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Hillary Clinton Makes History, Locks Up Democratic Nomination

By DAN MCCUE

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(CN) - After three decades as a bold-faced name in politics, Hillary Rodham Clinton on Tuesday became the first woman in American history to become the presumptive presidential nominee of a major political party.

Clinton's victory against Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont in the race for the Democratic nomination for president was sealed shortly before 9 p.m. as the first results began to come in from New Jersey, one of six states holding contests on the final "Super Tuesday" on the primary and caucus season.

Speaking before a jubilant crowd at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, Clinton celebrated her long-sought "milestone" while soaking up cheers and sustained applause. "The first time in our nation's history that a woman will be a major party's nominee.

"Barriers can come down. Justice and equality can win," she said. "This campaign is about making sure there are no ceilings, no limits on any of us. This is our moment to come together."

Clinton still needed significant victories in the west to claim the nomination by popular affirmation, but her victory in New Jersey ended any miniscule hope Sanders had of pulling off an 11th hour upset at the polls of the presumptive nominee.

The biggest blow to Sanders came hours later, when he lost California to Clinton by an apparent 20 point margin. Sanders hoped a strong showing would raise doubts about Clinton's achievement and inspire superdelegates to support him at the party's nominating convention in Philadelphia.

The senator did win moral victories in Montana and North Dakota, and on that basis vowed to fight on.

"Next Tuesday we continue the fight in the last primary in Washington D.C.," he told a crowd of supporters in Santa Monica.

"We are going to fight on, we are going to fight hard," he said.

As the California results came in, the White House announced President Barack Obama will be meeting with Sanders Thursday at the Senator's request.

"The President congratulated both candidates for running inspiring campaigns that have energized Democrats, brought a new generation of Americans into the political process, and shined a spotlight on important policy ideas aimed at making sure our economy and our politics work for everybody, not just those with wealth and power," the White House said in a written statement.

"The President congratulated Secretary Clinton for securing the delegates necessary to clinch the Democratic Nomination for President," the statement continued. "Her historic campaign inspired millions and is an extension of her lifelong fight for middle-class families and children," it added.

The latest Quinnipiac University poll of public sentiment looking forward to the general election show Clinton narrowly beating presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in November, but the same poll shows Sanders defeating Trump by a wide margin.

An even more granular Quinnipiac poll, focusing only on Connecticut, shows Clinton leading Trump by seven points, but Sanders leading the Billionaire real estate developer and reality TV star by a full 19 points.

A total 694 pledged delegates were at stake Tuesday night, the most since March 15. The biggest prize is California, where 475 delegates are at stake, followed by New Jersey, which offered 126 pledged delegates to the candidates.

Also weighing in Tuesday night are New Mexico (34 pledged delegates), Montana (21 pledged delegates), South Dakota (20 pledged delegates) and North Dakota (18 pledged delegates).

Tuesday's vote was overshadowed for much of the day by widespread reports that she'd already won the nomination by virtue of the superdelegates -- former officials and party insiders who are free to vote for the candidate of their choice at the party's July convention in Philadelphia

On Monday evening the Associated Press announced that its latest survey of the 714 Democratic superdelegates showed that Clinton already had all the support she needs to secure the party's nomination.

After the AP moved its story, several other news organizations, including NBC, CBS and CNN, also declared Clinton the presumptive nominee.

The former secretary of state, however, refused to take a victory lap as she wrapped up a full day of campaigning in California.

Instead she told attendees at a rally in Long Beach "we're going to fight hard for every single vote."

Meanwhile, the campaign of her opponent in Tuesday's contests, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, called the frenzy to give Clinton the nomination a "rush to judgment," pointing out that the superdelegates don't actually vote until the convention and they could change their minds about who they support.

"Our job from now until the convention is to convince those superdelegates that Bernie is by far the strongest candidate against Donald Trump," said Sanders spokesman Michael Briggs.

In the wake of weekend Democratic contests in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, Clinton had 1,812 of the 2,383 pledged delegates needed to secure the nomination. Sanders had 1,519.

But according to the Associated Press, Clinton has also locked up the support of 571 superdelegates, compared with Sanders' 46, thereby giving her all she needed for the nomination.

