

Voting Today: Here's What's at Stake

Earlier in the day Tuesday, Republican presidential front-runner Donald Trump became the first candidate to qualify for the party's nomination under the RNC's Rule 40(b).

The rule requires a candidate must have delegate majorities from eight states or territories to be eligible for the nomination at the national convention. By winning all nine delegates from the Commonwealth of the North Mariana Islands, he secured his eighth delegate majority.

But there is much more at stake during the Super Tuesday II primaries and caucuses. There are 358 delegates at stake, for starters, nearly all of which will be awarded on a winner-take-all basis in each state (only North Carolina awards its delegate proportionally).

By the end of the night, more than half of the states will have cast their ballots in the presidential primary, and more than half of the delegates will have been awarded. That makes Tuesday's results by far the most critical for all of the campaigns.

The polls will begin closing at 7 p.m. EDT in most of Florida. Part of the Panhandle being in the Central Time Zone, however, means returns there won't be released until after 8 p.m. Polls begin closing in Ohio and North Carolina at 7:30 p.m.

The final polls to close will be in Missouri and Illinois at 8 p.m.

Trump is currently leading by a wide margin in all of the polling, except Ohio, according to Real Clear Politics. There, he's in a statistical dead heat with Ohio Gov. John Kasich. U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) currently polls in second in

his home state, while U.S. Sen. Ted Cruz (R-Texas) currently polls in second in the other three states.

A “clean sweep” Tuesday night for Trump would give him nearly 800 of the 1,237 delegates he needs to secure the nomination. He would need just 45 percent of the remaining delegates to become the GOP nominee.

On the other hand, Kasich and Rubio would be mathematically eliminated. Cruz would need 87 percent of the remaining delegates to surpass Trump and win the nomination outright if that were to happen.

In the North Marianas, where the commonwealth governor endorsed Trump at the largest of the three caucus gatherings, the Republican front-runner took 73 percent of the vote. Cruz came in second with 24 percent. Kasich received 2 percent, and Rubio 1 percent.

The primary process is the only way Americans in the territories can have a say in who becomes president. Cruz has actively campaigned in those territories through surrogates in the hopes of winning every possible delegate.

“I encouraged CNMI GOP voters to come out and exercise their right and vote for their preferred presidential nominee,” Gov. Ralph Torres said. “I thank all the voters for participating in this important process. The attention the CNMI has received this presidential cycle from all the candidates has truly shown that our votes matter.”

Self-identified evangelical Christians make up a majority of the likely voters in Florida, North Carolina and Missouri. They make up a plurality of the likely GOP voters in Ohio and Illinois.