

Trump, DeSantis beat expectations in Iowa Caucuses

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Des Moines Register
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Iowa Republicans credited stellar field operations with helping propel Donald Trump and Ron DeSantis in Monday's GOP caucuses — sending Trump over the 50% threshold and boosting DeSantis ahead of rival Nikki Haley.

Trump had downplayed expectations in Iowa in the days leading up to the caucuses, suggesting after months of boasting about his lead in the polls that he might not finish with a majority of support.

But he claimed a record-breaking finish with 51% Monday, putting him 30 points ahead of DeSantis, his next-closest competitor.

DeSantis, too, slightly overshot expectations Monday, leapfrogging Haley into second place, even as the final Des Moines Register/NBC News/Mediacom Iowa Poll showed him 4 points behind her in the days before the caucuses.

"The two candidates who organized for a year-plus finished one-two," Iowa Republican operative Jimmy Centers said. "So, organization still matters here in the state. It certainly helps to have a paid media budget and to have strong debate performances. But if you're not building a grassroots army, especially for a cold night in January, you're going to regret it."

Still, DeSantis finished in a distant second place on caucus night — far short of his goal to significantly challenge Trump for first place.

A key to Iowa Caucus success: Strong ground games lift Ron DeSantis and Donald Trump

In addition to the magnitude and breadth of Trump's win, Iowa Republicans highlighted the pivotal role played by ground games as a key takeaway from Monday's contest.

DeSantis in particular, they said, benefited from a robust field organization.

Fueled by \$82.5 million that DeSantis raised for his reelection bid and transferred over from a state committee, his Never Back Down super PAC flooded Iowa with door knockers in the summer and made the arrangements that allowed DeSantis to campaign in each of Iowa's 99 counties.

Haley, by contrast, started with a much smaller Iowa footprint and didn't expand it until October — a point that left some Iowa Republicans wondering if it was too little, too late.

"Ron DeSantis definitely showed that organization allows you to outpace your coverage," Iowa GOP operative Nicole Schlinger said.

Although it was not enough to close the gap with Trump, Republicans said, it was likely the difference-maker in securing his second-place finish.

"I do think the reason that DeSantis is in second and Nikki is in third is because of organization," said Republican Party of Iowa Chair Jeff Kaufmann. "It's the reason that Ted Cruz was first and Donald Trump was second and Marco Rubio was third in 2016. It's organization. I mean, I definitely take that away from the battle for second and third. And that's not to say that Nikki Haley did something wrong. It's just to say that Ron DeSantis did have very, very good organization. That was the difference in my opinion."

Ron DeSantis didn't make strong enough inroads with evangelicals, who stuck with Donald Trump

Still, DeSantis struggled to definitively pull away from Haley, close the gap with Trump, or claim clear momentum going into New Hampshire.

His supporters had hoped he would peel off enough of Trump's support among Christian evangelicals to have a better showing in the state's far northwest corner, potentially boosting him overall.

As it stood, Trump grew his margins in many of those counties. In Lyon, where he captured just 15.6% of the caucus vote in 2016, Trump came away with nearly 59% on Monday, for example. DeSantis came in second with 28%.

According to CNN entrance polling, 53% of Trump's supporters on caucus night identified as white evangelical or born-again Christians. For DeSantis, it was 27%, and for Haley it was 13%.

"That is super impressive for the former president to take those far northwest Iowa counties," Centers said. "I think it shows that having a record matters, and Christian conservative voters believed that his record is worth more than perhaps his core convictions."

David Kochel, a Republican operative and Iowa Caucus campaign veteran, said that even though DeSantis did better in those counties than Haley, "clearly Trump has the loyalty and the support of a lot of evangelicals in Iowa."



Supporters of former President Donald Trump applaud on Sunday during a Trump campaign event at Simpson College in Indianola ahead of the Iowa Caucuses. ZACH BOYDEN-HOLMES/THE REGISTER

"Am I surprised? A little bit," Kochel said. "But his message is so simple. 'I gave you the (U.S. Supreme Court) judges.' And you can't argue with it. He did. He delivered on that promise. And, you know, for those voters who put that at the top of their list, that's enough."

Nikki Haley didn't do as well in the suburbs as some had expected

Iowa's Republican strategists had been watching to see how Haley performed in suburban and more densely populated areas of the state.

According to the final Iowa Poll, she was doing best among those who live in the suburbs and with white women who have a college degree. Fully half of her support came from independents and Democrats who said they planned to change their voter registration to caucus with her on Monday.

That led Iowa politicians to believe she would do well in the same types of counties that turned out for Marco Rubio in 2016 — places like Scott, Johnson, Polk and Dallas counties.

Kochel said it didn't look like Haley underperformed, but rather DeSantis overperformed expectations there.