The AP said according to its count, only 95 superdelegates remain publicly uncommitted to a candidate.

It further noted that since the start of its surveying of superdelegates in late 2015, none of those delegates has switched their support from Clinton to Sanders.

In an interview with NBC's Lester Holt Tuesday, Sanders was defiant.

"I was upset with what the AP did," Sanders said. "They got on the phone as I understand it, and started hounding super delegates to tell them in an anonymous way who they'd be voting for and the night before the largest primary, the biggest primary in the whole process, they make this announcement so I'm just really disappointed in what the AP did now."

Sanders vowed to fight on until the convention, saying that between now and then he will make the case that he is better positioned to beat presumptive Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump in November.

"This is not about me, this is about creating a country," he told Holt. "I don't sit around making these decisions just myself, we've got millions of people who have stood up and fought with us and were going to figure out how we go forward."

Sanders interview with Holt was likely the last most of the American public will hear from the candidate until the wee hours of the morning. He isn't expected to make any remarks on Tuesday night's results until the polls in California close at 1 a.m. eastern time.

The Democratic race was coming to an end amid new turmoil in the Republican Party. GOP leaders recoiled at Donald Trump's comments about a Hispanic judge, with one senator even pulling his endorsement of the presumptive GOP nominee. Trump insisted his words had been "misconstrued" as an attack on people of Mexican heritage.

With no competition, Trump easily won in New Jersey's Republican primary and was expected to just as easily run the table in the night's other contests, snapping up almost all of the 303 delegates at stake in the process.

With his win in New Jersey, where he picked up 51 delegates, Trump had 1,290 delegates. It takes 1,237 delegates to win the Republican nomination for president.

"We're only getting started and its going to be beautiful," the candidate told supporters who gathered at the Trump National Golf Club in Westchester County, north of New York City.

"I understand the responsibility of carrying the mantle and I will never, ever let you down," Trump said before turning his attention to the Democratic contests unfolding Tuesday night.

"To all the Bernie Sanders supporters left out in the cold by a rigged system, I welcome you to join us," he said.

New Jersey

In terms of the pledged delegates, New Jersey's 126 were the second biggest prize of the night's primaries and the results yielded few surprises on either side of the aisle.

Every major poll showed Clinton ahead in the Garden State and those predictions held up. Clinton won just over 63 percent of the state's Democratic vote.

Heading into primary day, both camps spent considerable time in New Jersey. Sanders had two rallies in Atlantic City and New Brunswick in May, and Chelsea Clinton campaigned in the northern part of the state as recently as Monday.

Clinton's win in New Jersey followed the pattern of most northeastern states. She previously notched wins in Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Maryland, also winning every state from Virginia to Florida.

On the GOP side, the Donald Trump train kept rolling through New Jersey. The state did get a dose of the #NeverTrump movement courtesy of former Republican Governor Christine Whitman, who penned a blistering [critique](#) of Trump in Politico and urged voters in a Star Ledger editorial to vote for either John Kasich or Ted Cruz, both of whom were still on the state's ballot despite ending their campaigns.

It didn't matter much; Trump garnered over 80 percent of the vote, cruising to victory in a contest long considered over. But the win comes as many Republicans, from Paul Ryan to Mitch McConnell, have denounced Trump's recent comments about the judge who is presiding over the Trump University lawsuit. Trump claimed that Judge Gonzalo Curiel, who was born in Indiana, has an "absolute conflict" against him because of his "Mexican heritage."

New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, among the earliest GOP politicians to endorse of Trump, told reporters after voting at his polling place in Mendham that the rebukes of Trump from Republican leaders were "a kerfuffle" and accused the media of trying to whip up a controversy.

Christie added that "I've known him for 14 years and Donald Trump is not a racist. In the end, there's always going to be conflict regarding civil lawsuits, people are always going to express their opinions. Those are Donald's opinions and he has the right to express them."

Christie has been named on some short lists for Trump's Vice President, although his poor poll numbers may prevent that from happening. The most recent Monmouth University poll of N.J. voters showed 27 percent approve of the governor's performance, while 65 percent disapprove. Perhaps more damagingly, the same poll found that 79 percent of those same voters agreed when asked if they think Christie "is more concerned with his own political future than he is with governing the state."

