



# NEVADA STATE Democratic Party

**TO:** INTERESTED PARTIES  
**FROM:** THE NEVADA DEMOCRATIC PARTY  
**SUBJECT:** VOTER REGISTRATION ANALYSIS  
**DATE:** 3/3/08

## VOTER REGISTRATION ANALYSIS

### Summary: An Unprecedented Surge in Democratic Voter Registration

Over the past 15 months, Democrats have seen a surge in voter registration that is without precedent in Nevada's history. Due in large part to the January 19<sup>th</sup> early caucus, Democrats have seen a statewide deficit in voter registration grow to a historic and commanding registration lead. The uptick began in late 2006, and was boosted throughout 2007 by campaigns, interest groups, unions and a national spotlight on the caucus that motivated Nevadans to register as Democrats. Same-day registration on January 19<sup>th</sup> gave Democrats an additional boost.

Given the trend in voter registration seen in the 2004 presidential election, when Democrats outpaced Republicans in voter registration throughout the election year, the Democratic advantage should only increase over the coming months.

In every competitive district across the state, Democrats have seen slim margins and voter registration deficits change to significant leads, in some cases evaporating Republican registration advantages. The following chart shows Nevada's paradigm shift over the past 15 months:

*Chart 1.1: Voter Registration in October, 2006, the last report before the 2006 general election, and Voter Registration as of February, 2008*

	Current			October 2006		
	Dems	GOP	Dem Adv	Dems	GOP	Dem Adv
Statewide	427050	392445	34605	396022	402020	-5998
CD2	134664	169511	-34847	123839	172185	-48346
CD3	161745	142845	18900	148497	146590	1907
Clark	303623	233299	70324	281278	240269	41009
Washoe	78129	86828	-8699	68872	85382	-16510
SD5	44854	43210	1644	41963	45003	-3040
SD6	20441	20342	99	19460	21517	-2057
AD5	8961	7924	1037	8597	8522	75
AD13	31725	31268	457	25463	29648	-4185
AD21	9350	9896	-546	8828	10522	-1694
AD23	9533	7453	2080	9366	7589	1777
AD29	9904	8920	984	9402	9412	-10

The aforementioned chart shows a clear shift to the Democratic column across the state. The chart also shows the impact across the state when looking at a cross-section of districts with close registration margins. A summary of the changes includes:

- Republicans outnumbered Democrats by approximately 6,000 active voters as of the close of registration in 2006. As of February 2008, Democrats now outnumber Republicans by almost 35,000 active voters, showing a reverse of nearly 41,000 votes in about one year.
- In Congressional District 3, Democrats held a slim registration advantage of less than 2,000 going into the 2006 Election, when Democrat Tessa Hafen lost by fewer than 4,000 votes. Democrats now hold the largest registration lead in the history of the 3<sup>rd</sup> District – almost 19,000 active voters.
- In State Senate Districts 5 and 6, where Democrats were down by 3,000 and 2,000 votes respectively, Democrats now lead in registration.
- In Clark County, Democrats nearly doubled their registration lead from 40,000 to 70,000.
- In Washoe County, Democrats sliced a 16,500 registration deficit nearly in half to 8,700.

In short, in terms of voter registration, Democrats have turned Nevada from a Republican-leaning state to a solid Democrat-leaning state going into the 2008 Election Cycle.

**The Impact of Same-Day Registration on January 19<sup>th</sup>: Accelerating a Pre-Existing Trend**

Due in large part to a strategic decision to permit same-day registration at the precinct caucuses, Democrats collected more than 30,000 voter registration forms on January 19<sup>th</sup>. But the boost in Democratic registration is not simply a result of same-day registration on January 19<sup>th</sup>. In fact, Democrats had seen a steady rise in voter registration stretching back well before the caucuses.

