



# POLIDATA® Political Data Analysis

DATABASE DEVELOPMENT, ANALYSIS AND PUBLICATION;  
POLITICAL AND CENSUS DATA; REDISTRICTING SUPPORT

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## **PRESIDENTIAL RESULTS BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS**

### ***Bush Strengthens His Control in the U.S. House***

March 23, 2005

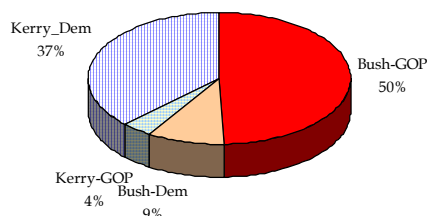
CLARK BENSEN<sup>1</sup>

POLIDATA® Political Data Analysis

In his successful bid for reelection in 2004, President George W. Bush won the popular vote in 255 of the nation's 435 congressional districts, a 75-seat edge over John Kerry's 180. At 255, the President won 27 more districts than the 228 he carried in the 2000 election.

There were 59 'turnover' districts, those represented in the U.S. House by a member of a party other than the winner of the presidential vote in the district. In 2004, 41 districts were carried by Bush yet represented by a Democrat; 18 districts were carried by John Kerry yet represented by a Republican. This represents a continued decrease over recent presidential elections. In 2000 there were 86 turnover districts. In 1996, there were 110 turnover districts. The 2004 presidential election was the first following the 2001-2002 redistricting phase of congressional apportionment.

Presidential Vote by Congressional Party



These conclusions are the result of a months-long study undertaken by POLIDATA® POLITICAL DATA ANALYSIS, a demographic and political research firm outside of Washington, D.C. The project was sponsored by two national political publications, NATIONAL JOURNAL'S ALMANAC OF AMERICAN POLITICS and the COOK POLITICAL REPORT, a non-partisan independent reviewer of congressional politics, and a national party committee, the NATIONAL REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE. The data were collected from election officials for over 400 county equivalents that contain a portion of more than one congressional district<sup>2</sup>.

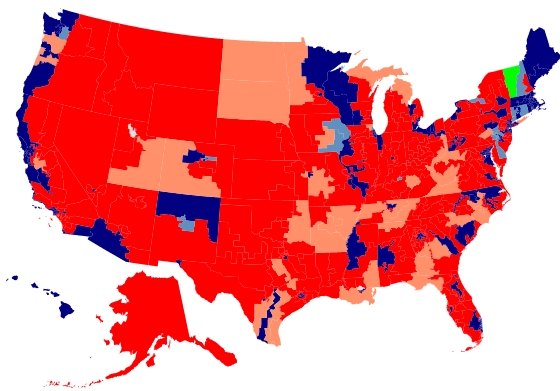
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<sup>1</sup> Clark H. Bensen, B.A., J.D., is a consulting data analyst and attorney doing business as POLIDATA® Polidata Data Analysis and a publisher of data volumes operating as POLIDATA® Demographic and Political Guides. POLIDATA has been involved with a Presidential Results by Congressional District Project for the 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000 and now 2004 Presidential Elections.

<sup>2</sup> Data assistance was provided by the Republican National Committee.

The results of the analysis confirmed regional patterns of split-ticket voting. In the East, Bush won 25 districts and Kerry won 58, but with 32 Republican members in the East, this is a net of -7 for Bush. (The net here is determined by subtracting the number of Republican members from the number of districts won by Bush.) In the Midwest, Bush won 66 districts and Kerry won 34. With 60 Republican members, this is a net of +6 for Bush. In the South, Bush won 116 districts and Kerry won 38. With 95 Republican members in the South, this is a net for Bush of +21 seats. In the West, Bush won 48 districts and Kerry won 50. With 45 Republican members, this is a net gain to Bush of +3 in the West. Nationally, with 232 Republican members elected in the November 2004 elections, and 255 Bush districts, the overall net for Bush is +23.

