

Background: Data and Analysis on Youth Vote in Alabama and Mississippi Ahead of Today's Primaries

MEDFORD/SOMERVILLE, Mass. – Below is research data and background on today's Alabama and Mississippi primaries compiled by the Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement (CIRCLE). Additional background data on young voters in Mississippi and Alabama can be found on the CIRCLE website here, and an overview of youth participation in the GOP primaries can be found here. For additional information on CIRCLE's research and today's primaries, please contact Brad Luna at brad@lunamediaingroup.com or 202-812-8140.

CIRCLE will provide exclusive youth voter turnout estimates for both states' primaries on Wednesday, March 14. To sign-up to receive copies of CIRCLE's cutting-edge research on young Americans and next-day voter turnout estimates for the 2012 elections, please email amy@lunamediaingroup.com.

In the 2012 GOP primaries in the South and Southeast so far, several different candidates have won the largest percentage of young primary voters. According to exit poll data, Rep. Ron Paul won 31% of primary voters age 18 to 29 in South Carolina; former Gov. Mitt Romney, 41% in Florida; former Speaker Newt Gingrich, 31% in Georgia; and former Sen. Rick Santorum, 43% in Tennessee.

Background on Young Mississippi Voters

- An estimated 434,000 18-to 29-year-olds in Mississippi are eligible to vote in 2012.
- Overall youth turnout for the 2008 Republican and Democratic primaries (combined) was 14% in Mississippi, a significant increase from 4% in 2004.
- 70,673 youth voted in the 2008 Mississippi primaries – 57,161 in the Democratic primary and 13,512 in the Republican primary.
- In the 2008 general election, Sen. John McCain won 56.17% of all votes in the state, but 56% of Mississippi young voters chose Obama. 81% of young white voters chose McCain, while 99% of young black voters chose Obama.
- As in many other states, an increasing percentage of young people have been turning out to vote in Mississippi in general elections: In 2008, youth voter turnout was 56.80%, in 2004 it was 51.89%, and in 1996 it was 38.03%.

Background on Young Alabama Voters

- An estimated 754,000 18-to 29-year-olds are eligible to vote in Alabama in 2012.
- In the 2008 Democratic and Republican primaries, an estimated 135,000 youth voted, resulting in a turnout of about 19%.
- Of the 67,000 young people who voted in the Alabama Republican primary in 2008, an estimated 15,000 voted for McCain, giving him third place in the youth vote. Former Gov. Mike Huckabee, who won the general and youth vote in Alabama, took 34,500 youth votes, followed by Romney with 16,000.

- Values and religion were key to Alabama's youth in the 2008 Republican primary. An estimated 85% considered abortion illegal in most or all cases, 60% attended church at least once a week, and 78% were born-again or evangelical Christians.
- Among young people who voted in the 2008 Republican primary in Alabama, 82% cared that their candidate shared the same religious beliefs and 60% voted for their candidate because they shared the same values.

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CIRCLE (www.civicyouth.org) is a nonpartisan, independent, academic research center that studies young people in politics and presents detailed data on young voters in all 50 states. CIRCLE was founded in 2001 with a generous gift from the Pew Charitable Trusts and is part of the Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service at Tufts University. CIRCLE's reputation for reliable, independent, timely research has been hailed by experts in the field of civic partnership, such as Harvard University professor Robert Putnam who said CIRCLE had brought "the best and most serious research to one place."

The Jonathan M. Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service (<http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/>) is a national leader whose model and research are setting the standard for higher education's role in civic engagement education. Serving every school of Tufts University, Tisch College creates an enduring culture that prepares students to be lifelong active citizens.

Tufts University (www.tufts.edu), located on three Massachusetts campuses in Boston, Medford/Somerville and Grafton, and in Talloires, France, is recognized as one of the premier research universities in the United States. Tufts enjoys a global reputation for academic excellence and for the preparation of students as leaders in a wide range of professions. A growing number of innovative teaching and research initiatives span all Tufts campuses, and collaboration among the faculty and students in the undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs across the university's schools is widely encouraged.