

Voters look to moral issues

► Religious leanings draw many to cast votes for Tom Coburn and President Bush.

By **KELLY KURT**
Associated Press

OKLAHOMA CITY — Republican Tom Coburn rode President Bush's coattails to a Senate victory Tuesday, aided by a heavy contingent of evangelical Christian voters, an Associated Press exit poll shows.

Bush, meanwhile, easily swept the state, convincing Oklahoma voters only he can be trusted to fight terrorism.

Voters also pointed to Bush's stance on moral issues in choosing him over Sen. John Kerry.

Democratic Senate candidate Brad Carson had attempted to sway Bush supporters by running largely as a conservative, but his foes countered by saying a vote for him was a vote against Bush. Nearly eight out of 10 Bush backers chose Coburn.

After a barrage of attack ads aired on behalf of both Senate candidates, a quarter of voters called both Coburn and Carson too extreme. But even those voters tended to favor the Republican, according to the poll of 1,114 Oklahoma voters.

The poll was conducted for AP and television networks by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International. Its results were subject to sampling error of plus or minus 4 percentage points, higher for subgroups.

Bush's supporters were most likely to cite moral values as the top issue affecting their decision. They saw his religious faith, strong leadership and clear stance on issues as his most important qualities.

Coburn won two-thirds of white evangelical and born-again Christians, a group that accounted for four out of 10 voters.

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The threat of terrorism loomed large in voters' minds, and more than half said they trusted only Bush to handle terrorism. Six out of 10 said the country is safer from terrorists than four years ago.

"I feel he will keep us safe, and that's my main issue," said 54-year-old Jim Jacobs, after marking his ballot for Bush at Witcher Baptist Church in north Oklahoma City. "I have a daughter in New York City who will probably cancel out my vote, but what the heck."

At the same precinct, Dennis Smith, 45, also voted for Bush, citing his stance on the war.

About 60 percent of Oklahoma voters approved of the decision to go to war in Iraq and most of them picked Bush. Nearly two-thirds of voters approved of the president's handling of his job overall.

"He's doing all right," Smith said. "Nobody knew what they were in for. I don't agree with everything he has done. He hasn't been the greatest, but he's been good."

Carson beat Coburn among liberals and moderates and the 25 percent of voters who find themselves worse off financially than four years ago.

William Samples, 47, a registered Republican in Tulsa, said he chose Carson because he found Coburn's comments about "rampant lesbianism" in southeastern Oklahoma bizarre.

"I can't believe he'd say that," Samples said.

But Coburn easily captured the 40 percent of voters who call themselves conservative and won among voters whose incomes stayed the same or improved. He also won nine out of 10 Republicans and nearly 20 percent of Democrats.

"I wasn't real happy with the Senate race," said Joy Howl, a 66-year-old voter in Oklahoma City, "so I voted straight Republican."

Carson supporters were more likely to oppose a state question for a constitutional ban on gay marriage.

The amendment defining marriage as between a man and a woman passed with overwhelming support from voters of all ages, incomes and party affiliations.



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE / Associated Press

Ragan Thompson cheers as election returns are announced Tuesday during a party sponsored by the Republican National Committee at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, D.C.

PRESIDENT: BY COUNTY

Unofficial returns by county in the race for U.S. President between George Bush and John Kerry.

LEGEND:
GB — George Bush; JK — John Kerry.

County	GB	JK
Adair	2,137	3,704
Alfalfa	920	1,075
Atoka	839	2,897
Beaver	807	1,114
Beckham	2,811	2,343
Blaine	1,537	1,792
Bryan	2,848	6,864
Caddo	3,343	4,137
Canadian	16,380	11,518
Carter	5,008	7,955
Cherokee	5,280	7,353
Choctaw	918	2,805
Cimarron	516	719
Cleveland	41,506	22,451
Coal	389	1,617
Comanche	11,593	9,410
Cotton	721	1,048
Craig	1,954	2,440
Creek	10,364	9,251
Custer	4,590	3,233
Delaware	5,420	5,102
Dewey	708	1,094
Ellis	567	1,037
Garfield	10,155	7,200
Garvin	3,333	5,260
Grady	6,495	7,624
Grant	957	1,137
Greer	729	1,116
Harmon	368	473
Harper	506	876
Haskell	1,176	2,927
Hughes	1,505	2,494
Jackson	3,689	2,470
Jefferson	753	1,073
Johnston	810	2,510
Kay	8,589	6,522
Kingfisher	1,734	3,096
Kiowa	1,383	1,609
Latimer	1,080	2,114
LeFlore	4,903	6,643
Lincoln	4,515	6,467
Logan	5,896	4,958
Love	893	1,782
McClain	4,108	5,482
McCurtain	1,840	6,450
McIntosh	2,758	3,786
Major	1,091	1,659
Marshall	1,407	2,757
Mayes	5,828	6,397
Murray	1,350	3,019
Muskogee	8,392	11,111
Noble	1,625	2,507
Nowata	1,516	2,072
Oklfuskee	1,301	2,049
Oklahoma	122,276	59,900
Oklmulgee	5,691	5,120
Osage	6,630	6,924
Ottawa	4,337	4,043
Pawnee	2,256	2,593
Payne	11,694	7,958
Pittsburg	5,966	8,263
Pontotoc	3,949	6,249
Pottwatome	9,686	10,293
Pushmataha	765	2,869
Roger Mills	511	898
Rogers	13,298	11,241
Seminole	3,029	4,138
Sequoyah	3,468	5,729
Stephens	6,803	7,046
Texas	2,031	2,707
Tillman	1,044	1,490
Tulsa	123,293	46,995
Wagoner	10,072	8,081
Washington	11,380	5,485
Washita	1,682	2,017
Woods	1,648	1,463
Woodward	2,617	3,119
Totals	565,967	441,220