*Chart 2.1: Pre-Caucus Day Registration and Caucus Day Registration*

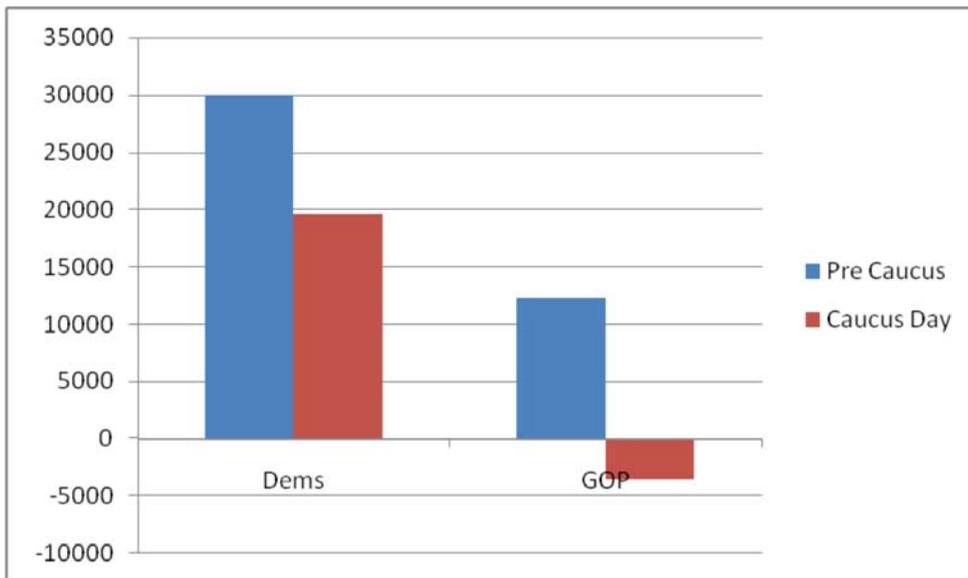


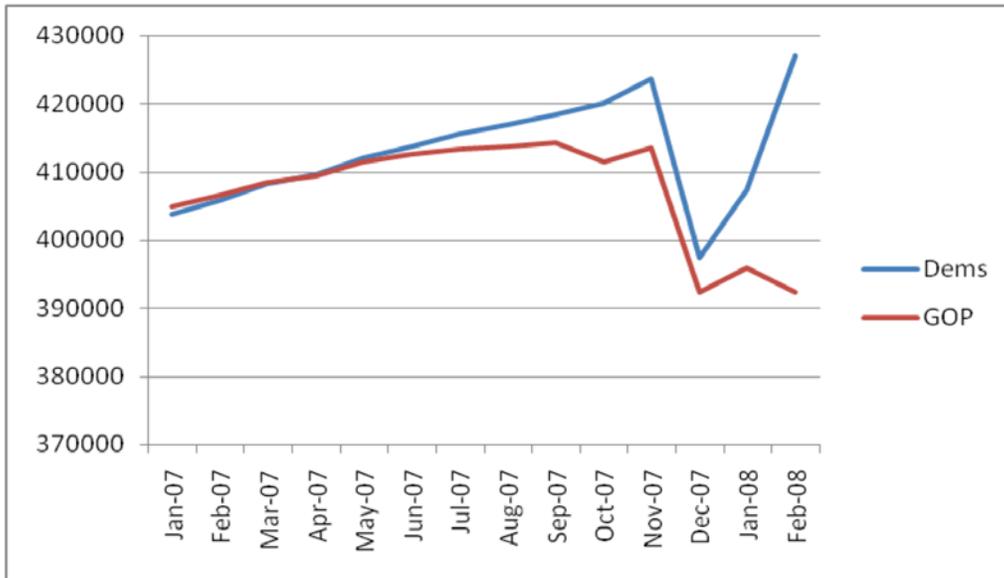
Chart 2.1 shows the relative increase, or decrease, in Republican and Democratic voter registration prior to the Caucus and on Caucus Day.

The chart shows the vast majority of Democratic voter registration gains occurred between the 2006 election and the caucuses. While in some part this boost in Democratic registration can be attributed to the same-day registration at the caucus, it reflects a deeper swing to the Democratic brand over a longer period of time, and not just a one-shot boost in January. During this period, Democrats outregistered Republicans by nearly a 2:1 advantage.

