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Local presidential vote had community flavor

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Though regionwide barely a sliver separated the leading presidential candidates from each party, a Bee analysis of community-by-community votes found clear and sometimes wide divisions.

In general, areas dominated by Democrats – places like Davis, downtown Sacramento and Land Park – strongly supported Sens. Barack Obama and John McCain. And more-Republican areas – like Orangevale, Citrus Heights and Placer County – gave Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton and Mitt Romney some of their widest margins.

The analysis included geographic results for Sacramento, El Dorado and Yolo counties. Placer County votes could not be included because county officials refused to release results by precinct, saying they weren't ready. [See a complete map of neighborhood results in the three counties.](#)

The voting patterns that emerged from the newspaper's analysis made sense to local election experts, who cited the influence of the dominant party. In liberal enclaves like Davis, they say, Republicans tend to be more moderate. Democrats who choose to live in conservative communities like Orangevale also tend to be more moderate.

George Hickman, a retiree who has lived in Davis for 25 years and voted for McCain, expressed his middle-of-the-road reasoning.

McCain is "for doing what is right regardless of what the party line is," Hickman said. "He has the capacity to bring people together. And he's a fiscal conservative."

Clinton ran largely on the strength of her résumé. Democrats who recall the Clinton years fondly and want to see something similar tend to be more moderate and traditional, local political observers said. Obama ran on a message of change and his fiery oratory excited many younger voters. So his supporters tended to be more liberal.

Voters believe Clinton is more predictable – a reliable voice for traditional Democratic issues, said Gary Dietrich, a local political analyst and president of Citizen Voice, a nonpartisan group that seeks to involve regular people in the public arena. "Whereas Obama will stray out of the box a little," Dietrich said.

"I like the fact that she has more experience than the other candidates," said Gayle Benson, a business executive who lives in Citrus Heights said, explaining her vote for Clinton. "Plus, it's a woman thing."

On the Republican side, local experts noted, Romney portrayed himself as the true conservative in the race and received the backing of many of the best-known figures in the conservative movement. McCain took issue with that characterization, but played up his appeal to moderates and independents.

"You've got the most vocal hard-right folks as part of the non-McCain vote," said Ed Costantini, professor emeritus and former chairman of the political science department at the University of California, Davis. "That would probably motivate a hard-right constituency" to vote for Romney.

Creating regional maps with the numbers supplied by Sacramento, El Dorado and Yolo counties turned up other trends as well: Clinton and Romney did better locally in suburban and rural areas, whereas McCain and Obama drew more support from urban centers.

There were also splits along racial lines that followed trends across much of the country on Super Tuesday: Obama had heavy support in areas like south Sacramento with a high percentage of African Americans, while Clinton picked up votes in places like Woodland with a high percentage of Latino voters.

There were exceptions to all of these local trends, and candidates for both parties got a lot of votes almost everywhere – the election was close, after all. On the Republican side, McCain got about 40 percent of the vote in the four-county region; Romney received about 37 percent. Among Democrats, both Obama and Clinton received about 47 percent of the vote.

As is typical after elections, those vote totals are not yet final and have not been officially certified, in part because counties are still counting. The closest races were in Elk Grove, Rancho Cordova, El Dorado Hills and Arden for the Democrats and, for Republicans, Elk Grove, Folsom, Galt and Rancho Cordova.

Clinton received her highest levels of support in West Sacramento, Woodland, Orangevale, North Highlands and Citrus Heights. She also beat Obama in Placer County and did very well in rural Elverta and Galt.

The five areas with the highest support for Obama were Davis, downtown Sacramento, Land Park, North Natomas and the Franklin/Laguna section of Elk Grove. Of those, Davis was at the top, giving Obama 58 percent of the vote compared with 39 percent for Clinton.

One factor in Davis was the strong support Obama received from UC Davis students. "He's moving in a good direction," said Max Mikalonis, president of the Davis College Democrats, which did not endorse a candidate. "He's talking about hope. He's talking about change."

Because of his age – he's 46 and Clinton is 60 – many students felt a stronger connection with Obama, added Dietrich. "If you are a younger voter, you didn't even vote for Bill Clinton," he said.

Like Obama, McCain received his widest lead in Davis, earning 47 percent of the vote to 29 percent for Romney. McCain also won handily in Woodland, Land Park, downtown Sacramento and south Sacramento.

Both Dietrich and Costantini think the local results prove the national mantra about McCain: He will be a formidable candidate if he continues to appeal to moderates and even liberals.

"McCain will be the tougher one for the Democratic candidates," Costantini said.

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