

Here's Why Ted Cruz Should Be Optimistic After Tuesday's Results

In the wee hours of Wednesday morning, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) got the good news: He hasn't been mathematically eliminated from the Republican Party's presidential nomination.

The Texas senator now has 465 delegates for the national convention by virtue of winning all of Utah's 40 delegates. The results from that state also offered hope that perhaps the momentum of the race may be swinging in his favor now that it's effectively a two-man race to the nomination.

But that is pretty much where the good news ends. GOP front-runner Donald Trump still managed to extend his lead in the delegate count by winning all of Arizona's 58 delegates, increasing his count to 754 delegates.

Returns have not yet been reported from the territorial caucus in American Samoa, a chain of islands in the South Pacific, which is seven hours behind the Eastern Time Zone. There are another nine delegates at stake there.

Arizona

The night began in Arizona, where Trump benefited from early voting. Unofficially, U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) received more than 70,000 votes—nearly 13.5 percent of the total vote—to place third overall, even though he dropped out of the race a week ago.

The Florida senator's votes, even if they all went to Cruz, wouldn't have been enough to hold off the GOP front-runner. He wound up with more than 246,000 votes, which was 47.1 percent

of the total vote, compared to Cruz' 129,000 (24.7 percent).

Ohio Gov. John Kasich returned to his also-ran status, taking slightly more than 52,000 votes (10.0 percent). Many of the other former candidates also received votes by virtue of appearing on the ballot. Dr. Ben Carson, for instance, came in fifth place with 14,000 votes (2.7 percent).

Utah

Voting did not end until early Wednesday morning in the Eastern Time Zone in Utah. There, Republicans held a caucus, which also featured online voting that extended beyond the actual caucus. As expected, however, with the help of prominent Mormons, such as former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, talk radio host Glenn Beck, and U.S. Sen. Mike Lee (R-Utah), Cruz received nearly 119,000 votes (69.2 percent).

Kasich came in second with 29,000 votes (16.9 percent), followed by Trump at nearly 24,000 (14.0 percent). Utah is a winner-take-most state, but because Cruz received more than 50-percent of the vote, he won all of the delegates.

By the Numbers

Exit polling wasn't provided for either state on Tuesday night, but the final results in Arizona closely mirrored pre-election polling. Meanwhile, the results in Utah continued the trend that pre-election polling had indicated.

The delegate math has become perilous for Cruz.

The Texas senator has 465 delegates, but must win 772 of the remaining 885 delegates—roughly 87 percent of those remaining—to win the GOP nomination outright. On the other hand, if Trump or Kasich win just 114 more delegates, Cruz will be mathematically eliminated.

For Trump, on the other hand, the story is almost a mirror image. He's now won 754 delegates (47.5 percent of those

awarded so far) and needs just 483 of the remaining 885 delegates—roughly 55 percent—to win the nomination outright.

Next Up: North Dakota

American Samoa's results are expected later this morning. The next state to award delegates is North Dakota, but there will be little fanfare, or excited anticipation for those results, because they're already predetermined.

North Dakota is the only state that doesn't bind its delegates, meaning they are not committed to vote for any particular candidate. Once those delegates are selected, you can be sure there will be a lot of lobbying by all of the remaining campaigns to win their votes at the national convention.

But even a commitment to a campaign isn't binding, and those 28 delegates' preferences—even if made public—won't go toward the “hard counts” that most media outlets will report.

The next big contest after that is next Tuesday, when Wisconsin steps into the spotlight all alone with its 42 delegates in a winner-take-most showdown between the two leading candidates.