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Early Vote Totals Across Texas Suggest Record Democratic Turnout in 2008 Democratic Primary, and Below Average Republican Participation

We have new data from the Secretary of State's office showing Early Vote totals through Sunday for the 15 most populous counties in Texas. Here are the comparative figures for the Democratic and Republican primaries with the ratio of Democratic voters compared to Republican voters:

County	Dem Early Vote	Rep Early Vote	Ratio (D/R)
Harris	66,756	23,851	2.8
Dallas	49,485	13,770	3.6
Tarrant	35,144	14,416	2.4
Bexar	42,198	14,033	3.0
Travis	36,890	7,396	5.0
Collin	15,155	9,756	1.6
El Paso	23,794	4,406	5.4
Denton	11,180	6,348	1.8
Hidalgo	25,556	1,494	17.1
Fort Bend	13,581	7,344	1.8
Montgomery	5,265	7,165	.7
Williamson	8,708	4,852	1.8
Nueces	9,106	2,090	4.4
Galveston	7,563	2,346	3.2
Cameron	9,870	966	10.2
TOTAL	360,259	120,233	3.0

Using these totals, we can estimate the total primary vote for each party as follows:

- (1) These 15 counties represent 60% of the total statewide vote, so we extrapolate that the entire state's early vote total as of Sunday was about 600,000 on the Democratic side and 200,000 in the Republican primary.
- (2) Based on past patterns, we can conservatively assume that about 50% of the early vote had been cast by Sunday, which means that final early vote total will be about 1,200,000 in the Democratic Primary and 400,000 in the Republican primary.
- (3) And finally, we can conservatively project that the early vote represents about 45% of the total statewide vote, which yields a final Democratic primary vote in 2008 of 2,667,000, and a final Republican vote of 889,000.

How do these numbers compare with previous party primaries in presidential years? Again, using the Secretary of State's data, here is how our projection stacks up against the 1972 – 2004 vote patterns in Texas.

	Democratic Primary	Republican Primary
2008 Projected Total	2,667,000	889,000
Actual Vote in:		
2004	839,931	687,615
2000	786,890	1,126,757
1996	921,256	1,019,803
1992	1,482,075	797,146
1988	1,767,045	1,014,956
1984	1,463,449	336,814
1980	1,377,767	526,769
1976	1,529,168	356,307
1972	2,192,903	114,007

We see that the expected Democratic primary vote will be a modern record, even exceeding the 1972 primary total which then included a hotly contested gubernatorial vote after the Sharpstown Bank scandal had undermined Governor Preston Smith and Lt. Governor Ben Barnes in an era when the Democratic primary was still the effective election for nearly all state and local offices in Texas.

On the other hand, even with many more state and local offices now held by Republicans and a moderately contested GOP presidential primary with Senator John McCain, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, and Congressman Ron Paul, the Republican primary vote will barely exceed that of 2004 when President George W. Bush was unopposed for his re-nomination, and will lag behind the 2000 and 1996 totals.

What does this sharp rebound in voting in the Democratic Primary portend for Senators Clinton and Obama? We'll take that up in a post tomorrow.