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STATES OF ELECTORATE AND ELECTION DIVERGE

RECORD LOW PRIMARY TURNOUT

HIGH NOVEMBER TURNOUT LIKELY

WASHINGTON, September 29 – Turnout in the 2004 Presidential and other statewide primaries – for governor and U.S. Senate – reached record lows, a result that does NOT presage a similar turnout in the November general election.

Presidential primary turnout in states which held primaries in both parties reached a new record low, as did turnout in Republican Presidential primaries, eclipsing the lows set in the uncontested primaries in 1972 (for Richard Nixon) and 1984 (for Ronald Reagan).

Turnout in Democratic Presidential primaries was the third lowest on record, less than a percentage point higher than the lows set in 1996 and 2000 and only because hard-fought statewide races in Arkansas, Illinois, Montana and West Virginia, all of which had higher turnout than the vote for Presidential candidates, pulled turnout upward.

When factoring in all major statewide primary races – President, governor and U.S. Senate – a similar pattern holds, record lows for overall two-party turnout, the second lowest Republican turnout and the third lowest turnout for the Democrats, lifted only by other statewide races, particularly the gubernatorial nomination battle in Missouri.

There was but one record high turnout – the Democratic Presidential primary in New Hampshire. There were a combined 38 primaries which produced record low turnouts.

Yet, it is likely that general election turnout will be higher than either the 1996 or 2000 elections and perhaps eclipse the 58 percent of citizen eligibles who voted in 1992.

These were among the principal findings of a report on primary turnout based on final and official Presidential primary results and final and official results, save for five states whose vote counts are final but unofficial, for other major statewide primaries released today by the non-partisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate (CSAE).

Among the findings in the report:

- Turnout in the 25 states which held Presidential primaries for both major political parties was 17.2 percent of citizen-eligibles, down 4.1 percentage points from 2000, and down 15.3 percentage points from the high turnout mark of 32.5 percent voting set in 1972.

- Turnout in the 26 states which held GOP Presidential primaries was 6.4 percent of eligibles, down five percentage points from 2000 and 5.8 percentage points from the high of 12.2 percent of eligibles who voted in 1980. Turnout was lower than the 6.8 percent who voted in the 1984 uncontested Ronald Reagan renomination contest and substantially lower than the 10.3 percent who renominated the uncontested Richard Nixon in 1972.

- Turnout in the 37 states which held Democratic Presidential primaries was 9.7 percent of eligibles, up 0.9 percentage points from 2000 and one percentage point from the nadir reached in the uncontested Clinton renomination contest of 1996. But this year's turnout was 10.7 percentage points lower than the 20.4 percent of eligibles who voted in 1972.

- Of the 25 states which held Presidential primaries for nominees of both parties, only five recorded turnout increases led by Oklahoma (up 3.9 percentage points), Pennsylvania (3.1) and Wisconsin (2.3). Turnout in twenty states declined, led by New Hampshire (down 12.9 percentage points), California (11.2), Massachusetts (8.4) and Maryland (7.4).

- Of the 26 states which held GOP Presidential primaries, only three recorded higher turnout since 2000 led by Pennsylvania (up 2.3 percentage points) and Indiana (1.1), the latter due to a hotly contested gubernatorial primary. Of the 23 states which recorded lower turnout, New Hampshire led the way with a decline of 19.2 percentage points, followed by Vermont (12.1), California (10.1), Massachusetts (9.6) and Wisconsin (8.8).

- The Democrats did somewhat better. Of the 37 jurisdictions which held Democratic Presidential primaries, 24 had higher turnout, led by Wisconsin (up 11 percentage points), followed by Vermont (6.9), Oklahoma (6.4), New Hampshire (6.3) and the District of Columbia's non-binding first in the nation primary (6.1).

