

Election FOCUS



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FAST FACTS:

✓ **States** with large Hispanic populations, such as Arizona, Nevada, New Mexico and Florida will likely play an important role in the 2004 election: in 2000, contests in those states were decided by 6 percentage points or fewer.

--Arizona Daily Sun

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Super Tuesday Wins Position Kerry for Democratic Presidential Nomination



Democratic presidential hopeful Senator John Kerry with daughter, Vanessa, left, stepson, Chris Heinz, right, and wife Teresa Heinz-Kerry, far right, celebrates primary victories for the Democratic presidential nomination on March 2, 2004, in Washington D.C. (AP Photo/Lawrence Jackson)

Super Tuesday was so “super” for Massachusetts Senator John Kerry March 2 that the now-apparent Democratic presidential nominee received congratulatory telephone calls not only from North Carolina Senator John Edwards, his remaining major rival for the position, but also from President George W. Bush, the presumed Republican re-nominee.

So-named because it was the biggest day on the election calendar — with contests involving one-fifth of the nation’s states and one-third of its

eligible voters — Super Tuesday resulted in Kerry gaining a near sweep and the Edwards camp saying its candidate was scheduled to announce his departure from the race at a news conference on March 3.

Kerry sailed to coast-to-coast victories by large margins in primaries in California, Connecticut, Georgia, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, Ohio and Rhode Island,

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African Americans and the 2004 U.S. Elections: An Interview with Dr. Ron Walters

In a recent interview, Dr. Ron Walters, director of the African American Leadership Institute at the University of Maryland, spoke with Washington File staff writer Darlisa Crawford about the role of African Americans in the 2004 election. Dr. Walters is a recognized expert on African American involvement in electoral politics and a frequent political commentator on network television. Also see this issue’s Campaign Highlight feature which includes a discussion of outreach to minority voters by the Republican Party.

Q: What are the major issues for African Americans in the 2004 election?

Walters: The Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, which is a black think tank, has done surveys in the past several election cycles, and the same

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and in caucuses in Minnesota. The victories gave him a cumulative total of more than 1,385 Democratic National Convention delegates pledged to his nomination. A total of 2,162 delegates to the July 26-29 convention in Boston are needed to officially win the nomination.

Voters in Vermont, the only other state holding a March 2 primary, gave the bulk of their convention delegate support to “favorite son” former Governor Howard Dean, even though he dropped out of the contest on February 18.

The two long-shot candidates still in the Democratic race, Ohio Congressman Dennis Kucinich and the Reverend Al Sharpton of New York, finished far back in all 10 Super Tuesday events, receiving less than 10 percent of the vote even in their respective home states. Both said they would continue to campaign.

A spokesman for Bush said that in a call from the White House, the president told Kerry he had had “an impressive night” and “won the nomination against a tough field.” Bush added that he looked forward to “a spirited race.” A Kerry spokesman described the call as “very nice,” and said the senator’s reply was that he “looked forward to having a debate on the issues.”

Policy lines are clearly drawn between the two men, with sharp disagreements already expressed on the conduct of war in Iraq, the economy, abortion, homosexual rights, the death penalty and the Second Amendment right to carry weapons.

Washington Post writer David Broder says that “for a politically polarized nation,” the campaign almost certainly will result in a close election.

Current opinion polls give Kerry a lead over Bush that many analysts attribute to the media attention paid to the Democratic nomination battles, while the president had no primary opposition and Republican voter turnout was much lower.

But Bush has raised more campaign money than any candidate in history — approximately \$140 million to Kerry’s \$32 million to date — and his re-election team planned later this week to begin a series of television ads that will try to convince voters the country will be better off with the president remaining in the White House another four years and also attempt to show Kerry as a liberal who changes his position on issues and is soft on defense.

While Kerry’s momentum and 27 victories in the 30 primaries and caucuses held to date (including the District of Columbia) have been impressive, they have still involved only a relatively small number of voters compared to the more than 100 million ballots expected to be cast in the November general election. According to some political analysts, many Americans still do not know much about Kerry, and the election could turn on which political party does the best job in defining him, the Democrats in a positive light or the Republicans more negatively.

