

Monmouth's Political Profile

There is an array of political parties and political cultures of Americans, two of those political cultures are conservative and progressive. Conservatives tend to be older, higher income citizens who live outside of populated urban areas (Hoft, Jim). The Republican Party is typically the political party that conservatives are affiliated with (Conservative). Conservatives tend to support the lowering of taxes and smaller governments and are typically against gun control and abortion (Conservative). Progressives however are quite different from conservatives. Progressives tend to be young, lower income citizens that live in urban areas (Riker, Dan). A large amount of minority groups tend to classify themselves as being progressive, such as African Americans and Hispanics (Section 9). Progressives are typically affiliated with the Democratic Party (Progressive Majority). They typically support higher taxes for higher income citizens (Conservative).

The town of Monmouth, Oregon is a small, rural, college town known as the home of Western Oregon University. Monmouth is a conservative and Republican town based on the idea that similar to many towns that have Republican majority, Monmouth is a small, agricultural and rural town that is heavily family oriented with small school districts and resides in a county that has opposed measures that favor Democratic ideals such as Measure 92. Monmouth has some progressive and Democratic characteristics such as a younger population and a higher percentage of its population is below poverty level. These Democratic characteristics that Monmouth has can be explained by the fact that Monmouth is a college town and a large majority of Monmouth's population is students between the ages of 18-22 that are not working or only work part time. Voters between the ages of 18-22 tend to not participate in elections, so the majority of the time their beliefs are not represented in the election results. Therefore, Polk County, which Monmouth resides in, identifies with the Republican Party based on the fact that Monmouth has characteristics that tend to be identified as conservative socio-demographics.

There are many socio-demographics that support that Monmouth and Polk County are Republican, however in my opinion, the most important of these socio-demographics are the median household income, the type of economy and the racial makeup of their populations. According to the United States Census Bureau as of 2009 through 2013, Polk County's median household income is \$52,808 (USCB, Polk County). In the same years Monmouth's median household income was \$31,582 (USCB, Monmouth). The difference between the median household income for Polk County and Monmouth represents that Monmouth has a higher percentage of its

population that is below the poverty level than Polk County as a whole. According to Progressives Today, “33% of households making between \$50,000 and \$75,000 were correlated with Republicans” (Hoft, Jim). Therefore, Polk County is Republican in this aspect because the median household income falls within this range. Bill Fay states, “63% of individuals making less than \$15,000 per year vote Democratic” (Fay, Bill). In Monmouth the median household income is over \$30,000 and the average number of persons per household is 2.51 (USCB, Monmouth). This can correlate to the median income of each individual in a typical household in Monmouth averaging over \$15,000 per year. Therefore, this socio-demographic supports that Monmouth, similar to Polk County is more likely to be associated with the Republican Party because of their median household incomes.

According to Oregon Blue Book, Polk County’s economy is agricultural (Oregon Blue Book). As stated in my thesis, one of the characteristics that makes Monmouth and Polk County Republican is that it is an agricultural town. Bill Fay states, “Rural areas are almost exclusively Republican” (Fay, Bill). If a town is agricultural then it is a rural town as well. Therefore, Polk County and Monmouth are Republican because they have agricultural economies which is a socio-demographic that is associated with conservatives.

According to United States Census Bureau, as of 2013 Polk County’s population was 0.8% black or African American, 13% Hispanic and 91% white and Monmouth’s population was 1.1% black or African American, 13.4% Hispanic or Latino and 82.8% white (USCB Polk County and Monmouth). This shows that throughout Polk County and Monmouth, the representation of African Americans and Hispanics in the population is very little in comparison to the white population. According to People Press, 69% of African Americans and 32% of Hispanics vote Democratic and a higher percentage of white vote Republican than Democratic (Section 9). This shows that the percentage of Democratic votes coming from the African American and Hispanic population within Polk County and Monmouth will not be enough to cause major changes to the election results. Therefore, the majority of votes come from the white population within Monmouth and Polk County which tend to vote Republican more than Democratic.

According to Oregon Secretary of State’s website, as of March of 2015 Polk County had 14,202 registered Democrats, 16,380 registered Republicans, 10,010 non-affiliated voters and 2,291 registered Independent voters (Voter Registration). For Polk County the majority of registered voters are Republicans. However, across the state of Oregon there are 822,989 registered Democrats, 651,963 registered Republicans, 536,852 registered non-affiliated

voters and 109,757 registered Independent voters (Voter Registration). Polk County is Republican based on the fact that the majority of its residents identify themselves as such. Polk County's Republican majority can be seen by observing the socio-demographics within Polk County such as race and median household income as previously discussed. Although the state of Oregon is a stronger Democratic state than Republican state that does not mean that the counties within Oregon cannot be Republican or affiliated with another political party.