COUNT:

Republicans extended their decade-long hold on the House for another two years.

FROM A-1

you very much," Bush said while awaiting results with his family.

Kerry, a four-term Massachusetts senator, allowed himself to muse about the problems he might face in the White House, including a soaring deficit and a war that has claimed more than 1,100 lives.

"I'm not pretending to anybody that it's a bed of roses," the Democrat said.

The Electoral College count was excruciating: With 270 votes needed, Bush won 27 states for 249 votes. Kerry won 17 states plus the District of Columbia for 225 votes.

In the early hours of Wednesday, Kerry was still on the hunt for electoral votes the GOP won four years ago. The states' won by Democrat Al Gore in 2000 are worth just 260 votes this year due to redistricting — 10 short of the coveted number.

Kerry could pick that up plus some in Ohio with 20 electoral votes. Without the Buckeye state, he could only turn to Nevada (5 votes).

A 269-269 tie would throw the presidential race to the House.

Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D.: "Obviously the presidential race is going to keep us up most of the night."

Bush lost Pennsylvania, a major blow after courting voters with steel tariffs and 44 visits — the most of any state — in a bid to steal it from the Democrats. The loss raised the stakes in Ohio, won by Bush in 2000.

In Nevada, independent candi-



BOB MACK / Associated Press

Supporters of the Kerry-Edwards and Bush-Cheney campaigns demonstrate Tuesday in front of the Supervisor of Elections Office in downtown Jacksonville, Fla. Several hundred last-minute voters lined up outside the building as polls neared closing.

date Ralph Nader could play the spoiler.

Republicans moved toward increasing their majority in the Senate, winning Democratic seats in Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Louisiana while Democrats took GOP-held seats in Colorado and Illinois. State Sen. Barack Obama won easily in Illinois; in January, he will be the third black U.S. senator since Reconstruction.

Republicans extended their decade-long hold on the House for another two years, knocking off four veteran Texas Democrats.

Alongside the White House and congressional races, a full roster of propositions and local offices kept voters busy. But all eyes were focused on Kerry's

bid to make Bush the first president voted out of office in the midst of a war.

"I've given it my all," Bush said after voting in a firehouse at Crawford, Texas, hoping to avoid being the first wartime president bounced from office.

The race showed signs of being as close as 2000, when Bush lost the popular vote to Gore but won the Electoral College count and the presidency after a ruling by the Supreme Court gave him Florida. The incumbent hoped to avoid the fate of his father — former President George H.W. Bush, who was bounced by voters in 1992 after waging war against Iraq and overseeing an ailing economy.

Braced for a replay of the 2000

recount, legions of lawyers and election-rights activists watched for signs of voter fraud or disenfranchisement. New lawsuits sought clearer standards to evaluate provisional ballots in Ohio and a longer deadline to count absentee ballots in Florida.

While complaints were widespread, they weren't significant. "So far, it's no big, but lots of little," said elections expert Doug Chapin.

Voters were torn over the presidential race, in ways all too familiar.

Exit polls suggested that slightly more voters trusted Bush to handle terrorism than Kerry. A majority said the country was safer from terrorism than four years ago, and they over-

whelmingly backed Bush.

However, among those who said they were very worried about a terrorist strike, Kerry held a slight lead. That was a troubling sign for the incumbent as was this: A majority of voters said things were going poorly in Iraq, and they favored Kerry.

With nearly 1 million jobs lost in Bush's term, Kerry was favored by eight of 10 voters who listed the economy as a top issue.

The nation's mood? There was division on that, too. Half said the country was headed in the right direction, a good sign for the incumbent.

Voters welcomed an end to the longest, most expensive presidential election on record. "It's the only way to make the ads stop," Amanda Karel, 25, said as she waited to vote at a banquet hall in Columbus, Ohio.

Both sides spent a combined \$600 million on TV and radio ads, more than twice the total from 2000.

Bush won among white men, voters with family incomes above \$100,000 and weekly churchgoers. Three-fourths of white voters who described themselves as born-again Christians or evangelicals supported Bush.

The president had hoped to increase his support among the religious right since 2000, but exit polls suggest there was little change.

