

## Iowa Politics Roundup: GOP Cuts Registered-Voter Deficit in Half

Written by Lynn Campbell  
Friday, 09 July 2010 09:42

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Iowa Republicans in the past month cut in half what was more than a 100,000-person deficit in voter registration.

As of this week, there are 699,972 active and inactive registered Democrats in Iowa and 644,838 registered Republicans, a difference of 55,134, according to the Iowa secretary of state's office. That compares with Republicans trailing Democrats by 102,450 on June 1, and by nearly 113,000 in January.

"In total, the Republicans reduced the deficit by 47,316 voters," said Iowa Secretary of State Michael Mauro. "Historically speaking, primaries are driven by parties. Nearly all the competitive races were found in the Republican Party this year, with the governor and three congressional districts, a secretary of state's race, a state treasurer's race."

Between June 1 and July 1, Republicans gained 37,271 registered voters, while Democrats lost 10,045 registered voters and independents lost 23,284. Voters had the ability to change their party registration at the polls, and many of them did so. Mauro said that in 2002 and 2006, Iowa also saw increases in voter registration for the party with competitive primaries.

Because party registration is not required in the general election, Mauro said voters won't necessarily change their party affiliation back before November 2, but he said "it's something [that] usually corrects itself over the next couple election cycles." He pointed out that Democrats went into the 2002 general election with a 40,000 deficit in voter registration, but Governor Tom

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Vilsack and U.S. Senator Tom Harkin still won re-election.

"It's really difficult to draw any definite conclusions about this year's numbers and how they'll impact the elections this fall," Mauro said. "But clearly, the primary did have an impact on the political landscape here in the state. With the number of competitive races on the Republican side, I think they were able to attract many new registered voters. I think what it does show is that Iowans are independent-minded voters."

Mauro, a Democrat who is on the ballot for re-election this November, warned incumbent Democrats of what the new voter-registration numbers could mean for their chances. "How do you deny that there's momentum there?" he said. "I think it should give everybody some pause for concern. I think you still have to work. You can't declare a winner or loser from this, but it does tell you things are moving."

### **TouchPlay Litigation Ends; State Avoids "Economic Catastrophe"**

The State Appeal Board this week approved a \$150,000 claim against the Iowa Lottery Authority and the state, concluding four years of litigation by former manufacturers, distributors, and operators of TouchPlay games.

While the claim was in favor of the plaintiffs, the settlement was far less than the \$900 million in TouchPlay-related claims against the state. Dozens of plaintiffs sued following the state's decision in 2006 to prohibit TouchPlay gambling machines after initially approving them.

Attorney General Tom Miller and his staff settled the claims for \$18.4 million, which is less than the \$30 million in revenue collected by the state from TouchPlay vendors.

"The TouchPlay settlements saved the state from potential economic catastrophe," Miller said. "We treated TouchPlay vendors fairly, acknowledging their substantial losses. At the same time, we put in a tremendous amount of effort to minimize the financial damage to the state."

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### **Culver Administration Blames Charter-Agency Law for Misspending in Alcoholic-Beverages Division**

Iowa's "charter agency" law created a lack of oversight that led to alleged misspending in the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division under administrator Lynn Walding, Governor Chet Culver's chief of staff said this week.

"In some instances, we feel that the controls were not adequate to begin with because this was subject to a concept called 'charter agencies,' which was an experiment of government and I think worked extremely well in some cases," Chief of Staff Jim Larew said. "But the concern was the kind of controls that normally apply to state agencies were not, in many cases by design, applied to charter agencies. And in this instance, we felt that there were insufficient controls."

A state audit released last Friday showed that the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division improperly spent tens of thousands of dollars over the past four years on artwork, leather chairs, bicycles, a camper, high-definition televisions, and other products. The agency is also alleged to have spent millions on contracts to renovate its offices without going through the proper bidding process.

Larew said concerns were brought to the governor's office in the fall of 2008. The Iowa Department of Management sought an opinion from the state attorney general's office whether there was legal cause to remove Walding but was told that there was not. So he said the department put "immediate and careful controls" on that agency, which he said were effective in ending the concerns. He said a future audit will show that the issues were addressed.

