



The Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Vote in 2006

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Gay, lesbian, and bisexual (GLB) voters may have a disproportionate impact in some key races in the upcoming election. An analysis of the GLB population in districts and states with competitive races shows the following:

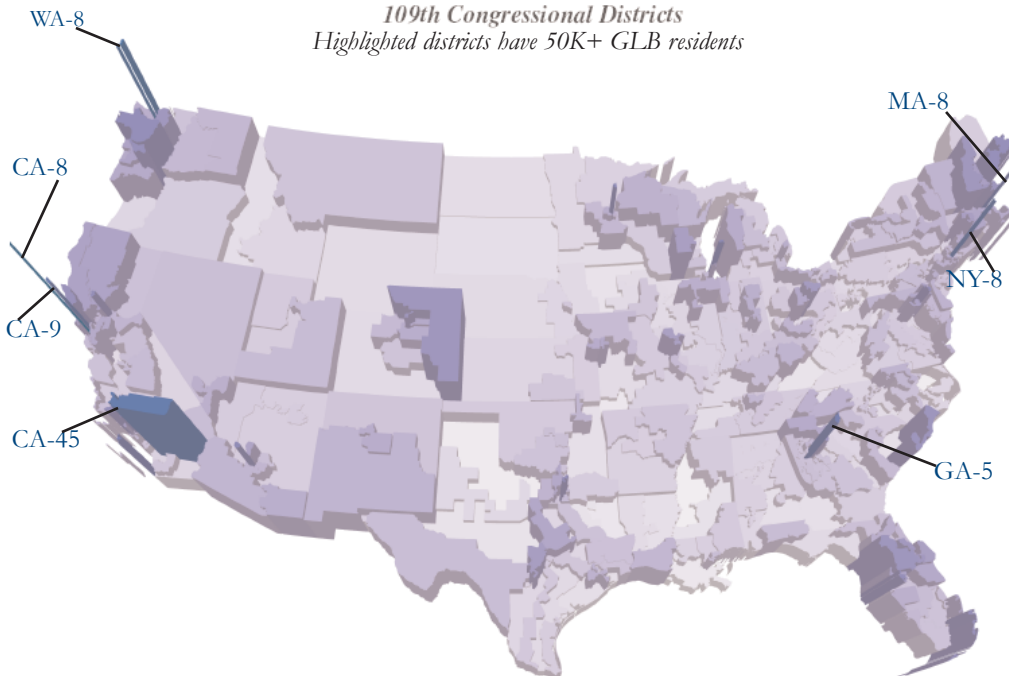
- In competitive House races with a Republican incumbent, an estimated 4.2 to 4.3 percent of adults are GLB, a figure above the national estimate of 4.1 percent and higher than proportions in tight races with an open seat or Democrat incumbent.
- In Senate races with a Democrat incumbent, an estimated 4.5 percent of adults are GLB.
- Among states with voter referenda that would ban marriage for same-sex couples, Arizona and Colorado have the highest proportions of GLB residents, 4.5 and 5.1 percent, respectively, and are the only two states with GLB population proportions above the national average.

INTRODUCTION

A recent Williams Institute analysis estimating the number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults living in each current congressional district provides an opportunity to consider the possible impact of the GLB vote in key races in upcoming Congressional elections.¹

Number of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Residents, 2005

*109th Congressional Districts
Highlighted districts have 50K+ GLB residents*



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While GLB voters are present in all Congressional districts, the map above demonstrates that some districts have a much higher proportion of GLB people (and likely GLB voters) than others. In particular, the following Congressional districts have more than 50,000 GLB residents who comprise more than ten percent of the adult population of that district: California-8th, California-9th, California-45, Georgia-5th, Massachusetts-8th, New York-8th, and Washington-7th.

IMPACT IN COMPETITIVE RACES

Most political analyses suggest that 2006 is an unusually competitive election year, with control of both the House and Senate at stake. Among the more respected prognosticators, the *Congressional Quarterly* (CQ), Professor Larry Sabato of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics, and Chris Cillizza from the *Washington Post* each compile their own lists predicting which House seats are up for grabs. On the Senate side, nearly all pundits agree that eleven seats are competitive.

To assess the potential size of the GLB vote in competitive districts or states, this analysis took both the House races designated as "leaning" or "toss-ups" by *Congressional Quarterly* (53 races) and Larry Sabato (50 races), Chris Cillizza's Top 25 House races, and the eleven Senate races considered to be competitive, and categorized districts or states by those with an open seat and those with a Republican or Democrat incumbent.² Then for each category, an estimate of the percentage of GLB adults in the population is shown (Table 1).