In 2010 12,899 Polk County residents voted in support of John Kitzhaber, the Democratic Governor candidate, while 15,966 Polk County residents voted for Republican candidate, Chris Dudley. During the 2014 election, 12,376 Polk County residents voted in support of John Kitzhaber and 15,809 Polk County residents voted in support of the Republican candidate Dennis Richardson (Official Results, November 2, 2010). Between these two elections the number of votes in support of John Kitzhaber decreased marginally. Since the majority of votes from Polk County are in support of the Republican Governor candidate, Polk County is Republican. This is the expected result because a Republican county will most likely support a Republican candidate who believes and supports the same ideals as the conservatives within Polk County.

According to Statesman Journal, in the 2012 general election 38.98% of Polk County's eligible voter population participated in the election (Hoffman, Hannah). In comparison with the previous years' voter turnout, this amount of voter turnout decreased. According to Oregonlive, in the 2014 general election there was 68.8% voter turnout in Polk County (Oregonian). There was a major increase in the voter turnout within Polk County between the 2012 and 2014 general election. During the 2012 Primary election there was a 35.8% turnout in Polk County (5/16 Breaking). The voter turnouts of the elections in 2012 are in close proximity of one another. According to Statesman Journal, during the 2014 Primary election 33% of Polk County's population participated (Hoffman, Hannah). The participation between the 2012 Primary election and 2014 Primary elections remained roughly the same with a small decrease. There was a greatest voter turnout for the general election of 2014; this is due to the ballot measures that were in the general election. Measures such as Measure 91 and Measure 92 which involved the legalization of marijuana and GMO labeling were topics that were highly discussed and held the attention of a wider range of citizens. When there are measures that are controversial and are highly debated and discussed, there is a greater chance of a higher percent of voter turnout because more voters will be compelled to participate.

Referring to the psychological and socio-economic factors of voting, the residents of Polk County are more likely to vote. This is based upon the factors such as education, income and level of government. According to United States Census Bureau, 89.8% of Polk County's population has a high school diploma or higher and 29% has a bachelor's degree or higher (USCB, Polk County). Voters who have a higher level of education are more likely to vote and have greater knowledge of politics. The households that are slightly above or below poverty level are the least likely to turnout. Since the median house income in Polk County is marginally less than the median household income for the United States, residents of Polk County are more likely to turnout than residents of counties whose median household income is slightly more than or is less than the poverty level. The level of government that is involved in the elections can have an impact on how many voters turnout. For the higher level government elections, such as presidential elections, there will be a much greater voter turnout than the smaller or lower level or local government elections. This can have a drastic impact on the amount of voter turnout for an election. However, based upon these socio-economic characteristics of Polk County, voters are more likely to vote and participate in elections.

Oregon State's Measure 74 "establishes medical marijuana supply system and assistance and research programs; allows limited selling of marijuana" according to Oregon Secretary of State's Website (Official Results, November 2, 2010). This measure would allow a system to be created to supply medical marijuana dispensaries by marijuana growers but would still allow medical marijuana users to grow marijuana at their homes if they are licensed to do so. Measure 74 would also give the government an opportunity to research to determine the safety of consumption of various amounts of marijuana for those who have a medical marijuana card. According to the article *Oregon Regulated Medical Marijuana Supply System Act, Measure 74*, "In early October 2010 the Democratic Party of Oregon gave its endorsement to Measure 74", meaning that Democrats are most likely to support measure 74 which means that a Republican town such as Monmouth would vote no on measure 74 (Oregon Regulated). According to the Oregon Secretary of State's website, 627,016 votes were cast throughout the state of Oregon in support of Measure 74 and 10,611 of those votes were from Polk County. Throughout the state of Oregon there were 791,186 votes cast that did not support Measure 74 and 18,358 of those votes were from Polk County. The state of Oregon did not pass Measure 74 and one of the counties to reject Measure 74 was Polk County (Official Results, November 2, 2010). Polk County's rejection of Measure 74 represents the strong conservative ideals of Polk County. Measure 74 would be expected to be defeated in Polk County and Monmouth based on their affiliation with the Republican Party.

In the general election of 2012 Measure 80 proposed an idea that, "Allows personal marijuana, hemp cultivation/use without license; commission to regulate commercial marijuana cultivation/sale" (Official Results, November 6, 2012). Measure 80 was a statewide defeated measure that would have supported the legalization of marijuana in the state of Oregon. Measure 80 received the majority of its support from the Democratic Party with 55% of Democrats supporting it and only 23% of the Republican Party supporting it (Oregon Marijuana). This is demonstrated in the defeat of Measure 80 in Polk County. According to the Oregon Secretary of State's website, Measure 80 received 13,706 votes in support from Polk County while 20,551 of Polk County's residents did not support Measure 80 (Official Results, November 6, 2012). This is the expected response on a measure that favors progressive ideals because the majority of Polk County's residents believe and agree with conservative ideals.

