

The Elusive Chase of the Unaffiliated Voter—All Eyes on Florida

By Lynne Holt
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As the presidential election season shifts into full gear, political pundits have increasingly turned their attention to Florida, long considered a critical swing state with a high number of unaffiliated voters. Florida’s voters determined the 2000 election (Bush v. Gore), voted for Bush in 2004, and selected President Obama in 2008 and 2012. Some political observers asserted that Florida’s unaffiliated voters contributed to the President’s re-election victory.¹

As Table 1 shows, unaffiliated voters as the number and percent of all voters in Florida has increased steadily since 2010. During that time period, of an increase of 776,112 new voters, 93% were reported as having no party affiliation and 7% of new voters affiliated with the Republican Party while the number of Democratic and minor party voters actually declined.

Table 1
Florida Registered Voters

Republican	Democrat	Minor Party	No Party Affiliation	TOTAL
2010 General Election²				
4,039,259	4,631,068	360,811	2,186,246	11,217,384
36%	41%	3%	20%	100%
2014 General Election³				
4,172,232	4,628,178	352,576	2,778,547	11,931,533
35%	39%	3%	23%	100%
January 2016⁴				
4,209,039	4,534,845	343,423	2,906,189	11,993,496
35%	38%	3%	24%	100%

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections

At the same time as the growth rate of Florida’ unaffiliated voters has been increasing, there has been a significant growth in the rate of registered Hispanic⁵ voters in the state, up by 22% from 2010 to 2014. Hispanic registered voters represented a larger segment of Florida’s registered voters in 2014 (1.7 million

¹ See, for example, Brenda Evans, “President Obama wins Florida with the Independent Vote,” *IVN*, November 8, 2012, at <http://ivn.us/2012/11/08/president-obama-wins-florida-with-the-independent-vote/>.

² Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, *General Election 2010: County Voter Registration by Party*, October 4, 2010, at <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/bookclosing/>. Data reflect the election closing-book numbers for 2010.

³ Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, *Active Registered Voters by Party*, October 6, 2014, at http://dos.myflorida.com/media/693898/gen2014_countyparty.pdf. Data reflect the election closing book numbers for 2014.

⁴ Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, *Voter Registration – Current by County*, January 31, 2016, at <http://dos.myflorida.com/elections/data-statistics/voter-registration-statistics/voter-registration-monthly-reports/voter-registration-current-by-county>.

⁵ We use the term “Hispanic” in this paper interchangeably with “Latino.”

or 14.5%) than they did in 2010 (1.4 million or 13%). They also account for a larger proportion of unaffiliated voters than that of the state's overall voter population (see Table 2). If the outcome of the 2016 election is as close as the 2012 election, these unaffiliated voters, particularly of Latino origin, have the potential to sway the final outcome.

In this first of a series of three papers we take a closer look at Florida's unaffiliated voters, with a focus on unaffiliated Hispanic voters. In the second and third papers we will analyze Floridians' concerns over several key public policy issues that will face the next president. These latter two papers will rely on data to be collected by the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, University of Florida, during its bi-monthly consumer confidence surveys.

The Florida Voting Process

Florida's unaffiliated voters may be unaffiliated either due to deliberative action on their part or by default. Florida, like every other state, determines its own registration process by statute. The terms "independent" and "unaffiliated" applied to voters may therefore have a different connotation in Florida than elsewhere in the nation. First, the Florida voter registration process does not give registrants the option of declaring themselves as "independent." If they select no party they can declare themselves as "No Party Affiliation".⁶ The Florida voter registration form also allows registrants to check a box for minor party and specify a party name. The percentage of voters who make that selection is approximately 3% of the total. Second, voter registration in Florida is made available when individuals apply for driver's licenses for the first time as authorized by the federal "motor voter" law. If they do not check a party affiliation on the registration application form, no matter where they complete and submit it, they are automatically assigned to the "No Party Affiliation" category.

