

Wrangell Votes for President

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<http://wrangellhistoryunlocked.com/president>

Introduction

Wrangell votes for president!

Today, it's sixty years of presidential elections, as picked by the voters in the Wrangell, Alaska.

Historians use elections to measure public opinion and track change over time.

All the results today are publicly available from the website for the Alaska Division of Elections.

If you'd like to follow along with some charts, visit us at wrangellhistoryunlocked.com/president

Let's go!

1960

Republican Richard Nixon defeats Democrat John Kennedy, 254 to 212 — 54% to 45%.

Since 1960, the Alaska Division of Elections reports absentee ballots at the district level. So this total, and all that follow, are votes capture in a voting precinct in Wrangell. We'll come back to this again at the end.

1964

Democrat Lyndon Johnson defeats Republican Barry Goldwater by a landslide, 334 to 137 – 70% to 29%.

Johnson is the only Democrat to win, and his 334 votes is still the most votes a Democrat has ever received for president in Wrangell.

Goldwater's 137 votes is still the fewest votes ever received by any Republican or Democrat running for president in Wrangell.

1968

Republican Richard Nixon defeats Democrat Hubert Humphrey, 231 to 202 – 50% to 44%.

Only 23 votes separate the winner from the loser, making this the closest race in Wrangell presidential history.

1972

Republican Richard Nixon defeats Democrat George McGovern, 246 to 145 – 55% to 32%. McGovern comes one vote away from having the fewest votes ever for a Democrat.

1976

Republican Gerald Ford defeats Democrat Jimmy Carter, 379 to 278 – 50% to 37%.

In 1976, the Alaska Division of Elections begins publishing the number of registered voters, allowing us to calculate Voter Turnout. In this election, 59% of the 1,274 register voters cast a vote.

Ford defeats Lyndon Johnson's record set twelve years earlier and begins three elections in a row of significant Republican gains.

1980

Republican Ronald Reagan defeats Democrat Jimmy Carter, 489 to 245 – 56% to 28%.

Wrangell adds 155 registered voters, and voter turnout holds steady at 61%.

While Republicans make big gains, 110 votes, Carter loses 33 votes in his re-election bid.

1984

Republican Ronald Reagan defeats Democrat Walter Mondale, 653 to 245 – 68% to 26%.

Wrangell adds 157 registered voters, and voter turnout holds steady at 60%.

Reagan sets a record for most improved re-election, gaining 164 votes, for an additional 12 percentage points.

Mondale's 245 votes is exactly the same number of votes Carter received four years before, and votes for third-party candidates drop off dramatically.

1988

Republican George H.W. Bush defeats Democrat Michael Dukakis, 646 to 285 – 66% to 29%.

Wrangell loses 74 registered voters, but more people cast a ballot for president, bringing voter turnout up to 65%.

Michael Dukakis receives more votes than any Democrat since Lyndon Johnson. Bush receives seven fewer votes than Reagan, bringing to an end five consecutive elections of Republican gains.

1992

The election of 1992 is a three-way race.

Republican George H.W. Bush wins a majority of the vote with 455 votes for 44%. Perot comes in second with 342 votes for 33%. And Bill Clinton comes in third, with 217 votes, for 21%.

This is the fifth consecutive election where the total votes for president increased, coming to a peak 1,030 for 67% voter turnout.

Bushes is down 191 from his run for president, becoming the first Republican to lose votes in re-election. Bush is the only candidate to win Wrangell without a 50% majority of the vote.

Perot's 342 votes is more than any Democrat has ever received in Wrangell.

1996

The election of 1996 is another three-way race.

Republican Bob Dole recaptures the simple majority for the Republicans with 545 votes for 56%. Perot wins 197 votes, a little over half what he earned four years earlier. Bill Clinton wins 195 votes. Both Perot and Clinton win 20% of the vote.

Wrangell adds 259 registered voters, but the number of ballots cast for president declines 60 votes. Voter turnout drops to 54%.

2000

Republican George W. Bush defeats Democrat Al Gore, 797 to 144 – 78% to 14%.

Wrangell adds 190 voters, bringing an all-time peak of 1988 registered voters. The number of votes cast, 1,028, is two votes short of tying the most votes ever cast for president, set back in 1992. Voter turnout declines slightly, to 52%.

This is the biggest blowout in Wrangell presidential history. Bush defeats the record set by Lyndon Johnson in 1964.

No Democrat has ever performed as poorly as Gore's 144 votes and 14% capture.

The election of 2000 is a peak moment for Republican turnout, which will be followed by four consecutive elections of declining numbers.

2004

Republican George W. Bush defeats Democrat John Kerry, 693 to 164 – 78% to 18%.

