

Trump, Clinton win US presidential nomination contests

Patrick Martin
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Billionaire Donald Trump and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton won their respective contests Saturday, the South Carolina Republican primary and the Nevada Democratic caucuses, boosting the two candidates' prospects in the contests for their parties' presidential nominations.

Trump's was the clearer victory, although he polled barely more than one-third of the Republican primary vote, because he won all 50 convention delegates at stake in South Carolina: 29 awarded to the overall winner and 21 more for winning each of the seven congressional districts in the state. Turnout was a record for a Republican primary in South Carolina, just over 737,000, compared to 604,000 in 2012.

Placing second and third were Florida Senator Marco Rubio and Texas Senator Ted Cruz, each with about 22 percent. Former Florida Governor Jeb Bush trailed badly, with less than 8 percent, followed by Ohio Governor John Kasich and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson. Bush announced only two hours after the polls closed that he was suspending his campaign.

In Nevada, Clinton prevailed over Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders by a 53 to 47 percent margin, but that gave her only a four-delegate margin, 19 delegates compared to 15 for Sanders, because the delegates were awarded in proportion to the votes cast at caucuses held around the state. Democratic turnout was down nearly 50 percent compared to 2008, when Clinton edged Barack Obama in the ballots cast but lost narrowly in terms of delegates.

The two parties will reverse states in the coming week, with Republican caucuses held in Nevada on February 23 and the Democratic primary in South Carolina on February 27. Most polls show Trump and Clinton in the lead in those contests.

The nomination campaign then heads into so-called

“Super Tuesday” on March 1, when primaries and caucuses are held in 11 states, awarding the largest number of delegates for the nominating conventions of any single day in the campaign. Seven primaries are in the South: Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

The American media portrayed Clinton's narrow margin over Sanders as a critical turning point for her campaign, after her double-digit loss in the New Hampshire primary February 9. However, given Clinton's 40-point lead in Nevada polls until recently, and her institutional support from Democratic Party officeholders and union bureaucrats, the Nevada result demonstrates as much weakness as strength.

Sanders piled up large leads among voters 30 and younger (82 percent to 14 percent) and lower-income working class voters, and actually led Clinton among Hispanics. Clinton led by huge margins among voters over 65, and African-American voters, who made up 13 percent of the electorate, sided with her by a nearly 4-1 margin, accounting for her entire margin of victory.

More important than the margin in Nevada, however, Clinton has all-out support from the party establishment. An Associated Press tally published Sunday found Clinton had the support of 449 “super delegates,” those with a convention vote due to holding elective office or membership in the Democratic National Committee, compared to only 20 for Sanders.

Perhaps the most revealing outcome of Tuesday's voting was the final, devastating defeat for Jeb Bush, the putative favorite for the Republican presidential nomination a year ago, and a candidate who spent \$150 million without winning a single convention delegate.

Media coverage of the campaign in South Carolina was filled with commentary declaring the Bush name to be still widely popular in the state, even if it is reviled

elsewhere in the United States. The Bush campaign evidently had the same view, bringing former president George W. Bush to the state for his first—and now only—campaign rally with his brother.

In the final debate before the primary, Trump drew boos from the Republican audience when he denounced George W. Bush for starting the war in Iraq on the basis of lies about weapons of mass destruction. Again, media pundits claimed that such a public attack on the legitimacy of the war and the Bush administration would produce a backlash in the Republican primary. Instead, Trump won easily, with more than four times the vote for Jeb Bush.

The *New York Times*, in a typical attempt to blur the significance of the Bush debacle, described him as “a clunky candidate in a field of gifted performers.” It would have been more correct to describe him as a dull, garden-variety reactionary overshadowed by a gang of ultra-right warmongers and quasi-fascists.

His failure is another demonstration of the enduring popular hatred of the administration of George W. Bush because of the war in Iraq, the worst financial crash since the Great Depression and its handling of the worst natural disaster in US history, Hurricane Katrina.

With the collapse of the Bush campaign, the Republican Party establishment is now seeking to consolidate behind the campaign of Rubio. This marks a further shift to the right, since Rubio, who won his Senate seat as an insurgent backed by the ultra-right “Tea Party” faction, was the most right-wing of the candidates competing for the favor of party leaders.

The Republican contest has evolved into a three-way race, with the fascistic Trump facing Cruz, who appeals mainly to Christian fundamentalists, and the militaristic Rubio, who is backed by the bulk of party leaders and most Wall Street Republicans.

It was noticeable that on the Sunday television interview programs, where Trump, Cruz and Rubio appeared multiple times, both of Trump’s rivals sought to attack him from the right. Cruz attacked Trump on immigration on the grounds that Trump, after deporting 11 million undocumented workers, would permit them to return and get US citizenship. Rubio attacked Trump on foreign policy, pledging a tougher stand on the Syrian civil war and on confronting Russia and China.

One of these programs featured a rare moment of truth, when Republican National Chairman Reince

Priebus told George Stephanopoulos on ABC’s “This Week” that the message of the presidential campaign so far is that “people are just sick and tired of politics in general, sick and tired of Washington, D.C., and, I think, just actually sick and tired of both parties.”

At the same time Priebus, echoing Rubio and Cruz, pledged that he would support Trump if the billionaire demagogue became the Republican presidential nominee.



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