News and Notes: Projecting the June 2016 California Republican Presidential Primary Election

Key Findings

- Businessman Donald Trump is heavily favored to win outright in 24 out of 53 (45%) California Congressional Districts.
- Trump has a commanding lead in 17 (32%) additional Districts.
- Trumps upside in California would net him over 133 delegates, likely putting him at or near the number of delegates needed to secure the Republican nomination.

Executive Summary

As Republican delegates and presidential candidates gather this weekend for the California Republican Party Spring Convention in Burlingame, California, greater attention has been drawn to the pivotal role California may play in the GOP presidential contest. Using data from the United States Census Bureau, and GIS mapping software, the National University System Institute for Policy Research (NUSIPR) has taken a closer look at the likely outcome of the June 7th primary election.

Exit polls from early Republican presidential primaries have identified strong electoral support for businessman Donald Trump from key demographic groups – largely non-urban, working class White voters. An analysis by the *New York Times* in March found that, among hundreds of demographic and economic variables, electoral support for Trump was highest in areas with large numbers of White residents with no high school diplomas, a large mobile home population, and a large share of "old economy" jobs (manufacturing, construction, et al.)[1]. Over time, primary polling and electoral results have shown that Trump's appeal has expanded beyond this core base, and now includes a broader swath of the Republican electorate.

Evaluating demographics using statistics is one way to project the outcome of an election in an area; it is a technique that has been readily used by journalists and data analysts covering the 2016 Democratic and Republican presidential contests. To project the results from the Republican presidential contest in California, NUSIPR first calculated the percentage of vote won by Trump by congressional district in four

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[1] Irwin, Neil and Katz, Josh. "The Geography of Trumpism." *New York Times*. March 12, 2016. <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/13/upshot/the-geography-of-trumpism.html?_r=0>.

recent state elections – Michigan, New York, Florida and Ohio. We then collected congressional district level data from the United States Census Bureau for these four states, as well as California – White 25+ population with a high school diploma or equivalency as a percentage of the overall population; White 25+ population with an annual household income less than $50,000 as a percentage of the overall population; the percentage of residents living in mobile homes; the percentage of Census respondents who indicated "American" as their ancestry; and the White 25+ population with less than a high school diploma as a percentage of the overall population.[2] Using Microsoft Excel, we conducted a regression analysis, with the percentage of vote won by Trump as our dependent variable, and all five aforementioned factors as our independent variables. We then took the correlation coefficients of our full set of variables and the constant, and constructed a linear equation within our California dataset, to generate a predicted share of Trump vote based on our model.
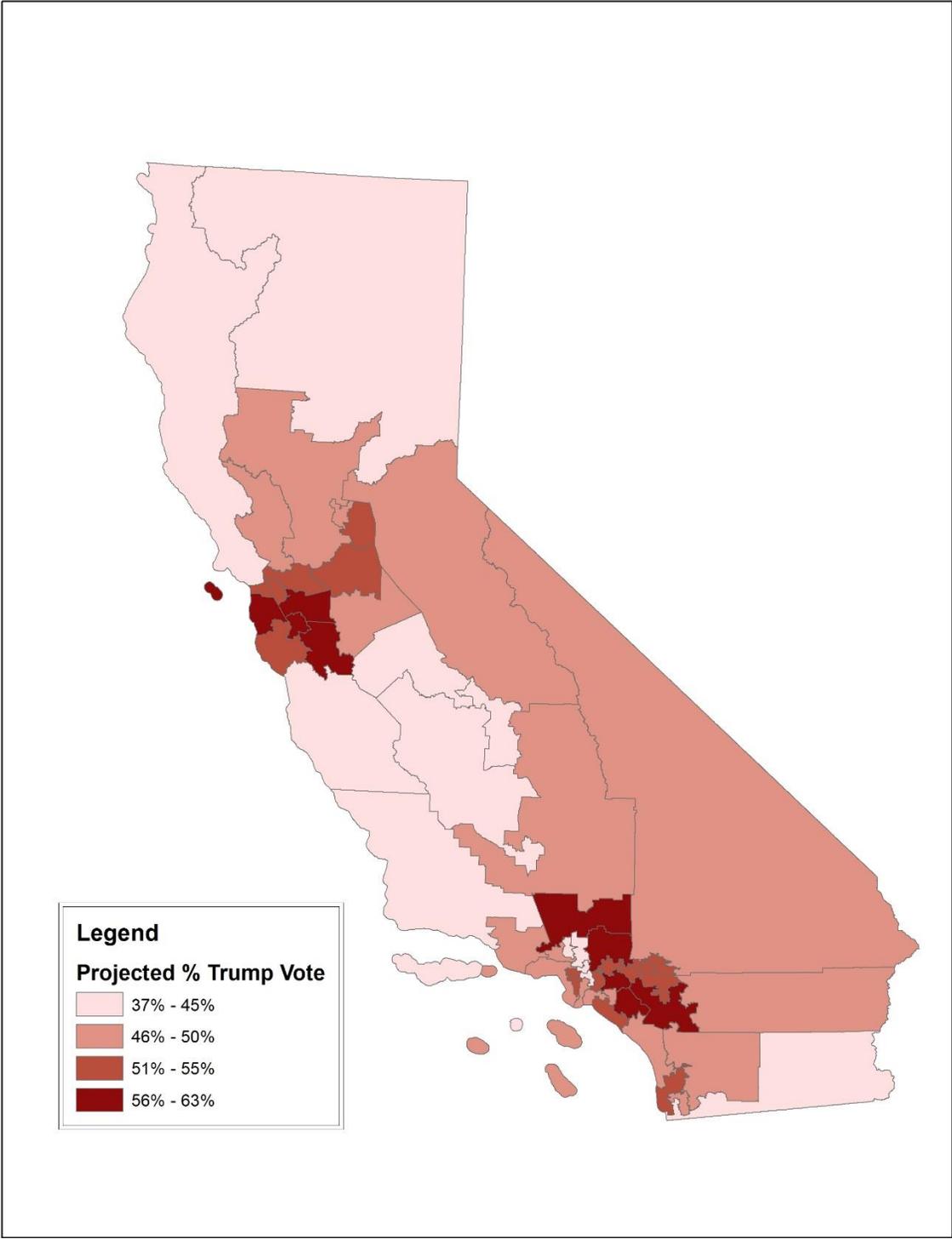
Our California model projects that Trump would win a majority of votes in 24 of 53 (45%) congressional districts, and would have a commanding lead (defined as 45%-49%) in an additional 17 districts (32%). Using GIS mapping software, we see that Trump's strongest electoral support comes from the Inland Empire (Riverside and San Bernardino Counties), north Los Angeles County, and the southern outlying counties of the San Francisco Bay Area. His weakest electoral support is concentrated along the Central Coast, the Central Valley, and far northern California counties.

