

**(PLEASE READ NOTE 3 ABOUT THE QUALITY OF REGISTRATION
STATISTICS COMING FROM THE STATES)**

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**REGISTRATION RISES MODERATELY
BATTLEGROUND STATES LEAD THE WAY
INDEPENDENTS GAIN MOST**

WASHINGTON, October 28 – Based on final and official registration statistics from 26 states, voter registration increased nationally a moderate and estimated three percentage points since 2000, with battleground states providing most of the increase.

–Since the states which have not reported have, by history, tended to report greater registration gains than the states which report this early, it is likely that when final figures come in from all states, more than 143 million citizens will have registered, 10 million more than 2000 and at least six million more than the number which would have been registered had registration rates remained constant.

–Registration increases in battleground states were geometrically higher than the increases in non-battleground states.

–While registration increased modestly (very modestly) in percentage terms for both Democratic and Republican parties, the greatest increase came among those who were not affiliated with either party.

–While registration is often not a good harbinger of turnout (in 1996 and 1998, registration went up and turnout went down; and in 2000 and 2002, registration went down and turnout went up), there is reason to believe that this year's increased registration, coupled with

heightened voter interest and the intense feelings generated by the 2004 Presidential campaign, will produce a substantially higher turnout this year.

These are a few of the tentative conclusions of a report on 2004 registration based on final and official statistics provided by 26 states – sufficient to provide some guidance as to national registration – released today by the non-partisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

Among the other findings in this report:

- Registration increased in 18 states, but decreased in eight states. The overall registration level in this election is likely to be 71 percent of eligible citizens, compared to 68 percent of citizens in 2000.

- Registration increased by 3.9 percentage points in the 12 battleground states which had final figures for this report. While it only increased by 0.1 percentage point in the 14 non-battleground states which reported their final figures.

- Democratic registration increased by a minuscule 0.3 percentage points in the 17 states which have partisan registration and have reported their final figures, but their increase was greater in battleground states (0.8 percentage points) than in non-battleground states (minus 0.2).

- While the GOP reported a slightly greater increase in registration (0.9 percentage points) in the partisan registration states which have reported, their increases were greater in non-battleground states (1.0 percentage point) than in battleground states (0.8).

- Those who registered for neither major political party recorded the greatest increase in registration (2.4 percentage points). Their increase was substantially greater in battleground states (2.9 percentage points) than in non-battleground states (2.0 percentage points). The level of non-major party affiliated registrants has reached 21.9 percent in the states which have reported, marking the 11th straight election of increase, from a level of 1.6 percent of the eligible electorate in 1960.

- The Democratic registration level in these states at 37.3 percent is nearly 25 percent lower than the 49 percent who were registered Democratic nationally in 1964.

- The greatest increases in registration were recorded in Missouri (up 9.8 percentage points), Florida (8.2), West Virginia (5.9), Virginia (5.3), Pennsylvania (5.1), New Mexico (4.7), Iowa (4.5) and New York and New Jersey (4.4). In all of these states which have partisan registration, registration as unaffiliated grew more than registration for either party.

- The greatest increases in Democratic registration were in New York and Pennsylvania (up 2.2 percentage points), Florida (1.8), and Iowa (1.2).

-The largest increases in Republican registration were in Kentucky (3.8 percentage points), West Virginia (2.4), Florida (2.0), and Louisiana (1.8). (Alaska actually recorded a larger gain for the GOP, but since Alaska's registration figures exceed the voting age population, anything the state reports needs to be taken with a grain of salt.)

-The Democrats outregistered the Republicans in Iowa and Pennsylvania. The GOP outregistered Republicans in Florida, New Mexico, Nevada and West Virginia.

The likely explanations for the surge in registration for citizens not affiliated with either major party are two-fold: 1. that a large number of younger citizens, below the age of 30, with no historic interest in parties have been registered this year; and 2. the decline in party strength and the misalignment of the two parties are driving more people towards independent status.

While increased registration does not normally predict higher turnout, it is likely this year that turnout will increase substantially, even among the younger new registrants, normally a low voting group. In public opinion polls, voter interest is about on a par with interest in the 1992 election when 58.1 percent of citizen eligibles turned out. Viewership of the debates was nearly as high as in 1992 with many more compelling, competing attractions. And the intense feelings generated by President Bush and this election are perhaps higher than any time since 1968. In 2000, fifty four percent of the electorate and 105, 400,000 voters went to the polls. It is likely that 1992 is a benchmark for this year's turnout and that it will equal or exceed the 1992 percentage. It is likely that 117.5 – 121 million voters will vote (or 58-60 percent of eligibles). If turnout exceeds 58.1 percent of eligibles, it will be the highest since 1968 when 61.9 percent voted. In this election, the larger the turnout, especially in battleground states, the more likely the results will favor Sen. John Kerry. While the feelings on both sides of the President George W. Bush divide are intense, there is only a limited amount of upward additional voting groups GOP can expect to add to their 2000 vote total – some portion of the four million evangelical fundamentalists that Bush political advisor Karl Rove has been targeting, a higher military vote and people in the rural areas in which the President has been lately campaigning. But the GOP also stands to lose some of its moderate and liberal Republican support. Other new voters are likely to be Democratic and recent polls of new voters tend to show a nearly 20 point Kerry advantage among them. If they turn out, as the data suggests they may, they could be decisive.

