

Ted Cruz: Wisconsin Was a 'Turning Point'

Declaring his victory Tuesday night in Wisconsin a "turning point" in the Republican Party's presidential primary, U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) continued his call for GOP voters to unite behind his candidacy.

"What an incredible victory ... It is a rallying cry. It is a call from the hard-working men and women of Wisconsin to the people of America: we have a choice. A real choice.

"And tonight, here in Wisconsin, a state where the media had said just a few weeks ago was a 'perfect state for Donald Trump to win,' the working men and women of Wisconsin have stood up and campaigned tirelessly to make sure that tonight was a victory for every American who cares about the future of our country."

Cruz's victory in Wisconsin had been predicted by polling for nearly a month, after Dr. Ben Carson and U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) dropped out of the race. But he out-performed his polling numbers by 9 points Tuesday night, taking 48.2 percent of the vote, according to unofficial results released to the media Wednesday morning.

GOP front-runner Donald Trump, meanwhile, took 35.1 percent of the vote, which was a half-point higher than pre-election polling said he would finish. Ohio Gov. John Kasich under-performed by nearly 6 points, receiving 14.1 percent of the vote.

As a result, Cruz finished with 36 of Wisconsin's 42 delegates, which was two less than his "on track" target number of 38, but three delegates better than last-minute polling suggested. The remaining six delegates were awarded to Trump.

The Cruz campaign can point to the results as reinforcement that at least a plurality of Republicans are disenchanted with Trump as a potential nominee. They can also point to the fact that late-voting former Kasich supporters flocked to him rather than the current front-runner.

Both Cruz and Trump have demanded that the Ohio governor drop out of the race. He was mathematically eliminated weeks ago, and doesn't have the delegate majorities needed to qualify for nomination at the national convention this summer.

Cruz pounced on that narrative in his victory speech Tuesday night:

"So I ask you to join us, as we continue to unite Republicans, Independents, Libertarians, Americans who care about our future—as we've done here in Wisconsin. So that we can come back to this state in November and, for the first time since 1984, paint the Badger State bright Republican red."

It may be too little, too late, though.

Next up is Colorado's remaining district conventions on Friday and its state convention Saturday. Cruz won the popular vote there March 1, and is likely to win most or all of the remaining delegates there, too.

But, accounting for all of the "soft-pledged" delegates he has picked up so far, and even if he wins all of Colorado's delegates, he will be 681 delegates short of the 1,237 needed to win the nomination.

New York is the next state to vote, on April 19, with 95 delegates at stake. That is Trump's home state, where he currently has a 32-point lead over Kasich—Cruz is 34 points behind—and is likely to win all of the delegate haul. After that contest, there will be only 674 available delegates remaining.

After that, the Texas senator will have a difficult choice to make: bow out, or push for a contested convention.