



Pennsylvania could decide whether Trump or Biden win: Five takeaways

Candy Woodall - USA Today Network

Pennsylvanians are waking up to find Republican President Donald J. Trump with a fragile lead in a presidential race that can't be called.

Trump is leading Democratic challenger Joe Biden 55%-43% in the Keystone State, but that could change after more than 1.4 million outstanding mail-in votes are counted.

Those mail-in votes are expected to heavily favor Biden because more Democrats voted by mail, while more Republicans voted in person. Also, the mail-in votes are largely uncounted in counties won by 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton: Philadelphia, Allegheny, Chester, Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery.



Paul Kuehnel, York Daily Record, York Daily Record Voters in East Manchester Township waited up to four hours Tuesday for their turn to vote in a line that snaked around the Northeastern Middle School and high school.

Here are five takeaways after a long election night in Pennsylvania, where results are still up in the air.

High turnout

A high turnout in the general election benefited each presidential candidate in different ways. More than 2.5 million votes were cast by mail, and long lines were reported at many polling places on Election Day.

“With all of the early voting, we didn’t expect that,” Gov. Tom Wolf said during a news conference Tuesday night. “There’s a passion for this election.”

Biden is benefiting from a high turnout of mail-in voters, who are mostly Democrats .

Meanwhile, Trump is seeing a boost from in-person voting. While the state waits on mail-in votes to be counted, Trump has a lead of more than 618,000 votes in Pennsylvania after a high turnout of supporters Tuesday.

Pa. may be the tipping point after all

Pennsylvania is looking like the "tipping point" state it was predicted to be nearly two months ago. FiveThirtyEight said this on Sept. 15:

"Right now, Pennsylvania looks like the single most important state of the 2020 election. According to FiveThirtyEight's presidential forecast, Pennsylvania is by far the likeliest state to provide either President Trump or Joe Biden with the decisive vote in the Electoral College: It has a 31 percent chance of being the tipping-point state."

And now it's the state with the most electoral votes still up for grabs.



Associated Press President Donald Trump and Joe Biden, presumptive Democratic nominee for president.

More than 1.4 million mail-in ballots left to be counted

Of the more than 2.5 million votes cast by mail, more than 1.4 million mail-in ballots still need to be counted. Those mail-in votes are expected to heavily favor Biden because more Democrats voted by mail, while more Republicans voted in person.

Also, the mail-in votes are largely uncounted in counties won by 2016 Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton: Philadelphia, Allegheny, Chester, Bucks, Delaware and Montgomery.

Coronavirus concerns

The pandemic was the biggest driver behind why the 2.5 million mail-in ballots were requested, and the counting of those ballots is the reason results are still unknown in Pennsylvania.

COVID-19 was also one of the top issues that made voters choose a candidate.

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Election Day marked a record turnout in Pennsylvania and a record number of coronavirus cases. Health officials on Tuesday reported 2,875 new cases of COVID-19 — the largest single-day increase since the first case was reported in March.

Some 32 deaths were also reported, bringing the statewide total to 8,855. There are more than 1,300 Pennsylvanians hospitalized with the virus, including 301 in intensive care units.

Bigger margins

Trump didn't change his campaign strategy much from 2016, and that may have helped him drive up the margins in red counties.

A big part of how he won four years ago was by driving up the margins so high in the red counties that Democrats didn't have enough votes from the reliably blue firewall in the southeast corner to make up for it.

For example, Trump was leading Biden by 42 points Wednesday morning in Cumberland County, which is one of seven counties where election officials said they would not start processing mail-in ballots until the day after the election.

Trump was also leading 70% to 30% in Westmoreland County, where in 2016 he won 64% to 32%.

Biden, for his part, was able to drive up the numbers in Lackawanna County, where he grew up in Scranton. Democrat Hillary Clinton won Lackawanna by about 3,000 votes four years ago.

As of Wednesday morning, Biden was ahead there by about 10,000 votes. But we won't know the true count of most of these counties until all the mail-in ballots have been counted.

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