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**REGISTRATION INCREASES BY FOUR MILLION
INDEPENDENTS GAIN MOST, DEMOCRATS LEAST
TURNOUT TO BE LOW, BUT LEVEL UNCERTAIN**

WASHINGTON, October 30 -- The percentage of eligible Americans who are registered rose to its highest level since 1970, turnout for statewide primaries dropped to its lowest level ever, and between 115-120 million eligible Americans will not vote in next Tuesday's mid-term election.

These were among the principal findings of a preliminary study of final registration counts from the 30 states and the District of Columbia which have so far reported and final and official primary turnout statistics from the 39 states which held statewide primaries in 1998, released today by the non-partisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

Among the findings of the Committee **(PLEASE READ NOTES REGARDING REGISTRATION)**:

--Propelled by the first-time mid-term election implementation of the 1993 National Voter Registration Act (the so-called motor voter law), citizen registration, when all states have reported, will have increased by an estimated two percentage points from 1994 to 63.8 percent, the highest level since 1970 when 64.9 percent of eligibles were registered.

--When final figures are in, overall registration will reach an estimated 128,200,000 or 4 million more than would have registered had rates remained the same as in 1994.

--Those registering as independents or for third parties gained the most, growing by an estimated 40 percent since 1994 in the 16 states and the District of Columbia who have reported and register by party. It is likely that when final figures are in from all states and

adjusted for anomalies in those statistics (see notes), Democratic registration will have fallen slightly and Republican registration will have increased slightly. (Although based on unadjusted figures, both parties increased, the Democrats by 1.3 percentage points and the GOP by 2.2.)

--Democratic mid-term registration is fully 23 percent below its apex of 44.68 percent in 1966. Independent registration is nearly ten times greater than it was in 1962.

--In the five states which still keep registration by race, white registration increased by a larger amount than black.

"None of this should be surprising," said Curtis Gans, CSAE's director, "The Motor Voter law was designed to ease registration barriers and enhance the opportunity to vote. And while part of the surge in independent registration is due to a continuous and progressive declining identification with both major parties -- the Democrats nationally and the GOP outside the south -- part of it is also due to the registration of less interested, less motivated citizens, unlikely to have allegiance to either party."

The Committee also found that final, official statistics from this year's primaries confirmed its earlier findings that:

--The turnout rate of 17.5 percent of eligibles in the 36 states which held statewide primaries was a new historic low.

--The Democratic turnout rate of 9.31 percent of eligibles in the 39 states which held statewide Democratic primaries was also the lowest ever.

--Turnout in 16 states with primaries in both parties fell to new lows. Democratic turnout hit a record low in 20 states.

--Overall two-party statewide turnout was 45 percent lower than in 1966, the high point for primary turnout and Democratic turnout was 52 percent lower than in the same year.

"Both these registration statistics and these primary statistics augur bad news for the two-party system and the Democratic Party in particular, unless they make greater efforts to reclaim some of their lost base," Gans said. "But it is not at all clear that the bad news will be delivered this year."

1998 General Election Projections:

"We have never had an election in which the possible removal of a President is both a subliminal sub-text to the debate and, as of recently, an overt issue. Anyone in this climate who would venture a hard prediction about either turnout or result has a degree of hubris that will probably suffer its comeuppance on election day," Gans said, "Nevertheless, below are offered some tentative predictions:"

--Turnout is likely to be between 36-38 percent of eligibles, down slightly or substantially from the 38.8 which turned out in 1994.

--Turnout declines, if they occur nationally, are not likely to repeat 1996 when turnout declined in every state. Minnesota and Kentucky are almost certain to have increased turnout -- due to the nature of the race in Minnesota (a three party affair, including two respected figures and a Reform Party candidate who has achieved a degree of respectability) and due to a tight, open-seat contest in Kentucky, which had not been contested seriously for decades. Other states, most notably Alabama, California, Colorado, Georgia and North Carolina, could experience turnout increases.

--The case for turnout decline is built on a variety of factors: a. that the nation has been experiencing a sustained and substantial decline in turnout for more than three decades, whose likely causes in the erosion of political institutions, decline of community, weakened civic and media education, and execrable conduct of campaigns (among other factors) have not been addressed; b. the evidence of that continued decline in the 1998 primary process; c. polling data from a number of reputable sources indicating interest in this election lower than it was in 1994; d. the fact that the Republican Party deliberately chose, until this week, not to nationalize the election on any issue other than values and trust; e. that the Democratic attempt at a unity platform of a limited number of potentially mobilizing issues came a-cropper in the President's desire to appear Presidential around a range of issues, diminishing in the process any centralized focus for the party; f. only modest gains in registration due to the motor voter law, gains similar to 1996 which did not significantly mitigate turnout decline; and, g. in many places, the ugliness of the campaign, particularly on television, which has had, absent overriding issues, the effect of depressing turnout.

