

Big Bang in Iowa! Matthew Pierce and the Iowa Caucus

Here are a two letters from our DA Berlin ex-member Matthew Pierce, who had started up our YDA Group in Berlin and has been very active in the Iowa Caucus. He sent us a proud picture and two reports from his organizing work for the Iowa Democratic Party on December 20th. Today we received a report from him on his experience with the Iowa Caucus. We post these letters to give you an insight into the "Big Bang in Iowa."

December 20th 2007

Dear Friends, Countrymen (and women), compatriots and comrades, foreign and domestic,

The Iowa First-in-the-Nation Caucuses are in less than 20 days now (I'm thinking 17/16?) and things are really cooking for us at the Iowa Democratic Party. However on this night I found myself at home at the astoundingly early hour of 7 pm.

Yesterday, I was among a very select and privileged few (well, in Iowa these days, nearly everyone can claim to be a member of this group) to get to

personally meet "the next President of the United States." All the candidates on both sides say this about themselves, so the term is used quite liberally here. (Good pun, eh?)

The "next President" I got to meet was one Senator Barack Obama. I have enclosed a photo below to "prove" the validity of this statement. His staff invited the IDP staff to have a photo with the Senator. I, of course, jumped at the chance. Others did not. Each to his own, I suppose.



In working for the IDP, I officially cannot openly express a presidential preference, but if I could, I'm

fairly certain I would select this man. The problem with the Democratic field this time around is that

there are so many quality candidates, whereas in 2004, they were no good ones, and only a few "decent" ones.

Ach, but I am not here to write you a political diatribe, but rather simply express how great my very short time here in Iowa has been and how my exciting and exhausting life is continually improving.

As this year will end in a whirlwind of work, long waking hours and a sizable stress load, I will unfortunately not be able to write a classic 45 page summary of the past year, which started in Berlin and will end in Des Moines. I should have some

days off following the Caucuses in which I will try to do this, but I cannot guarantee anything.

Wishing each and every one of you a blessed holiday season and a safe and excellent end to 2007. I feel blessed to count you all as friends.

All my best,

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My Iowa Caucus experience really began back on Oct. 8, 2007 when I was hired on as the 4th and final Field Organizer at the Iowa Democratic Party.

At this point I took over a 23 county region (Iowa has 99 counties, so about a 1/4 of the state) that is the SW part of the state (to the NE and Missouri borders). It's a pretty Republican area as both of the Congressional districts in my region have solid conservative Reps. But there are Dems in every district, even the most Republican!

Being a Field Organizer for the State Party meant that I was responsible for "setting up" 277 precincts (out of the 1781 in the state, a pretty small percentage considering my region is geographically 1/4 of the state). Setting these up for the Caucuses of course. This means that I needed to be sure every precinct had a Chair (to run the caucus and make sure everything is done according to our procedures in a fair and impartial manner), and every precinct had a location, either church, school, community center, sale barn, restaurant, fire house, or even in the small rural precincts at some one's home!

In the end, I found locations for every precinct and I was only missing 4 Chairs, who were then found on caucus night. In these precincts no one wanted to commit to do it, but in the end, someone had to. Oh, the burden of democracy.

My other big responsibility was to stuff and deliver all the packets (forms, letters, info, that was to go out to all 1781 precincts). We did this as an office

over a period of a week, and then we drove them all over the state. I have put on over 6200 miles (10,000 KM, nicht war?) since I began in October.

On New Year's Eve, there was a "Rockus before the Caucus" party put on as a joint effort between our Communications Director and the Republican Party of Iowa's Communications Director. She is actually a real sweetheart (I had imagined her as evil and ugly before I met her. Maybe just a little too partisan, eh?) As a move of solidarity for the state of Iowa, the Dems and Rep Parties worked together on many things to show that both parties feel it's important to KEEP Iowa as the first-in-the-nation, even if the calendar has to be redone before the next contest.

The party was beautiful (as were the ladies ;-)) and I actually had New Year's day completely off, which was not the case for those working on a Presidential campaign. The 2nd and 3rd were spent almost entirely at the Polk County Convention Complex (PCCC) in downtown Des Moines, the nervous center for the entire state. I spent a majority of my time in the "War Room" answering the phones, which, despite the fact we had 37 phone lines, were ringing off their hooks! (In comparison, the Reps had only 3 phone lines.) I also spent some time distributing Media Credentials to members of the media. It's estimated that there were over 2500 reporters from all over the world; Radio Australia, Italian news Service, ARD, ZDF, TV and radio from most of Europe, China, Japan, India, and even Al-Jeziera and Al-Jeziera International! Oh, and don't forget the enormous troops from the major American news outlets and media from every state, except maybe Hawaii & Alaska and the hundreds of

bloggers from every blog, most of which I had never heard of. There was not a hotel room or a rental car or a taxi that went unused in Des Moines from Dec. 31 to Jan 4. I had also heard that the Caucuses had brought in some \$45 million.

Here's a good link on the NYT that details just about everything:

<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/01/03/why-iowa-wants-to-be-first/>

The Caucuses convened at 7 pm, and by 11 pm we had the results in from every precinct in the state (remember, 1,781). At that point, the Republicans still had 200 out, and even on January 8, they still hadn't gotten all of theirs in. Can you guess who was more prepared and better organized?

And the turnout! 239,542 I believe is the exact record-breaking figure. In 2004 there were around 125,000, which was also record-breaking. That's about a 93% increase over the previous record, over the other record set back in 2000. The Reps

also had a record breaking 124,000, making a grand total of 12.2% of the entire state's population of 3 million. I'd like to see any larger state with such an incredible turnout (If 12% of CA, NY, FL or TX residents came out, the voting systems would collapse!) Iowans take their politics seriously (I mean, what else is there to do out here? Farming is pretty much everything else) and Iowa should and must remain #1.

It was an incredible ride and really a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It is my hope that Iowans have selected the next President of the US, but only time will tell. Should that be the case, I would be extremely proud to have had a small part in starting it all off with a big bang in Iowa.

Good luck with your International primary!

Your State-side Berliner,

Matthew Peirce
