



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 21, 2016

The Impact of the South Carolina and Nevada Results on the Presidential Race

Billionaire businessman Donald Trump won a decisive victory in the South Carolina Republican primary Saturday night, garnering 33 percent of the vote, outdistancing his two main rivals, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, and Senator Ted Cruz of Texas, who both finished with about 22 percent of the vote (with Rubio edging Cruz by about a thousand votes). Trailing far behind in single-digits were former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, Ohio Governor John Kasich, and retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson. The Democrat primary in South Carolina will be next Saturday, but in the caucuses held in Nevada yesterday, Hillary Clinton beat Senator Bernie Sanders 53-47 percent



Why did Trump and Clinton win their respective contests, and what do these results mean for the future of the campaign?

One immediate and obvious impact is that Bush dropped out of the 2016 race Saturday night. This appears to signal the end of the Bush political dynasty that has figured prominently in American politics for decades. Early on, pundits penciled in Jeb Bush as the front-runner for the Republican nomination, largely based on the connections he had with his father and brother having been the only two Republican presidents since Ronald Reagan left the White House in 1989.

In 2014, Bush audaciously announced that he would not run as a conservative, but rather as a moderate, opining that he believed a Republican presidential candidate had the best chance to win in 2016 if he is “willing to lose the primary to win the general.” Bush explained, “I kinda know how a Republican can win.” Bush’s strategy was based on the debatable idea that candidates who run as moderates, or at least as moderate-conservatives, have a better chance of winning in the general election.

After receiving less than eight percent of the vote in a state where his father (in 1988) and his brother (in 2000) had used decisive victories in Republican primaries to propel them to the nomination, Bush threw in the towel.

“I’m proud of the campaign that we’ve run to unify our country and to advocate conservative solutions,” Bush said. It was an amazing end to a candidacy that appeared to have everything — a famous name and plenty of money. Bush and his Super PAC allies had raised more than \$150 million by the end of 2015. No other candidate was even close.

The Bush family has long ties with the power elites of the United States, going back to Jeb’s great-grandfather, Samuel Prescott Bush. Samuel Bush was general manager of Buckeye Steel Castings



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Company in 1901, a manufacturer of railway parts. The company was run by Frank Rockefeller, brother of the founder of the Standard Oil Company, John D. Rockefeller.

Bush's grandfather, Prescott Bush, was known as a "moderate" Republican senator from Connecticut. Then, of course, his father, George Herbert Walker Bush, was chairman of the Republican National Committee, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, and a member of Congress. Less well known, he was also a director of the world-government-promoting Council on Foreign Relations. In 1980, George H.W. Bush ran for president, but was bested by the eventual winner, Ronald Reagan. This appeared to end the Bush family's political fortunes, but Reagan, in an apparent attempt to unite the Republican Party, picked Bush to be his running-mate. After eight years as Reagan's vice president, he was elected in his own right in 1988 — widely considered to be "Reagan's third term." But Bush governed as a "kinder, gentler" conservative, and was defeated by Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton in 1992.

Again, it appeared that the Bush political dynasty was over. But, after two years of Democrat Clinton, Republicans made huge gains in Congress and governorships, including a victory in Texas by Bush's son, George W. Bush. After six years as governor of Texas, George W. Bush was the Establishment's clear choice in the 2000 presidential race.

Eight years of George W. Bush, however, appears to have led Republican voters to reject Bush's "compassionate conservatism" (another name for the "modern Republicanism" of Dwight Eisenhower in the 1950s that Prescott Bush had championed, or what Senator Barry Goldwater of Arizona dismissed as a "dime store New Deal") and Bushism.

This also helps explain the rise of Donald Trump, who has run a campaign heavily concentrated on being against the Bush dynasty, repeatedly tying Jeb Bush to his brother, George. When George Bush ran in 2000, he ran against the adventurist and interventionist foreign policy of Bill Clinton, promising a "more humble foreign policy" and that the United States did not need to be the "policeman of the world." This resonated in 2000 after Clinton's multiple interventions in Haiti, Somalia, and the Balkans. But then, of course, Bush governed as a Wilsonian, advocating the spreading of democracy across the globe, intervening in the Middle East with the announced goal of making Iraq a "showcase for democracy" for the rest of that region.

Trump has tapped into the revulsion against such interventions, claiming he had opposed the Iraq War. Political commentator Christopher Ruddy contends that Trump owes Jerry Falwell, Jr. "a big fat wet kiss," for his South Carolina victory. Falwell, the son of a Southern Baptist icon, and successor to his father as chancellor of Liberty University, the leading evangelical university in the South, had strongly endorsed Trump days before the Iowa caucuses. This appears to have mitigated evangelical concerns about Trump, making it acceptable for many believers to vote for a man who seems much more secular than Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, or even Ben Carson and Jeb Bush.

Because Senator Ted Cruz had done so well with evangelicals in Iowa, some predicted Trump would lose to Cruz in South Carolina. In Iowa, 62 percent of voters called themselves white Christian evangelicals, and Cruz took one-third of that vote, several points ahead of Trump. But in South Carolina, a state in which 67 percent of the Republican electorate called themselves white Christian evangelicals, Trump actually got one-third of that vote, leaving Cruz at only a little more than a quarter.

