

Can Evangelicals Swing the Vote in Nevada?

As the old saying goes, “No rest for the weary.” Less than 48 hours after the South Carolina Republican Primary results were announced, all eyes have shifted to the American Southwest and the Nevada Republican Caucus.

But, the questions many evangelical Christians want answered is whether or not their brothers and sisters in Christ can swing the vote, or if Donald Trump is poised for a third consecutive blowout victory in the Silver State. The answer is “yes,” but it won’t be easy.

Like Iowa and New Hampshire, the Nevada caucus awards delegates proportionately to the vote tally on Caucus Night. There is no minimum threshold, so any candidate that receives at least 3.3 percent of the vote is likely to receive at least one delegate.

Based on the two most recent polls conducted there, though, it would appear Trump is set for another big win. His current Real Clear Politics polling average, based on polls taken just ahead of Saturday’s South Carolina primary, is 42 percent.

Ted Cruz is in second at 20 percent, and Marco Rubio is third at 19 percent. Digging into the “numbers inside the numbers” of the polls, one finds even less encouraging news for those who oppose the billionaire’s candidacy.

Gravis Marketing

In a poll commissioned for One American News Network, Gravis Marketing found that less than 10 percent of likely caucus voters self-identify as evangelical Christians. Nearly equal numbers identify as Mormons and Muslims.

The poll, in which Trump leads Cruz by a 39-23 margin, also found that 30 percent of those surveyed considered themselves politically “moderate,” while only 21 percent were “very conservative.” Immigration and terrorism were the top two issues for voters, with more than half saying they supported Trump’s proposal to temporarily halt Muslim immigration in order to establish proper vetting procedures.

CNN/ORC International

In a poll commissioned for CNN, ORC International found Trump holds a 45-19 lead over Rubio with Cruz close behind at 17 percent. About 60 percent of voters are firmly decided on their choice – likely core Trump, Cruz, and Rubio supporters.

Those surveyed were asked with candidate would be the best to handle certain issues. Here’s how those broke down:

Economy–1. Trump 61%, 2. Cruz 14%, 3. Rubio 11%

Illegal Immigration–1. Trump 58%, 2. Cruz 17%, 3. Rubio 14%

Foreign Policy–1. Trump 42%, 2. Cruz 20%, 3. Rubio 17%

Social Issues (specifically, abortion and same-sex marriage)–1. Trump 28%, 2. Cruz 21%, 3. Rubio 20%

Terrorism/ISIS–1. Trump 55%, 2. Cruz 16%, 3. Rubio 13%

They were also asked which candidate would:

Best represent Republicans like themselves–1. Trump 35%, 2. Cruz 22%, 3. Rubio 20%

Have the best chance of winning in November–1. Trump 56%, 2. Rubio 18%, 3. Cruz 16%

Most likely change how Washington works–1. Trump 64%, 2. Cruz 13%, 3. Rubio 9%

How to Swing the Vote

Nevada is vast, with mostly small towns located sporadically throughout. The two main population centers are Reno in the west and Las Vegas in the south. It is a state that is nearly impossible for candidates to completely canvass, meaning their campaigns have to be strategic in their efforts to win delegates.

Also, traditionally, less than 5 percent of registered Republicans participate in their caucus. So, to swing the vote, evangelical Christians who support someone other than Trump simply need to show up and vote.

The best way to motivate them to do so is from the pulpit. Pastors need to make the case directly to their congregations to have the biggest impact.