

## **SUPER TUESDAY** **POLITICAL PARTY**

Policy junkies gather to watch election results at Purdue

**Ron Wilkins**

[rwilkins@jconline.com](mailto:rwilkins@jconline.com)

Political junkies filled a large room in the Hicks Undergraduate Library on the Purdue campus, following the Super Tuesday events the way other people follow the Colts or the Cubs.

Part pizza party, part vote-tally gathering and part commentary talk show, the room was packed with the interested, the livestream producers, League of Women Voters representatives and experts in political science.

Eighteen-year-old Spencer Henderson of Louisville sat at a table near the back of the room doing homework, seemingly uninterested in the returns. But he was paying attention.

“I’m checking out the results for Super Tuesday with everyone else here,” he said, explaining his friends have already left the party and it was a choice of studying in his room listening to returns or studying at the party.

Henderson did not hint at whom he supported in the 2016 presidential race, but he didn’t hold back on whom he wasn’t supporting.

“Every single day when I follow politics, it just blows my mind that Trump is doing as well as he is,” Henderson said, despite that Trump was taking most of Tuesday’s GOP primaries. “People clearly just have absolute rage at the system to be supporting this guy.

“That’s far and away the most interesting story.”

At the front of the room, guests ranging from Purdue President Mitch Daniels and PBS’ Alexander Heffner and later a panel of political science, political communication and Brian Lamb School of Communication experts talked over the unfolding news of the day.

The Journal & Courier caught up with Daniels, who spent eight years as Indiana’s governor, as he was trying to take his leave from the event.

“I observed that for all the talk about money in politics, money didn’t buy much, certainly on the Republican side,” he said. “All of the money got wasted or spent on the Republican side,” he said. “All of the money got wasted or spent on candidates who have failed.

“Likewise, all the noise about the establishment this, the establishment that. It’s hard to find an establishment. If there is one, they’re not very effective because once again their candidates, at least on the Republican side, have not done well at all.



**A Super Tuesday panel discussion occurred on March 1 at Purdue University.**

RON WILKINS/FOR THE JOURNAL & COURIER

“If there is an establishment, maybe we see some evidence of that on the Democratic side.”

Daniels’ suggestion to those listening was to pay attention to voter turnout, rather than who carried what state.

“For whatever reason,” Daniels said, “there’s been a surge of turnout on the Republican side and a fall off from past years on the Democratic side. It may not be indicative of anything later on, but it’s a phenomenon worth keeping your eye on.”

Turnout at the watch party was good, too — better than two years ago, said Michael Turinetti, VP of Pi Sigma Alpha, national political science honor society.

“We were not sure what to expect,” Turinetti said. “We’re very happy for the number of people to turn out.”

The crowd, however, wasn’t cheering or booing at the returns as crowds often do at political events.

“I think part of it is the fact that Indiana is not participating directly, but you certainly have people around the room watching the screens to see what’s going on in those other states,” said Mari Fran Matterson, Purdue professor and head of the Brian Lamb School of Communication.

That doesn’t mean the races played out in the other states do not hold Hoosiers’ interest. “The race is interesting this year because we have people in that race that we haven’t had in the past,” she said, “and I think it’s made it kind of — I don’t know if competitive is the word — but more complex, more interesting in some ways for folks, and I think that sparks interest as well.”



**Hillary Clinton cheer as they watch  
ght rally in Miami on Tuesday. GERALD**

GERALD HERBERT/AP