- When one factors in all major statewide races (including governor and U.S. Senate),

primary turnout in states with primaries in both parties was 18.6 percent of eligibles, down 1.7 percentage points from the 20.3 percent who voted in 2000 and down 18.1 percentage points from the 36.7 percent at the high water mark for primary turnout in 1964.

-Average turnout in Democratic statewide primaries was 10.1 percent of eligibles barely 0.4 percentage points higher than the low water mark of 9.7 in 1996 and 14.3 percentage points lower than the highest primary turnout of 24.3 percent in 1964.

-GOP turnout was 8.2 percent of eligibles, down 2.8 percentage points from the 11 percent who voted in 2000, higher than the seven percent who voted in 1984, but 6.9 percentage points lower than the 15.1 percent of eligibles who voted in 1964, the year of highest Republican turnout.

-Of the 33 states which had statewide major office primaries in both parties, 19 showed lower turnout and 10 recorded new record lows – Alabama, Arkansas, California, Idaho, Louisiana, Nebraska, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas and West Virginia.

-Of the 39 states with Democratic major office statewide primaries, only 16 reported lower turnout, but 15 of those set new record lows – Alabama, Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Montana, Nebraska, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Virginia and Washington.

-Of the 38 states with Republican major office statewide primaries, only ten recorded higher turnout and 13 states recorded new record lows – California, Delaware, Illinois, Iowa, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont and West Virginia.

-The highest turnout in states with primaries in both parties was recorded in Missouri (34.2 percent of eligibles), followed by New Hampshire (30.2), Montana (29.3), Alaska (28.8) and West Virginia (27.8). The lowest turnout in these states was in Rhode Island (5.1 percent of eligibles), followed by Iowa (6.0), New Jersey (6.6) and Louisiana (7.1).

-The highest turnout in Democratic major office statewide primaries was in New Hampshire (23.5 percent of eligibles), followed by Wisconsin (20.5), Missouri (20.0), West Virginia (20.0) and Hawaii (19.3). The lowest Democratic turnout was in Utah (2.2 percent of eligibles), followed by Iowa (2.4), Idaho (3.2) Mississippi (3.6) and New Jersey (3.8).

-The highest GOP turnout was recorded in Alaska (17.7 percent of eligibles), followed by Kansas (16.9), Montana (16.0) and Missouri (14.6). The lowest GOP turnout was in Rhode Island (0.3 percent of eligibles), followed by Massachusetts (1.5), Louisiana (2.2), Tennessee (2.2), New Jersey (2.5) and Arkansas (2.7).

STATE OF THE ELECTORATE:

The troubling part of this report is not that primary turnout is low. It will always be lower than general election turnout because primaries are for the active and interested of each party. Rather it is the fact that each year seems to set new record lows, that overall turnout is 50 percent lower than it was two and three decades ago, that Democratic turnout is 59 percent below its apex and that GOP turnout is 45 percent lower.

Voting is essentially a religious act. Everyone does know that almost all elections are not decided by one vote and that in a purely rational world any individual citizen's vote does not make a difference. But as a nation and a democracy, historically American citizens have wanted to be part of a Rousseauian general will – to give or withdraw assent to a particular policy, party or individual, to be part of a grand collective to chart the nation's future. Americans voted out of a religion called civic duty. That religious impulse is almost totally gone. Citizens come out in certain hotly contested races like the New Hampshire Presidential primary and the Missouri gubernatorial primary of this year. But, in the main, as American participation has dwindled those remaining in the electorate are increasingly only those who have an interest in particular policy outcomes and the single-issue zealots, and politics in the general and public interest suffers in the resulting polarization.

Gene Weingarten of the Washington Post recently asked, "Why should one vote?" If the single vote does not affect outcomes; if in many elections (but not all), the non-voter might vote as the voter would; if, as in too many recent cases, whatever is said on the campaign trail is not honored in office – why should one vote. The answer lies in the obverse. What if nobody voted? Then, the United States would no longer be a democracy. The United States is still a democracy but it is rapidly becoming a democracy of, for and by the interested few and it is a situation that will get worse, unless the nation and its leadership can revive the religious impulse to be part of this great democratic experiment.

