for the Democrats.

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