Issue Brief: Voting Behavior and Minority Religion

Key Words
Voting Behavior; Minority Religion, Moral Issues, Mormonism, Judaism, Buddhism

Description
This issue brief outlines, generally, the voting behaviors of the three largest minority religions in the United States: Jews, Mormons, and Buddhists. It also discusses the common beliefs of all minority religions.

Key Points
• More than 75% of Americans are a type of Christian
• Jews tend to ally with Democratic party, especially on social issues
• Mormons are generally extremely conservative and support Republican candidates
• Buddhists are diverse in their voting behavior

Issue Brief
Catholics, Protestants, and those who are unaffiliated compile about ninety-one percent of the American population according to a Regional Basis Survey in 2007. The largest minority religions that do not fall in these categories are Mormonism at 1.7%, Judaism at 1.7% as well, and Buddhism at roughly 0.6%. Minority religions are growing in the United State and because of similar morals and beliefs, recent exit polls have shown that religion is one of the most accurate predictors of voting behavior in the United States.

Each individual minority religion tends to vote certain ways because of certain underlying values. Jews have long had the strongest party alliance, and of the minority religions, Jews have the closest ties to the Democratic Party. Jews tend to be more conservative on economic issues, but are deeply liberal on issues such as abortion, racial and sexual equality, and gay rights. Orthodox Jews tend to be more conservative; however, only a small percentage of Jews are Orthodox. In addition, Jews tend to be more highly educated than other groups, and therefore vote more liberally.

Mormonism is the fastest growing minority religion in the United States, and so it may be safe to assume their vote will soon count substantially. Mormons are conservative, especially on social issues; Church leaders urged Mormons to vote for a ban of gay marriages in 2000. Further more, they ally strongly with the Republican Party and a large percentage voted for the Republican candidate in recent presidential elections. The Mormons also believe in the traditionalist view of gender roles much more than the national average.

The Buddhist population is harder to assign to a single political party; there is no clear majority belief in the Democratic or Republican belief. Buddhists often ally with the Republican party on the issue of abortion, for it is a common Buddhist belief that life begins at conception. Buddhists, however, tend to have a generally liberal point of view, and therefore convert Buddhists are most often liberals. Buddhism, however, is a diverse group that varies greatly in their voting behavior and party alliances.

Minority religions, in general, tend to have socially liberal points of view such as tolerance, for being a minority religion, nearly all have suffered some kind of persecution or discrimination. Therefore, most minority religions have liberal views on immigration.

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