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Gay vote pushes gay candidate into Philly mayoral runoff

LGBT Philadelphia voters appeared to vote as a bloc in the city's Democratic mayoral primary last May, helping out candidate Michael Nutter win over four opponents, according to a recent study by the gay rights group Equality Forum.

"Collectively, gays voted 2 to 1 [for Nutter] over the citywide average of 36.6%," Malcolm Lazin, executive director for Equality Forum, told *The Advocate* on Tuesday. "This is particularly groundbreaking in many ways."

Lazin said the information is valuable because it reflects the power of the gay vote in even broader elections. "If a candidate gives the right cues, they can deliver a bloc vote which enormously shows the voting power in that voting group. Michael Nutter gave those cues."

Equality Forum's study revealed that Nutter won an average of 74% of the vote among seven distinct gay neighborhoods.

"From the viewpoint of looking at gay voters, we tried—short of an exit poll because of the cost involved—to determine if there was a gay vote," Lazin said. "Obviously, the numbers speak for themselves. Those are objective numbers."

The methodology of the study found that, using numbers compiled from the U.S. Census, 69% of same-sex households throughout the city voted for Nutter.

Five well-known Democratic candidates were up for the mayoral primary. Each had gay-friendly records as well as experience in public office. In fact, according to an Equality Forum statement, Nutter spent most of the race in fourth place before a surge that earned him a plurality of the total vote. And in heavily Democratic Philadelphia, he is now poised to defeat Republican challenger Al Taubenberger, replacing current mayor John Street.

But why Nutter, if all the Democratic candidates were qualified and pro-gay?

"My opinion was that Michael Nutter ran as an outsider, and was gay-supporting as a city councilman, but he wanted to change city hall," Lazin explained. "I think because our community views itself as an outsider of the mainstream, they found him to be the candidate that best represent their issues." (Michelle Garcia, *The Advocate*)

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