Of the 34 states with 'turnover' districts, the most were in Pennsylvania, with 1 district with a Democrat voting for Bush and 4 districts with Republicans voting for Kerry. This resulted in a net of -3 for Bush. In Texas, 4 districts with Democrats voted for Bush but no districts with



Republicans voted for Kerry. This is a net +4 for Bush. Other states with more than a couple of turnover districts included Arkansas, Connecticut and Tennessee. There were 15 states in which each district with a Republican voted for Bush and each district with a Democrat voted for Kerry. Vermont, the home of Independent Bernie Sanders, voted for Kerry.

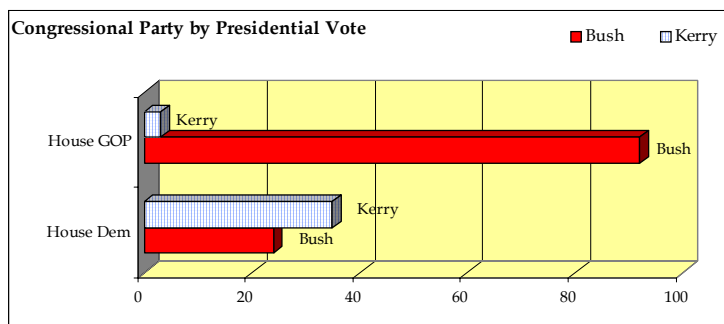
The House delegations in 30 states have more Republicans than Democrats. Bush won 31 states for the Electoral College vote. Had the vote gone to the House, based upon these numbers, there would have been 32 states in which the majority of the districts voted for Bush, 16 for Kerry (plus DC) and 2 ties (New Hampshire and Wisconsin). Also, had there been a uniform application of the Electoral Vote by Congressional District method, Bush would have won with 317 votes (255 for each CD plus 2 for each of 31 states) versus the 286 actually cast for the ticket. As with the 2000 election, such a proposal would have exacerbated the difference between the popular vote and the Electoral College vote.

The study, available from POLIDATA (for details see [www.polidata.org/prcd](http://www.polidata.org/prcd)), also highlights some other factoids about the presidential election from the perspective of a tally by congressional district. For example,

- ❑ The top Bush districts currently held by Democrats in the House include: Chet Edwards (TX-17); Gene Taylor (MS-5); Jim Matheson (UT-2); Ike Skelton (MO-4) and Earl Pomeroy (ND-AL). Bush won at least 63% of the vote in these 5 districts.
- ❑ The top Kerry districts currently held by Republicans in the House include: Jim Leach (IA-2); Rob Simmons (CT-2); Mike Castle (DE-AL); Curt Weldon (PA-7) and Mark Kirk (IL-1). Kerry won at least 53% of the vote in these 5 districts.
- ❑ The top five Bush districts were in AL (Spencer Bachus), TX (Mike Conaway; Mac Thornberry and Randy Neugebauer), and UT (Chris Cannon). There were 7 districts in which Bush received more than 75% of the vote.
- ❑ The top five Kerry districts were in NY (Charlie Rangel, Jose Serrano, Edolphus Towns) and PA (Chaka Fattah) and CA (Barbara Lee). There were 29 districts in which Kerry received more than 75% of the vote.

- ❑ There were only 2 districts that “voted” for Bush in 2000 but went for Kerry in 2004: NC 13 (Miller-D) and OR-4 (DeFazio-D). There were 17 districts that “voted” for Gore in 2000 but went for Bush in 2004. These districts are located in 10 states AR, CA, FL, IA, NV, NJ, NY, TN, TX and WV).

Will the results really matter from a congressional perspective? Overall, of the 232 House Republicans, only 18 represent districts that were carried by Kerry. For the 202 Democrats elected in November of 2004, 41 of these districts voted for Bush. So, whether the White House or the Democrats can appeal to these turnover districts may depend largely on the issue and the interests of individual members and their districts. Nevertheless, there are 214 Bush Republicans in the House, just shy of an absolute majority. The balance is comprised of 161 Kerry Democrats, 18 Kerry Republicans and 41 Bush Democrats<sup>3</sup>. The caucus of the Republicans has become much more monolithic than the caucus of the Democrats.