California

Lunchtime voters at Washington Elementary School in downtown San Diego's Little Italy neighborhood were "feeling the bern," as Courthouse News spoke to them about the primary contest.

Substitute teacher Diane B. said she changed party affiliation from Republican to Democrat just so she could vote for Sanders. Diane said while she would also support Clinton, she "likes how Bernie brings people together."

But new Portland transplant Scott Ford had an interesting voting plan. Ford voted for Sanders, but said he will vote for Donald Trump in the general election and plans to switch his party affiliation from Democrat to Republican. He said he would not write in Sanders' name because it would be "throwing away a vote."

"I see two Democratic parties with Hillary and Bernie. Bernie's just not getting the attention that is well deserved. With Hillary, it's like a bank account and all the money is being pushed over there," Ford said.

While Ford said it took him "a while to warm up to Donald Trump," he believes Trump's campaign has been more serious in recent weeks and he can get important infrastructure projects, like building high-speed rails and new airports, done.

Marcus Lowe volunteered for Sanders at San Diego phone banks and said Sanders' commitment to free healthcare is the "single most important issue" to him. A service industry employee at a hotel and restaurant, Lowe is currently uninsured and thinks it is un-American



that "40,000 Americans die a year because they lack healthcare" saying "I think it's an embarrassment."

Lowe said he "would vote for Hillary 100 percent" and even though he's a huge Sanders supporter he believes "it's more important for Hilary to beat Trump than for Bernie to beat Hillary."

A Donald Trump presidency, Lowe said, would be "catastrophic" for people around the world because Trump is a "climate change denier" and would undo policies set in place to mitigate climate change impacts.

Couple Sara Felman and Javier Segura both voted for Sanders, though for different reasons. Felman said Sanders is starting a "process of much needed change" and is the only candidate in a position to actually create institutional change because he "isn't bought."

Segura said he likes that Sanders uses research to back up his "articulate opinions" which he said is particularly important when it comes to climate change and the need to invest in renewable energy.

Both were miffed by the Associated Press announcement late Monday night naming Hillary Clinton the presumptive Democratic nominee ahead of the primary in California and several other states.

"It was irresponsible of the AP to make that call. What did the AP have to gain by doing that the night before a huge day," Felman said.

"It's the media manipulating public perception of what happened but it's not over until we go all the way to the end," Segura said, echoing Sanders commitment to campaigning until the Democratic convention.

Both said they too would vote for Clinton if Sanders does not get on the November ticket. Felman said it's important to beat Trump and called it "appalling" he has not [retracted](#) racist statements about U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel who is presiding over the [two](#) San Diego class action cases against Trump University.

Like their counterparts in San Diego, Sanders supporters in Oakland, Calif., said they wouldn't let reports that Hillary Clinton had enough delegates to clinch the nomination dissuade them from voting for their candidate.

"I want him to win California to send a message," said Katie Cooper, 35, after casting her ballot at the McClymonds High School on Myrtle Street in Oakland.

Cooper said she supports Sanders because he has brought issues like universal healthcare and income inequality to the forefront.

Nikolas Escutero, a 23-year-old musician, said his band drove nearly 1,000 miles from Vancouver so they could make it back to Oakland in time to vote for Sanders on Tuesday.

"He's for the majority," Escutero said. "He probably has the most refreshing take you can have on this oligarchic system."

For Isa, a 34-year-old voter who declined to give her last name, only one person on the Democratic primary ballot "has a long term vision to move this country forward," and that person is Sanders.

"I think Hillary is a brilliant woman, but I don't agree with her," Isa said, adding she feels the former Secretary of State lacks compassion.

"It's a question of who do I believe will execute their duty as president with the greatest good in mind," Isa said.

Not all Oakland voters fell into the Sanders camp, however.

Rosie Davis, a black voter who has lived in Oakland since 1950, said she voted for Clinton because she feels the former New York senator is more qualified to be president, and because it's time for a woman to occupy the Oval Office.

"She can do better," Davis said. "It's time for the good old boys club to change. I want to see a woman in there."

By lunchtime, 140 voters had cast their votes at the McClymonds High School polling place in Oakland.