In its last report, CSAE showed that procedural quick fixes are not the answer to democratic renewal – that the problem of diminished democracy is not a matter of procedure but of motivation. If the democratic impulse is to be revived, one will need to focus on the larger questions and harder solutions – reviving a failing public education system; increasing the quantity and quality of civic education within the schools; restoring newspaper readership and study, debate and testing on current events for the young; rebuilding commitment to the mediating and training institutions for the young – things like student government and newspapers, among others; preaching civic engagement values from our various bully pulpits instead of self-seeking, anti-government and consumerist values; considering a mandatory year of national service; revitalizing the integrating institutions of our society – schools, churches, unions and political parties; realigning our misshapen party system and restoring grassroots sinew to it; reregulating the broadcast industry so that it covers American politics and reaches the citizens who need to know; ending America's pristine isolation as one of the few democracies that does not regulate political advertising on television; reducing the amount of cynicism in political coverage and discourse; and restoring trust in leadership through a

leadership which by its words and actions understands that it has a trust to restore.

No halfway measures will work. But no task, however difficult, is more important than to revive the bedrock faith in the great and continuing American democratic experiment.

STATE OF THE ELECTION:

Despite the underlying disengagement of the American citizenry from the nation's political system, as a trend, the 2004 election should produce higher turnout.

Almost all polls measuring citizen interest in this year's election show that interest at substantially higher levels year than in either 1996 or 2000. Most Americans polled have seen this election as an important one. The Presidency of George W. Bush has been a lightning rod, creating highly emotional supporters and detractors and even those in the middle and uncertain about their choice feel conflicting but strong pulls in both directions. It is likely that voter participation which was at 54 percent in 2000, will reach or exceed the 58 percent level of 1992, the highest turnout since the 1960s. And it is likely that turnout will increase among all groups in the electorate, save perhaps moderate Republicans. Turnout could be between 118-121 million, as compared to the nearly 106 million who voted in 2000.

If turnout reaches these comparatively lofty levels, the Democrats are likely to be the principal beneficiaries. Republican hopes for turnout increase largely rest with religious fundamentalists, propelled by the gay marriage issue, and among rural voters in a tussle between values issues and their pocketbooks. Almost every other group would likely and on balance vote Democratic, were Sen. Kerry to emerge in the last month as both a strong and credible candidate.

But there is some evidence that the ugliness of the 2004 campaign may be taking its toll on potential turnout. In the latest Pew Center poll, interest in the upcoming debates was, at 61 percent, substantially higher than in 2000 and 1996, but lower than the 67 percent who expressed interest in 1992. And that, in turn, puts pressure on Sen. Kerry in the debates – to demonstrate that his changes of position are considered rather than opportunistic, to demonstrate that he is both likeable and strong and resolute. Polls still show that faced with the open-ended question of whether President Bush deserves re-election or someone else should be President, someone else wins. If Kerry is to be that someone else and if turnout is to increase as much as the Democrats need, Kerry needs to prove in the debates that he is the credible and trustworthy someone else.

In any event, turnout is highly unlikely to reach the mid-60 percent levels of the 1960s and the turnout increase of this year is almost certain to be temporary because none of the major issues which have served to dampen turnout have been addressed. It is a sad situation when an unpopular and misbegotten war, a limping economy, the threat and reality of terrorism and questions of honor and veracity serve as the motivating spur to temporary turnout increase. American democracy needs a better and more durable renaissance.

REDISTRICTING:

The figures in this report point to the need to address the single most important procedural issue in American politics – the way the states draw their Congressional and state legislative districts after each decennial Census.