As the accompanying figure indicates, the South is a key stronghold for Bush's strength in the House. Only 3 of the 95 House Republicans are in districts that voted for Kerry. On the other side of the aisle, 24 of the 59 House Democrats are in districts that voted for Bush.

With respect to the range of vote in the districts for the presidential election: Bush won 116 districts with 60% or more of the vote and Kerry won 88 districts with 60% or more. These 204 represent 47% of all districts. Viewed from another perspective, 215 districts, or 49% of the total, were won by a margin of 20% or more.

Of course, there are still some seats scattered around in some states that, based upon this indicator, would be considered as competitive. The number of districts determined by a margin of under 5% of the presidential vote was 45. In fact, there were 10 districts in which the presidential winner was determined by 1% or less, and another 10 under 2%.

However, many districts include jurisdictions where absentee votes are counted centrally. This means that the votes for President were not tallied separately for congressional district by election authorities. As part of this analysis, the allocation of these votes to the appropriate district is required. This is generally done by a comparison of the votes cast in the congressional election. This becomes a larger problem with some states, such as Florida, for which no congressional votes are tallied at all for an uncontested election. Obviously, the allocation of these votes could affect the results in some districts.

Another factor confirmed by the study was the disparity of the weight of a vote for President amongst districts. Even in California, the range of the district with the largest number of votes cast for President (Doolittle with 354,000 votes) was 3.15 times greater than the number

<sup>3</sup> It is important to remember that these are new districts, generally established for the 2002 elections to the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. The tally of Bush vs. Gore district types for the districts of the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress was: 202 Bush-Republicans and 36 Bush Democrats to 27 Gore Republicans and 169 Gore Democrats. Thus, the net over the 2002 elections was +12 Bush Republicans, +5 Bush Democrats and -9 Gore/Kerry Republicans, -8 Gore/Kerry Democrats. Redistricting in TX and member changes following the 2004 election affect this count.

of votes cast for President in the district with the smallest number of votes (Loretta Sanchez with 112,000 votes). On a larger scale this unequal voting weight matters: 42% of the total Presidential vote was cast in districts that elected 50% of the House.

Herewith, a caveat on the results of the study: researchers should bear in mind that for many congressional districts there are no hard-and-fast numbers of presidential results. Only a handful of states adequately compile the results of the presidential election for congressional districts. As there are about 450 county equivalents with portions of more than one district, election results must be obtained from local election officials, generally this means precinct-level data. This is a time-consuming and frustrating experience. Fortunately, our overall experience with state and local election officials was once again positive; without their assistance this project would have taken several more months.

One of the main problems is that several states have data problems that complicate the process: centrally counted absentee and/or early votes, and split precincts. Both of these problems require methods that involve judgment for the allocation of all presidential votes to a district. Therefore, depending upon the methodology used by the researcher, the overall numbers for each split-county, and therefore, each split-district, will vary.

In fact, this is one reason why today's release is a preliminary one and provides only the *results*, and not the votes for each district. A bit more time will be required to finalize the votes for each district with central absentees and split units. This extra time requirement is an important operational consideration for any proponents of change to a modified Electoral College with a vote by Congressional District plan.

Election reformers could do a great service by enabling local election officials to accurately tabulate ALL votes cast to the appropriate ballot box or district. Many local election systems now provide this capability, including all systems in California. Moreover, this reform should address the tabulation of all votes for all offices, including those not on the ballot. This has been a longstanding practice in several states, notably FL, AR, OK and LA where the names of the candidate elected are not even on the ballot for totally uncontested races. Appropriately tabulating votes for all offices for all districts, congressional, legislative and local, would greatly facilitate those who are interested in the political behavior of our representative districts, be they academics, politicians, citizens, or the courts.

