



For immediate release

11 October 2007

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HARVARD COLLEGE DEMOCRATS CELEBRATE SUCCESSFUL CONVENTION.

BARACK OBAMA WINS STRAW POLL WITH 45%; FORMER NASHVILLE MAYOR PURCELL GIVES RALLYING SPEECH; THREE NEW AMENDMENTS MADE TO CLUB'S PLATFORM.

The Harvard College Democrats held a successful convention this Saturday, bringing together the liberal community in a focal event which helped to ignite excitement for the 2008 race. The convention concluded with a first-ever straw poll of support for the primary candidates, with 45% of convention attendees choosing Barack Obama as their nominee.

Brigit M. Helgen '08, President of the Harvard College Democrats, said "The convention was a huge success with over a hundred people attending. It brought together the liberal Harvard community and proves that we're excited to take back the White House in 2008."

Over a hundred Harvard students attended the convention. Nashville Mayor Bill Purcell gave the keynote address, in which he condemned Republicans for a history of speaking about issues other than the truth and encouraged Democrats to focus on how to fix the country. He quoted the concession speech of Whig Congressman Davy Crockett as representative of an entire era of Republican politics: "The voters may go to hell; as for me, I will go to Texas."

A series of issue discussions on Iraq, health care, and grassroots organizing followed the keynote. After these workshops, convention attendees were offered a look into the politics of the eight candidates in the Democratic primary in the form of a mock debate, with students filling in for the candidates. Questions from the audience ranging from Obama's experience to Kucinich's idealism were met with both serious replies and laughs.

"I really thought the debate was illuminating," said Jonathan M. Padilla '11, who attended the convention. "Especially the antics of Governor Richardson and Senator Gravel."

The straw poll, which featured convention attendees dropping straws into bins representing the eight candidates, resulted in a win for those representing Senator Barack Obama. Senator Hillary Clinton finished a close second, with 27% of the vote. Senator Chris Dodd finished third, with 11%, followed by Governor Bill Richardson with 8%, Congressman Dennis Kucinich with 5%, and Senator John Edwards with 4%. Senator Joe Biden and Senator Mike Gravel received no votes.

Nathaniel J. Lubin '09, head of Harvard Students for Obama, a subgroup of the Dems, said "We're pleased to have the concrete evidence that Senator Obama has broad support on campus just like he has for millions of Americans."

The group also ratified its convention for the 2007-2008 year, adding three amendments supporting quota-free immigration policies, abolition of the death penalty, and the decriminalization of marijuana. Jarret A. Zafran, the Dems' Legislative Director, said "It's always a nice experience when the entire Dems community comes together and agrees on principles that bind us together as a party and as a community."

The convention only marks the start, though, of an ambitious year of political activities for the Dems. The upcoming election year, widely regarded as a political crucible that will shape the national landscape for the rest of the century, has generated plenty of enthusiasm on campus. The Harvard College Democrats are committed to working professionally and idealistically to turn that enthusiasm into meaningful results on the political scene.

The Harvard College Democrats are the largest partisan political organization at Harvard University. With extensive campaign efforts, numerous events every week, the Dem Apples blog, and over three hundred active members, the Harvard College Democrats are a powerful and expanding group of undergraduates. For more, visit www.harvarddems.com.

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