

Wyoming Elections Project

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There is a persistent myth in the modern voter, especially in deep red or blue states that the electoral outcome is predetermined. The myth persists partly from habit, in deep Republican Wyoming, that has the effect of making every election hinder on a heavy Republican ballot. This myth does a disservice to both Republicans and Democrats during an election. For example, the idea that, “it doesn’t matter,” keeps voter turnout low. The best solution to this problem is to provide easily accessible civic election information. By “civic election” information we mean electoral results dating back several cycles, this will show us how politics was always divisive but was also more persuasive; and gives us hope that we can get there again. Wyoming, for now, is one of the easiest places to get detailed electoral information. The challenge is where and how to obtain the information; data that is most often spread out and often difficult to narrow down. The Wyoming Elections Project is that solution, where visitors will be able to access electoral results in one place.

From data collected so far, the Project is only looking at Wyoming Gubernatorial elections, this makes sense on a few levels. First, the gubernatorial races are statewide, so we have a chance to look at how results play out in all 23 counties per election. Second, statewide concerns are often more prominent in Wyoming Gubernatorial races. This is due to many reasons, but the biggest one is that Wyoming holds their Gubernatorial contests outside of Presidential election cycles by two years. That means influence from the top of the ticket, though present, is not as profound as the top of the ticket is the Gubernatorial race, not the Presidential. Therefore, the data from these races is much more easily condensed and analyzed. That is, data collected from these contests are much more useful for the earliest stages of the Project.

By looking at each election in one place, we see twists and turns of each electoral outcome, sometimes with a matter of a single cycle, we can see the vote swing wildly in one direction or another. Take for example, the 1978 and 1982 gubernatorial elections. In these elections incumbent Governor Herschler won both; however, the share of Democratic votes in Fremont County was an increase of about 4,000 votes between the two elections.¹ By itself that is impressive, but looking further, the data shows us that voters in Fremont County increased their support for Herschler significantly more than in 1978, where Herschler won the county by only a few hundred votes. What does this tell us about elections? Many things, but the take away here, is how the voters can once again be persuaded in a divisive time, or rather, that it is possible.

The future website will feature an easily accessible map of Wyoming counties, each with corresponding election dates, reaching back to 1978 as the start. The current project only features gubernatorial races at the county and state results level, deeper dives into precincts are also possible. Further, other statewide races will be added to include even more ways to analyze and see how electorates have evolved over the last several cycles. For now, the Wyoming Elections. The immense amount of data collecting is a taxing process for an individual or organization to undertake on their own. Currently, the Project only exists as a concept and handful of well-placed graphs. Nevertheless, the Wyoming Elections Project will show us how politics is not a set order of outcomes and could serve as a reminder that politics can sometimes be very surprising.

¹ *Wyoming Blue Book*, Vol. IV, 26-27.

Bibliography

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