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA:

At the end of this report are two charts which show the turnout rates since the 1960s for various demographic groups in Presidential elections and what portion of the electorate and voting electorate they comprise. This represents an update of figures that CSAE has previously presented utilizing a different method of adjusting for the differences between actual voting data and survey response in the Census' biennial P-20 series on registration and voting of the Current Population Survey from whence this demographic data is derived. (See Note 4).

Included in the graphs are the turnout rates since 1964 by age, which shows decreases for

every age group below 65 with the size of decrease greater as one goes down the age ladder. The only really significant increase in among those over 75, whose causality is probably modern medicine in enabling people who were previously too infirm to vote.

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 November 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 used for reports on primaries the April figure for age-eligible citizen population, but is using the November figure for this report and any others relating to 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. Registration: The registration figures for the individual states in the back of this report are final, official, certified by the chief election officer of each state and totally misleading.

In any given election the official registration figures provided by the states are inaccurate because they contain the names of people who have either died or moved but have not been removed from the registration rolls. The degree of inaccuracy in any given state would pend both on when they conducted a list cleaning and how thorough such a list cleaning was. A state which conducted a thorough list cleaning close to an election would likely have fewer names that were not eligible. But because of non-thorough and early list cleaning, some states, notably Alaska, Maine and Mississippi, often have registration rolls which exceed 100 percent of the Voting Age Population. Prior to the enactment of the NVRA, it was at least possible to make a national estimate of registration which would be, on the average, ten percent lower than the official figures provided by the states.

But the NVRA mandated that states must keep even those who have moved or died on their registration rolls for at least two federal elections, even if the people whose names have remained on

the rolls have been determined to have moved or died. And, this, in turn, accounts for the substantially higher official figures than prior to the NVRA's implementation.

While states cannot remove names, they can transfer those for whom they have evidence have died or moved to an inactive list, which they are required by the NVRA to report each biennium by March of the year following a national election. A truer picture can be gleaned from the chart below which compares registration rates based on official figures and rates based on official figures minus those kept on inactive lists. The charts on registration and partisan registration in the summary charts below represent the Committee's best estimate of what actual registration is likely to be, based on the states which have provided final and official registration figures at the time of this report. (Three additional considerations when looking at these statistics: 1. Only 28 states and the District of Columbia have partisan registration and the partisan registration percentages estimated below are based on the raw registration figures. There are no similar corrective inactive lists for partisan registrants and it is likely that were there, the estimates for partisan registration percentages below would be smaller in each category. 2. The percentages of Democratic, Republican and Other registrations do not add up to 100 percent. The balance are unregistered. 3. The partisan percentages are taken from raw official data and thus do not yield the same totals as do the overall percentages).

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4. Adjusted Census Figures: Over the years, CSAE has attempted to provide figures on the turnout, percentage of the electorate and percentage of the voting electorate of various demographic groups. These estimates were and are based on the Census Bureau's P-20 series on Registration and Voting, a biennial survey of 90,000 respondents, as part of its continuing Current Population Survey. The Census survey estimates of the percentage of those who voted have always exceeded the actual vote count, owing largely to two factors – some who report voting actually did not (but want to be on the right side of things) and the denominator the survey uses (civilian population) is usually smaller than the actual population of those eligible to vote. For years, CSAE had used a formula which for each demographic group subtracted the difference between the overall reported vote and the actual vote and then added the difference between the vote for President (or, in mid-term years, the votes for the highest race in each state) and the total ballots cast in each state (only 31 states provide this figure), since the question being asked by the Census is whether the respondent voted rather than whether they voted for a particular office. In reviewing what it had done in the past, CSAE found that this methodology tended to understate the vote in various demographic groups. Looking at the Census P-20 responses this year, CSAE found that the denominators which were most closely matched were the Census' civilian population and the new CSAE November citizen voting age population (see Note 2 above). So, for the demographic charts in the back of this report, CSAE calculated the difference in reported voting based on the civilian denominator and the actual vote and then added the total ballots cast to more nearly approximate what percentage of each demographic group voted over time.

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. The Committee is also grateful to all the state election officials for graciously yielding their registration figures after an unconscionable amount of hounding by CSAE's staff.

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. Overall Registration: The chart below represents CSAE's best estimate of the percentage of the citizen eligible vote which will be registered in 2004 and were registered in previous years, adjusting for all the problems in registration lists outlined in Note 3 above:

Year	Estimated Number and Percent Registered	
2004	143,000,000	71.0
2000	133,780,000	68.0
1996	132,000,000	70.0
1992	123,649,000	68.4
1988	116,820,000	67.0
1984	114,750,000	68.8
1980	103,500,000	65.9
1976	95,850,000	66.0
1972	92,700,000	68.7
1968	81,000,000	70.3
1964	78,300,000	72.1
1960	74,250,000	70.9

2. Partisan Registration Trend: Estimated partisan registration based on raw final and official registration figures available at the time of this release. The other category includes those registered for parties other than the Democratic and Republican parties and those who register without affiliation or as independents.

Year	Democratic	Republican	Other
2004	37.3 (est.)	28.8 (est.)	21.9 (est.)
2000	36.3	27.8	19.6

1996	35.9	26.9	15.8
1992	36.6	25.4	12.7
1988	37.6	25.6	10.5
1984	40.2	24.0	10.2
1980	40.0	22.4	8.2
1976	41.5	21.6	6.8
1972	44.4	24.7	4.7
1968	45.8	26.1	3.2
1964	49.4	24.2	1.7
1960	48.3	27.2	1.6