

Election FOCUS 2004

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FAST FACTS:

✓ In 2002 a national survey by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies asked black respondents to identify themselves as Democrats, independents or Republicans. Although 63 percent claimed to be Democrats, the number was down from 74 percent in 2000. A slight increase from 24 to 29 percent resulted in independents, especially between the ages of 26 and 35. In that 26 to 35 age group there was a 20 percent increase in Republicans from 5 to 15 percent in 2002.

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Kerry Wins, Edwards A Strong Second in Wisconsin



U.S. Sen. John Edwards smiles as he greets supporters at the American Serb Hall in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on Tuesday, Feb. 17, 2004. (AP Photo/Charlie Riedel)

Massachusetts Senator John Kerry added to his string of victories by capturing 40 percent of the vote in the Wisconsin Democratic primary on February 17. Kerry has won 15 of 17 primaries and caucuses, making him the clear front runner for the Democratic presidential nomination.

A strong second-place showing by North Carolina Senator John Edwards with 34 percent of the vote gave his campaign renewed momentum. "I am surprised by the strength of the surge. I'm not surprised by the surge," Edwards said. "We've surged in a lot of states at the end when people got a close look at me and my campaign."

Former Vermont Governor Howard Dean finished a disappointing third with 18 percent of the votes. Media reports say

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Minorities and the 2004 Election: An Interview with Phil Tajitsu Nash

Minorities will play a big part in the 2004 elections, especially in key states such as California, Florida, New Mexico and Arizona. In a recent interview, Washington File staff writer Darlisa Crawford spoke with Phil Tajitsu Nash, who is a frequent political commentator, author of *Winning Campaigns Online* and CEO of CampaignAdvantage.com.

Q: Are minority groups having an important impact on the Democratic primary and caucus races?

Nash: Until now, many of the states that have had primaries and caucuses have not been those with large urban populations and percentages of minorities. New

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Dean will suspend his presidential campaign on February 18 but leave his name on the ballot. Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich trailed with 3 percent of the vote and the Reverend Al Sharpton had 1 percent of the vote.

Since Wisconsin's Democratic primary was "open," independents and Republicans were allowed to cast ballots in the primary. According to a CNN exit poll, Edwards fared better than Kerry among independent voters by nearly a 15-point margin, but Kerry fared better among Democrats. Edwards said, "If we're going to win the general election we're going to have to get independents, and this is another in a long series of examples of me being much more attractive to independent voters."

According to CNN senior political analyst Bill Schneider, Edwards' emphasis on job creation and his criticism of NAFTA — a free trade agreement among Canada, the United States and Mexico—had considerable appeal in Wisconsin, where an estimated 80,000 manufacturing jobs have been lost since 2000.

"He's challenging Howard Dean and John Kerry for supporting

NAFTA, the trade agreement that Wisconsin voters overwhelmingly believe is causing a loss of American jobs," Schneider said. "And that populist economic message is bringing a surge of support for Edwards from voters who want to send a message."

On February 14 voters participated in caucuses in Nevada and the District of Columbia. Armed with the endorsement of retired General Wesley Clark, who dropped out of the race on February 11, Kerry secured 47 percent of the 9,126 ballots cast in the District of Columbia. Sharpton won 20 percent and Dean, the previous winner of the nonbinding District of Columbia election got 18 percent. Edwards placed fourth with 10 percent and Kucinich got 3 percent. Maintaining his lead, Kerry won 63 percent in Nevada's caucuses while Dean finished second with 17 percent and Edwards placed third with 10 percent.

Although neither has won a primary caucus, Sharpton and Kucinich have vowed to remain in the race through the Democratic National Convention in late July. Sharpton, who advocates that the Democratic Party platform reflect minority issues, claims his second place victory in the District of Columbia demonstrates that "urban black voters...want to see us

having delegates at the convention and representation of their concerns. The party cannot be victorious in November if they ignore that message."

Kucinich, who opposes the Iraq war and advocates the return of U.S. troops to American soil, said, "It is at the convention where I will win the nomination, based on the emergence of Iraq as the defining issue."

Although the next contests on February 24 are caucuses in Hawaii and Idaho and a primary in Utah, it is "Super Tuesday" on March 2, the largest single collection of primaries and caucuses on the Democratic calendar that will be most influential in the selection of a Democratic presidential nominee. ■



THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE
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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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Minorities and the 2004 Election: An Interview with Phil Tajitsu Nash

Hampshire and Iowa, for example, have some of the smallest percentages of minorities of any states in the country. This is why a lot of people think that the right to be the first states to cast votes in the presidential election cycle should be rotated every four years. The District of Columbia, which has a very large percentage of minorities, tried to become the first balloting place this year, but was rebuffed by most of the candidates and by the Democratic National Committee. It nevertheless held a non-binding primary in January before the Iowa caucuses.