Florida is also a closed primary state, the most populous of 13 states with closed primary elections. In Florida's closed primary elections, voters who are not affiliated with a party cannot vote if there is more than one candidate on the primary election ballot. (If there is only one candidate, they can vote.) In Florida's 2016 presidential preference primary there is more than one candidate competing for the nomination by each major party. Unaffiliated voters will not be able to vote in the primary unless they had affiliated with one of the major parties by the deadline, February 16, 2016.

Unaffiliated Voters and Hispanics

In Florida, there were 1.7 million registered Hispanic voters in 2014, compared to 1.4 million in 2010. According to the Pew Research Center, new Hispanic voters in 2016 will likely come from three groups: 1. those who have reached the age of 18 and are eligible to vote, 2. those who have become naturalized citizens, and 3. those who have left the island of Puerto Rico.⁷

Unaffiliated voters as well as Hispanic voters account for a growing number and total of registered voters. In many cases they are the same voter because one third of registered Hispanic voters were unaffiliated

⁶ See the check list for party affiliation on the voter registration application that can be accessed at <http://dos.myflorida.com/media/693757/dsde39.pdf>.

⁷ Jens Manuel Krogstad, Mark Hugo Lopez, Gustavo López, Jeffrey S. Passel and Eileen Patten, *Millennials Make Up Almost Half of Latino Eligible Voters in 2016*, Pew Research Center, January 19, 2016, at 4-5, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2016/01/19/millennials-make-up-almost-half-of-latino-eligible-voters-in-2016/>.

in 2014 compared to 28% in 2010, an increase of 5%.⁸ The percent of unaffiliated Hispanic voters was larger than that reported for their Republican Party affiliation (27%) but somewhat less than for their Democratic Party affiliation (38%). The remaining 2% of Hispanic voters was affiliated with a minor party. Significantly, Hispanic voters were more likely to be unaffiliated than all voters, 33% to 23%, respectively.

Table 2
2014 Florida Registered Voters

Republican	Democrat	Minor Party	No Party Affiliation	Total
All Voters				
4,172,232	4,628,178	352,576	2,778,547	11,931,533
35%	39%	3%	23%	100%
Hispanic Voters				
471,002	662,098	28,367	575,302	1,736,769
27%	38%	2%	33%	100%

Source: Florida Department of State, Division of Elections

According to one news report that appears to rely on anecdotal information, unaffiliated voters in Florida tend to be younger, less partisan, and less likely to vote than Florida voters who are registered as either Democrats or Republicans, with a growing proportion of those voters reported to be of Hispanic origin.⁹ Florida’s voters of Hispanic origin contributed to President Obama’s narrow victory over Mitt Romney in 2012, providing 60% of the vote for Obama compared to 39% for Romney.¹⁰ The percentage in support of the President was much higher than the 39% of Hispanics who were registered as Democrats in October 2012.¹¹

Hispanic voters are also a diverse group. Table 3 below shows the ethnic composition of eligible (but not necessarily registered) Hispanic voters in the U.S. and Florida.

Table 3
Eligible Voters, Hispanic Origin, U.S. and Florida, 2014

	Mexican American	Puerto Rican	Cuban American	Other Hispanic Origin
U.S.	59%	14%	5%	22%
Florida	9%	27%	31%	32%

Source: Lopez and Stepler, *Hispanics in the 2016 Election: Florida*, Pew Research Center January 19, 2016

⁸ There was a total of 404,570 Hispanics registered as “No Party Affiliation” in 2010, which was 28.4% of total registered Hispanics in 2010.

⁹ Steve Bousquet, “The Florida Voter: Dramatic Growth of ‘No Party Affiliation’ Reshapes Florida Politics,” *Miami Herald*, November 20, 2015, at <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/state-politics/article45554313.html>.

¹⁰ Mark Hugo Lopez and Paul Taylor, *Latino Voters in the 2012 Election*, Pew Research Center, November 7, 2012, at October 9, 2012, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2012/11/07/Hispanic-voters-in-the-2012-election/>.

¹¹ Florida Secretary of State, Division of Elections, *2012 General Election, County Voter Registration By Party and Race*, http://dos.myflorida.com/media/693846/gen2012_countypartyrace.pdf.

