



Organizers rate Madison County Democratic caucus-style straw poll night a success

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - The first **Madison County Democratic presidential nomination** in a caucus-style straw poll was well attended and received, organizers said after it concluded.

After deliberations at seven different locations spread throughout the county, Madison County Democrats selected Hillary Clinton as their choice for the Democratic presidential nomination.

"Tonight Democrats across Madison County came out in force to choose the next President of the United States, and after much deliberation and debate, Hillary Clinton was chosen," Katie Stuart, a candidate for state representative in the 112th District said. "After a lively debate among friendly Democrats, Clinton received 47.6 percent and Sanders received 46.2 percent."

Local Democrats convened in seven locations across Madison County for the party's first-ever caucus, set to coincide with the Iowa caucuses. Although delegates will not be selected until the March 15th Primary Election, the straw poll results will be used on official Madison County Democratic Party materials and social media.

Rachelle Crowe, a member of a working committee for the event, said she believes the event "exceeded our expectations."

"It was great to get so many new faces out and it was really a terrific evening," she said. "We had approximately 600 participants and it was a great turnout. It was a great showing of what the modern Democratic party is in Madison County. We want them all to have a voice."

Madison County Circuit Clerk Mark Von Nida echoed Rachelle's sentiments.

"The Caucus format is a wonderful example of direct democracy where neighbors come together discuss their preferences, try to convince the undecided and ultimately agree on a result," Von Nida said. "It is our hope that even though only one candidate won the straw poll, the Democratic Party will be more unified by giving everyone a voice."

Von Nida said it was a fun night for those involved.

“When it was over, people generally left with smiles on their faces even if, in the particular location, their candidate didn’t win,” Von Nida said. “They still felt included. I think the caucus was intended to energize the party and give people that normally aren’t included in Democratic events a venue to come and participate.”

Von Nida explained there were basically seven venues for the straw poll, two in the northern end of Madison County, two in the southern end and three in the eastern end. The three in the eastern end included Collinsville, Marine and Edwardsville.

Approximately 600 citizens attended the event, which closely followed the Iowa caucus rules. Local party officials were on hand at each location to welcome the crowd, register voters and facilitate the caucus. Although only voting-age attendees were counted, parents were encouraged to bring their children to observe and learn more about the political process.

"Today's Madison County Democratic Party is a modern party," Madison County Board Member Kelly Tracy said. "We are open, inclusive, and working to be more responsive to the issues of the day. It was encouraging to see so many citizens come out to meet like-minded candidates and discuss the important issues facing our country."

Party leaders believe the event gives them an edge going into the March primary.

"The straw poll is only the beginning," Circuit Judge Kyle Anne Napp said. "Democrats are energized, Democrats are excited and Democrats have momentum going into the primary and beyond."

Von Nida said people were able to bring their children if they wanted to the straw poll gatherings and that was done purposely because organizers are hoping this does open the young people’s minds to the importance of Democracy.

“The most encouraging thing I saw was a number of youth showed up,” Von Nida said. “There were a lot of university and recently graduated kids in attendance. The younger vote trended toward Bernie Sanders.”