

Political Party Affiliation in California

As election season rapidly approaches, we at the Center for Economic Development decided to take a look at political party affiliation in California. This month's newsletter maps use the most recent data on voter registration available from the California Secretary of State's Office to map the political affiliation of registered voters both at the county level and by congressional district. These maps highlight the continued divergence of political leanings both between rural and urban parts of the state, and between coastal and inland parts of the state, two trends that should not surprise those who have been following contemporary California politics.

As of February 2015, 17.7 million of California's 24.4 million eligible voters were registered to vote. Of these 17.7 million voters, 43 percent are registered Democrats and 28 percent are registered Republicans. Of the remaining registered voters, nearly 24 percent are independent voters (registered with no party affiliation), and just over 5 percent are registered to all other parties including the American Independent Party, Green Party, Libertarian Party, and Peace and Freedom party.

While Democrats hold a wide majority in voter registration statewide, the twelve counties that represent the CSU, Chico Service Region each have more registered Republicans than Democrats. For registered voters within the twelve counties combined, over 41% of registered voters are Republicans, with only 30% of voters registered as Democrats. The county with the widest majority of Republicans both within our service region and statewide is Modoc County, where Republicans have a 25.2% lead over Democrats in registered voters. The smallest Republican majority among counties in our region is found in Trinity County, where only six tenths of one percent more voters are Republicans than Democrats.

The CSU, Chico Service Region largely corresponds to the outlines of California's 1st Congressional District. Within this district, Republicans have an 11.8 percent lead over Democrats in terms of registered voters. Statewide, the district with the highest percentage of registered Democrats is District 13 (Richmond/Oakland/Berkeley) with 55.3 percent more voters registered as Democrats than Republicans. District 50 (inland portions of San Diego County) has the largest majority of registered Republicans, with 18.9 percent more voters registered as Republicans than as Democrats.

Looking at the regional differences both between counties and congressional districts, a distinct trend between coastal and inland parts of the state is clear. In terms of California's coastal counties, all but three have more registered Democrats than Republicans, and two are primarily rural in nature: Del Norte and San Luis Obispo. In terms of congressional districts, all coastal districts hold Democratic majorities with the exception of District 48 and District 49, located in the traditional Republican stronghold of southern Orange County. While popular media and conventional wisdom in California is often focused on the perceived cultural and political differences between northern and southern portions of the state, these maps highlight the more relevant political divide that persists in our state - between coastal, mostly urban portions of the state and inland, mostly rural portions of the state.

Data Source:

[California Secretary of State Voter Registration Statistics, 2015](#)