--Turnout decline, if it occurs, may not substantially benefit the GOP. The conventional notion that low turnout benefits the Republicans and high turnout, the Democrats, has not been true for more than three decades. In this election, while two aspects of mid-term demography -- the greater proportion of the mid-term electorate which is more affluent and better educated -- would seem to benefit the Republicans, one aspect -- senior citizens who vote heavily and have been shown in recent polls to favor the Democrats over the GOP by 10 percentage points -- does not. Moreover the Republicans who chose at the eleventh hour to mobilize their base by raising the President's conduct with respect to the scandal for which impeachment hearings are scheduled, adopted a high-risk strategy with respect to a public now anxious, despite their dislike and distrust of the President, to put all of it behind them. That dissonance could lead both to a backlash, which has not so far appeared, and, thus, a degree of mobilization on the part of some Democratic constituencies.

--Which is also to suggest that the turnout decline, while the more likely outcome Tuesday, may not happen because of the one thing hovering over this election like a 5-ton elephant.

"There is no outcome other than a very substantial Republican or Democratic gain in either house of Congress or a large increase in turnout, that I would find surprising," Gans said. "Before the issues which have led to an impeachment inquiry were dumped on Congress in early September, I would have confidently predicted a substantially lower turnout and a

probable substantial GOP victory. Neither of those seem as likely now."

NOTE: Attached are graphs on turnout between 1962-1994 and registration and partisan registration 1962-1998; notes and summary charts; raw state-by-state registration charts; and final and official primary turnout charts.

This preliminary registration release, unlike others the Committee has produced prior to elections, neither cites numerical increases in individual states nor tries to rank either the absolute level of registration or the degree of change in individual states. The Committee will assay that in its final election report, when every state produces its inactive lists and when the raw figures from individual states can be adjusted to make come statistical sense. Caution should be used in the reporting of these unadjusted figures as suggested in the notes below.

NOTES AND SUMMARY CHARTS

This report is the presentation of two reports: 1. A preliminary report on citizen registration based on final official state registration figures from those states which have reported registration figures at the close of registration 1998, compared to similar figures from previous years. (These figures are subject to various caveats listed in the notes below.) and 2. a final accounting of 1998 statewide primary turnout, based on final and official figures from all states which had such primaries.

It should be noted that in all of these reports turnout is arrived at by dividing those who voted (or, in the case of the Census Bureau material, those who self-reported registering or voting in response to survey) by the population eligible to vote and NOT by those registered. For whatever the flaws (noted below) in the eligible vote (Voting Age Population) statistics provided by the Census and minor anomalies in the vote count (also noted below), this gauge is by far more reliable and consistent than registration. Using registration as a denominator leaves out those who both did not register and did not vote (and, in the case of North Dakota, which has no registration, would leave out a whole state). Registration as a denominator has no consistency, since it fluctuates by changes in registration law and procedure. (A major change, such as the implementation of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 -- the so-called motor voter law -- can show dramatic increases in registration and, by virtue of that, exaggerated decreases in turnout.) Registration lists are inflated by those who have either died or moved but remain on the lists because those lists have not been recently cleaned. This might not be a problem, had each state consistent list cleaning procedures with regard to frequency and timing, but they don't. Thus, there is no way of measuring the degree of distortion in individual states. And because of certain provisions in the motor voter law (noted below), state official registration statistics are even more inaccurate than they have ever been.

The following are some notes relating to the figures which have been compiled and the deficiencies in those figures.

1. Voting Age Population:

The denominator for determining the percentage of eligible Americans who vote in this report and in common use is the Census Bureau's early election year estimate of age-eligible population in that election year. (To determine turnout on a consistent basis, that number is divided into the Presidential vote in Presidential election years and into the votes cast for that statewide office which draws the highest vote -- or in the absence of a statewide contest, aggregate vote for all Congressional elections in a state.) While the Census estimate of age-eligible voters (Voting

Age Population or VAP) is both the number used for analysis by most reputable sources and is the only number that provides a constant denominator through the history of the United States, this number is flawed in a number of respects: it includes aliens, convicted felons and people deemed incompetent in mental institutions who cannot vote, and it does not include age-eligible American citizens living outside the United States who can vote. It also does not make accommodations for at least two other factors: it does not factor in the undercount in the decennial Census (see registration notes below), and it counts those in the military at their bases in the several states, although many cast their ballots in the state of their home residence. This figure is used, despite these limitations, because it is one of only two sets of denominators which offer a degree of consistency over time (similar methodology) and thus can be used for historical analysis purposes.