Under present custom, in states in which one party has control of both the legislature and governor's office, the tendency is to put most populations which would favor the opposition in one or more (the smaller number the better) districts which are safe for the opposition and reserve a much larger number of safe districts for the current majority party. In states in which neither party controls both the legislative and executive branches, the tendency has been to protect the maximum number of incumbent office-holders and create the minimum number of competitive districts. With ever-increasing sophistication of population identification and targeting, the number of competitive districts has dwindled down to a precious few.

In each of these non-competitive districts, the relevant election is not the general election, but the primary whose winner is effectively elected. As the results of this study show, the average turnout for a Democratic statewide primary is 10.1 percent, with many being substantially lower. The average turnout for a statewide Republican primary is 8.2 percent. Turnout for Congressional and state legislative primaries is substantially lower. Which means that in any given district, a highly organized minority representing the views of no more than four percent of the population can win a primary for its candidate of choice which is tantamount to election. And, particularly in the Republican Party, the organized minority is the secular and religious right. (The same danger would exist in the Democratic Party were there an organized left, but there isn't.) If one wants to point to the increasing polarization of American politics, the insertion into the public agenda of peripheral issues, the gridlock that exists and has existed for some time, there is no more clear and compelling reason than low voter turnout and one-party districts.

The nation will not recreate a cooperative middle in American politics unless and until, there is a major effort to wrest the drawing of districts from political and ideological partisans and place them in the hands of those who value competition and political sanity. By making the general election again the deciding election (rather than the primary), it will ensure that the majority of American will choose their leaders and that majority rather than tiny minority views will again be in the forefront.

NOTES AND SUMMARY CHARTS

1. What is Turnout: Turnout should be a simple calculation in which the numerator is the number of votes cast and the denominator is the number of citizens eligible to vote. But because of various anomalies in election statistics, some of which are outlined in detail below, this calculation is more complicated. By common usage, the numerator in every Presidential election year is the vote for President (even though that tally is usually about one percentage point lower than the actual number of citizens who go to the polls. It is lower because many states, although an ever-diminishing number, do not keep records of all those who go to the polls, the total ballots cast). In mid-term elections, the numerator is the total of votes for the statewide race in each state which draws the highest number of votes and the aggregate total of votes for U.S. House of Representatives in those states which do not have statewide races. (This total tends to be between 1 and 1.5 percentage points lower than the actual total ballots cast but is used for the same reasons – that many states do not compile total ballots cast figures.)

Turnout is **NOT** the percentage of those registered who voted. There are three basic reasons for this: a. Using registration as a denominator does not account for the whole of the electorate, including those who are not registered. Thus, it gives a false picture of true citizen engagement. b. Changes in registration law can dramatically affect the figures. If the nation adopts, as it did, a registration law that provides for national mail registration, registration at motor vehicle bureaus and at social service agencies, registration will go up but turnout of those registered will decline artificially by a greater amount than it does when using the entire eligible electorate as a denominator. c. Registration figures are subject to the fluctuations of election administration. If a state conducts a thorough purge of its registration lists close to election, its registration figures will be lower and thus its percentage of registered voting will be higher. But if registration lists are not so purged, as they are not in many states, the figures for registration will be higher and the turnout based on these inflated registration figures will be lower. Consider how distorted a turnout percentage using registration as a base would be in a state such as Alaska, which because of lack of regular list cleaning and potential flaws with the Census Bureau's estimates of the state's eligible population, registration figures are regularly in excess of 100 percent of the eligible vote.

2. The Eligible Vote – The Denominator for Determining Turnout: The eligible vote in this report is the number of people residing in the United States who are 18 years of age or over minus the number of non-citizens residing in the United States who are 18 years of age and over as of April 1. It is an interpolated figure from the 2000 Census, based on the methodology outlined below.

For years, CSAE and every other reputable organization working in this field had used the Census Bureau's estimates of November age-eligible population (VAP) to determine turnout. That figure came under legitimate criticism because it included non-citizens; convicted felons (in

most states) and, in some states, ex-felons; and people deemed mentally incompetent in institutions who could not vote and did not include citizens residing in other countries, citizens naturalized during the election year and the citizen portion of the Census' undercount, all of whom could vote but were not part of the VAP estimate. The Census Bureau has ceased providing its VAP estimates.