Veteran political observer Charlie Cook says the battleground will be in 16 or 17 of the 50 states, where the voting

was very close during the 2000 presidential election. Perhaps the most important one, Cook adds, is Ohio, with other Midwestern states, the Pacific Northwest and Florida being critical as well.

Between now and June 18, primaries and caucuses will still be held in 21 states. Contests in Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas are next, on March 9.

The *San Francisco Chronicle*, in an editorial noting that the Democrats have emerged from the primary season with an unusual level of cohesion, added that Kerry does not have the intra-party wounds that often have burdened his predecessors. Calling the primaries “positive and substantive,” the newspaper said there appears to be “a formidable nominee to challenge Bush and his policies.”

As they were in the earlier Democratic primaries, voters will be driven in the upcoming events by a determination to oust Bush from office. Many of them have an unfavorable opinion of the president even though he remains very popular among Republicans and many Independents.

An editorial in *USA Today* says an angry voter base “is not enough to capture the presidency” because elections are won by attracting political moderates and Independents, comprising one-third of the electorate, who can be “turned off” by partisan rage. Both Kerry and Bush, the newspaper points out, face the similar challenge of appealing to Independents while still keeping their loyal supporters energized. ■



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

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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African Americans and the 2004 U.S. Elections

issues come up. The top one, right now, is employment — jobs — because black unemployment is double white unemployment. It's about 11 percent, whites are about 5.1 or 5.2 percent. So that's a critical issue in the black community, because there's so much unemployment. Then, of course, education is important. We're now commemorating the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 50 years ago, when the Supreme Court decided to integrate American schools. And yet, we still live in a highly segregated environment with respect to education, where 80 percent of young black kids go to schools that are more than 50 percent black and 60 percent of whites go to schools that are more than 50 percent white.

So, education — especially higher education — is a big issue because that is the route to social mobility and professional status. Things like grants and government funding are a primary concern.

And then, of course, health care is very important, because of the gaps in many health-related diseases and conditions between blacks and whites, and also gaps in the treatment of those conditions and insurance coverage. Those are the top three.

The war in Iraq is in fourth place according to some recent studies and polling information, primarily because blacks have become such a high proportion of the casualties. Twenty percent of the casualties in Iraq are African American, so that's an obvious concern, as well as the concern about the use of the financial resources going to the war.

Q: In 2002, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies asked black respondents in its national survey to identify themselves as either Democrats, Independents or Republicans. Although 63 percent claimed to be Democrats, the number was down from 74 percent in 2000. Is this trend continuing and is the Republican Party making special efforts to bring African Americans back to the party of Abraham Lincoln?

Walters: The Republican Party in each election cycle has claimed that they are making such efforts, but it's very difficult to see them. African Americans will say, for example, that they have changed their party identification. Right now, however, the growth in party identification is for neither major party, but with Independents. Yet, when you look at how people actually vote, African Americans voted 90 percent Democrat in the last election in each age group. So, although some of the past Joint Center studies show that younger blacks below the age of 35 were more conservative on some issues, still, when it came to political behavior, they voted pretty much like their elders.

Q: How have recent efforts to redraw legislative districts in states such as Texas impacted minority communities?

Walters: The question of redistricting in Texas is one that will eventually be decided by the courts because of

“Generally speaking, the black youth vote will be important, since that population constitutes about 40 percent of the total black population. There has been an effort to increase youth turnout because it runs in the mid-30 percent range, compared to over 50 percent for older African American adults.”

--Dr. Ron Walters

The opinions expressed in this article are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Government.

the irregularities in redistricting. The issue here is whether or not this dilution of both the black and Hispanic vote runs afoul of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Many experts believe that redistricting is legal, but in the minds of many lawyers, it is a clear violation, because it has diluted these votes. And so, that fight will go on, and it probably will not affect African Americans unless many of the states adopt mid-term redistricting. That's one of the reasons why I think that eventually the practice will be thrown out by the Supreme Court.

