

G.O.P. Gained
In Percentage
Of Mail Votes

But Among Democrats,
Participation Slipped

By NICK CORASANITI

Republicans made almost universal gains in mail voting during the 2024 election, eroding a key Democratic advantage in nearly every state that tracks party registration, according to a data analysis by The New York Times.

The Republican rise in the use of mail voting was almost always accompanied by a drop in registered Democrats casting a mail ballot, allowing Republicans to make significant inroads in battleground states like Pennsylvania, red states like Florida and blue states like Connecticut.

The turnaround was remarkable given Republicans' yearslong skepticism toward mail voting, fueled by President-elect Donald J. Trump's false claims about fraud. The method was once widely embraced by Republicans in Southern and rural states but fell out of favor during and after the 2020 election as Mr. Trump and his allies argued that the only safe way to vote was in person on Election Day.

Making up ground in mail voting was a critical goal for Republicans heading into last year's election, as G.O.P. strategists worried that the party had created an opening for Democrats. Election experts in both parties have long believed that it is best to bank votes early, shrinking the universe of voters to target on Election Day and limiting the effects of bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances on turnout.

Mr. Trump, apparently cognizant of the Republican warnings, softened his stance in the final months of the 2024 election but still declared that he wanted "single-day voting."

Coupled with a Republican

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Louisiana City,
Fed Up, Picks
Coach to Lead

By RICK ROJAS

BATON ROUGE, La. — As Sid Edwards tells it, he was driving through a gusty storm, with lightning streaking the sky, when he reached a fateful crossroads.

He could turn right — proceed as usual, opening up the weight room at Istrouma High School in Baton Rouge, La., where he was the head football coach. But on this July day, he said, divine intervention steered him in the other direction.

Shoving his doubts aside, he headed toward City Hall, where he handed in paperwork to enter the race to lead Baton Rouge, the state's capital and second-largest city. He had no money, no staff, no real shot at success — or so it seemed to nearly everyone, including him.

Despite his dim prospects, Mr. Edwards blazed to the front of a crowded field and into a runoff election in December against the two-term incumbent mayor-president, as the position is called.

And then he won. He took office this month.

"I don't use the word 'miracle' loosely," Mr. Edwards, 61, said in an interview. "I think God wanted me in this position. I think I'm ordained."

Another, more temporal, explanation: These are tough times for incumbents or politicians perceived as defenders of the status quo, not only in Baton Rouge but worldwide. And in this city, a simmering dissatisfaction with violent crime, fraying infrastructure and a general sense of unchecked

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SPORTS D1-8

A Coach That Coaches Follow

Jim Crutchfield of Nova Southeastern has gained noted admirers for winning with a relentless full-court press. PAGE D1

Home Country's Hope

Alex de Minaur has had a passion for the Australian Open since rallying for a win there as a 17-year-old. PAGE D6



PHILIP CHEUNG FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The Palisades fire blazed through the hills of Mandeville Canyon on Saturday in West Los Angeles.

ISIS Raids Ruining a Paradise in Mozambique

By JOHN ELIGON and TAVARES CEBOLA

CABO DELGADO PROVINCE, Mozambique — In a region of southern Africa known for its lush forests and emerald waters, attacks by Islamic State militants have raged for years.

The fighting has killed thousands, robbed young men of limbs, forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee to temporary shelter, and made widows cover tears with their veils.

In October, we traveled to the Cabo Delgado Province in northern Mozambique to understand how terrorists who claim an affiliation with the Islamic State have gained a foothold and wreaked havoc on Muslims and Christians alike.

Officials in the region and in the West say they are deeply concerned that if the Islamic State affiliate known as ISIS-Mozambique is not contained, then the loosely linked Islamic State network that has been gaining ground in pockets of Africa could become a bigger global threat.

What residents call "the war" has robbed the region of what was a largely peaceful life of fishing and farming.

Nearly 6,000 people have been killed and up to half of the province's 2.3 million people have been displaced. Finding food and shelter has become a daily struggle in a province rich with natural resources like rubies, gas and timber.

Since our visit, the country has grown only more tense. After a disputed presidential election,

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JOAO SILVA/THE NEW YORK TIMES

Outside a clinic in Pemba, Mozambique. The region has been plagued by Islamic State fighters.