For years also, Dr. Walter Dean Burnham, professor emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin, has been producing a denominator of age-eligible citizens (age-eligible population minus age-eligible non-citizens, interpolated by state and nation from and between decennial Censuses). After some study of this matter, CSAE has come to believe that this denominator is the best for determining turnout, subject to the caveat below. It has come to this belief because of two factors:

1. Available data. One does not determine turnout simply for any given year but also as an historical comparison with previous years. Data for several of the issues involving the inadequacy of the age-eligible population (VAP) figures are either simply not available, not available in a timely manner, not available over a given period of history or not allocatable to the states. Data on convicted and incarcerated felons is only available for a fairly recent time period. State laws on whether convicted felons and ex-felons can vote are changing and have changed over time. There is no accurate set of figures on those deemed mentally incompetent. The number of American citizens residing abroad is ascertainable but the number of age-eligible has to be estimated and there are no figures which allow the allocation of these citizens by state. Naturalization figures come in too late, often a year or two after the election year, to be usable in any current population accounting. And while any given Census undercount can be allocated by state, one can only estimate how much of that undercount is of citizens as opposed to non-citizens.

2. The balance of the figures: In studying this statistical problem, CSAE has found that the most important issue is that of non-citizens. If one wants to have a relatively accurate picture of turnout, one must eliminate the non-citizens from the age-eligible population. On the other hand, the other adjustments to the denominator would not substantially differ from the denominator of citizen age-eligible population. In pursuing its inquiry into this topic, CSAE found that the factors which would lower the denominator – felons, ex-felons and people deemed mentally incompetent who can't vote – are roughly equal to two of the factors which would increase the denominator – citizens living in other countries and naturalization who could vote. If one added a ballpark figure for the number of citizens in the undercount who could vote, the factors in those years of an undercount, other than non-citizens, which would increase the denominator exceeds those which would reduce it.

The one caveat in adopting the Burnham methodology lock, stock and barrel is that Burnham interpolates from Census to Census. These Censuses are accurate as of April 1 of each decennial year for all of the past 50 years. (In prior years, Census results captured the population as of varying months.) In order to have more accurate figures for November, CSAE has, using the same methodology, projected citizen population to November. Thus, CSAE is using in this

report and for all future reports on primaries, the April figure for age-eligible citizen population, but will use a November figure for the general election.

Methodology

Since the decennial census population figures are accurate as of April 1 in each census year, the VAP Burnham dataset calculates the difference in the required census figures between a base census year and the same figures as reported in the following census. To estimate the voting age population for the years between the censuses, the difference between them is simply multiplied by the number of months that have passed beyond April 1 of the base year and then added to the base year figure. For example, to arrive at the April 1, 1992 voting age population, the difference between the April 1, 1990 census population and the April 1, 2000 census population is multiplied by 24/120ths (for the 24 out of 120 months between the census counts) and added to the April 1, 1990 figure.

The process for arriving at the CSAE November Eligible figures is the same, except that the data is projected forward to November instead of April. To accomplish this, the multiplier is simply changed to the number of months that have passed since April of the base census year. For instance, to calculate the November 1996 voting age population, the difference between April 1, 1990 and April 1, 2000 is multiplied by 79/120ths and added to the April 1, 1990 count. The same interpolation process is applied to the decennial census counts of non-citizens of voting age in each state. Once estimates of the total voting age population and the non-citizen voting age population for each state have been calculated, the non-citizen figure is simply subtracted from the total to arrive at the appropriate figure.

