

How the Evangelical Vote Broke in South Carolina

The “spin” from a number of sources Saturday night was that Democrats crossed party lines in large numbers and voted for businessman Donald Trump in the South Carolina Republican Primary to give him his huge win.

Not even close.

According to exit polling data, less than 2 percent of participants in Saturday’s vote self-identified as Democrats. In South Carolina, voters don’t register by party affiliation, so that can’t be entirely confirmed.

Asked about their ideology, only 1 percent self-identified as “liberal.” While the group was so small as to not register any exit data, Trump did win the “moderate” voters by 11 points over U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.).

Trump also won the military vote, despite Cruz’ military build-up announcement at the . Yorktown museum in South Carolina in the final days before the vote. Trump got 35 percent of veterans’ support, followed by Rubio at 23 percent, and Cruz at 21 percent.

Veterans made up about 17 percent of those who voted Saturday.

On the other hand, nearly 3 in 4 voters—72 percent—self-identified as “evangelical, born-again Christian.” Among that group, Trump edged out U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas), the choice of many evangelical faith leaders, by a 6-point margin, 33-27 percent.

Another set of numbers perhaps explains why so many evangelicals, like many other demographic groups, are flocking to Trump’s campaign.

More than half—52 percent—said they feel “betrayed” by the Republican Party; the businessman won that group by 13 points, 36-23 percent, over Cruz. However, more voters (48 percent) said they would prefer an anti-establishment candidate over one who has political experience (47 percent).

Rubio won the latter, 38-29 percent over Cruz. But, Trump won an outright majority—63 percent—of the former group. Cruz took 13 percent of the votes from that group, while retired neurosurgeon Dr. Ben Carson got 11 percent.

Complete Victory

Trump won all but two of South Carolina’s 46 counties. Richland County, a stronghold for Republican Party establishment voters, and Charleston County, both of which went to Rubio.

He also won all seven of the Palmetto State’s seven congressional districts. The delegates from each of the congressional districts—three each—are awarded on a winner-take-all basis. The remaining 29 delegates are awarded on a winner-take-all basis to the statewide winner.

The unofficial results from Saturday, according to the South Carolina State Election Commission:

1. Donald Trump	239,897	percent
2. Marco Rubio	165,951	percent
3. Ted Cruz	164,883	percent
4. Jeb Bush	57,883	percent
5. John Kasich	56,240	percent
6. Ben Carson	53,354	percent

Establishing a New Plane

As a result, Trump won all of South Carolina's 50 national delegates. Not only was Saturday's win his second decisive victory in a row, it was the first time in the 2016 race that a candidate was able to get a delegate majority.

Republican National Committee rules specify that a candidate must win a majority of the delegates overall, as well as a majority of the delegates from at least eight states to qualify for the nomination. Many had speculated that it might be impossible for a candidate to do that, but Trump's win establishes him on a different plane from the other remaining candidates.