Table 1. Estimated percent of GLB individuals among adults within Congressional districts and states with competitive races, by party of incumbent.

Estimated percent of GLB individuals among adults in competitive races					
	House				Senate
	CQ	Sabato	Washington Post	Combined	
Incumbent Republican	4.2%	4.3%	4.2%	4.2%	3.8%
Open	4.1%	4.0%	4.2%	4.0%	3.9%
Incumbent Democrat	2.8%	3.0%	3.4%	2.7%	4.5%

These estimates suggest that the GLB vote will likely have the largest impact in tight House races with a Republican incumbent and in Senate races where a Democrat is in a close contest. In the House races involving a Republican incumbent, an estimated 4.2 to 4.3 percent of adults are GLB.

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In Senate races with a Democrat incumbent, an estimated 4.5 percent of adults are GLB. While both these figures are above the national 4.1 percent estimated GLB population,³ the estimated percentage of GLB residents in competitive districts with a Democratic House incumbent or in states with a Republican Senate incumbent are below the national average. In competitive House races with open seats, an estimated 4.0 to 4.2 percent of constituents are GLB compared to 3.9 percent in states where there is a competitive race for an open Senate seat.

BALLOT INITIATIVES TO BAN MARRIAGE FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES

Eight states—Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Virginia, and Wisconsin—will be voting on a constitutional amendment that would ban marriage for same-sex couples. The impact of the GLB vote will likely be strongest in two states, Arizona and Colorado, with an estimated adult GLB population of 4.5 percent and 5.1 percent, respectively; both exceed the national average of 4.1 percent. The remaining states have estimated percentages ranging from 1.9 to 4.0 percent, all lower than the national average.

An explanation of the methodology for estimating the size of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population along with data for all competitive districts and states discussed in this report are included in the Appendix.

CONCLUSION

This analysis suggests that the impact of GLB voters will likely be greatest in competitive districts with a Republican House incumbent and in states with a Senate Democrat incumbent. In both cases, the estimated proportion of GLB residents exceeds the national average. This situation is also true in two states, Arizona and Colorado, with ballot initiatives that would ban marriage for same-sex couples.

What kind of impact might these voters have? While empirical data on GLB voting behavior in individual districts or in most states is unavailable, it is notable that in both 2000 and 2004, more than three-quarters of GLB voters cast their ballots for the Democratic presidential candidate. Whether or not that pattern holds in 2006 remains to be seen, but this analysis offers evidence that GLB voters could play an important role in key races in the upcoming election.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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NOTES

¹ See Gary J. Gates, "Same-sex Couples and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Population: New Estimates from the American Community Survey," Williams Institute, October 2006 (<http://www.law.ucla.edu/williamsinstitute/publications/SameSexCouplesandGLBpopACS.pdf>) and Appendix for detail about estimating the size of the GLB population in states and Congressional districts.

² Competitive districts were those listed as of Friday, 27 October 2006 by *Congressional Quarterly* (http://www.cqpolitics.com/risk_rating_house.html), Larry J. Sabato's Crystal Ball (<http://www.centerforpolitics.org/crystalball/2006/house/>) and the *Washington Post's* Chris Cillizza (<http://blog.washingtonpost.com/thefix/>).

³ Analyses from the National Survey of Family Growth find that 4.1 percent of men and women aged 18-45 identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual (National Survey of Family Growth, 2002).

APPENDIX

Methodology for estimating the size of the gay, lesbian and bisexual population

Analyses from the National Survey of Family Growth estimate that 4.1 percent of men and women aged 18-45 identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual. If 4.1 percent of all adults in the United States identify as such, then an estimated 8.8 million adults are gay, lesbian, or bisexual. Data taken from the 2005 American Community Survey (ACS) provides estimates for the proportion of same-sex unmarried couples residing in all Congressional districts. By assuming that the proportion of same-sex couples who live in a state or Congressional district is the same as the proportion of all GLB individuals residing in that same area, ACS data can be used to estimate the total size of the GLB population within states and Congressional districts. The size of the GLB population in any area can be estimated by multiplying the estimate of 8.8 million GLB adults by the percentage of all same-sex couples residing in a given state or Congressional district.