Measure 92 "requires all food manufacturers, retailers to label 'genetically engineered' foods as such; state, citizens may enforce" (Measure 92). This would lead to any foods that have been genetically modified to be labeled so the consumers have the knowledge of the products they are consuming. Measure 92 was defeated in the majority of counties throughout Oregon, one of those counties being Polk County. Polk County's election results from the 2014 general election show that 12,829 voters supported Measure 92 while 17,849 voters did not support it (Measure 92). The fact that Measure 92 was defeated in Polk County supports the idea that Polk County is Republican because according to the Statesman Journal, "the Republican Party opposes Measure 92" (Staver, Anna). Polk County would be expected to reject Measure 92 because Measure 92 supports progressive ideals rather than conservative ideals.

Jackie Winters is the Senator for District 10, which is the district that Monmouth resides in. Winters is an active participant in the Republican Party (Legislator). Senator Winters has an extensive work history including working at OHSU's medical records unit, the Portland Model Cities Program, being the Supervisor of the Office of Economic Opportunity's New Resource Program and she helped create the Oregon Food Share Program. In 1998 Winters was elected as State Representative for District 31. During the years 2000, 2002, 2006 and 2010 she was reelected as State Representative. In 2010 she was elected to represent District 10 (OSL Biography, Winters). Winters supports the legalization of marijuana due to the fact that she introduced SB 542 that would eliminate the ban under Measure 91 on local government (Borrud, Hillary). As stated previously, Measure 91 is mostly supported by Democrats which does not align with Winters' Republican ideals. Winters voted no for HB 2787 which would

authorize in-state tuition for undocumented immigration (The Voter's Self). This particular vote on this house bill shows Winters does not support illegal immigration, which is a conservative belief (Conservative). This stance on illegal immigration shows a Republican ideal that Winters supports. Winters voted no for HB 2456 that would increase tax funds for school and health services (The Voter's Self). Winters' vote on this house bill shows her support of lowering taxes. Referring to Student News Daily, conservatives tend to support the lowering of taxes (Conservative). Although not all of Winters' stances on these measures support what a typical Republican or conservative may look like, Winters does still fit the mold of what it means to be a conservative. Winters is an older, Republican voter who lives in a rural town and supports the lowering of taxes, all of which are socio-demographics of conservatives.

Paul Evans is the House Representative for District 20. Evans is an active member of the Democratic Party (Legislator). In 1992 Evans graduated from Western Oregon University and following his graduation he enlisted in the United States Air Force. After his deployment he earned his Masters of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies with focuses in American Government, Environmental Policy and Rhetoric at Oregon State University. Some of Evan's accomplishments throughout his career are being the Mayor of Monmouth, teaching at Western Oregon University and Oregon State University, joined the Senior Policy Staff of Governor Kulongoski, Chief of the protection and the National Security Division for High Impact Technology (OSL Biography, Evans). Evans supports the legalization of marijuana and labeling of genetically modified foods (Voter Guide), these are two measures that favor Democratic beliefs. Evans does not fit the typical mold for what it means to be progressive. Evans is Democratic but he does not live in an urban area and he is not a young minority either. Although Evans does not fit the mold of what it means to be progressive that does not mean that he is conservative, there will always be outliers who do not fit the mold.

Monmouth is a Republican and conservative town based on the idea that similar to many towns that have Republican majority, Monmouth is a small, agricultural and rural town that is heavily family oriented with small school districts and resides in a county that has opposed measures that favor progressive and Democratic ideals such as Measure 92. Polk County, which Monmouth resides in, identifies with the Republican Party based on the fact that Monmouth has characteristics that identify as socio-demographics of conservatives. Those conservative demographics are median household income, race and the type of economy. By observing Monmouth's socio-demographics, I hypothesized that Polk County would associate with the same political party based on the idea that

Monmouth represents a portion of Polk County. Polk County's socio-demographics give it a sense of belonging with the Republican Party. The typical household income and race of the residents of Polk County are socio-demographics that describe conservatives. In the past, the majority of Polk County's voting residents have identified themselves as part of the Republican Party which has been supported by the results of elections. In Polk County it is very common for Republican candidates and Republican favoring measures to get the majority of Polk County's votes while Democratic candidates and Democratic favoring measures tend to be defeated in Polk County. Winters party affiliation aligns with that of Monmouth and Polk County and Evans party affiliation does not align with that of Monmouth and Polk County. These statistics and socio-demographics support my hypothesis that Polk County is a Republican and conservative county.