Wrangell loses 346 registered voters, the single biggest drop-off since records became available. 54% of 1,642 registered voters cast a vote.

While Bush received 104 fewer votes in re-election, he held his share of the vote at 78%. Kerry ends three consecutive elections of Democratic losses, and ushers in an era of three consecutive elections of gains for Democrats.

2008

Republican John McCain defeats Democrat Barack Obama, 599 to 231 – 70% to 27%.

Despite the addition of Alaska Governor Sarah Palin to the Republican ticket, McCain receives 94 fewer votes than Bush in previous election.

At 231, Obama wins more votes than any Democrat since Dukakis.

53% of 1,618 registered voters cast a vote. Since 2008, the number of registered voters in Wrangell increases, while the number of votes cast for president declines.

2012

Republican Mitt Romney defeats Democrat Barack Obama, 513 to 252 – 64% to 32%.

For the first time, less than half of Wrangell's registered voters vote in Wrangell's precinct, as 48% of 1,658 registered voters cast a vote.

Obama gains 21 votes, making him the only Democrat running for re-election to gain votes.

Romney received 86 fewer votes than McCain/Palin just four years before. Split 2 to 1, the race is one of the closest in decades.

2016

Republican Donald Trump defeats Democrat Hillary Clinton, 512 to 177 – 67% to 23%.

44% of 1,731 registered voters cast a vote.

Trump receives one fewer vote than Romney four years earlier, while Hillary Clinton receives 75 fewer votes than Obama – the biggest single drop for any Democrat.

2020

Republican Donald Trump defeats Democrat Joe Biden, 526 to 171 – 72% to 23%.

Vs Alaska

Wrangell has picked the same winner as Alaska 100% of the time. Just like Alaska, Wrangell always favors the Republican, except the one time in 1964 where both Wrangell and Alaska went for Democrat Lyndon Johnson.

When we compare the vote in Wrangell to the state of Alaska, it's clear that Wrangell generally follows the trend of Alaska, with some exceptions. We can see that it's 1984 where support for Democrats begins to decline slightly below the state total, becoming more pronounced through the 1990s, and holding through today. In 1988, support for Republican candidates began slightly outpacing the state total. Since 2000, Wrangell has supported Republican candidates for president significantly more than the rest of Alaska.

While the margin of victory in Alaska for Republicans over Democrats running for president has been declining since 2000, the margin of victory grew wider in the Wrangell precinct for 2016 and 2020.

Vs Registered

The Alaska Division of Elections also publishes a monthly list of registered voters by party, going back as far as the 1996 presidential election. If we look at just the registered voters in Wrangell for November of every election year, we see some interesting insights. The percent of registered voters in Wrangell who are Nonpartisan or Undeclared stays very close to 60% over decades. The percent of Wrangell voters registered as Republican has stayed close to 26%, plus or minus 5. Since 2004, the percent of Wrangell voters registered as Democrats has stayed at 8%.

Most of the time, the votes a candidate receives is greater than the number of voters registered in their party. For example, in 2000, there were 488 registered Republicans, but President Bush received almost double that many votes: 797. Over successive elections, the margin has been declining. In 2016 and 2020, President Trump received 512 and 526 votes in the Wrangell precinct — 23 and 20 votes lower than the registered number of Republican voters in Wrangell. This happened to Bill Clinton in 1996 and Al Gore in 2000, as well.

Voter Turnout

In 1992, Voter Turnout was 67%. After years of declines, it dropped to 37% in the 2020 election. So, where did all the voters go? Did one-third of Wrangell give up on voting?

Absentee Ballots

This is where you have to look at the absentee ballots. If you vote absentee in Wrangell, your vote is counted at the district level. In 2020, your absentee ballot was combined with absentee ballots from Ketchikan, North Tongass, South Tongass, Saxman, Hydaburg, Metlakatla, and reported as a single row called “Absentee.”

In 2020, a record-high 40% of the voters in this district voted absentee. In the beginning of statehood, absentee votes in Wrangell's district hovered around 15%, plus or minus 4. But in 2008, absentee voting nearly doubled from 15% to 28% and held at 24% in 2012 and 2016.

And Democrats tend to perform better among absentee voters in this district. In the three-way race of 1992, Bill Clinton lost in the district, but won among absentee voters. Obama did the same thing in 2008. In 2020, for the first time ever in Wrangell's district, a Democrat, Joe Biden, won a simple majority of the absentee voters.

As absentee voting rises in popularity, it will be harder to get an exact figure of how many people in Wrangell vote for a given candidate.

That's all we have for today. Thanks for listening. I'm Ronan Rooney. If you'd like to follow along with some slides, check us out at wrangellhistoryunlocked.com/president