The other denominator, not in common use but a better one, is that developed by Dr. Walter Dean Burnham of the University of Texas which provides a citizen-age eligible population -- one in which the aliens (the largest source of distortion of the Census figures) are removed. Burnham has a data set going back to 1824 for a denominator of eligible population and, since 1870 (the first decennial Census to estimate aliens), that data set attempts through interpolation to exclude aliens. At some future point, funds making that possible, CSAE hopes to provide analysis using both Census and Burnham's figures. But while it should be noted that using Burnham's figures, turnout in 1996 was 51.9 percent, as compared to 49 percent using VAP, the national and individual state trend lines are quite similar -- at a remove of about 3 percentage points higher in Burnham's figures. It should be noted that in certain states with high concentration of aliens -- California and Texas, for example -- actual turnout percentages could be two to three percentage points higher than those reported here.

For 1998, the Census estimated voting age population is 200.9 million. The estimated number of undocumented and documented resident aliens is 14.02 million. There are between 3-4 million convicted felons in prison, and, in some states, even after serving their time who have been stripped of their voting rights. There are between 3-4 million Americans living out of the United States who can vote but are not counted as eligible in the Census estimate. There are, in addition, an indeterminate but relatively small number of people in mental institutions and deemed incompetent who are not included in the 200.9 estimate and there are a presently indeterminate but relatively small number of aliens who have gained citizenship this year, who would reduce the alien estimate.

2. Voting Figures:

Voting figures used in the report are final, official and provided by the election officials of the several states and the District of Columbia. Votes from previous years are also final and official, provided by the election officials and compared with America Votes, a biennial compilation of election statistics published by Congressional Quarterly Press. Primary figures are the votes for that contest which engendered the highest vote. There are essentially three charts in the report on primaries. One for the nation and one for each political party. In some states, there were contests in only one party. There were 36 states which had contests in both parties. But each party had contested races in 39 states, in some cases not the same states. Thus, the partisan percentages are accurate with respect to each party, but may not add up precisely to the national figure.

3. Registration Figures:

Registration figures used in this report are final, mostly, but not always official and provided by the chief election officials in the several states and the District of Columbia. The Committee only uses figures at the close of each registration cycle each biennium, believing those are the only ones which are comparable. In this report, only those states which have reported final figures are included. Note that only about half the states have partisan registration. Previous year's registration figures are final, official and reported by the chief election officials.

Accurate registration numbers have always been difficult to ascertain, made now more difficult by provisions of the National Voter Registration Act (the motor voter law). The registration statistics contained in the back of this report -- provided by the chief election officers of each state and the District of Columbia -- are badly flawed because they contain the names of substantial numbers of citizens who have died or moved. In previous years, it was possible, after study, to estimate that the degree of distortion of registration numbers was approximately 10 percent nationally -- although there would be wide variations on an individual state basis pending the frequency, timing and thoroughness of their list cleaning procedures.

However, in the past, it was possible to present gross registration numbers nationally and a figure for adjusted registration based on a ten percent deflation.

Three aspects of the Motor Voter Law have made this estimation obsolete:

--A provision in the law which prohibits election officials from removing the names of those who have changed residences from the lists until two federal elections have intervened. With mobility rates running about 16 percent a year, this means that an

individual list, after three plus years before names could be removed, could be distorted by as much as 60 percent. Election officials have been given the option of transferring those who would have been removed from the rolls to an "inactive" list, which permits individuals mistakenly placed on that list to vote and which permits some rough approximation of actual registration.

--A provision which makes it illegal for election officials to initiate any proceeding which might lead to removing a citizen from the list or placing him or her on an inactive list within 90 days before an election.

--A ruling by the Justice Department that prohibits non-voting from being used as a trigger for initiating list cleaning procedures -- such as mailings or computer matches with change of address files -- to ascertain whether a citizen is still residing where he or she is listed on the registration rolls. While the law rightly forbids removing a citizen from the rolls for exercising his or her right not to vote, this ruling forces states to double the effort and cost of list cleaning procedures and thus makes it less likely that such list cleaning will be undertaken at any greater frequency than mandated by the law.

While states are not permitted to actually purge citizens from their voting lists if they have moved until two federal elections have elapsed, they are mandated to provide the Federal Election Commission with an inactive list of voters -- voters who would ordinarily be purged but are kept on the list by law -- by March of the year following each Federal election.

Those lists are instructive. Each of the states which created their inactive lists indicated in interviews between CSAE and the election offices that their inactive list essentially represented the names that would have been removed prior to the motor voter law.

Thus, a realistic national picture of registration is derived by ascertaining the gross registration, subtracting the inactive list where applicable and multiplying the resulting total by 0.9 (to account for the normal inflation of national registration in any given election year.)

On the next page is a chart which shows the difference between registration percentages based on official statistics and the adjusted figure subtracting those on the inactive list. At the time of this release, there were eleven states which had compiled their inactive lists, sufficient to make a realistic correction to the gross registration figures at the back of this report. Only three states had lists of inactives by partisan registration, sufficient to be instructive rather than determinative.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

CSAE would like to again acknowledge the assistance that Dr. Walter Dean Burnham has given in each of its major reports in providing historical context to the figures it analyzes.

