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**Wisconsin voter registrations increased nearly 8% in last year**

*By WisPolitics.com*

Over the past year, nearly twice as many new voter registrations have been added in the 60 Wisconsin counties Donald Trump won in 2016 compared to the dozen where Hillary Clinton was victorious, a WisPolitics.com review shows.

Wisconsin doesn’t track voter registration by partisan affiliation, so the look at county registration numbers provides only a partial view of where campaigns have recruited voters in the lead-up to the 2020 election. Registration deadlines loom.

Overall, there are 264,875 more voters registered as of Oct. 1 compared to Sept. 1, 2019, an increase of 7.9 percent. Of the new registrations, 172,585 are from the 60 counties Trump won.

Trump won Wisconsin four years ago thanks to a surge in rural Wisconsin amid depressed Democratic turnout in urban areas. With Democrats vowing to redouble efforts in cities such as Milwaukee, insiders have believed a way to counter that would be for Trump to run up the score in the areas he won four years ago.

While his counties have driven the increase in voter registrations, some could be a mixed bag for the president.

St. Croix County, one of the state’s fastest-growing counties, saw a jump in registrations of just over 12 percent. That is best in the state on a percentage basis. The county’s growth has been fueled by migration from the Twin Cities, and Republicans have acknowledged the increasingly suburban area is proving difficult for Trump in polling this fall. He won it by more than 18 percentage points in 2016.

Kenosha County saw the second-largest jump on a percentage basis — 11.4 percent. The county has traditionally voted Democrat in presidential elections, and Trump took it by just 238 votes in 2016. The area was thrust into the national spotlight following the late August police shooting of Jacob Blake and the ensuing violent protests. Of the 9,800 additional registrations over the past year, 4,166 came in September.

Rock County, which Clinton won four years ago, was the only other county with a double-digit increase — at 10.1 percent.

Trump Victory spokeswoman Anna Kelly said the operation launched an “unprecedented” voter registration effort in Wisconsin.

The jump in registered voters was higher for this election than in 2016, when there was a gain of 181,010. And it was higher than in 2012, which experienced an addition of 131,631.

“We have already surpassed our voter registration goal by 17 times to expand the electorate and run up the score for the President and Republicans up and down the ticket,” Kelly said in an email.

The campaign didn’t provide details on its original voter registration goal.

Local clerks perform maintenance on voter rolls in off years. WisPolitics used the numbers reported for Sept. 1, 2019, as the basepoint, because it was the smallest number of registered voters last year. That suggested clerks had largely completed their maintenance by then.

In raw numbers, Dane and Milwaukee counties saw the biggest upticks. Dane County had 30,840 more registrations as of Oct. 1 compared to last September, while Milwaukee County had 37,115.

In a typical election year, Democrats spend the closing weeks making pushes on college campuses to register students. But the COVID-19 pandemic has complicated those efforts.

The Biden campaign said it has hosted text banks at least twice a week since August to encourage UW students to register. It also has nearly 100 volunteer “Campus Captains” across the state who have helped with voter registration drives through more than 120 events.

The deadline to register online or via mail was Oct. 14. Voters can register in person at their clerk’s office through Oct. 30 or at the polls on Election Day.

*The Capitol Report is written by editorial staff at WisPolitics.com, a nonpartisan, Madison-based news service that specializes in coverage of government and politics, and is distributed for publication by members of the Wisconsin Newspaper Association.*

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