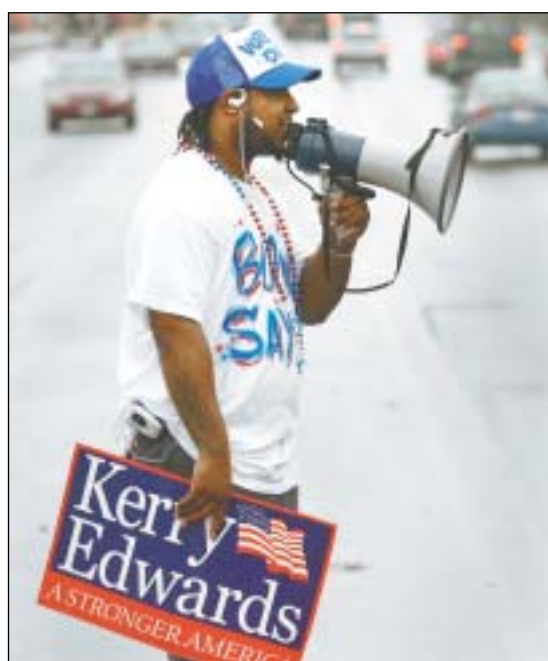
Kerry retained Gore's margins among blacks and union households, key parts of the Democratic base. His voters named the economy and Iraq as top issues.

One in 10 voters were casting ballots for the first time and fewer than 10 percent were young voters, hardly the groundswell that experts had predicted. Kerry was favored by both groups, according to the surveys conducted for The Associated Press by Edison Media Research and Mitofsky International.

PRESIDENT: STATE BY STATE

STATE	PR	POPULAR VOTE		ELECTORAL	
		Kerry	Bush	Kerry	Bush
Alabama	99	690,123-37	1,171,067-63	0	W 9
Alaska	59	69,023-34	125,306-63	0	W 3
Arizona	94	690,261-44	860,857-55	0	W10
Arkansas	87	409,980-45	497,038-54	0	W 6
California	38	2,108,866-53	1,828,091-46	W55	0
Colorado	84	783,564-46	914,825-53	0	W 9
Connecticut	94	783,233-54	644,531-44	W 7	0
Delaware	95	191,870-53	164,807-46	W 3	0
District of Columbia	100	183,876-90	19,007-09	W 3	0
Florida	99	3,416,447-47	3,781,138-52	0	W27
Georgia	99	1,225,186-41	1,767,532-59	0	W15
Hawaii	0	69,298-55	55,372-44	4	0
Idaho	65	99,832-29	240,092-70	0	W 4
Illinois	94	2,666,886-55	2,139,410-44	W21	0
Indiana	97	919,229-39	1,411,972-60	0	W11
Iowa	95	705,132-49	716,861-50	0	7
Kansas	92	375,055-36	660,965-63	0	W 6
Kentucky	99	706,503-40	1,061,608-60	0	W 8
Louisiana	99	803,984-42	1,084,909-57	0	W 9
Maine	81	294,719-53	248,409-45	W 4	0
Maryland	96	1,142,074-55	911,987-44	W10	0
Massachusetts	98	1,739,506-62	1,045,186-37	W12	0
Michigan	74	1,737,336-51	1,625,031-48	17	0
Minnesota	71	1,081,984-52	974,147-47	W10	0
Mississippi	93	419,758-40	617,790-59	0	W 6

Missouri	89	1,075,257-46	1,256,957-54	0	W11
Montana	59	103,911-40	152,395-58	0	W 3
Nebraska	74	171,024-32	364,819-67	0	W 5
Nevada	56	276,252-49	281,385-50	0	5
New Hampshire	95	319,527-51	306,350-49	W 4	0
New Jersey	99	1,799,320-53	1,587,494-46	W15	0
New Mexico	92	240,634-47	269,426-52	0	5
New York	99	3,945,432-58	2,763,506-40	W31	0
North Carolina	98	1,411,950-43	1,830,441-56	0	W15
North Dakota	94	99,845-36	176,120-63	0	W 3
Ohio	96	2,559,802-49	2,673,882-51	0	20
Oklahoma	99	492,305-34	940,314-66	0	W 7
Oregon	73	698,240-53	610,547-46	W 7	0
Pennsylvania	96	2,717,188-51	2,530,698-48	W21	0
Rhode Island	99	246,981-60	161,238-39	W 4	0
South Carolina	98	620,837-41	889,670-58	0	W 8
South Dakota	91	124,899-38	200,492-61	0	W 3
Tennessee	99	1,029,935-43	1,376,392-57	0	W11
Texas	87	2,599,495-38	4,172,241-61	0	W34
Utah	45	83,265-26	229,332-72	0	W 5
Vermont	98	178,566-59	117,617-39	W 3	0
Virginia	99	1,399,057-46	1,648,910-54	0	W13
Washington	62	827,004-53	702,204-45	W11	0
West Virginia	87	295,009-44	376,393-56	0	W 5
Wisconsin	83	1,206,703-50	1,178,866-49	10	0
Wyoming	93	68,258-30	156,123-68	0	W 3
Totals		47,904,421-48	51,521,750-52	252	286



ROADSELL HICKMAN / Associated Press

De'Miles Jones, 23, of East Cleveland, Ohio, uses his megaphone at an intersection in Cleveland to help get out the vote in support of Democrat John Kerry.