Certain Florida counties have larger concentrations of Hispanic voters than do others and more unaffiliated Hispanics than the statewide average. For example, Orange and Hillsborough Counties have slightly higher percentages of unaffiliated Hispanic voters than the statewide average of 33% for that voter population, with 37% and 35%, respectively¹² Puerto Ricans in particular have settled in Orange County and Hillsborough Counties, adding to the labor force and thereby contributing to economic expansion and positive credit ratings in these counties, according to Moody's Investors Service.¹³

Puerto Rican Floridians

Florida's Puerto Ricans (all ages) exceeded 1 million in 2014, approaching that of New York which currently has the largest Puerto Rican population in the nation. From 2000-2014, the population growth rate of Puerto Ricans was greater than that of the state's total population growth and also exceeded the growth rate of the state's overall Hispanic population.¹⁴ The relative youthfulness of Puerto Ricans compared to the overall populations has implications for voting as well to the extent that younger voters may have different priorities than their older cohorts and will potentially be voting for a longer period of time than the overall population. For example, the median age of Puerto Ricans in Orange County is 30.2 years old compared to 33.8 years old for the entire county population and 41.3 years old for Florida as a whole.¹⁵

Puerto Ricans who move from the island are U.S. citizens. However, as long as they reside in Puerto Rico they cannot vote in general elections and cannot vote for members of Congress. They can select in primary elections delegates who will represent them at the Democratic and Republican nominating conventions. Like other Florida voters, they need to register if they want to vote.

Puerto Ricans residing in Florida comprise a growing bloc of potential voters in the 2016 presidential election and in the past were more sympathetic to Democratic than Republican policies and positions. Indeed, according to exit polls in the 2012 presidential election, 72% of Florida's Puerto Ricans voted for President Obama compared to 28% for Mitt Romney.¹⁶ A poll of 400 Puerto Rican residents of the I-4 corridor which was conducted in September 2014 also reflects a greater affiliation with the Democratic Party (55%) than the Republican Party (19%) with 17% registered as Independents.¹⁷ However, the voting pattern in future elections may be fairly unpredictable given the number of Puerto Rican voters who are new to the state and have yet to commit to a party affiliation.¹⁸

¹² Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, *2014 General Election, County Voter Registration By Party By Race*, October 6, 2014, at http://dos.myflorida.com/media/693893/gen2014_countypartyrace.pdf.

¹³ Moody's Investors Service, *Moody's: Puerto Rico's Out-migration Benefiting Florida's Orange and Hillsborough Counties' Credit Strength*, November 3, 2015, at https://www.moody.com/research/Moodys-Puerto-Ricos-out-migration-benefiting-Floridas-Orange-and-Hillsborough--PR_338118.

¹⁴ Jens Manuel Krogstad, *In a Shift Away from New York, More Puerto Ricans Head to Florida*, Pew Research Center, October 30, 2015, at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/10/30/in-a-shift-away-from-new-york-more-puerto-ricans-head-to-florida/>

¹⁵ <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/area-profiles/county/orange.pdf>.

¹⁶ ImpreMedia/Latino Decisions, *2012 Latino Election Eve Poll, Results for Florida*, November 6, 2012, at <http://www.latinodecisions.com/files/3513/5241/7778/FL.2012.pdf>.

¹⁷ *Voter/ Consumer Research/ I-4 Puerto Rican Residents*, September 2014, at <http://www.pr51st.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/SurveyReport.pdf>.

¹⁸ Megan Davies, "The Puerto Rican Vote Could Swing a Crucial 2016 State and Candidates are Taking Notice," *Business Insider*, September 4, 2015, at <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-puerto-rican-vote-2016-florida-2015-9>.