Oakland, just across the bay from San Francisco, is part of Alameda County, the state's seventh most populous county with 833,000 registered voters.

In the last contested primary election in 2008, Alameda County voters supported Barack Obama with 52 percent of the vote compared to Clinton's 43 percent.

In Santa Cruz, Calif., support for the respective candidates appeared to divide neatly along demographic lines, with older voters saying they voted for Hillary Clinton, while the younger said they were still holding out hope for Bernie Sanders.

"I have not given up on him yet," said Natalie Beatie, 33, of Santa Cruz. "A vote for Bernie is a vote for the middle class. It would be nice to see that again."

Kieran Shook, 22, said he voted for Sanders because his fiancé is chronically ill and universal healthcare is literally a matter of life and death.

"Bernie said he will challenge the nomination at the convention so I am holding out hope," he said.

However, Chris Parker, a 49-year-old Santa Cruz resident, said he voted for Clinton despite liking Sanders' ideas more and even favoring him until a week ago.

"If it were earlier in the process I would have voted for Bernie, but as it stands I think it is more important for Hillary to have momentum going into the general election," Parker said.

Most of Sanders' supporters said they would vote for Clinton if she does manage to secure the nomination at the Democratic Convention in Philadelphia held in late July.

There was a notable exception.

"I won't vote for Hillary," said Jeffrey Hickey, 34, of Santa Cruz. "I won't vote for Trump either. If Sanders doesn't make it, I probably just won't vote, like normal."

Parker said this is why Sanders contribution to the Democratic Party as a whole has been so integral, despite some recent carping by institutional members about Sanders reluctance to drop out and how it is preventing the party from galvanizing around Clinton.

"The supporters of Sanders are energized and he has gotten a lot of people involved in the process," he said. "I just hope they stay involved in the process going forward."

Not everyone was reluctant to vote for Clinton either. Susan Cellarius said she thought Clinton "will make the best president because she is most knowledgeable about the job."

South Dakota

The flow of voters at a Sioux Falls polling location in a residential neighborhood Tuesday morning was more of a steady, person-by-person trickle than a flood. With no lines, most voters easily made it in and out within five minutes.

While over half of the voters asked preferred to keep their thoughts on the election private, Bernie Sanders supporters of all ages seemed eager to speak up.



"He's the candidate most interested in the things that affect me," Jason Weihs, a tattooed young man said after voting, listing the wage gap and civil rights as high on his list of priorities.

Weihs also cited Sanders' "consistent voting record" as a reason the candidate won his support, as well as the fact that he has "never been a big Hillary fan."

David Mlsna, another young Sanders supporter, said, "I always knew I would vote for a Democratic candidate. I was actually hoping Joe Biden would run. My dream ticket would be Biden and Sanders."

Asked if he was dismayed the news media declared Clinton the presumptive presidential nominee before the polls even opened Tuesday, Mlsna said he still thought Sanders could win South Dakota's primary.

"It's fundamentally good for the election process that he stayed in," Mlsna said. "It keeps a more open discourse on a lot of issues, and I can feel like my vote actually counted."

Georgiana Dugan and Richard Harper, an older, married couple, threw their vote in with Sanders in the hope that he would "bring Hillary a little bit further to the left."

"We want to make sure a Democrat gets the executive branch," Dugan said, adding that both she and Harper would "absolutely" support Hillary Clinton's candidacy if she becomes the Democratic nominee.

Dugan and Harper both called this election cycle "embarrassing."

"The whole world is watching us," Dugan said.

"I'm embarrassed for my country," Harper added.

Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump were not without their supporters at the polls, however.

Perhaps due to the general anti-Hillary sentiment among many of Trump and Sanders' supporters, an older woman who has "always known" she would vote for Hillary did not feel comfortable giving her name.

"I've been following her since Bill Clinton was in office," she said. "She's the most qualified person I think there's ever been to be president."

Although the state has not voted for a Democrat since Lyndon Johnson in 1964, the Democratic voters at the poll were hopeful that this year might be different. "I think Trump will turn some Republicans away," Weihs said.

Jerry Domke, an older voter registered as Independent, said he was turned off by Trump's campaign. "Trump is nothing but a bully and a blowhard," he said.