After Trump praised Planned Parenthood in the most recent GOP debate, which was held in South Carolina, many political experts expected evangelicals would finally repudiate him. Another thing to consider, however, is that while the Republican Party has been officially a pro-life party since Reagan, there has always been a fairly significant percentage of Republicans who are either lukewarm in their



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devotion to the pro-life cause, or even hostile. In a state such as South Carolina, where the Republican Party is so strong, the path to political success requires identification with the Republicans. Because of this, a good percentage of the Republican electorate is really not all that conservative, or evangelical.

It must also be remembered that Trump received only 33 percent of the vote, which means that two-thirds of the voters in the Republican primary did not vote for him. Allowing that Trump would receive some of the support of the other candidates, it is reasonable to conclude that it's unlikely that the New Yorker could have garnered a majority of the vote if he had been running one-on-one against either Cruz or Rubio. In fact, polls have consistently shown that, in a one-on-one race, either Rubio or Cruz would defeat Trump by double-digits.

Of course, neither Cruz nor Rubio is going to drop out in order to give the other a better chance to stop the Trump Train — at least not yet. And, if Trump wins the Super Tuesday contests coming soon, there is a point at which his momentum will simply boost his numbers enough to where he could still emerge with the nomination.

So, why did Rubio edge Cruz — by a very narrow margin?

First, South Carolina is much closer to Florida (Rubio's home state) than to Texas (Cruz's home state). In addition, Rubio was able to secure the support of Governor Nikki Haley, South Carolina Senator Tim Scott, and Congressman Trey Gowdy (very popular with conservatives for his stiff challenges to Hillary Clinton over the Benghazi affair). Rubio has cast himself as a strong "national security" conservative in a state with a strong military presence, while portraying Cruz as relatively weak in this area.

Rubio has roundly blasted Cruz for his opposition to recent National Defense Authorization Acts (NDAA). Cruz has opposed these budget bills for national defense, not because he is opposed to national defense, but because these bills purportedly allow the president, on his own, to detain American citizens without due process of law, if the president charged that they were "enemy combatants." Cruz is also more reluctant to intervene in places such as Syria, to overthrow that nation's President Assad, contending that such an action would do more harm than good.

Another factor, which almost certainly could have made the difference in Rubio finishing ahead of Cruz, was Trump's repeated accusations that Cruz is not a "natural born citizen." Trump has contended that because Cruz was born in Canada, he is not constitutionally qualified to be president of the United States. Most legal scholars believe that Cruz would win any challenge to his candidacy in court, but voters might be sufficiently concerned to play it "safe" with Rubio. For that matter, Cruz most likely has lost votes to Trump himself over this concern, as polls indicate that the second choice of Trump voters, if they have one, is Cruz. Interestingly, polls have shown that Cruz is the second choice of Rubio supporters, as well. Rubio, on the other hand, is expected to gain the most with the departure of fellow Floridian Jeb Bush from the race.

No doubt sensing this charge against Cruz has been a successful tactic, Trump has now begun to question Rubio's eligibility. "I think the lawyers will have to determine that," Trump added, after re-tweeting the accusation that not only Cruz could not legally serve, but Rubio's qualifications are suspect, as well. (Rubio's parents were legal residents of the United States, in the process of gaining American citizenship, when Marco was born in Florida).

Rubio believes that the race is now down to Trump, Cruz, and himself. He clearly thinks that Trump would not win a two-man race with him. "As this race continues to narrow, I think it'll be easier for that 70 percent to coalesce, and so that's why I feel so good," Rubio told Fox News Sunday.



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Cruz has similar views on the present status of the race, but told George Stephanopolous of ABC, "Donald devotes all of his time and energy, all of his money, to attacking me. This demonstrates that Donald sees me as the only real threat to him."

The next contest for the Republicans is Nevada on February 23.

The Democrats had their contest in Nevada on Saturday, using the caucus method. After suffering a double-digit loss to Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont, an avowed democratic socialist, Hillary Clinton came back to defeat him, 53-47 percent. Her victory was achieved through support from Hispanic voters and casino unions.

Speaking to supporters at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas, Clinton said, "Some may have doubted us but we never doubted each other, and this one's for you."

Sanders told his supporters, "The American people are catching on that we have a rigged economy," and argued that, despite the relatively narrow loss, he now has the momentum. But Clinton, as of now, has the delegates, especially with the overwhelming support of the so-called superdelegates (Democratic Party officers and public office holders).

And most political experts believe she can also count on the support of African-American voters in South Carolina and the rest of the South. While there is a chance that the e-mail scandal could sink Clinton's presidential hopes, it is questionable if the Obama Justice Department would actually indict her. If she is not indicted, this may not be "equal treatment under the law," but it would be par for the course for the Obama regime.

Another important consideration is that Republican turnout is up from 2008, while Democrat participation is down. The participation in the Nevada caucuses included only about 80,000. Eight years ago, 118,000 turned out in the stiff Democrat contest between Clinton and then-Senator Barack Obama. If the Republican turnout is up and the Democrat turnout is down in the November elections, it would benefit the Republicans not only in the presidential race but in other races as well.

Clinton holds a commanding lead over Sanders in the upcoming Democrat contest in South Carolina of more than 20 points in most polls.

Photos of Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton: AP Images

Steve Byas is a professor of history at Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College in Moore, Oklahoma. His book History's Greatest Libels is a challenge to distortions of history, including attacks upon such persons as George Washington, Christopher Columbus, and Clarence Thomas.



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