

The South Carolina Exit Poll Number You Need to Watch

For Republicans and Democrats alike, the South Carolina primaries—while a week apart—add a new dimension to the presidential race that wasn't as predominant in Iowa or New Hampshire.

The African-American vote, while nowhere near a majority in the Palmetto State, is significant enough to swing an election. And that's why several candidates, from both parties, have made an effort to attract those voters.

In the past 30 years, African-Americans have predominantly voted for Democrats, and due to her husband's popularity with black voters during his presidency, Hillary Clinton has been expected to do well with those voters. But Donald Trump, Ben Carson and Bernie Sanders have all made inroads, particularly in black churches.

The African Methodist Episcopal Church, with nearly 600 congregations and more than 120,000 members, is the fourth-largest Christian denomination in the state. There are a number of black Baptist and nondenominational churches in the Palmetto State as well.

In all, there are more than 250,000 African-American Protestants in the state. But the days of assuming those voters will automatically vote Democrat are over. Many black voters, feeling betrayed by the Obama administration and leery of the hard-left social issues agenda offered by Sanders and Clinton, have been open to looking at the Republican options.

Last weekend, at a pro-family presidential forum hosted by Palmetto Family, Trump provided a last-minute surrogate to speak on his behalf. Pastor Mark Burns, an ordained Baptist minister, reaches 27 million viewers nationally and 2 million

in upper South Carolina with two different programs.

The Carson campaign has heavily courted the African-American vote in South Carolina as well. Marco Rubio has been campaigning around the state with Tim Scott, the Palmetto State's first Republican black Senator in nearly 120 years. And in Nevada over the weekend, Sanders and Clinton both spoke at the same African-American church.

For that reason, it will be important to watch the exit polling the next two Saturdays to see how black voters swing, if at all, in South Carolina. With Super Tuesday I just a few days away, African-American Christians could be another driving force in the 2016 presidential race.