

Voter Turnout in New Hampshire Exceeded Expectations

January 25, 2024 **by Dan McCue**



The New Hampshire state capitol Primary Day morning. (Photo by Dan McCue)

CONCORD, N.H. — Voter turnout for the 2024 New Hampshire presidential primary on Tuesday exceeded the secretary of state's expectations despite the fact many complained beforehand that this year's contest lacked the oomph of previous primary seasons.

Numbers released Wednesday by Secretary of State David Scanlan showed 323,166 Republican ballots were cast on primary day; of Democratic ballots, 121,152 were cast.

Last week Scanlan had predicted about 322,000 Republican ballots would be cast and about 88,000 for the Democrats.

There are 873,357 total registered voters in New Hampshire.

Of these, 267,768 are registered Republicans and 261,254 are registered Democrats. The state's largest block of voters are the 344,335 who registered undeclared.

And it's the members of this last group who often play the decisive role in New Hampshire elections.

As John Williams, moderator of Ward Four, the voting precinct closest to the state Capitol in Concord, explained, "They're the one group of voters who can participate in our primaries and vote for either side."

Under New Hampshire state law, a Democrat wishing to vote in the Republican primary or a member of the GOP wishing to vote for a Democrat must change their registration to the appropriate party by early October.

Undeclared voters retain their right to pick a side right up to their arrival at their polling place — which is called a "ward" in New Hampshire. As "moderator," Williams is responsible for ensuring everything runs smoothly.

"What happens," Williams said the day before the primary, "is undeclared voters will step up to one of our tables of volunteers, and they'll sign an affidavit saying they want to vote in one party's primary or another.

"After showing their photo ID, they'll then be given the ballot for the primary they want to participate in, and they step into the booth to fill it out. Once they're done, they walk their ballot over to the vote-counting machine and slide it into the slot.

"What's interesting with the undeclareds is they typically rush over to a designated area in the polling place to have their undeclared voting status instantly restored," Williams said.

Breakdowns of the votes by county can be found [here](#).

As for the perception of malaise that had surrounded the run-up to the election, the mood was perhaps best summed up by Michael Dunham, a political memorabilia collector from Massachusetts, who has been driving north to attend the primary for years.

“Most years, at least one political party has a big field of candidates competing for everybody’s attention — and sometimes both do,” he said. “And as you can imagine, that situation naturally lends itself to a certain level of excitement.

“This year, the Republican field was narrowed from 14 to just two candidates before they even got here. And the Democrats aren’t even officially competing here,” he said.

“It’s not bad. There are still quite a few people here. It’s just different. A little quieter than past years,” Dunham said.

One segment of the state’s population that was decidedly not quiet was the one engaged in the massive, grassroots effort to have Democrats write in President Joe Biden’s name on the party’s ballot.

Biden did not file to run in the primary because the Democratic National Committee decided to revamp its primary calendar this year, putting an end to New Hampshire’s first-in-the-nation status and sanctioning South Carolina as first instead.

The plan flew in the face of state law, which mandates that New Hampshire hold its primary a week before any similar contest, and Scanlan opted to hold its position.

After the state’s decision, Biden did no campaign events in New Hampshire, and the DNC sent a letter to local Democrats actively

trying to discourage voting, saying that the votes would be meaningless.

Nevertheless, what amounted to a volunteer army of Biden supporters managed to get him more than 77,000 write-in votes, 63.61% of all Democratic votes cast.

Ray Buckley, chairman of the New Hampshire Democratic Party, quipped, “It was the easiest victory any candidate for president has ever had.”

Though town clerks, ward moderators and volunteers across New Hampshire had to count the tens of thousands of write-in ballots caused by the Democrats’ stance on the primary and the effort to ensure a Biden win anyway, officials said they were well prepared for the job.

“When it comes to elections, New Hampshire probably has the best system in the world,” said Nick Wallner, clerk at the Ward 5 polling place at the Christa McAuliffe Elementary School in Concord.