Even though island residents cannot vote for president in the general election,¹⁹ many residents have family in the U.S. including Florida, Ohio, New York, and other states. Families still on the island are tackling many pressing issues: job insecurity and limited job opportunities, an economy in tatters, limited access to consumer goods and services, and inadequate medical and pension benefits, among others. In addition, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico is in the midst of efforts to restructure its debt which has had a profound impact on daily life on the island. Presidential candidates have taken various positions on the issue of debt restructuring with Bernie Sanders supporting debt restructuring without imposing austerity measures as a solution. Hillary Clinton supports applying bankruptcy rights to the Commonwealth but also favors an orderly debt repayment whereas Republican candidate, Marco Rubio, who won the Republican primary in Puerto Rico on March 6, opposes the application of bankruptcy rights. The other Republican candidates have remained largely silent on the issue to date.²⁰ Presently unknown is the extent to which presidential candidates' pronouncements or absence of such pronouncements on this issue will determine the votes of relatives who now call Florida their home.

Cuban-American Floridians

In contrast to the net migration of Puerto Ricans to Florida, Cuban net migration to the state has grown much more slowly, reaching a total of 1.4 million residents in 2014. The Cuban-American population grew by 65% since 2000, compared to that of 110% for Puerto Ricans during the same time period.²¹ Cuban-American voters still account for a larger and more conservative population than do their Puerto Rican counterparts. However, the party affiliation of Cuban Americans has changed to a more significant Democratic Party affiliation in 2012 compared to earlier election cycles, in part due to an influx of immigrants since 1990 and the emergence of eligible voters of Cuban heritage who were born in the U.S.²²

Changing Cuban-American demographics undoubtedly contributed to President Obama's decision to restore diplomatic relations with Cuba. His decision has pitted presidential nominees against each other with Marco Rubio and Ted Cruz, both Cuban Americans, opposing that position and Hillary Clinton, Bernie Sanders, and Donald Trump supporting restoration. A poll conducted by Florida International University (FIU) in 2014 showed more support for restoring diplomatic relations with Cuba from Florida's Cuban-American voters. The FIU poll periodically surveys Cuban Americans who live in Miami-Dade County which has the largest concentration of that population in the state. In the most recent poll (2014), 55% of registered voters supported the reestablishment of diplomatic relations.²³ In contrast to those findings,

¹⁹ However, they can vote in the Republican primary and Democratic caucus.

²⁰ Lucho Granados Ceja, *Puerto Rico and the U.S. Race for the Presidency*, TeleSUR, February 4, 2016, at <http://www.telesurtv.net/english/analysis/Puerto-Rico-and-the-U.S.-Race-for-the-Presidency-20160204-0001.html>.

²¹ See Krogstad, *In a Shift Away from New York, More Puerto Ricans Head to Florida*.

²² Jens Manuel Krogstad, Mark Hugo Lopez, and Gustavo Lopez, *Democratic Edge in Hispanic Voter Registration Grows in Florida*, Pew Research Center, July 31, 2015, at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/07/31/democratic-edge-in-hispanic-voter-registration-grows-in-florida/>

²³ Guillermo J. Grenier and Hugh Gladwin, *2014 FIU Cuba Poll: How Cuban Americans in Miami View U.S. Policies Toward Cuba*, Florida International University, 2014, at <https://cri.fiu.edu/research/cuba-poll/2014-fiu-cuba-poll.pdf>.

a national poll by Bendixen & Armandi found among Cuban Americans more opposition (48%) than support for (44%) the President's decision.²⁴

That ambivalence was also very much evident in the votes of Florida's Cuban Americans in the 2012 general election. The only way to determine votes from specific racial and ethnic groups in an election is to conduct exit polls. Florida's Cuban-American voters were more supportive of Obama (49%) than Romney (47%) in the 2012 election, according to Pew Research Center exit polling.²⁵ However, another poll conducted by Bendixen & Armandi gave Romney the higher portion (52%) of Cuban-American votes, compared to 48% for Obama in Florida.²⁶ Regardless of the outcome, Florida's Cuban-American vote was split between the two nominees largely along the dimension of age, with younger voters under 45 years old supporting Obama and older voters opposing him.²⁷

