

Voter turnout may shatter national record

By [MICHELE DARGAN](#), Daily News Staff Writer

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Elna Laun is encouraged by the number of people who give her the thumbs-up sign when she's wearing her "Sen. Barack Obama for President" button.

As president of the Palm Beach Democratic Club, she's also happy that polls show the Democratic presidential candidate leading Republican nominee Sen. John McCain.

But she's not resting easy yet and she's not taking anything for granted.

"There's a flaw in the polls in that the younger voters don't have land lines and the pollsters don't call cell phones," Laun said. "I'm taking the polls with a great big grain of salt."

Experts predict that this Election Day, Tuesday, will see the largest voter turnout in the history of the country. As of Thursday, more than 110,000 voters in Palm Beach County had cast their ballots in early voting.

Everywhere she goes, Laun said her Obama button gets people talking.

"This is a different election than in the past," Laun said. "There's so much enthusiasm. I've never seen anything like it. I go to Publix and people start talking with me about Obama. At the post office, a woman looked at my button and said, 'Isn't that great! Where can I get one?' I have great hopes, but my fingers are crossed."

No candidate has become president since 1960 without winning two of the three swing states: Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. The most recent polls have Obama leading

For more information

Election Day 2008: Polls open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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by various percentages. Realclearpolitics.com computes his average lead at 6.1 percent.

A Gallup Poll released Friday shows the gap between Obama and McCain has widened, with Obama at 51 percent of likely voters to McCain's 43 percent. Gallup's expanded model shows a slightly larger gap with Obama at 52 percent to McCain's 43 percent. Both polls use registered voters, but the expanded model factors "current voting intentions."

According to the independent Quinnipiac University Poll released Wednesday, Obama holds a 12-point lead in Pennsylvania, a nine-point lead in Ohio and a two-point lead in Florida.

"If Sen. Barack Obama can take Florida, he could match or come close to President Bill Clinton's re-election margin in 1996, carrying all three of the big swing states en route to rolling up 379 Electoral College votes," said Peter Brown, assistant director of the Quinnipiac University Polling Institute in a release. "The last challenger to win the Big Three was Ronald Reagan, who tallied 489 Electoral College votes in his 1980 landslide."

Still, Marie Hope Davis, president of the Palm Beach Republican Club, said there's a lot of enthusiasm at its West Palm Beach headquarters, which also houses the local John McCain for President campaign.

Davis said she thinks the race is much closer than reflected by the polls.

"It's obviously much closer than Barack Obama thought it would be or he wouldn't be coming back to Florida as much as he is," Davis said. "We think that John McCain will pull it out in the end. We want to make sure that every eligible voter has the right to vote, but not the ineligible voters."

"John McCain is the underdog and has been in that position before," Davis said. "He's a true war hero and Sarah Palin is representative of women wanting it all and balancing their personal and professional lives."

On a personal note, Davis said she has a great deal of admiration for Sen. Hillary Clinton for breaking the glass ceiling. Davis said she would have felt more comfortable with Clinton in the White House than Obama because Clinton is tougher on the issue of security.

Davis said there have been a number of Clinton supporters who are not happy with Obama as the party's nominee and who now are campaigning for McCain.



2008 Palm Beach Voting Precincts

*Hover over the map
for information on
each precinct; click
on your precinct for
directions to polling
locations.*

Additional Information

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"Their positions are they didn't like the way Hillary was treated and they're concerned about the issue of security," Davis said. "Barack Obama is not a tested individual."

Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, said it's a history-making election on many fronts, including the increased number of people voting.

"This may be the highest turnout election in American history," Jamieson said. "If so, we will credit that, in part, to the unpopular war, unpopular president and anxiety-producing economy. But also at play was the turnout elicited in the primaries by Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama."

James Campbell, a political science professor at the University of Buffalo, said the poll ranges on Obama's lead are so different that "some of the polls are going to be wrong." There also are many variables that factor into how accurate a poll is, including how hard the pollsters push the undecided voters for a preference.

Another factor may be that the Obama campaign made a push to register voters in outreach campaigns throughout the country.

"We know by history that if they don't register by their own initiative, they're less likely to turn out to vote," Campbell said. "But this year there's a greater use of early voting and that might pull in the more marginal young voters."

"I don't think anyone should count the election as a done deal," Campbell said. "The polls shouldn't discourage anyone on either side to get out and vote. Things look good for Obama and bad for McCain, but that's not necessarily how it will turn out."

The seven Palm Beach precincts are housed in four polling locations. Polls for South Palm Beach and Manalapan residents are located in their respective town halls. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday.

Anyone already in line at 7 p.m. will be allowed to vote.

Voters need to bring a form of identification that includes a photo and a signature.

Everyone must vote at their correct precinct. Precinct information and other voting information can be found at www.pbcelections.org.

Local races that will be on the ballot include:

U.S. Rep. District 22

Ron Klein (D) incumbent

Allen West (R)

State Senate District 25

Jeff Atwater (R) incumbent

Linda Bird (D)

Florida House District 83

Carl Domino (R) incumbent

Bryan Miller (D)

Florida House District 89

Mary Brandenburg (D) incumbent

Jeffrey Auslander (R)

Supervisor of Elections

Susan Bucher (nonpartisan)

Bob Margolis (nonpartisan)

Palm Beach County State Attorney

Michael McAuliffe (D)

Joseph Tringali (R)

County Commission District 7

Addie Green (D) incumbent

Elizabeth Wade (R)

Port of Palm Beach, Group 1

Wayne M. Richards (D) incumbent

Thomas F. McCracken (R)

Palm Beach Soil & Water Conservation

Group 2

Drew Martin (nonpartisan)

Mike McIntosh (nonpartisan)

VOTING PRECINCTS

Palm Beach

- * 1196: St. Edward Parish Hall, 165 N. County Road. The site is for voters who live between the northern town limits and Seminole Avenue.
- * 1198: The Episcopal Church of Bethesda-by-the-Sea, 141 S. County Road. For voters living between Oleander Avenue/Root Trail and the north side of Royal Palm Way.
- * 1200: Central Fire-Rescue Station at Town Hall, 360 S. County Road. For voters living between the south side of Royal Palm Way and the north side of Worth Avenue.
- * 7084: Central Fire-Rescue Station at Town Hall, 360 S. County Road. For voters living between the south side of Worth Avenue and the north side of Southern Boulevard.
- * 7086: South Fire-Rescue Station, 2185 S. Ocean Blvd. For voters living between the south side of Southern Boulevard and the north side of Sloan's Curve.
- * 7088: South Fire-Rescue Station, 2185 S. Ocean Blvd. For voters living between the south side of Sloan's Curve and the Lake Worth Bridge.
- * 7100: South Fire-Rescue Station, 2185 S. Ocean Blvd. For voters who live between the Lake Worth Bridge and southern town limits.

Manalapan

- * 4026: Town Hall, 600 S. Ocean Blvd. All residents.
- * 4024: Town Hall, 3577 S. Ocean Blvd. All residents.

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