Appendix Table 1. Estimated size of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population within Congressional districts with a competitive House race, 2006

District Name	Estimated % gay, lesbian, bisexual among adults	Estimated number of gay, lesbian, bisexual residents	Incumbent Party	CQ	Sabato	Washington Post
District 1, Arizona	3.1%	15,470	Republican	X	X	
District 5, Arizona	3.8%	19,747	Republican	X	X	
District 8, Arizona	4.8%	25,540	Open		X	X
District 11, California	5.1%	26,864	Republican	X	X	
District 50, California	3.0%	15,374	Republican	X		
District 3, Colorado	2.4%	11,544	Democrat			
District 4, Colorado	6.9%	33,772	Republican	X	X	
District 5, Colorado	3.9%	18,413	Open			X
District 7, Colorado	5.9%	27,224	Open	X	X	X
District 2, Connecticut	5.6%	28,471	Republican	X	X	X
District 4, Connecticut	5.3%	26,635	Republican	X	X	X
District 5, Connecticut	2.8%	14,659	Republican	X	X	X
District 13, Florida	4.3%	24,870	Open	X	X	X
District 16, Florida	3.6%	20,568	Open	X	X	X
District 22, Florida	5.3%	28,313	Republican	X	X	X
District 8, Georgia	3.5%	19,301	Democrat	X	X	X
District 12, Georgia	2.7%	12,030	Democrat	X	X	
District 1, Idaho	2.0%	10,579	Open		X	
District 6, Illinois	4.6%	22,169	Open	X	X	X
District 8, Illinois	3.2%	16,829	Democrat	X	X	X
District 17, Illinois	2.5%	11,614	Open	X		
District 2, Indiana	3.5%	16,740	Republican	X	X	X
District 8, Indiana	3.3%	16,037	Republican	X	X	X
District 9, Indiana	3.5%	17,701	Republican	X	X	X
District 1, Iowa	2.6%	11,396	Open	X	X	X
District 3, Iowa	2.6%	11,507	Democrat	X	X	
District 3, Kentucky	3.8%	19,266	Republican	X	X	X
District 4, Kentucky	3.8%	19,830	Republican	X	X	X
District 3, Louisiana	1.7%	8,263	Democrat	X		
District 1, Minnesota	2.4%	10,966	Republican	X	X	X
District 6, Minnesota	4.2%	21,516	Open	X	X	X
District 2, Nevada	3.6%	20,178	Open	X	X	
District 3, Nevada	3.8%	24,978	Republican	X	X	
District 2, New Hampshire	7.0%	33,406	Republican	X		
District 7, New Jersey	3.8%	18,764	Republican	X	X	
District 1, New Mexico	5.4%	26,079	Republican	X	X	X
District 19, New York	2.8%	13,703	Republican	X		
District 20, New York	4.7%	23,621	Republican	X	X	

District 24, New York	4.4%	20,893	Open	X	X	X
District 25, New York	4.7%	22,763	Republican		X	
District 26, New York	3.3%	15,692	Republican	X	X	X
District 29, New York	4.2%	20,091	Republican	X	X	
District 11, North Carolina	4.8%	23,997	Republican	X	X	X
District 1, Ohio	2.7%	11,647	Republican	X	X	X
District 2, Ohio	4.9%	23,697	Republican	X	X	
District 15, Ohio	5.8%	27,138	Republican	X	X	X
District 18, Ohio	3.6%	17,211	Open	X	X	X
District 4, Pennsylvania	2.7%	13,001	Republican	X		
District 6, Pennsylvania	3.6%	18,486	Republican	X	X	X
District 7, Pennsylvania	5.2%	25,308	Republican	X	X	X
District 8, Pennsylvania	3.5%	17,607	Republican	X	X	X
District 10, Pennsylvania	3.1%	14,763	Republican	X	X	X
District 17, Texas	2.6%	12,852	Democrat			
District 22, Texas	4.3%	24,382	Open	X	X	X
District 23, Texas	3.9%	20,361	Republican		X	
District (at Large), Vermont	5.1%	23,871	Open	X		
District 2, Virginia	5.3%	23,736	Republican	X	X	X
District 8, Washington	6.3%	33,167	Republican	X	X	X
District 8, Wisconsin	4.4%	22,710	Open	X	X	X
District (at Large), Wyoming	3.0%	11,419	Republican	X	X	

Appendix Table 2. Estimated size of the gay, lesbian, and bisexual population within states with a competitive Senate race, 2006

State	Estimated % gay, lesbian, bisexual among adults	Estimated number of gay, lesbian, bisexual residents	Incumbent Party
Maryland	4.4%	178,266	Open
Missouri	3.8%	160,912	Republican
Montana	2.6%	18,703	Republican
Nebraska	3.4%	42,934	Democrat
New Jersey	3.9%	245,628	Democrat
Ohio	4.0%	335,110	Republican
Pennsylvania	3.5%	323,454	Republican
Rhode Island	3.4%	27,040	Republican
Tennessee	3.4%	148,868	Open
Virginia	4.0%	220,309	Republican
Washington	5.7%	266,983	Democrat