Florida's Cuban-American vote is not necessarily guaranteed for a presidential candidate with Latino origins or even the same national roots.²⁸ Younger Cuban Americans born in the U.S. can be expected to have less attachment to the island from which their parents or grandparents fled and therefore somewhat different policy priorities. Proficiency in Spanish may not suffice if a candidate's positions do not align with young Cuban Americans' most pressing concerns which are reported to be more focused on domestic issues and less on U.S. policy toward Cuba, of interest to their parents and grandparents.²⁹

Whether younger Cuban Americans will turn out and vote, however, is another question. In 2012, the turnout rate of younger Hispanic voters in general (ages 18-24) was 34% compared to 52% among all other age groups, 25 years and older.³⁰ However, in that election Cuban Americans of all ages had a higher voter turnout (67%) nationally than Hispanics in general (48%).³¹ It will be interesting to see whether the trends of higher turnout and a growing affinity with the Democratic Party propelled by younger Cuban Americans will result in more votes for the Democratic nominee in the 2016 presidential election, particularly given the changing demographics of this population and the nation's changing relationship with Cuba.

²⁴ Mark Hugo Lopez and Jens Manuel Krogstad, *As Cuban American Demographics Change, So Do Views of Cuba*, Pew Research Center, December 23, 2014, at <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/12/23/as-cuban-american-demographics-change-so-do-views-of-cuba/>.

²⁵ See Lopez and Taylor, *Latino Voters in the 2012 Election*.

²⁶ Greg Allen, *Republican Lock On Florida's Cuban-American Vote May Be Over*, NPR, November 16, 2012, at <http://www.npr.org/sections/itsallpolitics/2012/11/16/165283004/republican-lock-on-floridas-cuban-american-vote-may-be-over>.

²⁷ Nate Cohn, "Why the Cuba Issue No Longer Cuts Against Democrats in Florida," *The New York Times*, December 17, 2014, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/18/upshot/why-the-cuba-issue-no-longer-cuts-against-democrats-in-florida.html? r=0>,

²⁸ Emily Deruy, "10 Things to Know About Cuban-American Voters," *The Atlantic*, July 21, 2015, at <http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/07/10-things-to-know-about-cuban-american-voters/432354/>.

²⁹ CBN, *A New Generation: Cuban Vote Up for Grabs?*, March 2014, at <http://www.cbn.com/cbnnews/politics/2014/March/A-New-Generation-Cuban-Vote-Up-for-Grabs/?Print=true>.

³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 - Detailed Tables, Reported Voting and Registration by Race, Hispanic Origin, Sex, and Age: November 2012*, Table 2, at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>.

³¹ *Ibid.*, referencing Mark Hugo Lopez and Ana Gonzales-Barrera, *Inside the 2012 Latino Electorate*, Pew Research Center, June 3, 2013, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/2013/06/03/inside-the-2012-latino-electorate/>.

Will the Hispanic Vote and the Unaffiliated Vote Make a Difference in 2016 in Florida and the Nation?

Of all populations, Hispanics are in general least represented nationally in terms of voter turnout compared to both whites and African Americans.³² However, that was not the case in the 2012 election, at least in Florida, when 62% of the state's Hispanics voted, a turnout that was comparable to the white vote and higher than the turnout of Florida's black and Asian voters.³³ If this pattern is repeated in the 2016 presidential election, a higher turnout might make a difference in terms of the election outcome.

The presence of Hispanic voters was not central to Republican campaign strategies in Iowa and New Hampshire. As a recent *Miami-Herald* op-ed piece observes, Republican candidates in those states "competed to demonize Hispanics."³⁴ Those tactics may have worked because Hispanics in both states accounted for less than 3 percent of the vote. The question posed in the article is whether eligible Hispanic voters will forget those slights by Election Day in other states and support a Republican, or if they will remember those slights and decide not to vote. In some states such as Texas, their appearance may not make much of a difference because Texas is a reliably "Red" state. But in other states such as Florida, that turnout could contribute to greater support for the Democratic nominee in November.

Turnout projections focused on Hispanic voters will of necessity be inaccurate this far out. As Election Day approaches we may have better insight into whether strategies that were perceived to be anti-Hispanic will resonate or not with Florida's Hispanic voters. Will anti-Hispanic campaign strategies deployed in early primary states be considered more important than other issues such as the economy, health care, immigration issues, tax policy, and the threat of terrorism? Can Republicans appeal to Florida's Hispanic voters without losing votes from their more conservative base?