Since then, other states with more minorities have held primaries and caucuses, including, South Carolina, which has about 50 percent African American voters. Missouri has about 15 percent African American voters, and Delaware also has about 15 percent African American voters. Then, as the primaries in California and other large states approach in early March, we should see more and more minority participation.

February 3rd was called “Hispanic Tuesday” by some Democratic activists to highlight the importance of Hispanic voters in Arizona (25 percent Hispanic) and New Mexico (42 percent Hispanic, with a governor, Bill Richardson, who is Hispanic). President Bush also has traveled to these states recently to tout his job-creation and immigration policies, so you know that the Hispanic community is making its voice heard. A coalition of Asian Pacific

Americans recently released a detailed political agenda to remind Republican and Democratic politicians that Asian Pacific Americans are an important source of votes in 15 of the 50 states. Nine and one-half percent of the eligible voting population in California is Asian Pacific American, for example, and California has the most electoral votes of any state in the United States.

Q: Does geography sway the party affiliation of minority voting blocs?

Nash: It’s more than simple geography. You really have to know the history of the specific communities. For example, the Miami area has a lot of Hispanics but they tend to be from Cuba, and they came when they left the island when Fidel Castro took over back in 1959. They tend to be more middle and upper class, and they tend to gravitate more toward the Republican Party. Now, they have become a very significant Republican voting bloc, sending people to Congress and electing local officials.

In the geographical areas near Mexico, there are more Mexican Americans, who tend to gravitate toward the Democratic Party. So within a single minority there can be differences in terms of which national group they came from and the time period they came to the U.S..

Q: How important will the “swing voters” be in this election? And are there many swing voters among minorities?

Nash: I would say the Asian Pacific American community is a wild card in this election. There are quite a number

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— Phil Tajitsu Nash,
political commentator and CEO of
CampaignAdvantage.com

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of Asian Pacific Americans who are still trying to develop more political clout within both major parties. They are already a force in California, where we see a large number of Asian Pacific American state representatives, and in Hawaii, where Asian Pacific Americans are the majority in both houses of the state legislature.

African Americans have been a very strong Democratic constituency and have successfully elected officials in places such as Atlanta and in other cities in the South, and in the Midwest. There are a number of African American mayors and members of Congress and statewide leaders in quite a few states.

However, I don't see anything changing this year with the African American community. I think, if anything, they're probably going to get more Democratic than they were in the past, because a lot of African Americans are not very happy at the economic situation they've seen in the last three years.

Q: Is the Democratic Party or the Republican Party benefiting from the nation's growing racial diversity?

Nash: Both major parties, as well as the Green Party and Libertarian Party, and other parties, are trying to reach out to members of these minority communities, and in fact you are seeing more and more minority candidates. Latinos, African Americans, Asian Americans and Native Americans are rising up in the ranks in their respective party organizations all around the country.

Q: According to a recent poll, 54 percent of Hispanic voters, a traditionally Democratic constituency, believe that President Bush is doing a good job. Are there more Hispanic Republicans voting in this election?

Nash: Election polls in 10 states with high concentrations of Hispanics in 2002 found that only one-third of Hispanics voted Republican in most races, but up to one-half did in certain gubernatorial races. Pollsters also found, however, that those Hispanics who voted had higher levels of education and income than the community as a whole. Lower income Hispanics and those who identify themselves as "independents" (which usually means "Democrat" for Hispanics) tended to stay home for various reasons, including dislike of dirty campaigns.

President Bush is trying to attract Hispanics this election cycle with a plan to allow some previously undocumented Hispanics to work here legally for three years.

Q: Will the women's vote be a deciding factor in this election?

Nash: The women's vote is important in every election. It's hard to say whether it will be more decisive than it's been in the past, but there are at this time, a number of women governors, lieutenant governors and attorneys general. We're starting to see more and more female statewide officers who rise to national office. We're seeing women in the highest ranks in the parties, for example, the chair of the Iowa Democratic Party. We're

seeing a lot of strength among women candidates and also women campaign officials. I think that's going to translate into more women voters and more women candidates in this election in November.

Q: More young voters are expected to participate in the 2004 election. For example, voters under age 25 will make up seven or eight percent of the voting population. What are some of the issues that will appeal to younger voters and how are the Democratic candidates campaigning for this generation?

