

Tsongas, Clinton do well in Tuesday primaries



ATLANTA (AP) — Paul Tsongas, once the darkest of dark horses, trumpeted a Maryland win Tuesday as proof his Democratic presidential effort has national appeal. Rival Bill Clinton held out his convincing Georgia victory as a harbinger of coming contests in the delegate-rich South.

"A funny thing happened on the way to oblivion — the message took hold," said Tsongas, the former Massachusetts senator who early in the race had been dismissed as strictly a regional candidate.

Clinton, the Arkansas governor, cast himself in a two-man race with Tsongas from here on.

"We go on to embrace this whole country with the message of change," Clinton said at a rally in Florida — one of eight Southern battlegrounds on Super Tuesday next week. "You have a clear choice."

This week's "Junior Tuesday" clashes were a battle

for delegates and front-runner's momentum between Tsongas and Clinton — and a survival test for two other candidates, Sens. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska and Tom Harkin of Iowa. The results suggested the senators' campaigns were in perhaps irreversible trouble.

The senators are strapped for cash and entered Tuesday hoping to gain a smattering of delegates to stay alive — and draw more contributions. But neither Harkin nor Kerrey gained delegates in Georgia and they appeared likely to be shut out in Maryland and Colorado as well.

Harkin was the leader in a state party sampling of Minnesota's caucuses, but barely ahead of an uncommitted slate of delegates.

Former California Gov. Jerry Brown was in a tight, three-way contest with Clinton and Tsongas in Colorado. If nothing else, Brown was likely to regain his eligibility for federal matching funds by getting at least 20 percent of the Colorado vote — a crucial mini-victory for his low-budget campaign.

Tuesday's Democratic contests also included a primary in Utah and caucuses in Idaho and American Samoa. In Utah, Tsongas was leading with three-fourths of the vote counted, with Brown running second and Clinton third, just above the threshold for getting a share of the delegates. In Idaho, uncommitted was ahead with half the vote counted, followed by Harkin and then Clinton.

Up for grabs overall: 383 Democratic convention delegates and, perhaps more importantly, momentum heading into the busiest stretch of the primary season.

Although Clinton got his first win and remains the Democratic fund-raising leader, he will need a series of victories to dissipate the cloud over his campaign caused by questions about his character and his use of a deferment to avoid the Vietnam draft.

Kerrey spent the day in Arizona, which holds caucuses Saturday, and vowed to forge ahead with his campaign.

Buchanan continues to nip at Bush's heels

WASHINGTON (AP) — Worried by Patrick Buchanan's strength in primary battles, the White House warned Tuesday that President Bush could be hurt in the fall if the conservative challenger persists. Buchanan celebrated his second-place standing as an outright victory and exulted, "We can win this nomination."

In head to head contests, Bush triumphed easily over Buchanan in Georgia, Colorado and Maryland. But Buchanan was picking up 36 percent of the vote in Georgia and winning 30 percent of voters in Colorado and Maryland.

"We have done it again," Buchanan told cheering supporters in Atlanta, two weeks after a similar-sized finish in New Hampshire.

The president, even before all the polls had closed, said Tuesday's results meant "we are well on our way to the nomination and look forward to taking the battle to the Democrats."

But even as Bush proclaimed victory, the administration expressed concern that Buchanan was hurting Republican chances of holding on to the White House.

"You can talk to historians,

they'll tell you it's certainly not helpful as you go into a general election," said White House press secretary Marlin Fitzwater. "We think Republicans should give that some thought because President Bush is going to win the election. It doesn't make sense for them to make it more difficult for him."

Buchanan showed no sign of giving up. "We're going to go all the way, my friends, because the battle of Georgia is now over and it is won and the battle of the South begins tomorrow."

Implying conservatives to join his ranks, Buchanan declared, "We can win this nomination."

Angela Bay Buchanan, his sister and campaign manager, said they view Michigan's primary on March 17 as the best shot for victory. "We've got to win somewhere. We can't just keep going along with 30 and 35 percent of the vote."

Bush, in his statement, reached out to disaffected voters. "To those who have been with me in the past but did not vote for me today, I hear your concerns and understand your frustration with Washington. I am committed to regaining your support."

Bush's campaign said it was resigned to seeing a protest vote against the president as long as the economy is sour. Bush campaign chairman Robert Teeter said Buchanan is "going to get in the high 20s and low 30s at least for the time being."

Nevertheless, Teeter said, Bush won clear victories. "It's three more behind us, three more wins."

The president was leading for 120 national convention delegates, to 11 for Buchanan from the three primary states.

Minnesota and Washington held GOP caucuses, but both states planned to allocate delegates based on the results of presidential primaries later this spring.

Earlier in the day, there was hopeful news about the economy and Bush quickly seized on it, hoping to calm the anxiety that translated into sizeable protest votes earlier in the campaign.

"It's nice to have some encouraging news," the president said, pointing to reports of strong home sales and a surge in a key economic forecasting index.

Buchanan hit Bush in Georgia with television ads that exploited the politically explosive issues of pornography, race and homosexuality. One commercial showed gay men in leather harnesses and chains in a film that Buchanan said was financed in part with federal funds.

Bush counterattacked with a commercial questioning Buchanan's patriotism for failing to support U.S. involvement in the Persian Gulf. Both candidates courted the religious right.

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