What we do know at this time is that a majority (80%) of Latinos nationally have a negative opinion of Donald Trump, whose anti-immigrant pronouncements have offended many.³⁵ This negative attitude also applies to the Republican Party in general and has become much more pronounced since the 2012 presidential election, according to a poll conducted by Hispanic Decisions in November 2015. In November 2012, only 18% of respondents to the Latino Decisions poll responded that the Republican Party was hostile toward Hispanics compared to 45% three years later.³⁶

³² Thom File "The Diversifying Electorate—Voting Rates by Race and Hispanic Origin in 2012 (and Other Recent Elections)," *Current Population Survey Reports*, P20-569, U.S. Census Bureau, May 2013, at <https://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-568.pdf>.

³³ U.S. Census Bureau, *Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2012 - Detailed Tables, Reported Voting and Registration by Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2012*, Table 4B, at <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting/publications/p20/2012/tables.html>. 62.2% Hispanics turned out to vote versus 61.9% white non-Hispanics. Margin of error is 4.8%. Note that a comparison of this sort cannot be made in non-presidential election years such as 2014, when the Hispanic turnout was very low, only 36.5% compared to 50.5% for the total turnout. Matt Barreto, *Missed Opportunities: Assessing Latino Turnout in 2014*, Latino Decisions, March 3, 2015, at <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2015/03/31/official-voter-turnout-data-for-latinos-in-2014/>.

³⁴ Jose W. Fernandez, "Hispanics Pay a High Price for their Low Voting Turnout," *Miami Herald*, February 10, 2016, at <http://www.miamiherald.com/opinion/op-ed/article59632561.html>.

³⁵ Public Religion Institute, *American Values Survey Supplement*, November 6-10, 2015, at <http://publicreligion.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/AVS-Supplement-FINAL.pdf>

³⁶ Latino Decisions, *New Poll: Hostile Talk Hurts GOP with Latino Voters*, November 16, 2015, at <http://www.latinodecisions.com/blog/2015/11/16/new-poll-hostile-talk-hurts-gop-with-latinos-voters/>.

Yet, eligible Hispanic voters come from diverse backgrounds. Whereas the majority of the nation's eligible Hispanic voters are of Mexican heritage (59%), only 9% of Florida's eligible voters are Mexican American. The majority (58%) are Puerto Rican and Cuban Americans.³⁷ Will these and other Hispanic populations respond differently to anti-Mexican immigrant rhetoric? Might the relatively small complement of Mexican-American voters in Florida explain the more favorable response by Republican Hispanics to Donald Trump in a January poll conducted by Florida Atlantic University (FAU)?³⁸ In that poll 54% of likely Republican Hispanic voters supported Donald Trump over 10 other GOP candidates at the time, a higher percentage than was given by other likely Republican voters.

Full Circle to Unaffiliated Hispanic Voters

As shown above in Table 2, almost 600,000 of Florida's registered Hispanics were not affiliated with a political party in 2014. Will that group of voters make a difference in November? Some may argue, as did the author of a recent article in the *New Republic*, that the Hispanic vote will not be decisive in the 2016 presidential election because of the way electoral votes are allocated among the states. States with the largest Hispanic populations such as California, New York, New Jersey and Illinois are reliably Democrat in presidential elections, while Texas is Republican. However, in a swing state like Florida, the Hispanic vote might matter and could well be decisive.³⁹

As we remember all too well from the Gore vs. Bush 2000 election, the number of popular votes does not determine the election presidential outcome but rather the number of electoral votes. David Wasserman, Editor, *Cook Political Report*, points out that demographics favor a Democratic victory in the Electoral College in 2016: a growing number of Democratic-leaning Hispanics and other minorities are projected to join the voter ranks in 2016, while the Republican stronghold, white voters without college degrees, will decline as a percentage of total voters.⁴⁰ An interactive model⁴¹ developed by Wasserman and Bycoffe of five demographic groups including Hispanics revealed that if Florida's Hispanics had the same turnout as in 2012 and 56% of them voted for the Democrat candidate, the state would still trend Republican in terms of electorate.⁴² If one recalls that 38% of Hispanics were registered as Democrats in 2014 (Table 2)

³⁷ See Gustavo Lopez and Renee Stapler, *Latinos in the 2016 Election: Florida*, Pew Research Center, January 19, 2016, at <http://www.pewhispanic.org/fact-sheets/2016-state-election-fact-sheets/latinos-in-the-2016-election-florida/>.

