

What did, and didn't, happen in the Iowa Democratic caucuses

by Jeffrey Steinberg

It could be called a tale of two precincts. On Monday night, Jan. 24, an estimated 200 people, overwhelmingly supporters of former Sen. Bill Bradley, turned out for the Democratic Party Presidential delegate selection caucus in one election precinct in Des Moines, Iowa (there were 2,136 Democratic precincts statewide). Those 200 voters got to choose seven delegates for the next, countywide phase of the selection process, leading eventually to a statewide convention, where a total of 56 delegates will be selected to attend the Democratic National Convention in August.

At this particular precinct, two-thirds of the delegates went to Bradley, who turned out twice the number of voters as the purported frontrunner, Vice President Al Gore.

In the adjacent precinct, only 80 voters turned out—mostly Gore supporters—but they got to choose ten delegates to the county conventions.

In the wild world of the Iowa Democratic caucus process, each local precinct was pre-allocated a number of delegates to select—regardless of how many voters turned out for the first-phase vote. These allocations were made by the state Democratic Party, ostensibly based on past polling results. According to one Democratic Party source, the allocations were heavily weighted to areas where support for Gore was expected to be higher, particularly areas where it was believed that organized labor would be able to turn out voters on behalf of the state Democratic Party's chosen favorite, the Vice President.

Fewer votes, but more delegates

According to the results in these two adjacent Des Moines precincts, Bradley out-pollled Gore, yet Gore came away with more delegates to the second-phase selection process—largely because of machinations by the Iowa state Democratic Party.

What were the actual results of a head count of Democratic caucus voters, statewide, on Monday night in Iowa? According to one source, who participated in the Iowa Democratic Party caucuses, the Iowa State Democratic Party issued orders that no voter turnout totals are to be released to the media.

This reporter can confirm that the Iowa state Democratic Party did not make the “raw” voter totals available, despite several efforts to obtain the data, on night of the caucuses and in the days that followed.

All that was released was the number of delegates allocated to Vice President Gore, Senator Bradley, and “other” (in fact, the “other” delegates went to Lyndon LaRouche). As of this writing, the number of voters who turned out for the Democratic caucuses, and the tally of whom they voted for, still remain a dark secret.

It was widely reported in all of the media that 63% of the delegates went to Vice President Gore, and 35% of the delegates went to Senator Bradley. But those percentages only reflect the mirror-distorted delegate allocation procedures of the state Democratic Party. Even the Republicans in Iowa, it should be noted, held a secret ballot, but one based on the actual voter turnout at the caucuses (the Republican caucuses were non-binding; delegates to the Republican National Convention will be selected in a primary vote later this year).

From the polls

What can be said about the Iowa Democratic results is derived almost exclusively from the entrance and exit polls—taken by the media. Furthermore, CNN, Fox, and NBC television networks had already announced the “projected” victories of George W. Bush and Al Gore *45 minutes before the first votes were cast in any Iowa precinct.*

Nevertheless, a few interesting patterns emerged from the entrance interviews conducted by ABC with 1,078 Democrats attending the caucuses, patterns that verified what the Democratic Party official told *EIR*. First, among the “strong Democrats” who attended the caucuses, Gore did well. But, among the caucus participants who did not consider themselves “strong Democrats,” the numbers were much closer. And among those who call themselves “independents,” Bradley beat Gore. Among the youngest voters to turn out, Bradley scored significantly better than Gore. In short, Bradley's prospects improve significantly, when independent voters and young voters turn out.

The day after the Iowa caucuses, Richard Burke wrote in the Jan. 25 *New York Times*, “Mr. Gore's victory was a comeback of sorts. For months he had been worried about Mr. Bradley's surging campaign. . . . An ebullient Mr. Gore, at a rally late tonight, declared, ‘Thank you for the biggest victory of the contested caucuses here in Iowa. Wow! Thank you.’ It was a far cry from the 1988 Presidential campaign when Mr. Gore skipped Iowa, deriding the caucus system as ‘madness’ and calling it ‘the small state of Iowa.’”

Speaking a bit more bluntly, election analyst Gail Collins, in the same edition of the *New York Times*, wrote, “The Iowa caucuses are about as good a barometer of what the public thinks as that *Time* Internet poll that named Elvis the Person of the Century.”