On Caucus Day itself, Democrats saw an increase in registration of almost 20,000 registered Democrats, while Republicans lost almost 5,000 voters. The loss in Republican registration shows two trends: (1) that several thousand Republicans changed parties in order to participate in the Democratic Caucuses, and (2) that while Republican crossover was significant, it was only a minor portion of the Democratic registration surge seen on Caucus Day. In other words, suggestions that the Democratic lead is a result of Republicans who intended to switch for one day and then return to the GOP is false; those voters made up a small portion of the Democratic increase.

The surge in Democratic registration is part of an ongoing increased excitement and “brand loyalty.” This trend began in the months leading up to Democrats’ historic sweep of Congress and is accelerating as Democrats move towards reclaiming the White House in 2008.

Chart 2.2: Democratic Registration versus Republican Registration, January 2007 – February 2008



This chart shows the change in registration for Democrats and Republicans over time beginning with January 2007.

Democrats started 2006 behind Republicans, but the party continued an upward trend that started in 2006 and continued throughout 2007. Republican registration, by contrast, began to flatten out and ultimately fell during the summer of 2007.

County clerks and registrars moved thousands of voters to inactive status<sup>1</sup> in December of 2007, cutting both parties’ active

registration totals and narrowing the Democrats’ lead over the GOP. However, Democrats immediately rebounded in the following two months while Republicans floundered, resulting in the lead in Democratic registration seen today.

In other words, Democrats were already on this road to registration advantage prior to January 19<sup>th</sup>; the caucuses just took us there much faster.

### Registration Projections for 2008: Democrats Likely to Increase Their Lead

Republicans have tried to make the case that they will catch up to Democrats in registration over the course of the election year. In reality, the recent past shows that the very opposite to be true. If anything, Republicans are likely to continue falling behind as we draw closer to November.

In 2000, Republicans and Democrats oscillated between who gained more registered voters from month to month, with Democrats holding a slight lead by Election Day. However, in 2004, Democrats consistently outpaced Republicans in voter registration.

<sup>1</sup> Inactive status is for registered voters who have changed addresses and could not be contacted by election departments in two subsequent attempts. They remain eligible voters unless they miss two federal general elections at which time they are removed from the rolls. Despite being eligible to vote, inactive voters vote at very low rates and are better left out of targets and projections.

Chart 3.1: 2004 Registration Increase by Party by Month

2004 Presidential Election					
	Dem	GOP	Dem Gain	GOP Gain	Adv
Jan 2004	339503	352730	n/a	n/a	n/a
Feb 2004	343679	355116	4176	2386	1790
Mar 2004	351813	360503	8134	5387	2747
Apr 2004*	343954	355527	-7859	-4976	-2883
May 2004	348190	358321	4236	2794	1442
Jun 2004	354950	363463	6760	5142	1618
Jul 2004	376101	377601	21151	14138	7013
Aug 2004	383561	382630	7460	5029	2431
Oct 2004	429808	434239	46247	51609	-5362

Chart 3.1 shows that beginning in February, 2004, Democrats gained more registered voters every month except for April and October. In April of 2004, both parties lost registered voters due to a later-than-usual inactivation of voters. These inactivations tend to favor Republicans, as demonstrated by this chart and chart 2.2. (The inactivation for the 2008 election cycle already happened in December of 2007 and should not be a factor this year). Democrats also fell behind in the period leading to the close of registration. The Secretary of State lacks registration data for September 2004, but shows that Republicans outpaced Democrats by approximately 5,000 newly registered voters in the final stretch of 2004. Regardless, Democrats out-registered Republicans by almost 12,000 voters in 2004.

Coming off of a successful caucus, Democrats already have the foresight and experience to plan a stronger voter registration push in the final months of the 2008 election. Furthermore, if the excitement on the Democratic side of aisle continues throughout the election, and the preponderance evidence suggests it will, then Democrats could very well increase at even higher rates than the 2004 election.