But Domke was "not excited" about his other options, either. "I sure as hell am not going to vote for Hillary Clinton," he said, "but that dumb cluck [Sanders] can't understand that everywhere that socialism has been tried, it's failed."

Still, he begrudgingly cast his lot with Sanders today.

Ike Bean, a middle-aged Republican voter, was forthcoming about his support for Trump. "I like that he's really honest about his thoughts and opinions. I feel like in this country, we're too ..." He paused to consider his words, then added, "Everybody's feelings have to not get hurt. And he doesn't really care, it's just, 'This is the way I feel, and I think,' and that's what I really like about him."

Although Bean liked Trump from the start, he had been pulling for Chris Christie or Ben Carlson earlier in the race.

He thought Trump had a good chance of winning South Dakota. "South Dakota is traditionally a Republican state," he said.



New Mexico

New Mexico's primary elections historically have lackluster voter turnouts, but several hotly-contested races seemed likely to make this one for the record books.

The New Mexico Secretary of State reported Tuesday that 117,506 people voted early for the primary, nearly double the 66,661 early votes cast in 2012's primary. And reports from the local news media indicated the turnout on primary day is following that upward trend.

A number of high-profile local races may be part of why New Mexico voters are so interested this year. The democratic slot for a candidate to replace Albuquerque's Bernalillo County District Attorney Kari Brandenberg is receiving a lot of local attention, with former APD Officer Ed Perea and former federal prosecutor Raúl Torrez in a close race for the nomination.

"I'm here [to vote] for the local races," said Albuquerque resident Diane Pickford as she waited to cast her ballot. "In the national stuff your vote counts for less, but change starts small."

Donald Trump has locked up the Republican presidential nomination, leading some to expect a smaller turnout of Republican voters today.

But Jeb Bush, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina and John Kasich are all still listed on the New Mexico Republican ballot as presidential candidates, raising the possibility of a significant showing of non-Trump votes, which could send a strong message to the national party.

New Mexico will send 43 delegates to the Democratic National Convention, of which 9 are superdelegates.

Of them, six have already pledged to support Hillary Clinton. Former state Rep. Eleanor Chavez of Albuquerque expressed concern about this arrangement, telling the Albuquerque Journal, "This isn't a coronation — it's supposed to be a democratic process."

Despite news reports already giving Hillary Clinton the Democratic nomination, supporters of Bernie Sanders echoed the candidate's vow that they aren't giving up "until the last vote is counted."

When Sanders supporter Jason Torrez was asked if he was discouraged about voting when the Associated Press had predicted Clinton as the winner on Monday night, he said, "Nah, it's not over till it's over. Besides," he laughed, "if you don't vote, you don't get to complain."

Courthouse News reporters Victoria Prieskop in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Lacey Louwgie in Sioux Falls, South Dakota; Bianca Bruno in San Diego, California; Nicholas Iovino in Oakland, California; Chris Fry in New Jersey, and Matthew Renda in Santa Cruz, California, contributed to this report.

The Associated Press also contributed to this report.

Photo caption 1:

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton speaks at a concert at the Greek Theater, Monday, June 6, 2016, in Los Angeles. (AP Photo/John Locher)

Photo caption 2:

Caption

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., and his wife Jane Sanders arrive at a campaign rally on Monday, June 6, 2016, in San Francisco. (AP Photo/Noah Berger)

Photo caption 3:

FILE - In this May 26, 2016 file photo, Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks in Billings, Mont., Thursday, May 26, 2016. Trump says comments on judge 'misconstrued' as an attack against people of Mexican heritage. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley, File)

Photo caption 4:

San Diego voter Scott Ford. (Photo by Bianca Bruno)

Photo caption 5:

San Diego voters Sara Felman and Javier Segura. (Photo by Bianca Bruno)

Photo caption 6:

Voters fill out their ballots during the New Mexico Primary Election at Gonzales Community School in Santa Fe, on Tuesday, June 7, 2016. New Mexico voters will get an unusually decisive say Tuesday in the final round of state presidential primaries in which Hillary Clinton is on track to clinch the majority of Democratic delegates nationwide. (Clyde Mueller/Santa Fe New Mexican via AP)

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