CSAE would like to thank the Associated Press and the various state and local election offices for their continuing help with CSAE's research.

The statistical analysis in this report and previous CSAE reports has been made possible through a custom database program developed for CSAE by Gary Corbin and Laura Lee Guimond.

Data for this report was gathered by CSAE Research Associate Joel Wolf.

All analysis in this study was done by Curtis Gans, CSAE's director, who is solely responsible for any screw-ups.

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NOTE: The figures in the summary charts below represent CSAE's best estimate of registration this year and in previous years. The tables in back are the reported and unadjusted registration from the individual states.

Note also that Alaska has a registration figure that is in excess of its eligible vote, which, of course, is an impossibility. This will likely also be true of Maine when it reports its registration after the election. The reasons for this anomaly stem from two possible sources: 1. the failure of those states to adequately and in a timely fashion clean their lists of those who have died or moved those leading to inflation of their registration numbers and/or 2. a flawed Census estimate of the eligible population. The Committee has no independent means of ascertaining which of these things is true.

SUMMARY CHARTS

I. TURNOUT IN PREVIOUS YEARS:

YEAR	PERCENTAGE VOTED
1994	38.79
1990	36.53
1986	36.42
1982	40.09
1978	37.77
1974	38.78
1970	46.78
1966	48.61
1962	47.57

II. REGISTRATION TREND: Registration rate as a percentage of eligible vote (VAP) for those states (30) and the District of Columbia which have reported in 1998 and all states in previous years. In each case these percentages are estimates, based on downward adjustments of 10 percent (in all other years except for 1998) account for those names which have not been removed from the rolls, but who have died or moved and, in 1998, also for those placed on inactive lists who would have been purged from the lists.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VAP REGISTERED</u>
1998	63.8 (est.)
1994	61.8
1990	60.0
1986	61.2

1982	60.0
1978	60.1
1974	61.6
1970	64.9
1966	66.0
1962	64.2

III. PARTISAN REGISTRATION TREND: Registration by major party and other (those registering independent and for third parties) for those states (16) and the District of Columbia reporting this year and in previous years which register by party, using unadjusted registration figures:

YEAR	DEMOCRATS	REPUBLICAN	OTHER
1998	34.27	25.54	13.55
1994	33.00	23.34	9.61
1990	33.12	22.72	8.35
1986	35.43	21.98	8.11
1982	35.96	20.61	6.60
1978	38.08	19.93	5.90
1974	38.71	21.52	4.77
1970	41.05	24.85	3.42
1966	44.68	24.49	2.65
1962	43.38	25.39	1.54

IV. 1998 OVERALL FINAL PRIMARY TURNOUT: Overall turnout in statewide primaries in states (36) with statewide primaries in both parties, as a percentage of VAP, based on final and official results from all states.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE</u>
1998	17.50
1994	19.36
1990	20.00
1986	19.72
1982	24.00
1978	23.61
1974	23.86
1970	29.77
1966	31.84
1962	28.61

V. PARTISAN FINAL PRIMARY TREND: Percentage of eligibles who voted in statewide primaries in each party based on final and official state primary turnout figures from all states reporting. Note that each party had statewide primaries in 39 states.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>DEMOCRATIC</u>	<u>REPUBLICAN</u>
1998	9.31	7.96
1994	10.15	8.72
1990	12.47	7.70
1986	11.40	7.08
1982	14.98	7.65
1978	14.83	8.01
1974	15.59	7.02
1970	17.65	10.48

1966	19.66	12.54
1962	18.92	11.84

VI. STATES WHICH SET RECORD LOWS FOR PRIMARY TURNOUT:

Alabama (24.86%)	New Hampshire (11.64)
Alaska (24.95)	New Mexico (20.40)
Arizona (9.66)	North Carolina (14.17)
Arkansas (19.85)	Oregon (21.18)
Idaho (17.45)	Pennsylvania (11.37)
Maine (10.77)	Tennessee (16.66)
Minnesota (18.70)	Texas (7.62)
Missouri (13.60)	Wyoming (33.24)

VII. STATES WHICH SET RECORD LOWS FOR DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY TURNOUT:

Alabama (10.88%)	Missouri (7.45)	Texas (3.44)
Arizona (3.07)	Nebraska (8.77)	Wyoming (9.46)
Arkansas (16.94)	Nevada (7.98)	
Georgia (8.57)	New Mexico (14.08)	
Hawaii (13.40)	North Carolina (9.50)	
Idaho (3.04)	North Dakota (9.14)	
Kansas (5.38)	Oklahoma (11.53)	
Maine (4.72)	Pennsylvania (5.70)	
Maryland (11.16)	Tennessee (7.24)	