There is no criminal investigation in the case. Larew pointed out that Walding was not accused of using financial resources for his own benefit. Walding was appointed during the tenure of Governor Tom Vilsack, and the charter-agency law also took effect under the Vilsack administration. About five state agencies became charter agencies under the law, in an attempt to become more entrepreneurial. The law has since expired.

"It was a question of judgment to be sure," Larew said. "The charter-agency concept came to its

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own natural conclusion through a sunset provision. This was one where the governor and lieutenant governor made it clear that they did not want to renew that going forward. So there are no other charter agencies in Iowa government. ...There were examples that we heard of in some of our departments that were excellent, really putting taxpayer money to good use." But achieving "those efficiencies by definition required loosening of some of the day-to-day controls that government agencies normally have."

Republican nominee for attorney general Brenna Findley said Miller should explain to Iowa taxpayers why he advised Culver not to fire Walding.

State Auditor David Vaudt revoked the Culver administration's privilege to receive advance copies of state audits after Vaudt said Culver leaked to the press the Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division audit. And Democratic candidate for state auditor Jon Murphy questioned the timing of the audit by Vaudt, saying "apparently it took over a year for the auditor's office to get answers to questions to help complete this particular audit."

### **Flood Concerns Move to Southern Iowa; Governor Requests Presidential Declaration**

Culver announced late Wednesday during his tour of flooded areas in Ottumwa and Eddyville that he's asked President Barack Obama to declare 35 Iowa counties federal disaster areas after flooding and storms in recent weeks.

"The state of Iowa stands ready to make assistance available to those who need it," said Culver, who planned to sign the letter to Obama on Wednesday night.

Culver on Thursday cautioned Iowa residents to carefully document losses and expenses related to flooding to prepare for eventual claims for assistance.

As of Thursday, 31 counties remained under state disaster proclamations, and 24 Iowa counties were under flood warnings for river flooding -- down from 28 the day before. No heavy rain fell across Iowa on Thursday, and a break in the rainfall along with lower humidity is forecast through Saturday.

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Roads that remain closed include U.S. Highways 61/136 in Lee County, Iowa Highway 2 in Fremont County, and Iowa Highway 5 in Warren County, along with many county roads, city streets, and multi-use trails.

### Primary-Election Results Now Official

Results of Iowa's June 8 primary election are now official, following a state canvass this week.

Official statewide results follow.

- Turnout: Democrats 73,218, Republicans 229,732, total 302,950.
- Republican gubernatorial primary: Terry Branstad, 114,450 (49.8 percent); Bob Vander Plaats, 93,058 (40.5 percent); Rod Roberts, 19,896 (8.7 percent).
- Democratic U.S. Senate primary: Roxanne Conlin, 52,715 (72 percent); Bob Krause, 8,728 (11.9 percent); Thomas Fiegen, 6,357 (8.7 percent).
- Republican First Congressional District primary: Benjamin Lange, 14,048 (40.9 percent); Will Johnson, 6,067 (17.6 percent); James Buddem, 3,347 (9.7 percent); Mike LaCoste, 3,076 (8.9 percent).
- Republican Second Congressional District primary: Mariannette Miller-Meeks, 18,830 (47 percent); Steven Rathje, 8,155 (20.4 percent); Christopher Reed, 5,365 (13.4 percent); Rob Gettemy, 4,749 (11.9 percent).
- Republican Third Congressional District primary: Brad Zaun, 19,469 (38.7 percent); Jim Gibbons, 13,022 (25.9 percent); Dave Funk, 9,989 (19.9 percent); Mark Rees, 1,981 (3.9 percent); Pat Bertroche, 690 (1.4 percent); Jason Lee Welch, 572 (1.1 percent); Scott Batcher, 464 (0.9 percent).
- Democratic Fifth Congressional District: Matthew Campbell, 7,119 (62.3 percent); Mike Denklau, 2,261 (19.8 percent).

There was only one recount in the state, in the Republican primary for Iowa House District 2 in Woodbury County. Official results show that Cate Bryan defeated Ryan Beardshear by 13 votes, 549 to 536. Bryan will now face Democrat Chris Hall in November. The seat was held by Representative Roger Wendt (D-Sioux City), who abruptly retired earlier this year after learning that his cancer had returned.

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*This weekly summary comes from [IowaPolitics.com](http://IowaPolitics.com), an online government and politics news service. Reporter Andrew Duffelmeyer and other correspondents contributed to this report.*