Revisiting the Latino Vote in Florida: An Analysis of Voter Registration Data from August 2016

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About the CNN en Español and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies Partnership:

CNN en Español (CNNe) and the Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies (CLACLS) at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY), have partnered to provide an exclusive focus on Latino voters in America, the fastest growing minority voting bloc that could play an instrumental role in determining the next President of the United States. Through rigorous academic research generated by CLACLS’ Latino Data Project, CNN en Español will broadcast detailed reports about Latinos in the American elections over several multi-media platforms geared toward Spanish-speaking audiences around the world, including 4 million U.S. households.
The Center for Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies is a research institute that works for the advancement of the study of Latin America, the Caribbean, and Latinos in the United States in the doctoral programs at the CUNY Graduate Center. One of its major priorities is to provide funding and research opportunities to Latino students at the Ph.D. level.

The Center established and helps administer an interdisciplinary specialization in Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies in the Masters of Arts in Liberal Studies program.

The Latino Data Project was developed with the goal of making information available on the dynamically growing Latino population of the United States and especially New York City through the analysis of extant data available from a variety of sources such as the U.S. Census Bureau, the National Institute for Health, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and state and local-level data sources.

All Latino Data Project reports are available at http://clacls.gc.cuny.edu

For additional information you may contact the Center at 212–817–8438 or by e-mail at clacls@gc.cuny.edu.

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As the 2016 presidential election enters its final month, it is increasingly clear that Florida is in all likelihood the swing state which will determine who will become the next president of the United States. Political commentators, pundits, and data analysts have concluded almost unanimously that Donald Trump cannot win the presidency without winning Florida and its 29 electoral votes, a state won by President Obama by 0.9% of the popular vote in 2012.¹

It is also clear that the Latino vote in the state will be critical if Hillary Clinton is to win Florida. Latinos cast about 17% of all ballots in the reelection of President Obama in 2012 and because of steady demographic growth since then CLACLS projects that they may comprise 20% of all ballots to be cast in November 2016. Exit polling data for 2012 indicated that about 60% of all Latinos voted for President Obama and it is clear that to carry Florida Clinton must win an equal percentage or more of the Latino vote in the state. Current polling data indicates that Trump’s support in the state among Latinos is well below the 40% of the Latino vote won by Mitt Romney in 2012.²

In the report on Florida Latino voters issued in March 2016 CLACLS analyzed actual voter registration data issued by the Florida Department of State. At the time that report was published the most current data was from October 2014. Since then Florida has published monthly updates on voter registration for each county and the major race/ethnic groups in the state, the most recent dated August 1, 2016.

CLACLS has analyzed these data to determine if the trends indicated by the 2006-2014 data continued to 2016. These may be summarized as follows: Latinos increasingly registered as Democrats throughout the state (38.9% in 2014); as Independents (33% in 2014); and registered Latino Republicans decreased between 2006 and 2014 and were 27.2% of all registered Latino voters in 2014.

The 2016 data confirm these trends as indicated in Figure 1. Between 2014 and 2016 Latinos registered as Democrats inched up to 38.8% of all registered Latino voters; independents increased slightly to 33.3%; and those registered as Republicans continued to decline from 27.2% in 2014 to 26.4% in 2016.

In 2014 Latinos comprised 14.6% of all registered voters in the state. This increased to 15.4% in August 2016 reflecting the demographic increase of the Latino population of Florida.

The March report noted that about 83% of all registered Latinos in Florida were found in Central and South Florida counties in 2014 and this remained exactly the same in 2016. These counties are indicated in map 1.


² A September poll by New Latino Voice in Miami-Dade County where there are large concentrations of Latino voters revealed that a mere 18% supported Trump compared with 74% supporting Clinton. If this is accurate, and a reflection of Latino voter sentiments throughout the state, Clinton will have a very strong chance of carrying Florida. See http://latinousa.org/2016/09/07/trump11poll/
Map 1
Central and South Florida Counties

Central Florida Counties
- Orange
- Osceola
- Brevard

South Florida Counties
- Palm Beach
- Broward
- Miami-Dade
One of the main demographic changes taking place in the state among Latinos since 2014 is the arrival of large numbers of Puerto Ricans to central Florida counties. Voter registration data do not indicate the nationality of Latino voters, but evidence from Central Florida suggests that the increase of the area’s Latino population fueled by Puerto Rican arrivals, has led to a rise in Latinos registering to vote at a much higher rate than elsewhere in the state. The number of registered Latino voters in Florida rose by 9.5% between 2014 and 2016. In South Florida they increased by 6.5%. But in Central Florida Latino registered voters grew by 13.8% and this was in all likelihood related to the influx of Puerto Ricans from the island. (See table 1).

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Maps 1 and 2 indicate the concentration of the Latino electorate in Central and South Florida counties as of 2014 census data. These are where Latino citizens 18 years of age and older lived. It is impossible to determine the percentage which was registered to vote. However, since about 72% of all eligible Latinos registered to vote in 2012, it may be assumed that a similar percentage of registered voters are found in these counties.

On election night 2016, as returns are posted for Florida, it may be instructive to pay attention to results in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, as well as in the Orlando region of Central Florida, for some indication as to how the state may vote and the important role that Latino voters will play in its outcome.

Table 1
Latino Registered Voters in Florida by Region, 2014 -2016

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Registered Latino Voters 2014</th>
<th>Registered Latino Voters 2016</th>
<th>% Increase 2014 - 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Florida</td>
<td>1,736,769</td>
<td>1,902,079</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total South Florida</td>
<td>996,773</td>
<td>1,061,535</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Central Florida</td>
<td>458,088</td>
<td>521,463</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Map 1
Latino Electorate by Census Tract
South Florida Counties, 2014

200 or less
201 - 500
501 - 1,500
1,501 - 2,500
2,501 - 3,500
3,501 +
Map 2
Latino Electorate by Census Tract
Central Florida Counties, 2014

- 200 or less
- 201 - 500
- 501 - 1,500
- 1,501 - 2,500
- 2,501 - 3,500
- 3,501 +