Since the last decennial census occurred in 2000, it is necessary to project the figures forward to arrive at the voting age population for 2002 and 2004. To accomplish this, the difference between the 1990 and 2000 decennial censuses is used to establish a rate of growth. This rate of growth is then used to project forward based on the number of months passed since April 1990 out of the 120 months between the censuses. For instance, to obtain the voting age population for April 2004, the difference between April 1, 1990 and April 1, 2000 is multiplied by 168/120 and added to the April 1, 1990 total.

3. The Vote – Primaries: The vote totals contained in this report are final, official and certified by the chief election officer in each state, except for the non-Presidential totals for Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Washington and Wisconsin whose vote totals are final, unofficial but very close to what the final totals will be. This report is based on two sets of primary results – the primary results in the Presidential primaries and the final results for primaries for U.S. Senate and governor. In some cases, these primaries were held at the same time; in others they were separately held. (CSAE does not compile data on Presidential nominating caucuses since such data is always uncertified and unofficial.)

4. The Charts: Assessing primary turnout is more difficult than assessing general election turnout because not every state holds Presidential primaries, not all states have Presidential primaries in both

parties and not all states have either gubernatorial or Senatorial contests or both. There were, for instance, 37 states which held Presidential primaries for one party's nominee or the other in 2004, but only 25 states which had primaries in both parties. In previous years, only some of the states had similar primaries to this year's. All of which creates a problem for assessing comparable turnout.

CSAE's basic comparisons of turnout in this report is a comparison between the average turnout of all the primaries held this year against the average turnout of all similar primaries in previous years, even if the states under consideration in each year are not the same. This is supplemented by charts comparing those states which held primaries in each of the years in the study (a lesser number of states than actually held primaries this year or in previous years).

The charts which are named "total" turnout are those in which primaries were held in both parties. The "total highest turnout" chart is a comparison of the turnout in whatever statewide primary in each state (President, governor or U.S. Senate) had the highest turnout.

5. Acknowledgments: Primary research for this report was done by Mark P. Harvey, CSAE research associate, who is also responsible for creating the denominator database for the analysis of November turnout. Organizing the analysis for this report was made profoundly easier by a custom database program developed by Samuel Schreiber, CSAE research associate emeritus. CSAE would also like to express its profound gratitude to Dr. Walter Dean Burnham, professor emeritus at the University of Texas at Austin, for sharing his database, helping to devise CSAE's new November denominator for the analysis of registration and turnout and for his continuing help to CSAE's work.

6. Culpability: The analysis contained in this report has been done by Curtis Gans, CSAE's director, who is solely responsible for any and all errors contained within.

SUMMARY CHARTS

1. Presidential Primary Turnout: Average percentage of citizen eligibles who voted in 2004 Presidential primaries as compared to average turnout in previous years. (Number of states in parentheses are how many states had primaries in each category this year.)

YEAR	Total (25)	Democratic (37)	GOP (26)
2004	17.2	9.7	6.4
2000	21.3	8.8	11.4
1996	18.4	8.8	9.5
1992	23.4	13.2	9.2
1988	26.3	16.2	9.3
1984	24.0	16.0	6.8
1980	27.5	14.6	12.2
1976	30.1	18.5	11.7
1972	32.5	20.4	10.3
1968	19.2	17.6	8.0
1964	26.0	12.5	11.9
1960	17.2	16.1	11.6

2. Total Primary Turnout: Average percentage of citizen eligible voters who cast ballots in the statewide race (President, governor or U.S. Senate) which garnered the highest turnout in 2004 compared to the average of such races in previous years.

YEAR	Total	Democratic	GOP
2004	18.6	10.1	8.2
2000	20.4	9.8	11.0
1996	19.8	9.7	10.0
1992	23.9	13.9	9.7
1988	26.1	16.2	9.4
1984	24.5	16.8	7.0
1980	28.2	16.5	11.6
1976	29.6	18.2	10.8
1972	30.9	22.2	8.7
1968	28.7	18.9	10.1
1964	36.7	24.3	15.1
1960	26.0	20.5	10.8