Based on our model, the projected statewide vote for Trump is 49.7%. This is nearly identical to the Fox News and CBS News/YouGov state polls taken in the last two weeks, which both had Trump at 49%.[3]

[2] 2014 American Community Survey 5-Year Datasets.

[3] Polls - California Republican Presidential Primary. Real Clear Politics. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2016/president/ca/california_republican_presidential_primary-5322.html>.

Figure 1: Percentage of Projected Support for Trump in California, by Congressional District

Our California vote model is only an approximation of the projected vote; many factors, including exogenous events and targeted campaigning efforts by Republican candidates Senator Ted Cruz and Governor John Kasich, could alter the outcome of district-level races. The California Republican primary

is officially a "winner-take-all" contest by congressional district, with 3 delegates awarded per congressional district to the candidate who earns the most votes per district, an additional 10 at large delegates awarded to the winner of the most votes statewide, and 3 pre-determined delegates.

Recent polls have shown Trump as the clear front-runner in the state; FiveThirtyEight, a prominent data analytics website, has the polling average for the California Republican primary race at 42.9% Trump, 26.3% Cruz, and 18.3% Kasich.[4] There are a few factors that are likely at play here. Pollsters have identified a coalescing of Republican vote behind Trump over the past two weeks, suggesting a greater acceptance of Trump as the party nominee. Prior exit polls have also shown that Trump voters don't feel represented or heard in the political process. California Republicans have suffered a string of losses in statewide races over the past 18 years. There are currently no Republicans holding statewide elected office, and Republicans are in the minority in the State Assembly and Senate.

Based on our model, NUSIPR projects that Donald Trump will win at least 133 out of the 172 delegates (77%) in California. This is a larger delegate share than what has been earlier projected by political experts (93).[5] The implications of this projected Trump victory in California is significant, as it would likely mean that the candidate would secure the Republican Party nomination outright, making a contested convention scenario unlikely.

About the National University System Institute for Policy Research

The National University System Institute for Policy Research (NUSIPR) is a non-partisan, non-profit organization that formulates and promotes high quality economic policy, and public opinion research so as to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of local governments in San Diego County and to improve the quality of life enjoyed by the region's residents.

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[4] 2016 Primary Forecasts. FiveThirtyEight website. Accessed April 28, 2016.
<http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/election-2016/primary-forecast/california-republican/>.
[5] Will Donald Trump Clinch the Republican Nomination Before the Convention. FiveThirtyEight website. Accessed April 28, 2016. <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/will-donald-trump-clinch-the-republican-nomination-before-the-convention/>.