### **The Impact on the 2008 General Election: Competitive Races Lean Strongly in Favor of Democrats**

The impact of this paradigm shift on the November election could be dramatic and may be devastating to the Republican Party in Nevada. Consider the following example regarding the 2004 Presidential Election in Nevada:

- At the close of registration in 2004, Republicans held a 4,431 registration advantage statewide. That year, Senator John Kerry lost to President Bush by 21,500 votes statewide.
- Democrats now hold a registration advantage of 34,605 (giving Democrats an additional 39,036 registered voters compared to 2004).
- Democrats needed an additional 10,751 votes in 2004 to deliver Nevada for Senator Kerry.
- *Looking at today's registration numbers, if all things were equal (and the political climate is almost universally agreed to be better for the Democrats in 2008), Democrats would need to turn out just 27.5 percent of these new Democrats to deliver Nevada for the Democratic Nominee.*
  - *Given the size of the statewide Democratic registration advantage, these new Democrats could turn out at one-third the rate that newly registered Democrats did in 2004 and Senator John Kerry would still have defeated President Bush in Nevada.*

This is true in every competitive district in the state – Democrats have registered so many new voters that the party would have to turn out a relatively small percentage of these voters to win competitive races in 2008.

*Chart 4.1: Registration Compared to Win Margins with New Dem Votes Needed to Win*

	Current			2006/2004					New Dems Needed to Win	
	Dems	GOP	Adv	Dems	GOP	Adv	Win Margin	Reg. Gain	# of New Dems Needed to win	% of New Dems Needed to win
04 Presidential	427050	392445	34605	396022	402020	-4431	-21500	39036	10751	27.5%
06 Gubernatorial	427050	392445	34605	396022	402020	-5998	-23319	40603	11660	28.7%
06 CD2	134664	169511	-34847	123839	172185	-48346	-12575	13499	6288	46.6%
06 CD3	161745	142845	18900	148497	146590	1907	-3971	16993	1986	11.7%
06 SD5	44854	43210	1644	41963	45003	-3040	1807	4684	904	n/a
04 SD6	20441	20342	99	21182	24132	-2950	n/a	3049	n/a	n/a
06 AD5	8961	7924	1037	8597	8522	75	-779	962	390	40.5%

The above table illustrates the impact of the shift in voter registration on competitive districts. The “current” columns show the number of registered Democrats and Republicans and the voter registration advantage. The “2006/2004” columns show the registration numbers from either 2004 or 2006 (whichever was the last election in that district) at the close of registration, the win/loss margin and the registration gain made since that election year.

The last column predicts the number of newly registered Democrats that would need to vote Democratic in 2008 to win these competitive districts, most of which Democrats lost in 2006 or 2004. These competitive races now strongly favor Democratic candidates.

For example, in Congressional District 3 Democrat Tessa Hafen narrowly lost to Congressman Jon Porter by 3,971 votes in 2006. At the time Democrats held a slim 1,907 voter registration advantage. Today, Democrats hold a 18,900 registration advantage and would have needed to turn out only 12 percent – or 1,986 of new Democrats registered in the past 15 months – to win the district.

Even in heavily Republican Congressional District 2, Democrat Jill Derby would have defeated Republican Dean Heller had just 47 percent of the Democrats registered in the past 15 months voted. In context, 81 percent of new Democrats voted in 2004.

## Conclusion

Democrats have steadily increased voter registration over the past 15 months, capped off with a surge on the January 19<sup>th</sup> precinct caucuses. The current composition of registered voters gives Democrats a historic statewide lead as well as significant leads in every single competitive district.

Historical data suggests Democrats are likely to increase their voter registration advantages as the election year continues. This is contrary to Republican spin that the GOP will make up this gap in the next 250 days. In fact, Republicans would have to have a registration surge that would dwarf the recent Democratic registration surge just to return to parity.

The registration advantage now held by Democrats makes competitive races lean strongly in favor of Democratic candidates. While this by no means guarantees Democratic victories in all of these districts, it suggests that Nevada Democrats are in the strongest position in recent history to win contests up-and-down the ballot.