Q: How will the voter reform efforts since the 2000 election impact the African American constituency?

Walters: It should boost the vote, insofar as the Help America Vote Act has provided economic resources to states and localities for purchasing modern voting machines. Those machines should help to increase the African American turnout figures, because their votes were disproportionately thrown out during the last presidential election. Some of that has been traced to the fact that the older voting machines are placed in inner-city areas. So, if the new machines are put in these areas, then it should certainly help to record the African American vote. Other important aspects of electoral reform include better training for poll workers, better management of voter lists, voters' ability to check their voting status, voting right restoration of those with prior felony convictions and other things.

Q: Will African American youth be an important factor in this election, and are special voter registration

drives aimed at youth?

Walters: There are many special voter registration drives aimed at youth. MTV, of course — which is the youth-oriented television network — generally has a number of programs aimed at young people. But, the big non-partisan organization called Youth Vote is funded by a number of sources, and it is perhaps the main organization that targets youth voting.

There is an organization called Black Youth Vote, which is part of the larger organization, the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation. Black Youth Vote has been in existence for quite awhile, and it targets young people below the age of 35. Generally speaking, the black youth vote will be important, since that population constitutes about 40 percent of the total black population. There has been an effort to increase youth turnout because it runs in the mid-30 percent range, compared to over 50 percent for older African American adults.

Q: Why is Al Sharpton's campaign significant and how long will he remain in the race?

Walters: Al Sharpton's campaign is significant, first of all, because he represents African Americans who generally are absent at the higher levels of national politics. We've never had an African American president, we don't have blacks in the *Senate of the United States. There are 39 in the House of Representatives, and only one on the Supreme Court. So, when you look at the higher levels of government, blacks are missing, and so to have Sharpton represented in the race is a plus for African Americans.

[*Editor's Note: Carol Moseley Braun served in the U.S. Senate from Illinois from 1993-1999, and most recently also ran for president during the Democratic Party primaries and caucuses.]

Secondly, to the extent that he is able to collect delegates, he will be able to represent African American interests at the convention, and with the potential nominee of the party. The larger his delegate group, then the more influence he will have.

People compare Sharpton to Reverend Jesse Jackson, who first ran for the presidency in 1984, and who took 384 delegates to the convention that year. By 1988, when Jackson ran again, he took 1,200 delegates to the convention. So, he was obviously in a very, very strong position to exercise leverage. That is the hope of many people: that Sharpton will be able to replicate some aspect of Jesse Jackson's feat in presidential politics.

Q: Are there any other comments that you want to add?

Walters: In the 2000 election cycle, African American registration had pulled pretty much even with whites. The difference between the two was only two percent. African Americans had also pulled even with whites in voting. The difference there was only 2.9 percent. That's something that is very important, because it's been a long road since the Voting Rights Act of 1965. And in most of that time, the black vote and registration was significantly behind the white vote. In 2000, African Americans virtually caught up. In the 2004 election cycle, therefore, I wouldn't be surprised if the black vote actually surpassed the white vote. ■

Campaign★Highlight

Bush Team Begins Campaign

With 20 Democratic primaries and caucuses over the last two months and the Super Tuesday primaries yesterday, media focus has been on the Democratic candidates vying for their party's nomination. This may have begun to change, however, on February 23, when President Bush began his general election campaign. In a speech to Republican governors, Bush defended his presidential record and sought to distinguish himself from the Democratic candidates. "Our opponents have not offered much in the way of strategies to win the war, or policies to expand our economy," he said.

"It's a choice between keeping the tax relief that is moving the economy forward, or putting the burden of higher taxes back on the American people," he continued. "It's a choice between an America that leads the world with strength and confidence, or an America that is uncertain in the face of danger."

