

Edwards tops Texas Democrats' straw poll

Obama, Clinton trail him in state party's ePrimary survey

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AUSTIN – Democratic presidential hopeful John Edwards has won a Texas straw poll conducted on the Internet, state Democratic Chairman Boyd Richie announced Monday.

Mr. Edwards, a former North Carolina senator who was the party's vice presidential nominee in 2004, attracted nearly 38 percent of the 8,101 votes cast, Mr. Richie said.

Sens. Barack Obama of Illinois and Hillary Rodham Clinton of New York finished second and third, respectively. Mr. Obama drew 21 percent, and Ms. Clinton, 20 percent. Five others split the remaining votes cast in the Texas Democratic Party's recent weeklong ePrimary Poll.

Online surveys are not considered an accurate reflection of public opinion because participants are a self-selected group. Reputable pollsters carefully screen respondents to ensure they are potential voters, and they take a sample that matches the breakdown of a population by age, race, sex and location.

Mr. Richie said Texas Democrats tried to block attempts to vote more than once or from out of state. But the party could do little to ensure that respondents were even eligible to vote, let alone registered to vote or likely to do so in a Democratic primary.

Mr. Edwards' wife, Elizabeth, said her husband connects with average Texans.

"He understands their lot – he too grew up in a town where Sunday morning church and Sunday evening church and Wednesday night church and Friday night football were what the town was built around," said Ms. Edwards, who was in town for a fundraiser and to sign copies of her new book. She joined Mr. Richie at a news conference to discuss the results.

Though Ms. Clinton and Mr. Obama run ahead of Mr. Edwards in many national polls, Ms. Edwards attributed that to free publicity the two current senators receive. Also, she said, "A lot of people are not paying a lot of attention."

Ms. Edwards said her husband "has a lot of friends in Texas" and if he wins the Democratic nomination, he will not cede Texas to the GOP.

"John's going to play here, and John's going to play every place," she said.



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The Associated Press
Elizabeth Edwards says her husband appeals to Texas voters because 'he has a rural policy, which is sorely missing from the other candidates.'

Ms. Edwards said her husband has a shot at carrying states the Republicans won in recent presidential elections because he emphasizes bread-and-butter economic issues such as depressed wages and health coverage.

Plus, she said, "he has a rural policy, which is sorely missing from the other candidates."

Even though the Democrats' effort was not "completely, scientifically down to the gnat's toenail," Mr. Richie, said it was "more representative" than the state GOP's presidential straw poll, conducted in Fort Worth over Labor Day weekend.

At that event, 1,300 Texas Republican activists voted in person, but they had to pay to do so. The poll was won by U.S. Rep. Duncan Hunter of California.

Said Mr. Richie: "If anybody in this room believes that Duncan Hunter is going to be the nominee for the Republican Party, I've got to talk to you about a bridge."

GOP spokesman Hans Klingler said in response that "grassroots leaders" voted at his party's event.

"Unfortunately, it looks like the Texas Democratic Party's only hope is to do that in a virtual world," he said.