Nash: Over the past few elections there has been a lot more focus on senior citizens, on health care issues and other things that impact an older population. But key issues in 2004, such as jobs, education and the war in Iraq will have some resonance for younger voters. I think that these younger voters are being energized by political campaigning on the Internet, and I expect more of them will get involved with one party or the other as a result. ■

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Will Youth Rock The Vote This Year?
http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/04_07/b3870107.htm

Wooing Hispanics
http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/politics/july-dec03/hispanics_09-04.html

"Electability" is the Primary Issue for Black Voters
<http://www.jointcenter.org/what-snew/020504-story.htm>

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Campaign★Highlight

U.S. Latino Vote Viewed as Crucial in 2004 Presidential Race

Latino voters in the United States will play a key role, and could be the decisive factor, in determining who wins the 2004 U.S. presidential race, say representatives from the two major American political parties and experts who chart the Latino vote.

Latinos are now the largest minority group in the United States. The latest U.S. Census Bureau figures show 38.8 million Latinos in the country, and their influence is especially felt in states with large Latino populations, such as Florida, New York, Illinois, Texas, California and New Jersey, as they hold 181 of the 270 electoral votes needed to take the presidency. An estimated six million Latinos participated in the 2000 presidential election, and that number is expected to increase in 2004.

The Democratic and Republican political parties both are heavily engaged in outreach efforts to woo Latinos to their side. The Republicans, for instance, have posted on their Spanish-language website an initiative called "Abriendo Caminos" (Forging New Paths), which serves as that party's gateway to extolling what it says are President Bush's efforts to aid Latinos.

As in 2000, the Republicans are also employing what they call the "Team Leader Project," in which speakers from the Bush administration inform local communities about Republican legislative proposals to assist Latinos.

Nicole Guillemard, director of outreach at the Republican National

Committee in Washington, said Bush won about 35 percent of the Latino vote in the 2000 presidential election and her party hopes to significantly improve on that mark this year. That turnout for Bush was a decided improvement over the 21 percent won by the 1996 Republican candidate, former Senator Bob Dole. The Republicans also take heart in the fact that some polls show that Latinos, traditionally a Democratic constituency, are now less likely to automatically identify themselves as Democrats.

The Republicans view the Latino vote as "very crucial" in the presidential election, emphasized Guillemard.

Meanwhile, Nelson Reyneri, director of Hispanic Outreach for the Democratic National Committee, said his party has a five-part outreach strategy for capturing Latinos, built around the theme of "Juntos Podemos" (Together We Can).

Under that strategy, the Democrats hope to expand their traditional support from Latinos, recognizing that the party cannot "rest on its laurels" to appeal to that large voting bloc, said Reyneri. The strategy includes holding Hispanic Leadership Summits to reach out to Latino leaders. The party plans such a summit May 14-16 in Orlando, Florida, attended by some 200 Democratic Hispanic elected and appointed officials, party activists and the eventual Democratic presidential nominee.

The Democrats seek to expand on the 62 percent of the Latino vote won by former Vice President Al Gore in the 2000 match-up against Bush. The Latino vote will be a "critical factor" on who wins the White House, said Reyneri.

A leading pollster of Latino voting trends, Sergio Bendixen, found that as of early February, Bush would receive 34 percent Latino support against an unnamed Democratic opponent — about the same percentage as in 2000. However, that does not necessarily rebound in the Democrats' favor, Bendixen said. His polling showed an unnamed Democratic opponent receiving 48 percent of the vote — far below the mid-60s level Democrats believe they need among Latinos to win the White House.

Bendixen said the biggest issues for U.S. Latinos are education, jobs, health care, the war in Iraq and immigration. On that latter issue, Bendixen said Latinos are split about 42 percent in favor, 20 percent against regarding Bush's new proposal to issue temporary work permits to temporary workers in the United States, the large majority of them from Mexico. However, opposition to the plan more than doubled when respondents were told most temporary workers would have to return to their home countries at the end of three or six years.

A poll released January 8 by the Washington-based Pew Hispanic Center found that Latinos were less supportive of the war in Iraq and of Bush as a re-election candidate than the U.S. general population as a whole. The poll found that about 36 percent of Latinos support Bush's re-election.

Lisa Garcia Bedolla, assistant professor of Chicano/Latino Studies at the Irvine campus of the University of California, said the Latino vote will not be as important in California and New York.

Where the Latino influence will count most, she said, is in such “battle-ground states” as New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, Florida and Illinois where the Latino population has dramatically increased in just a few

years and the state vote could swing either Democratic or Republican. ■

Arab Americans and the 2004 Election: An Interview with Jean AbiNader

Arab Americans, especially since 9/11, have become increasingly involved in state and local politics both as voters and political candidates. Jean AbiNader, managing director of the Arab American Institute, businessman and adjunct professor at Georgetown University, spoke with Washington File staff writer Alexandra Abboud about Arab Americans and the 2004 election.