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# Summary of Congressional and Presidential Winners, 2004

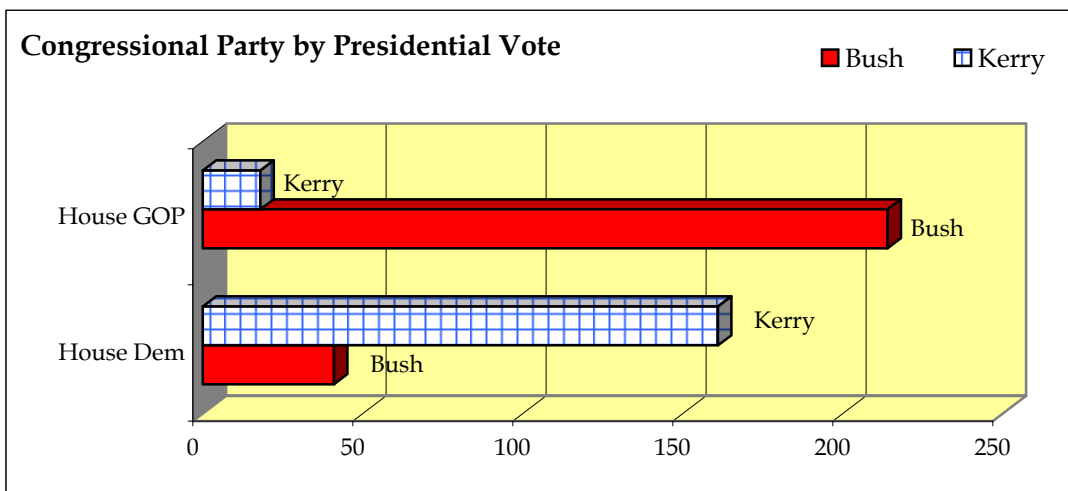
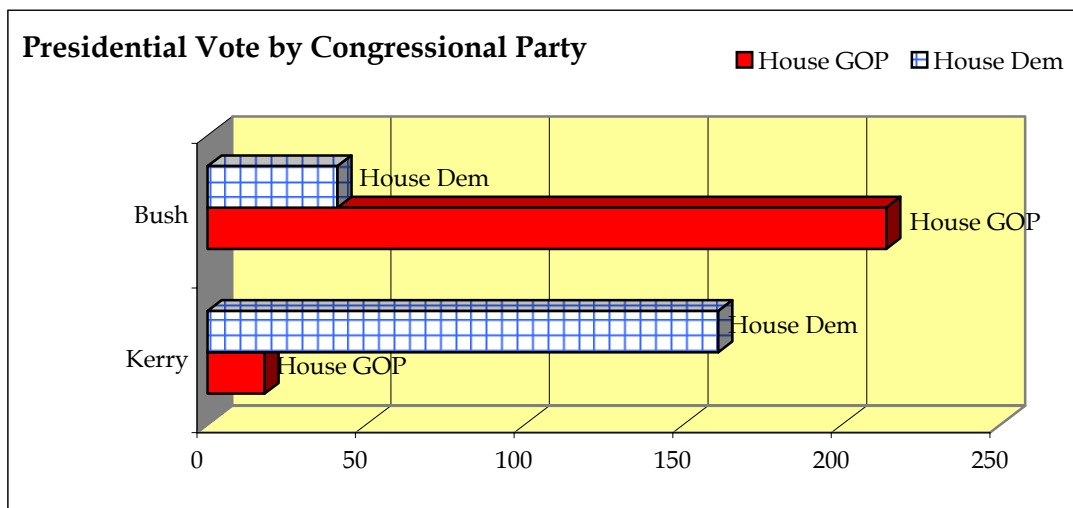
## National Summary

### All 435 Districts

*President by Congressional Winner*

	House GOP	House Dem	House Ind	Total
<b>Bush</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>255</b>
<b>Kerry</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>435</b>

*Net for Bush: 23*



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