

Where was the Latino Vote?

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In an unexpected turn of events, Republican nominee Donald Trump made history at 3 o'clock in the morning last Wednesday becoming the President-Elect of the United States. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who had won the popular vote by over 1 million ballots, lost in the electoral college 290 to 232.ⁱ

In this election, 157 electoral votes were up for grabs in the 12 swing states. The Critical states that needed to be won were Arizona (10), Colorado (9), Florida (29), Iowa (6), Michigan (6), Nevada (6), New Hampshire (4), North Carolina (15), Ohio (18), Pennsylvania (20), Virginia (13), and Wisconsin (10). Of these, Clinton only took Colorado, Nevada, and Virginia, adding up to a total of 28 electoral votes, whereas Trump ran away with the remaining 129 electors.

Clinton was dependent on a heavy Latino voter turnout in Florida and Arizona to elevate her chances of winning these states, coming closer to 270 electoral votes. Victories in both of these states would have brought the election within a 2-point margin, 259 to 257, with Clinton trailing. She had worked hard to appeal to the Latino population and other minority groups with Tim Kaine as the Vice-Presidential nominee. Kaine has a very strong, positive reputation among Latinos in his home state of Virginia. Utilizing the time he spent living in various Latin American countries and his fluency in Spanish, he has respected their identity for decades and has always had their best interest at heart.

In stark contrast, Trump campaigned aggressively against Latinos. Referring to Hispanic immigrants as rapists and claiming that they bring drugs and crime to our nation, Trump has been a staunch advocate of building a border wall and deporting millions of undocumented immigrants. From this, it is undoubtedly clear that the two Presidential nominees had very different policies. One promised inclusion and protection, while the other worked to promote xenophobia and arrant racism.

This year, a record number of 27.3 million Latinos were registered to vote, an increase of four million since 2012.ⁱⁱ Many of these registrations were inspired to vote against Trump, rather than for Clinton. Trump's immigration policy and xenophobic stance was a driving factor towards this increase in voter registration. Not only were Latinos registering to vote, but since the onset of the campaign season many immigrants applied and received their citizenship so they would be able to vote in this election.ⁱⁱⁱ However, only 65 percent of the Latino vote supported Clinton, compared to the 71

percent that had backed President Obama in 2012. The lower support for Clinton could possibly stem from a large conservative Cuban-American population that voted for Trump.^{iv} The Cuban-American demographic can explain Trump's victory in Florida. Clinton had enough Latino support to swing Nevada blue, but it did not compensate for the success Trump saw in the other battleground states.

Latinos Attendance at the Polls

Playing a major role in the results for Florida, Nevada, as well as Arizona, Latinos have the power to influence the final outcome of the election. Historically, they are predominantly members of the Democratic Party. Pre-election polls confirmed that they were siding with the Democrats once again and early voter turnout among Latino voters in Florida, Georgia, and North Carolina was higher than normal.

Major problems arose throughout this election. Latinos tend to have strikingly lower turnout at polls so although the number of registered Latino voters increased dramatically, it is constantly a push to actually get them to vote.^v Even though the early voters looked promising for Clinton, this did not last. In the past, Latinos have cited a "too busy, conflicting work or school schedule" as the top reason for not voting and many also felt like their vote did not matter.^{vi} This could hold true to the 2016 election and explain higher turnout among Latinos at early voting stations. She had too little support among Latinos and too little turnout to make her Madame President.

Further, it is extremely difficult to be a voter that does not speak, or has a limited understanding of, the English language. There are limitations due to English-only registration forms, absentee ballots, and polling places. Colorado only has three counties that provide voters with bilingual ballots.^{vii} In the rest of the counties, bilingual registration forms are provided, however ballots are only in English.^{viii} In Wisconsin, there are 20 polling places across that state that can accommodate the Spanish speaking population.^{ix} In Florida, organizations like ProEnglish, legal advocates actively working to make English the official language of the United States, try to limit access to bilingual ballots as an option for voters.^x This is a major hindrance to Hispanic voters and could drastically increase their turnout if bilingual ballots are available. This community would be less marginalized and more capable of being heard and understood.

Strength in Numbers and Location

Although a minority, Latinos have immense outpouring of strength and influence in the U.S. presidential elections due to dense populations in key states. Their concerns and policy preferences should be seriously taken into consideration in the policy of both candidates, but especially the winner. A Latino citizen has the same right as any white, Christian, elite, male citizen and should be given the same opportunity to vote. The marginalization of this community is a shameful manifestation against this country's tattered performance as a full blown functioning democracy. In the next election, it would be of great benefit to make voting stations more accessible to the Spanish-speaking population and other non-English speaking demographics.

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ⁱ "Election Results 2016." CNN Politics. November 8, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/election/results>.

ⁱⁱ Krogstad, Jens Manuel. "Key Facts about the Latino Vote in 2016." Pew Research Center RSS. October 14, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/10/14/key-facts-about-the-latino-vote-in-2016/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ O'Keefe, Ed. "Latino Voter Group Reports Registering More Than 100,000 New Voters." Washington Post. October 4, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2016/10/04/latino-voter-group-reports-historic-jump-in-voter-registrations/>.

^{iv} Luhby, Tammy, and Jennifer Agiesta. "Exit Polls: Clinton Fails to Energize African-Americans, Latinos and the Young." CNN. November 9, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://www.cnn.com/2016/11/08/politics/first-exit-polls-2016/>.

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^v Cohn, Nate. "This Time, There Really Is a Hispanic Voter Surge." The New York Times. November 07, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/08/upshot/this-time-there-really-is-a-hispanic-voter-surge.html>.

^{vi} Krogstad, Jens Manuel, Mark Hugo Lopez, Gustavo López, Jeffrey S. Passel, and Eileen Patten. "Looking Back to 2014: Latino Voter Turnout Rate Falls to Record Low." Pew Hispanic. January 19, 2016. Accessed November 15, 2016. <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/01/19/looking-back-to-2014-latino-voter-turnout-rate-falls-to-record-low/>.

^{vii} Orme, Wyatt. "No Bilingual Ballots for Spanish-speakers." Aspen Public Radio. November 1, 2016. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://aspenpublicradio.org/post/no-bilingual-ballots-spanish-speakers#stream/0>.

^{viii} Ibid.

^{ix} "Hablo Español -- I Speak Spanish." Wisconsin Elections Commission. Accessed November 11, 2016. <http://elections.wi.gov/voters/spanish>.

^x "The 2016 Presidential Candidates on Official English." ProEnglish. Accessed November 11, 2016. <https://proenglish.org/the-2016-presidential-candidates-on-official-english/>.