

## **USF Straw Poll: Democrats Beat GOP Candidates in Major Races**

Philip Booth

TAMPA, Fla. (Oct. 30, 2006) – University of South Florida students, faculty and staff members largely picked Democrats over Republicans in a straw poll conducted on campus on Oct. 26.

Approximately 700 people voted in the mock elections, organized by the USF chapter of national political science honor society Pi Sigma Alpha in cooperation with USF Student Government and held for four hours at the Phyllis P. Marshall Center and Russell M. Cooper Hall.

In the gubernatorial race, Jim Davis (D) won with 48 percent of the vote to 41 percent for Charlie Crist (R).

Sen. Bill Nelson (D) won 57 percent of the votes, to 36 percent for Katherine Harris (R).

The Democratic candidates also took the lion's share of the votes for U.S. House seats, with John Russell (District 5), Phyllis Busansky (District 9), Samm Simpson (District 10) and Kathy Castor (District 11) beating their GOP opponents.

Republican candidates took House seats elsewhere, with Adam Putnam winning in District 12 and Vern Buchanan in District 13.

Republicans also fared well in lower-profile state races, with Bill McCollum beating Walter "Skip" Campbell for Attorney General; Tom Lee beating Alex Sink for CFO; and Charles H. Bronson beating Eric Copeland for Commissioner of Agriculture.

Last week's mock voting was the fifth such straw poll held at USF in recent years, said Susan MacManus, a professor in the Department of Government and International Affairs. MacManus, faculty advisor for Pi Sigma Alpha, is a highly regarded Florida political analyst.

According to poll results, 92 percent of the voters were USF students, while 8 percent were USF staff and faculty. Males represented 53 percent of the voters, and females 47 percent. Fifty-eight percent of the voters identified themselves as Democrats, and 41 percent as Republicans. The race/ethnicity breakdown: White, 74 percent; Hispanic, 16 percent; African American, 14 percent; Asian, 11 percent; other, 7 percent. Age breakdown: 18-25, 80 percent; 26-35, 14 percent; 36-50, 6 percent.

Students and others made picks for Florida Supreme Court Justices and proposed amendments to the state constitution.

As many as 1,000 students participated in the straw polls held at USF two years ago, in advance of the primary and general elections, said MacManus, faculty advisor for Pi Sigma Alpha and a highly regarded Florida political analyst.

“It’s fun for the students,” MacManus said. “The reason we do it is to educate our students about the election, and get them excited so that they will get out and vote.”

Results of the USF straw poll in previous years have paralleled some results of the real-life elections.

“It’s been pretty close several times,” MacManus said.

*The University of South Florida is one of the nation’s top 63 public research universities as designated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF received more than \$310 million in research contracts and grants last year, and it is ranked by the National Science Foundation as one of two of the nation’s fastest growing universities in terms of federal research and development expenditures. The university has a \$1.6 billion annual budget and serves 44,038 students on campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota/Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.*

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