Q. What are the important issues that Arab American voters would like to see addressed in the 2004 election?

I think it’s important to note that this year there is much deviation from previous voter patterns. In the 2000 elections, for example, domestic issues were as high as any foreign policy issue in the Arab American community. Arab Americans share a broad range of domestic concerns with other Americans such as employment, taxation, education, health care, Social Security, Medicare and school vouchers.

Since 9/11, however, the most important domestic issues have been civil liberties, protecting the rights of

Arab American citizens, immigrant rights and protections in areas such as visa policies and programs.

I think the chief foreign policy issues that are of concern in the Arab American Community are the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, what many believe to be the lack of a comprehensive international strategy for the reconstruction of Iraq and disrespect toward Islam and Muslim peoples in general.

Q. Many Arab Americans live in important election battleground states like Michigan, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Florida. Are we seeing an effort by the Democratic and Republican parties to reach out to these voters?

A: The fact that seven out of the nine Democratic candidates directly addressed the Arab American National Leadership conference in Dearborn, Michigan in October 2003, and that the Republicans sent Marc Racicot, the chair of the Bush-Cheney 2004 campaign to the conference, demonstrates their recognition not only that Arab Americans are registered voters

in large numbers, but that they do vote, particularly at a time like this where there are so many visible issues that are motivating the community. So there is definitely an effort being made, particularly in these critical states, to reach out to Arab American voters.

Q. Typically, what are the political leanings of Arab Americans?

A: It pretty much reflects the national trend — about 45 percent Republican, 43 percent Democrat. The rest are independents who don’t declare a party preference.

Arab Americans break down pretty much just like other Americans do. As a result of issues such as Palestine, the war in Iraq and civil liberties, it appears that Arab Americans are moving more toward the Democratic Party or making the Republican Party answer very tough questions about what the United States is going to do to improve the policies in those areas.

Because the Arab American community is largely professionals, educated and small business owners, there’s a very strong tendency toward being more conservative as both Democrats and Republicans. But in general, how people vote in each election very much depends on the issues that are raised and the quality of the candidates.

Since 9/11, for example, there has been a dramatic shift in the approval ratings of the president, and a December 2003 poll and a January 2004 poll, show that Arab American support for the president has dropped from 45 percent to less than 20 percent.

Q. Are we seeing an increase in Arab American participation in politics both in terms of voting and in running for political office?

A: I think there is greater participation across the board. For example, at almost all the major mosques and Arab Community Centers, there are voter registration drives on a regular basis.

There is a heightened awareness among Arab Americans that they can't avoid the political process if they want to defend their rights — that they have to be part of the process.

When Arab Americans first came here, the first immigrants — like most immigrants — were interested and concerned about economic issues such as finding a job, raising their families and providing education for their kids. So public service was not high on their agenda.

But after one or two generations, you start to have people look around and say, "Listen, if we're going to really participate in this society, public service is something we have to look to." And so we have great role models. We have, for example, West Virginia Congressman Nick Rahall, former governor John Sununu, former U.S. Office of Management and Budget Director Mitch Daniels, the late Najeeb Halaby, former chairman of Pan American World Airways and the father of Jordan's Queen Noor, and former Maine Senator George Mitchell. There are both Democrats and Republican roll models for Arab Americans in terms of public service.

Also, we are seeing a lot more young people involved in get-out-the-vote efforts and in voter registration efforts, and we feel very strongly that Arab Americans are really starting to get it — that they can't wait only every four years to participate in the process, but that they have to be part of it constantly. And Arab Americans as candidates are much more sophisticated than they were years ago because they recognize that voting is done primarily on a local basis on local issues, and Arab Americans are

as much a part of the local community as anyone else.

The work of the Arab American Institute is really just encouraging Arab Americans to accept their responsibility as citizens, not once every four years, but on a continuing basis, so that not only are they concerned about who is elected president, but what the school boards are doing, what is being done about traffic congestion and if we have safe streets. This is all part of becoming responsible members of the community, and we find a very, very positive response among Arab Americans.

Particularly interesting now is getting the immigrants to understand their role in the community. In the past it was easier to do this with Arab Americans who had been in the United States or were born here, and whose parents were born here. But now we're also seeing the newly arrived immigrants who understand that this is a challenge that can only be met if they take personal responsibility for it by becoming good citizens. ■

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