Although the speech marks what many say is the formal start of the Bush campaign, fundraising and other campaign efforts in support of the president's re-election bid have been going on for some months. According to news sources, in terms of fundraising, the Bush campaign has raised over \$143 million overall and \$12 million in January alone. This formidable bankroll will fund, for example, the television commercials that the Bush campaign is expected to begin running on March 4.

Any incumbent official, by virtue

of the public nature of his or her position, has greater visibility and more of an opportunity to meet voters and discuss vital policy positions. In addition to the president's campaign, Vice President Dick Cheney, First Lady Laura Bush, Lynne Cheney, and other high-ranking administration officials have also been actively campaigning on his behalf. According to the New York Times, in recent months they have attended more than 100 fundraisers around the country. In addition, a network of over 400 people who raise funds in 45 states have raised at least \$100,000 each.

Also speaking on February 23, Vice President Cheney in a speech in Wichita, Kansas, discussed the administration's record on the war on terror and on rebuilding Iraq and Afghanistan. "I think we've got a record of accomplishment to show for our efforts, he said. "I think the American people can be confident of a better future, stronger economy, and a greater security... because of the leadership of George W. Bush."

In addition to the more traditional "stump speeches" that often signify the start of a campaign, the Bush team is expected to begin its media campaign on March 4, having reserved time on several television stations. Thus far, according to the Associated Press, at least \$4.5 million worth of airtime has been bought on stations such as CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, Fox News Network and ESPN, a sports network. According to the Associated Press, "Political analysts say advertis-

ing through cable TV allows the campaign to target its advertising to specific constituencies and be on the air everywhere, including in states that may not be in play in the election."

The Bush team will also begin running campaign ads on Spanish-language networks such as Univision and Telemundo in New Mexico, Florida, Nevada and Arizona, advisers to the campaign said. The Bush-Cheney website can also be viewed in Spanish.

The emphasis on Spanish-language campaign ads reflect a greater effort on the part of the Bush campaign to reach out to minority voters this election. In the 2000 election, former Vice President Al Gore won 62 percent of the Hispanic vote, compared to Bush's 35 percent. According to Bush campaign officials, the president believes it is important to reach out to those voters who may not speak English as their first language.

In states with large Hispanic populations such as Arizona, New Mexico, Florida, Nevada and Arizona, the 2000 presidential election was decided by six percentage points or less, according to the Associated Press. And with nine million Hispanic voters expected to register by November, presidential candidates have recognized the necessity of courting these voters.

The Bush-Cheney campaign has also made an effort to reach out to African American voters as well. According to Sharon Castillo, a spokesperson for the Bush-Cheney campaign, the campaign has made an aggressive effort to ensure that small, local African American newspapers

will have access to officials and information that matches the level of larger papers, such as the New York Times.

But according to Castillo, the Republican outreach to minorities is most evident in the administration's policies. Citing programs to improve education and to increase minority first-time home ownership, Castillo said that President Bush will "campaign on the issues."

In addition to traditional media campaigning, the Bush team has also used the Internet, a campaign tool popularized by the campaign of former Vermont Governor Howard Dean. And although the Bush-Cheney campaign has not used the Internet as a

primary fundraising tool — it raised only about \$3.5 million online — the campaign has used e-mail and the Internet as a way to disseminate information about the campaign and in recent days has actively used its campaign website to respond to criticisms by Democratic rivals.

The Bush-Cheney website currently carries a video clip attacking the Democratic front runner, Massachusetts Senator John Kerry, for his ties to several special interest groups such as drug and telecommunications companies. A link to this ad was sent to six million Bush supporters around the country.

According to news reports, it

appeared that the Bush team would wait until the spring or summer of 2004 before beginning a more active campaign using TV ads. However, according to the New York Times, polls that showed Bush falling behind his Democratic rivals in a nationwide contest, and attacks by Democratic candidates, prompted the Bush team to begin their active campaign earlier than planned. ■

READ MORE ABOUT IT:

The official Bush-Cheney campaign website: www.georgewbush.com

The Republican National Committee website: www.rnc.org