

Did Republicans Give Hillary Her Victory in Ohio?

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Global Research, March 13, 2008

The Free Press 10 March 2008

Region: [USA](#)

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Hilary Clinton's larger-than-expected victory in Ohio may have been won with votes from Republicans, and from independents who usually vote Republican.

Much has been made of Rush Limbaugh's other far-right commentators' pleas to Republicans to cast their ballots for her in open primary states like Ohio and Texas. Part of the strategy is to slow down Barack Obama, who analysts argue will be harder for John McCain to beat this fall. Others, like Ann Coulter, have gone so far as to say they actually PREFER Clinton to McCain. Such voters would certainly also prefer the former first lady to Obama.

Whatever the case, there is concrete evidence in Ohio that Republican cross-over voters did, in fact, play a significant role in delivering the Buckeye primary votes to the Senator from New York.

Ohio has a classic open primary. Party affiliation can be whatever a voter states upon entering the polls. Both of this article's writers, who usually vote Democratic or independent, chose to vote Republican in the 2006 primary, essentially because of a desire to oppose J. Kenneth Blackwell, the sitting Secretary of State, because of his role in his voter suppression during the 2004 election. In 2006, though our previous party affiliations were Democratic, each writer merely informed poll workers that we wished to cast a Republican ballot. Raised eyebrows notwithstanding, there were no problems getting them. The same opportunity allowed voters to cross-over last week.

There is clear statistical evidence that many Republican voters did cross-over. The Democratic Party "won at least 141,785 new voters in the four-county region" of Warren, Clermont, Hamilton, and Butler counties according to the Cincinnati Enquirer. Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner told the New York Times that in Clermont and Summit Counties, paper ballots ran out mostly due to a large number of independent and Republican voters crossing over to vote in the Democratic primary.

In Warren and Clermont counties, in southwestern Ohio, the number of votes cast in the Democratic primary are telling. The Cincinnati Enquirer reported that in Warren County, for example, there were 12,440 registered Democrats (9.49%) and 41,377 registered Republicans (31.57%) and 77,237 nonpartisan voters (58.94%). In Tuesday's primary, 27,855 voters (48.53%) asked for Democratic ballots, representing 223.91% of the registered Democrats in that county.

Warren County is notorious for a "homeland security" alert called by county officials on Election Day 2004, causing the ballots to be diverted to and counted in a restricted unauthorized warehouse.

In Clermont County, there were 14,496 registered Democrats and 37,714 registered Republicans, as reported by the Enquirer. In the primary, 26,279 people voted Democratic. One Clermont County presiding judge reported running out of Democratic ballots and turning away at least 30 people, according to the Cincinnati Enquirer.

Election observers on 2004 claimed that 100 or so ballots in Clermont County has stickers over John Kerry's name, that would have caused the vote scanner not to register a marked Kerry vote.

In 2004, Warren, Clermont and nearby Butler County gave Bush some 140,00 more votes than Kerry. Bush's entire margin of victory in Ohio was less than 119,000 votes.

Dr. Richard Gunther, professor of political science at Ohio State University suggests that other factors are in play in Ohio. He sees a likely shift of independent voters, similar to the elections of 1930, 1932 and 1934. In those elections, spurred by the Great Depression, independent and Republican voters shifted their loyalties to the Democratic Party and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, causing a fundamental realignment in politics that lasted for fifty or so years.

There were some technical issues with voting machines in Tuesday's election. The Enquirer reported on power outages in Darke and Hamilton counties and reports of electronic touch-screen voting machines problems in Montgomery County. Voters at one precinct in Lucas County (Toledo) voted on paper ballots after the electronic voting machines failed, according to the Toledo Blade.

Secretary of State Brunner has made significant strides toward guaranteeing freer, fairer and more transparent elections. In the wake of massive irregularities under Former Secretary of State Blackwell in the 2004 election, Brunner has committed the state to paper ballots. In Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), she forced the resignation of Republican Board of Elections (BOE) Chair Bob Bennett, along with the rest of the board. Bennett forced the county to spend \$20 million on electronic touch-screen voting machines, which proceeded to crash in the 2005 primary. Among other things, they registered a 14% vote count error, according to a BOE study.

This spring Brunner ditched the machines in Cuyahoga County in favor of paper ballots. Ironically, the county ran out of the Democratic ballots, indicating a higher than expected turnout of voters for the Democratic primary. In response, a federal judge ordered several Cleveland polling stations to stay open until 9pm so everyone could vote.

In Franklin County (Columbus) a survey by the 16-member election protection team from the Columbus Institute for Contemporary Journalism showed that it took an average of 15 minutes to vote in inner city precincts such as ward #5 and #55. These two precincts had lines between three to seven hours long in 2004.

Restrictions on absentee and early voting were not present in this year's voting as they had been in 2004. Co-author Harvey Wasserman got his absentee ballot in the mail without incident this year, whereas it took four phone calls in 2004. The Franklin County Board of Elections opened with extended hours on the Monday before the primary to give voters greater flexibility.

Two days before primary election day, Brunner forced the resignation of Franklin County

BOE Chair Matt Damschroder. Election officials told the Free Press that Damschroder met with Bush, Blackwell and Karl Rove on election day 2004. Misallocation of voting machines and other irregularities caused inner city residents to wait up to five hours to vote in his bailiwick. Prior to that election, in his BOE office, Damschroder accepted a \$10,000 check for the Franklin County Republican Party from a representative of the Diebold voting machine company. Inexplicably, after Damschroder resigned, the Franklin County BOE, including two Democrats, voted to retain him as a “consultant” at over \$11,000 per month salary.

Anecdotal evidence from Texas, where Clinton won the popular vote in the Democratic primary, also indicates Republican and Republican-leaning independent cross-over voting may have had an impact. While losing the popular vote by a narrow margin, Obama won that state’s caucuses, and emerged from Texas with more Democratic delegates than did Clinton.

Evidence in general would suggest that the intrusion of normally Republican voters into the Democratic primary may signify what statisticians call an “asymmetrical entrance” of new voters. Such a phenomenon could signal malicious cross-over voters or signs of a Democratic realignment, or both. This would also cause errors in pre-election polls. The post-election exit polls may have been affected by the so-called “Bradley Effect,” in which white voters casting ballots in an election where a white candidate is running against a black one tend to mislead exit pollsters about how they cast their actual vote.

This fall it is virtually certain that Ohio will once again play a key role in choosing the next president. Except for John Kennedy in 1960, no candidate has won the presidency without carrying the Buckeye State since the 1840s.

This spring, the Buckeye State has also played a critical part in the race for the Democratic nomination. And it would appear that Ohio Republicans and independents who generally vote Republican were key in handing the state to Hillary Clinton.

Bob Fittrakis and Harvey Wasserman are co-authors of [How the GOP Stole America’s 2004 Election & Is Rigging 2008](#)(www.freepress.org). With Steve Rosenfeld they co-wrote [What Happened iin Ohio?](#) from the New Press.

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