³⁸ James Hellegaard, *Florida Atlantic University Poll: Trump Surges in Sunshine State, Bernie Cuts into Clintons lead in Dem Primary. Grayson (D) and Jolly (R) early frontrunners for Party Nominations' in U.S. Senate Race*, January 19, 2016. See also Marisa Schultz, "Trump Winning over Hispanic Republicans, Poll Says," *New York Post*, January 31, 2016, at <http://nypost.com/2016/01/31/trump-winning-over-Hispanic-republicans-poll-says/> for similar findings.

³⁹ Laura Reston, "Forget Donald Trump. Hispanics Only Matter for Democrats in 2016," *New Republic*, October 9, 2015, at <https://newrepublic.com/article/123062/forget-donald-trump-Hispanics-only-matter-democrats-2016>.

⁴⁰ David Wasserman, "How Demographics Will Shape the 2016 Election," *FiveThirtyEight*, December 3, 2015, at <http://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-demographics-will-shape-the-2016-election/>.

⁴¹ Aaron Bycoffe and David Wasserman, "What Would It Take to Turn Blue States Red?," *FiveThirtyEight*, December 3, 2015, at <http://projects.fivethirtyeight.com/2016-swing-the-election/>.

⁴² Another analysis determined that the threshold for pushing the 2012 presidential election outcome to Republicans would have been a 58% of Hispanic voters supporting President Obama's reelection instead of the 60% who did so. See Allison Kopicki and Will Irving, "Assessing How Pivotal the Hispanic Vote Was to Obama's Victory," *The Caucus: the Politics and Government Blog of the New York Times*, November 20, 2012, at http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/11/20/assessing-how-pivotal-the-hispanic-vote-was-to-obamas-victory/?_r=0.

and 62% of Florida's Hispanics actually voted in 2012, Hispanic support for a Democratic nominee will need to come from elsewhere, most likely from unaffiliated voters.

The outcome for Florida with its 29 electoral votes will be harder to call than the other most populous states with fairly reliable electoral vote delivery. Certain factors may contribute to a larger turnout of Democratic voters since the previous presidential election, such as a proportionately lower turnout of white voters, as well as reforms in 2013 to Florida's election laws which extended early voting days and hours and expanded the types of places that could be used for polling.

The combination of these changes should make voting more accessible to Floridians and particularly to minority voters who were most impacted in the 2012 general election. An MIT analysis concluded that in that election minorities waited on average nearly twice as long in line as whites to cast their votes. According to an analysis by an Ohio State University professor, at least 201,000 potential voters became discouraged by those lines and decided not to vote. Most of them would have cast their ballot for Obama, according to his estimates.⁴³

Other factors may deliver Florida's Electoral College votes to the Republican Party and make the state's Hispanic vote less relevant for the overall outcome. These factors include a low turnout of African Americans who are overwhelmingly supportive of Democratic candidates or a much higher proportion of the energized Republican base than is otherwise predicted.

Since so many scenarios are possible at this stage and so much remains unknown, presidential candidates would be wise to tone down their anti-immigrant rhetoric until they can be more confident about the outcome. Even then, they should think twice about denouncing the nation's ethnic and racial diversity since it has been fundamental in distinguishing the United States from most other nations in the world.

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⁴³ Jeremy Peters, "Waiting Times at Ballot Boxes Draw Scrutiny," *New York Times*, February 4, 2013, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/05/us/politics/waiting-times-to-vote-at-polls-draw-scrutiny.html>.