The school was named to honor the teacher-astronaut who died in the space shuttle Challenger explosion in January 1986. Her children attended the school and she taught at the nearby high school.

Wallner was particularly enthusiastic about the Dominion voting machines the state had employed.

“It works extremely well,” he said. “When a voter inserts their ballot, if it’s marked correctly, it is directed to one bucket inside. If it’s a write-in vote, it goes to another. And then, if for some reason, there’s a defect, it rejects the ballot and we’ll put it in a separate slot on the sides.

“And it’s totally secure,” Wallner said. “It’s not hooked up to the internet in any way, and the only cable you see coming from it is the one we plug into the wall for electricity.”

Wallner and Williams both said there are several redundancies built into the New Hampshire vote-counting system to ensure its accuracy, starting with retaining all of the paper ballots as backups.

Then, once the poll closes, the electric tally from the voting machine is matched against a hand count of the ballots.

“Occasionally, we might be off by one or two votes, usually stemming from those cases where the moderator has had to try to figure out the voter’s intent on a ballot that wasn’t read by the machine,” Wallner said.

“One thing that I think has set this primary apart from some of the others is the response of people to all these accusations around the country of voting fraud,” said Roger Wellington, assistant Ward clerk at Ward 5.

“People here in New Hampshire take our elections very, very seriously and they are eager to help. It’s a point of pride with us, and we had many more people volunteer to come out this year — almost too many — wanting to push back at this attack on elections and play a role in validating our count,” Wellington said.

These are the full New Hampshire presidential primary election results for 2024 with 100% of wards reporting:

NH PRIMARY REPUBLICAN

Candidate	Votes	Percent
DONALD TRUMP	175,308	54.25%
NIKKI HALEY	139,792	43.26%
RON DESANTIS	2,223	0.69%
CHRIS CHRISTIE	1,488	0.46%
WRITE-INS	1,158	0.36%
VIVEK RAMASWAMY	826	0.26%
RACHEL SWIFT	533	0.16%
MIKE PENCE	401	0.12%
RYAN BINKLEY	314	0.10%
MARY MAXWELL	279	0.09%
TIM SCOTT	189	0.06%
DOUG BURGUM	179	0.06%
ASA HUTCHINSON	106	0.03%
SCOTT AYERS	79	0.02%
DARIUS MITCHELL	73	0.02%
GLENN MCPETERS	50	0.02%
PETER JEDICK	25	0.01%
PERRY JOHNSON	25	0.01%
DAVID STUCKENBERG	25	0.01%

DONALD KJORNES	23	0.01%
SCOTT MERRELL	21	0.01%
JOHN CASTRO	19	0.01%
ROBERT CARNEY	15	0.00%
HIRSH SINGH	9	0.00%
SAMUEL SLOAN	6	0.00%

NH PRIMARY DEMOCRAT

Candidate	Votes	Percent
JOE BIDEN (WRITE-IN)	77,061	63.61%
DEAN PHILLIPS	23,977	19.79%
OTHER WRITE-INS	10,071	8.31%
MARIANNE WILLIAMSON	4,938	4.08%
DEREK NADEAU	1,587	1.31%
VERMIN SUPREME	905	0.75%
JOHN VAIL	679	0.56%
DONALD PICARD	365	0.30%
PAPERBOY PRINCE	316	0.26%
PAUL LACAVA	175	0.14%
JASON PALMER	141	0.12%
PRESIDENT BODDIE	136	0.11%
MARK GREENSTEIN	131	0.11%
TERRISA BUKOVINAC	101	0.08%
GABRIEL CORNEJO	86	0.07%
STEPHEN LYONS	80	0.07%
FRANKIE LOZADA	73	0.06%
TOM KOOS	71	0.06%
ARMANDO PEREZ-SERRATO	67	0.06%

STAR LOCKE	57	0.05%
RAYMOND MOROZ	51	0.04%
EBAN CAMBRIDGE	47	0.04%
RICHARD RIST	37	0.03%

