

TOP STORY

Stockton poll finds high enthusiasm to vote in Nov. 8 midterm elections

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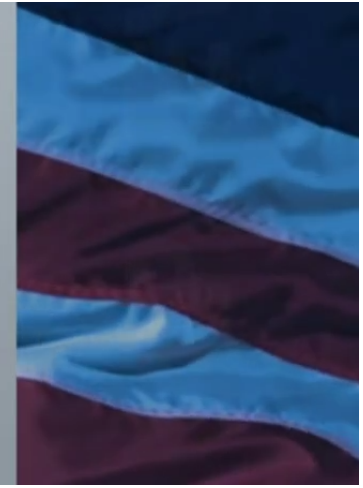


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ELECTION 2022



Many races are won on election night, but it's not uncommon for it to take a few days – an in rare instances, a few weeks – for the Associated Press to declare a winner. That is because each of the 50 states determines its own voting rules, laws and procedures, including when polls close and when mail-in ballots are tallied, which means counting doesn't happen all at once. The Founding Fathers set up the Electoral College — a series of state elections to pick the president — to empower states in terms of their own elections processes. But they didn't stand up a centralized entity to count every citizen's vote. So every U.S. election night, The Associated Press counts the nation's votes, tallying millions of ballots and determining which candidates have won their races. It's been done that way since 1848, when the AP declared the election of Zachary Taylor as president. In 2020, the Associated Press was 99.9% accurate in calling U.S. races, and 100% accurate in calling the presidential and congressional races for each state. In the 2020 race, President Joe Biden was declared the winner four days after Election Day – at 11:26 a.m. ET on Saturday, Nov. 7. Stephen Ohlemacher, AP Election Decision Editor said he oversees and 60 analysts on election night, "and we declare the winners in about 7000 races across the U.S.." On election night, race callers in each state are equipped with detailed information from AP's election research team, including demographics, the number of absentee ballots, and political issues that may affect the outcome of races they must call. For years, AP has employed a full-time elections research team that works year-round to ensure the vote count team, the decision desk and newsroom know as much as possible about what to expect once Election Day arrives. And can pass that on to member news organizations and customers. "In many years, it takes a long time in various states to find out who won different elections," Ohlemacher said. "In the pandemic it did get more pronounced and that's because the increase in mail ballots. It also became more pronounced in more states. Winners may have been called, and concessions may — or may not — have been made, but voting itself is over when polls close on Election Day. There's still more work to do, as local election officials count and verify results through the canvass and certification process. That means that race calls are made before results are official. But the AP only declares a winner when it's certain that the candidate who's ahead in the count can't be caught. "At the AP, we follow the numbers. We call races without fear or favor," Ohlemacher said. "If the numbers say that a candidate has won and we can verify that the vote count is accurate, we declare a winner."

Almost 80% of New Jersey registered voters are enthusiastic about voting in Tuesday's midterm elections, according to a Stockton University poll released Wednesday, and Republicans are more enthusiastic than Democrats or independents.

Among respondents, 25% said the economy is their biggest issue, while 12% said it was abortion and 11% said inflation.

More respondents in the statewide poll of registered voters supported GOP positions on the economy, but Democrats outpolled Republicans on the issues of abortion and health care by large margins.

Still, among voters across the state, a generic Democrat (47%) would beat a generic Republican (37%), according to the poll conducted Oct. 6 to 18 by the William J. Hughes Center for Public Policy at Stockton.

As of Nov. 1, there were about 2.53 million registered Democrats in the state, 1.53 million Republicans and 2.37 million independents, according to the New Jersey **Division of Elections**.

“There is some good news for Republicans in this poll,” said John Froomjian, director of the Hughes Center. “Support for President Biden is weak, Republican enthusiasm is strong and the top issues in the election are working for the Republicans.”



Stark differences between major party 2nd Congressional District candidates

More voters said they supported the Republican positions on hot button issues such as the economy, immigration and crime than were aligned with Democrats, according to the poll.

“One question is whether the Supreme Court’s overturning of Roe v. Wade will motivate Democratic turnout, especially among women,” Froomjian said.

Almost two-thirds of women voters (63%) and 39% of male voters said a candidate’s views on abortion would impact their vote greatly.

The poll of 707 registered voters has a margin of error of +/- 3.7 percentage points.

Among all voters, 57% were very enthusiastic about voting in the midterms, but that jumped to 70% for Republican voters. Another 21% overall were somewhat enthusiastic.

In the 2nd Congressional District that covers all of Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland and Salem counties and parts of Gloucester, Camden, Burlington and Ocean counties, Republicans narrowly outnumber Democrats now, after Democrats for a time took the lead. As of Nov. 1, there were 183,916 Republicans and 179,964 Democrats in the district.

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Primary election Tuesday, here are the basics

Independents, however, are still the largest voting block at 208,153.

The poll did not break answers out by region, Froonjian said. But the area has been voting more Republican in recent elections.

Incumbent U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, of Dennis Township, faces Democratic first-time challenger Tim Alexander, a civil rights attorney and former law enforcement officer from Galloway Township.

On issues of crime and immigration, which Van Drew has stressed in his campaign, the poll found voters are more aligned with the Republicans, Froonjian said.

“Among Republican politicians now those two issues are intertwined,” Froonjian said. “It tells me the Republican advertising and messaging are breaking through.”

Parts of New Jersey may be catching up politically with South Jersey, “which we have seen becoming more red, shifting from being a swing area to more reliably Republican,” Froonjian said.



Abortion issue causing lots of buzz, but will it bring out Democratic voters?

The races in the 7th and 3rd congressional districts are competitive this year, he said. Both were formerly Republican leaning but have Democratic incumbents who could be vulnerable if the Red Wave expected nationally hits here.

In the 3rd, covering almost all of Burlington County and parts of Ocean County, Democratic U.S. Rep. Andy Kim faces Republican Bob Healey. The Cook Political Report recently moved the district from likely Democratic to leans Democratic.

In the 7th, which Cook says leans Republican, U.S. Rep. Tom Malinowski faces Republican former state Sen. Tom Kean, who will benefit from redistricting this year.

Voters were about evenly split in their opinion of President Joe Biden, with 46% having favorable views and 47% having unfavorable views. Asked whether Biden should run again, 56% (24% of Democrats) did not want Biden to run for reelection in 2024.

And 67% of voters (26% of Republicans) did not want former President Donald Trump to run again in two years.

Voters are somewhat split over whether to support forgiving up to \$20,000 in student loan debt for individuals earning less than \$125,000 and households earning less than \$250,000.

Half support the plan while 41% oppose it and 9% are not sure. Voters younger than 30 agreed with it the most (71%) and support was lowest among senior citizens (40%).

One in five said they currently have student loan debt while 28% have paid their student debt off, and just over half have never had student loan debt. Nearly half of those who never had student loan debt still support the cancellation (48%-39%).

But of those who did have debt at one point and paid it off, most (54%) oppose it while 40% support it. Of those with student loan debt currently, 68% support and 29% oppose.

Fewer than one in three voters (30%) have paid close attention to the January 6 Committee hearings. About one-third said they have followed them somewhat closely while 36% said not very closely or not at all.

Of those who watched them at all, 79% said they did not change their opinion of what happened that day.

The poll was conducted via a mix of technologies.

Stockton students texted cellphones with invitations to take the survey online, and Opinion Services contacted respondents by cell and landline telephone.

Most interviews were conducted by phone (450), but the remaining 257 answered online, according to the Hughes Center.

Data are weighted based on U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey data for New Jersey on variables of age, race, ethnicity, education level, sex and region, the Hughes Center said.

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