INTERNATIONAL A4-9

Gambling, Apps and the Mob

Digital games and sports betting could spell the end for a lottery run by criminal gangs that has been a fixture of Brazilian life for decades. PAGE A4

Italy to Release an Iranian

An action involving a suspect in a drone attack on U.S. forces came days after Iran freed an Italian journalist. PAGE A8

OBITUARIES B5-6

Experimental Theater Founder

Abigail McGrath, 84, was in a little-seen Andy Warhol film, but was best known for the Off Center Theater. PAGE B6

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Trump vs. the Bureaucrats

MAGA has turned "the administrative state" into a battle cry. A faceless entity is the perfect foe: hard to understand and even harder to love. PAGE A10

A Judge's Push to Flip His Loss

A Democrat narrowly won re-election to North Carolina's highest court. Her challenger has waged an unusual protest to reverse the result. PAGE A13

Noem's Priority: U.S. Border

South Dakota's governor, who sent state troops to Texas but declined to deploy them to help in a local flood, was picked to head Homeland Security. PAGE A12

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Over There vs. Over Here

"Tammy Faye" and other stage hits in London have fared poorly on Broadway. The reason isn't entirely clear. PAGE C1

Asking a Lot of Herself

Whether Elphaba in "Wicked" or Celie in "The Color Purple," Cynthia Erivo sees her characters through. PAGE C5



AS L.A.'S INFERNO
BEGAN, ITS MAYOR
WAS NOT IN TOWN

TRAVEL PLEDGE BROKEN

Mounting Criticism of
Bass Threatens Grip
on Leadership

By SHAWN HUBLER and SOUMYA KARLAMANGLA

After the first rally in her campaign for mayor of Los Angeles in 2021, Karen Bass spoke candidly about what she saw as a potential drawback to the job — a lack of world travel and involvement in global affairs.

Ms. Bass was accustomed to circling the globe as a Democratic member of Congress and of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and had spent decades working on U.S.-Africa relations. It was



ERIC THAYER/GETTY IMAGES

Mayor Karen Bass said she had rushed back from Africa.

one of the most absorbing parts of her political career, she told The New York Times in an interview on Oct. 17, 2021, at her home in the Baldwin Vista neighborhood of Los Angeles.

"I went to Africa every couple of months, all the time," she said, adding, "The idea of leaving that, especially the international work and the Africa work, I was like, 'Mmm, I don't think I want to do that.'"

She ultimately decided that she did, telling The Times that if she was elected mayor, "not only would I of course live here, but I also would not travel internationally — the only places I would go would be D.C., Sacramento, San Francisco and New York, in relation to L.A."

That pledge has been spectacularly broken.

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A Cathedral's Savory Savior:
Hams Hanging in the Belfry

By SÉGOLÈNE LE STRADIC

ST-FLOUR, France — Struggling to raise funds for the restoration of his cathedral's antique organ, a priest from St-Flour, a small town in France's heartland, came up with a creative solution. He turned one of the bell towers into a curing workshop where farmers could hang their hams to dry.

For nearly two years, after being blessed by a local bishop, pork legs swayed in peace in the dry air of the cathedral's north tower, bringing in much-needed funds and delighting charcuterie lovers. Then an inspector for the organization that oversees France's architectural heritage stepped in.

After noticing a grease stain on the floor of the bell tower, as well as other infractions, the inspector ordered that the hams be taken down. They were a fire hazard, he said in a report in December 2023, according to cathedral officials. When the cathedral refused to remove the hams, the dispute escalated all the way to the country's



DMITRY KOSTYUKOV FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Notre-Dame was flush with funding. St-Flour had ham.

minister of culture, Rachida Dati.

The battle over the St-Flour hams was widely derided as an example of how overzealous officials can quash innovative local initiatives. It also spoke to a larger issue that aging churches across France have been grappling with as they face reparations: Who is going to pay to maintain the country's vast religious heritage?

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BUSINESS B1-4

Migrants Buoy Social Security

Undocumented workers often pay taxes that help government programs, and often can't collect from them. PAGE B1

Airlines See a Smooth Ride

The industry is enjoying strong demand and rising profits, but it remains vulnerable to unexpected problems. PAGE B1

OPINION A16-17

David French PAGE A17

