

PRESS RELEASE: March 7, 2012

Harwich High School Students Conduct Super Tuesday Exit Poll

As they have been doing since 1998, Harwich High School Government students conducted an exit poll at the Harwich Community Center on March 6, 2012. Five classes participated, and in all 187 voters were interviewed. Voters were asked not only who they had supported for President, what also the most important issues for them along with questions about how they expect to vote in November for President and the U.S. Senate.

For President, 73% of voters had taken a Republican ballot, and of them, 70% voted for Romney, with Santorum at 10% and the other candidates in single digits. This mirrored the town and state results. By far the most important issue for voters was the economy, as 88% cited this as among their top 1-3 issues. Health care was next most mentioned by 45%, followed by taxes (29%), the deficit/debt (28%), foreign policy (27%), Social Security/Medicare (22%), and education (21%).

In analyzing the identification of issue by party preference we see that all parties cited the economy as the top issue by a wide margin. Beyond that, Democratic voters were more likely to cite health care (58%) and education (33%) as critical issues. For Republican voters, health care was still the second most mentioned issue (43%), and after that they were more likely to cite taxes (33%) and the deficit/debt (31%) as critical issues.

In analyzing the results by gender, we see that women were more likely to have taken a Democratic ballot (by 7%) and to cite health care as a key issue (53% to 34%). Men were more likely to support Romney (by 12%), to support Scott Brown (by 18%, though only 1% less likely to support Warren – women were more undecided on this question), to cite taxes as a critical issue (39% to 22%) and to disapprove of Pres. Obama's performance (62% compared to 51%).

This survey cannot be taken as a representative sample of the overall voting population. Clearly, Republicans and Republican leaning Independents were more motivated to vote in this primary since only the Republican nomination for President was contested in the state. Voting was very light, and we were able to interview many fewer people than past exit polls. These conditions limit the potential value of much of our data, but the look at voter issues and the analysis by party and gender may still have some validity.

As always, the exercise of interviewing voters was a valuable experience for our students. The opportunity to discuss how people voted and why gives them an insight into the range of political views in our society and helps motivate them to become active voters and citizens themselves. Thank you again to Town Clerk Anita Doucette for her ongoing support, and to all the voters who shared their time and views with our students.

For complete results visit our webpage: www.harwich.edu/depts/history/dickson/gov.html

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