In Polk County, which is home to Des Moines, Trump won 38%, DeSantis got 27.2% and Haley came in third with 26.4%.

"I wonder, just given the weather, if we can't just attribute that to two things," Kochel said. "One, building an organization over the course of 10 months actually accounted for something (for DeSantis). And two, I think (Gov.) Kim Reynolds' endorsement probably helped him in some of those places where she does really well. She runs ahead of Trump in all those kinds of precincts. And I think that her imprimatur probably helped DeSantis."

Kochel said that Haley was slower to build out a ground operation, which could have hurt her when it came to capturing momentum late in the race.

And he noted that pollster J. Ann Selzer said in the final Iowa Poll that Haley faced an enthusiasm problem.

"I thought that the momentum was enough to compensate for that, but it wasn't," Kochel said.

Low turnout didn't hurt Donald Trump

According to the Republican Party of Iowa, 110,298 people turned out to caucus on Monday, which is lower than in the previous three competitive GOP caucus cycles.

Republican strategists had predicted that higher turnout would benefit Trump, because he has a greater volume of supporters to potentially bring to caucus. In turn, they said, lower turnout might hurt him.

That proved untrue on Monday.

"I thought that the former president's numbers were even more impressive with how low turnout was because as (the Register's) Iowa Poll showed, he was getting so many first-time caucusgoers," Centers said. "And I thought if turnout was low, that meant that first-time caucusgoers were staying home. But in fact, it appears that they still went out and still went for Donald Trump. It demonstrates that there is no such thing as a soft Trump supporter. These individuals and voters are highly motivated and believe in him. And that's why I think he was able to get above 50% last night."

Party chair Kaufmann celebrated the turnout in the face of extreme wind chills following a major blizzard.

"I just think, overwhelmingly, the human story in all of this is that a lot of Iowans, many of them senior citizens,

went out in areas of Iowa that were 30-below wind chill, so they could participate in democracy," he said. "... I hope there's a tiny moment where we can all look at that phenomenon and not care that that was a Republican caucus or if it would have been a Democratic caucus and say, 'Wow. Don't forget us here in

the heartland. We've got passion that translated into action.' That, to me, as an Iowan, as a seventh-generation Iowan, that's what I'm going to take out of this."

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AMENDED NOTICE OF LOCAL PUBLIC HEARING

City Commission of the City of Haines City, Florida to Consider the Creation of the White Clay Community Development District

DATE: February 1, 2024
TIME: 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: City of Haines City
City Commission Chambers
620 E. Main Street
Haines City, Florida 33844

In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 190, Florida Statutes, a public hearing will be held by the City Commission of the City of Haines City beginning at 7:00 p.m., on February 1, 2024, in the Commission Chambers, 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844, to consider an ordinance granting a petition to establish a community development district which may be known as the "White Clay Community Development District" (the "District"). The title of the proposed ordinance is as follows:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF HAINES CITY, FLORIDA ESTABLISHING THE WHITE CLAY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 190, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION OF RECITALS; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY; PROVIDING FOR FINDING OF FACTS; PROVIDING FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT AND NAMING OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE LEGAL DESCRIPTION OF THE EXTERNAL BOUNDARIES OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE DESCRIPTION OF THE FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR THE DESIGNATION OF THE INITIAL MEMBERS OF THE DISTRICT'S BOARD OF SUPERVISORS; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING FOR COMPLIANCE WITH ALL REMAINING SECTIONS OF CHAPTER 190, FLORIDA STATUTES, AND ALL OTHER APPLICABLE LAWS AND ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The proposed community development district is comprised of approximately 169 acres, more or less, generally located south of White Clay Pit Road, north of County Road 546 East, and west of Slocumb Road. The Petitioner has proposed to establish the White Clay Community Development District to plan, finance, acquire, construct, operate and maintain infrastructure and community facilities, which may be authorized by such districts under Florida law including but not limited to Chapter 190, Florida Statutes.

Copies of the petition, department reports and proposed ordinance are open to public inspection at the office of the City Clerk, City of Haines City, 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844.

All interested persons and affected units of general - purpose government shall be given an opportunity to appear at the hearing and present oral or written comments on the petition. Any persons or affected unit of general purpose local government, who wish to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at this public hearing will need a record of the proceedings. For that purpose, the person or unit of general purpose local government may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made that includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and Florida Statutes, section 286.26, if you are a person with a disability who needs any accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. Please contact the office of the City Clerk at 620 E. Main Street, Haines City, Florida 33844, or by phone at (863) 421-9921, not less than three business days before a hearing or meeting in order to make arrangements.

Run Dates: January 18th, January 25th

Location Map of White Clay Community Development District

