

Press Release: February 5, 2008: Harwich Students Conduct Primary Exit Poll

Approximately 70 Harwich High School students conducted a primary election exit poll today at the Harwich Community Center. All were seniors taking United States Government. In all, they interviewed 323 voters. The students gained many insights into how individual voters make their decisions. The results:

Overall, Romney was a clear winner over McCain (67% to 28%, Paul and Huckabee got 2% each) and Obama over Clinton (62% to 38%). The war (57%) and the economy (46%) were the two most important issues for voters with health care (24% and character (18%) also prominent (voters were asked to cite one or two issues out of nine). In appraising President Bush's performance, 18% approved, 74% disapproved, and 8% were unsure.

Among the critical independent (unenrolled) voters, Obama (59% to 39%) and McCain (61% to 36%) won, but unfortunately for McCain, independents chose Democratic ballots 3 to 1.

Twice as many voters took Democratic ballots in our poll, and in the issues most Democratic voters cited the war as an issues (65%, favoring Obama 67% to 32%) which most Republicans cited the economy (58%, favoring Romney 69% to 28%). Republican voters approved of President Bush (50% to 35%), while 93% of Democratic voters disapprove.

By candidate, Clinton (79% to 67%) and Romney (74% to 50%) voters were more strongly supportive of their candidate, while Obama (37% to 29%) and McCain (35% to 28%) were more likely to have made their decision in the last week.

By gender, women were a little more supportive of Romney (72% to 61%) and Clinton (45% to 27%) though a majority of women still supported Obama (55%). Women tended to more strongly support their candidate (77% to 59%), and to have made their decision last year (42% to 29%). Not much difference could be seen in issue choices, though women were more likely to cite health care (30% to 18%).

By age (younger: 18-39, middle aged: 40-59, older: 60+), older voters were most supportive of Romney (71% to 64% and 60%, old to young), and younger voters favored Obama (85% to 61% and 53%, young to old). While the war was the largest issue for all groups, this was most pronounced among younger voters (74% to 50% and 56%, young to old). Young voters were also most likely to have made their decision for whom to support in the last week (43% to 29% and 25%, young to old).

The average voter watched 4.1 debates and 55% reported that these helped them make their decision. These voters favored Romney more (72% compared to 63% of those not influenced), while no difference existed among the Democrats.

While our results are limited by their size and location, we think they do reflect many of the trends that drove this election. The actual survey can be viewed at <http://www.harwich.edu/depts/history/dickson/Surveys.htm>