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Live Blogging the San Mateo County Presidential Straw Poll

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I am at the San Mateo County Expo Center, where they are conducting a [Presidential Straw Poll](#) today.

This is a large room and it is packed. It looks like at least a thousand people have turned out. (Later - just heard someone say 1600.)

Along one wall are tables set up by the local Democratic clubs and the campaigns. There are Hillary, Obama, Edwards and Kucinich tables, and there is a strong Kucinich contingent here. I haven't seen a Dodd or Biden table or sign or supporters, but I have seen people with Richardson signs. And, of course Draft Gore signs.

I am here with Mary Ratcliff of [The Left Coaster](#) and [Pacific Views](#). If I am lucky Mary will let me use her camera because I loaned mine to someone who has not returned it. (hint)

The first speaker is now talking and the sound system is terrible. I'm way in the back at a press table, and there are a lot of talking people between me and the speakers. "...taking back our country ... San Mateo County ... and I thank you for being here... we WILL have a Democratic president in 2009 ..."

Now Congressman Tom Lantos is speaking. "We are here to begin the glorious process of electing the next President of the United States of America who will be a Democrat. ... Let me say a word about each of the candidates because any one of them will be a tremendous improvement..."

Now Dennis Kucinich is speaking. I can't hear well from where I am... "I stand before you with a political record that is a little bit different from the other candidates... non-for-profit, Medicare-for-all..." crowd all cheering ... "health care system..." I can't hear anymore... the crowd is chanting "bring them home, bring them home" ... "I'm telling you now it's time for all these candidates to say NO to war against Iran ...As President of the United States I'll lead America to a new era where we reject war as an instrument of policy... Constitution of the United States ... a President who will stand for diplomacy ... central mission of a Democratic President is to create jobs ... " ... "we used to make steel ... we used to make cars ... millions of jobs ... "

I took a picture with my cell-phone camera. I hope it can convey how many people are here...



(Also Mary has some good pics over at [The Left Coaster](#).)

Now there are many more people here and I can't hear or see anything. I will head to the front try to report back as I can...

Former State Senator Jackie Speier just spoke for Hillary. Couldn't hear. She received a good reception

Now former State Controller Steve Westly (ran for Governor) is speaking for Obama. Huge cheer. Hurting my ears. Can't hear... "Republican party on the run... all-time record low..."

I think I wouldn't be able to hear the Obama speaker even if I was in front there is so much cheering. People now chanting "O-bam-a, O-bam-a"

Now on behalf of John Edwards is State Senator Leland Yee. Just as much cheering as for Obama. "There are in fact two Americas. John Edwards understands ..." crowd cheering... "and what he sees and what his vision is ONE America... nearly 47 million individuals who have no health care. And John Edwards wants one America that has health care for everyone. ... Everyone paying their fair share. He in fact wants one American, one country, one voice, universal health care for everyone in the United States." ... cheers ... "best of education, best of opportunity..."

I wonder if it means something that I can hear more of the Edwards speaker, or if he's just louder? OK, he finished and the cheering made my ears hurt, but not as much as the Obama speaker...

A speaker for Bill Richardson, David Buchanan, is coming up next.

I think organization says a lot about the campaigns, and even a small event like this one can be a significant momentum-builder in the public mind if it is reported widely. Richardson has a surprising showing here, with people walking around, and a representative who came over to the press area promoting his experience. There was an Edwards representative saying Edwards is electable, progressive and green. There were two Students for Obama representatives here. One Student for Obama representative contacted me before the event as well. ... Now another, more senior, is here.

Richardson spokesman - "The war in Iraq, in this issue there can be no equivocation. We must have a leader who (something) to the lies. We need a President who will commit to having all our troops out by ...(can't hear and now the Obama rep is talking to the person next to me...)"

The Richardson person has finished and my ears survived...

The voting appears to be wrapping up. The vote counters have been called to a door, to go out and get trained. The master of ceremonies - Andrew Byrne, Chair of San Mateo County Democrats, is saying that the speeches are over, be sure to vote before it closes, come to our Democratic clubs, get involved, visit the tables at the side of the Expo Center room here...

Oh diety-on-a-stick there's a rock band on the stage getting ready to play. My ears... are already bad because I used to be in a rock band on the stage...

There is a students-for-Obama group over at the side now all chanting and cheering.

The crowd is thinning, people not sticking around for the vote-counting. And the band is loud.

I took a photo of the tables along one wall here:



counting ... counting ... counting ...

Counting:



Commonweal Institute's Executive Director Barry Kendall just got an award for something to do with organizing this.

While we wait ... I think Obama and Kucinich might have organized the best turnouts. Not sure. Edwards had a strong showing as well. We'll see.

Still waiting...

OK, the numbers are coming - now Andrew is thanking everyone...

The vote count:

Edwards 221

Kucinich 180

Obama 171

Hillary 128

Gore (write in) 23

Richardson 21

Biden 8

Dodd 4

Gravel 4

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