

## **GOP NATIONWIDE PRIMARY VOTE EXCEEDS DEMOCRATS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE 1930**

### ***GOP Turnout Highest Since 1970; Democratic Turnout Lowest Ever***

Contact: Curtis Gans, lead researcher, 202-885-6295 (o), 703-304-1283 (c) or [gans@american.edu](mailto:gans@american.edu)  
Maralee Csellar, AU Communications, 202-885-5950 or [csellar@american.edu](mailto:csellar@american.edu)

WASHINGTON, DC (September 7, 2010)—In another sign that the Democratic Party is in deep trouble in the 2010 mid-term elections, the average Republican vote for statewide offices (U.S. Senator and Governor) in the primaries held through August 28 exceeded the Democratic vote, the first time this has happened in mid-term primaries since 1930, according to Curtis Gans, director of American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate.

Republican turnout in their statewide primaries exceeded Democratic turnout in theirs by more than 4 million votes. The average percentage of eligible citizens who voted in Democratic primaries was the lowest ever. The average percentage of citizens who voted in the GOP statewide primaries was the highest since 1970.

These were among the highlights of a report on turnout in the 35 statewide primaries held before September 1 by American University's Center for the Study of the American Electorate, based on final and official results for the primaries prior to August 17 and final but unofficial for those primaries which occurred later.

***A set of charts to provide the numerical basis of the statistical conclusions in this report and notes which explain both the terms and methodology used for this report is available in a PDF download at: [http://www.american.edu/media/upload/2010\\_PrimaryTurnoutData\\_webversion\\_.pdf](http://www.american.edu/media/upload/2010_PrimaryTurnoutData_webversion_.pdf)***

So far, 30,283,128 citizens have voted in the primaries. Of that number 17,182,893 voted in Republican primaries; 12,963,925 voted in Democratic primaries and 136,310 voted in Green and Libertarian primaries or for candidates other than those running for major party nominations. (The GOP had three more statewide contests than the Democrats—Indiana, South Dakota and Utah— but the total votes cast in those GOP primaries was 826,603, hardly accounting for the more than 4 million vote difference between the parties.)

Republican turnout constituted an average of 10.5 percent of the eligible electorate, an increase of 2.3 percentage points over the 8.2 percent who voted in the 2006 primaries prior to September and the highest since 10.9 percent voted in 1970. Republican turnout increased in all but five states of the 35 that had statewide primaries, and GOP statewide primary turnout reached new records in nine states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, Oklahoma and South Carolina.

Democratic turnout was 8.3 percent of the eligible electorate, lower than the 8.7 percent of the electorate who voted during this period in 2006 and continuing almost linear descent in Democratic primary turnout since 20.7 percent voted in the party's primaries in 1966. Turnout increased in only nine of 32 Democratic statewide primaries, and among the 23 states where declines were recorded were many states with hotly contested races, including Connecticut, Florida, Illinois Michigan and Ohio. Democratic statewide primary turnout fell to record lows in 10 states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, North Dakota, Oklahoma and Tennessee.

“Given the intense intramural battles within the Republican party and the growing belief that because of sour economic conditions and the opportunity they present for GOP gains in both houses of Congress and in the states, it isn’t surprising that Republican turnout increased,” said Curtis Gans, director of AU’s Center. “But what’s likely to prove telling is the lower participation of the Democrats, the first tangible demonstration of what polls have been showing– a distinct lack of enthusiasm among the Democratic rank and file.”

“With no prospect of an economic turnaround before November and no program commensurate with the economic and unemployment crisis being proposed by the Obama Administration (however much it may rightfully claim other achievements), it seems highly likely that the Democrats will suffer major losses, possibly mitigated slightly by the extremism of some GOP nominees,” Gans said.

On another level, the combined turnout in the 32 states which had statewide primaries for nominees in both parties was 18.7 percent of eligible citizens, tying 1998 for the second lowest turnout level ever and only exceeding the 16.7 percent turnout in the 2006 primaries. All of these figures are a third lower than the average mid-term primary turnout prior to 1974.

“These figures speak to the falling away of an ever larger slice of the population from active political participation and the continuing decline in public involvement with the major political parties, reducing their ability to serve as forces of cohesion within the American polity,” Gans said.

“All indications are that this situation will get worse, if it ever gets better,” said Gans. “Major Republican gains will almost surely lead to the inability of the Democrats to enact any major programs, particularly with respect to jobs. And in the absence of a major and imaginative jobs program, it is hard to see the economic situation getting palpably better. And that is a recipe for further disillusionment.”

This election is not analogous to the election of 1982 prior to that of 1984, when President Reagan had all the tools necessary in both fiscal and monetary policy to restore growth. It is not analogous to the election of 1938 before the election of 1940 because there will likely be no global conflict to provide impetus to massive government spending. If there is an analogous election, it could be that of 1994, where the Democrats lost massively but the Congressional Republicans under the leadership of Speaker Newt Gingrich egregiously exceeded their mandate. But the Democrats were able to successfully campaign in 1996 against those excesses, in part, because the economy was healthy enough for President Clinton to raise taxes, balance the federal budget and produce a surplus.

“All of which is to suggest that the odds favor the GOP in both 2010 and 2012, if they are careful. But since they don’t have any program to restore jobs and growth, it’s hard to feel hopeful about the state of either the economy or the polity.” Gans said.

Ranked among the top 10 schools of its kind, American University’s School of Public Affairs, home to the Center for the Study of the American Electorate, offers public affairs education on the undergraduate, graduate, and executive levels. The school is also home to research centers and institutes in the fields of political science, public administration, public policy and justice. Graduates of the school are active in global policy legislation, advocacy, and in the nonprofit and private sectors.

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