

Friday, January 08, 2010

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• Happy Holidays!

It has been an exciting first three weeks at ISN and we're looking forward to bringing you more news in the months ahead.

We are taking a short break to enjoy time with family and friends. ISN will resume our news services on Monday, December 28.

The new year will bring in some much anticipated changes:

-ISN will welcome two accomplished reporting fellows to our Springfield bureau in the new year. Our fellows will help expand our coverage of the statehouse.

-The website will undergo a few changes as we include social media platforms and reach out to new and current audiences. Look out for us on Facebook and Twitter in the coming weeks.

From all of us at Illinois Statehouse News, warmest wishes to you and your family during this holiday season.

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- [IL House](#)
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- [Scrutinizing Scholarships](#)
- [State News](#)

Browse > [Home](#) / [Elections](#), [Featured Stories](#), [State News](#) / Registration Up, But Timing Could Dampen Turnout

Registration Up, But Timing Could Dampen Turnout

January 7, 2010 by [Kevin Lee](#)

Filed under [Elections](#), [Featured Stories](#), [State News](#)

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By Bill McMorris (217) 528-9844

CHICAGO — Voter registration for the February primary is at an all-time high, but increased registration does not always mean increased turnout.

The number of registered voters grew to 7.5 million, a 3 percent increase from the 2008 presidential primary and 4 percent increase from the last governor's race in 2006.

The increase in voter registration since that election does not necessarily reflect an increase in voter enthusiasm. Ron Michaelson, political science professor at University of Illinois-Springfield, says that increased primary turnout is no guarantee.

“We have never had a non-presidential primary this early before,” he said. “There are not a lot of predictors that you can rely on to guesstimate what voter turnout is going to be.”

Michaelson worries that the timing of the primary could prevent Illinois from having a “healthy turnout.” Only one-quarter of registered voters cast primary ballots in the 2006 governor’s race. That primary, however, was held in March, rather than February, which could have an impact on voter behavior this year.

Illinois has one of the earliest primaries in the country after moving the date up to February back in 2008 to lend a helping hand to then Senator Barack Obama. More than 40 percent of registered voters cast ballots in that contest.

But governor’s races have historically attracted less interest than presidential elections, as demonstrated in 2006. Michaelson said that turnout could be dampened even further by any number of factors, including weather and the election’s proximity to the holiday season.

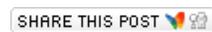
“Candidates have to get out the vote, to get out the vote in the middle of winter is not the easiest thing in the world to do,” he said. “I see no indication that we are going to have a better than average.”

Michaelson, who once headed the state Board of Elections, says the cold could affect campaign precinct captains.

“A lot of candidates and precinct committee-men walk their precincts in the days and weeks before the election,” he said. “The conditions just won’t allow that in the dead of winter.”

The level of turnout may be questionable, but Rupert Borgsmiller, Assistant Executive Director at the Board of Elections, has no doubt voter registration will increase before the Feb. 2 primary. Registration for the primary officially ended on Jan. 5, but the state extended a three week grace period that allows citizens to register and cast ballots by Jan. 26.

Information about grace period registration can be found at www.elections.il.gov.



Tags: [2010 campaign](#), [election](#), [Ron Michaelson](#), [Rupert Borgsmiller](#), [University of Illinois at Springfield](#), [voter registration](#)



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