

Candidates Termed 'Near Even'

WASHINGTON (AP)—Democrat John F. Kennedy apparently has pulled almost even with Republican Richard M. Nixon as they spring toward the finish in their hectic race for the presidency.

But a new Associated Press survey indicates that—with election day only three weeks ahead—neither candidate has been able to grasp a clear advantage in 17 states numbering nearly half of the 536 electoral votes.

It is among this undecided group that the winner likely will be decided. He will need 269 electoral votes.

This latest AP checkover of the political situation in all 50 states gave some evidence that Sen. Kennedy might be gaining an edge in some of the big doubtful states—like New York (45), Pennsylvania (32), California (32), and Michigan (26).

At the same time, some of the states in this group seemed to be trending toward Vice President Nixon—Minnesota (11), Utah (4) and New Mexico (4).

And in a number of states credited either to Kennedy or Nixon, it was possible the balance might tip the other way before voting time.

The survey indicates: Nixon is ahead in 19 states with 141 electoral votes. Kennedy is credited with the lead in 14 states with 129 electoral votes. In a few Southern states, a scattering of Democratic electors might not vote for Kennedy even if he won their states.

The 17 states rated as tossups account for 267 electoral votes—close to enough to elect a president by themselves.

In the previous survey two weeks ago, Nixon was regarded as out front in 22 states with 161 electoral votes; Kennedy as leading in 14 states with 123 votes. And 14 states with 253 votes were listed as in doubt.

Thus, the indication is that Nixon has dropped by three states and 20 electoral votes. Kennedy has the same number of states as the last time—14—but has added 6 votes. And the doubtful group has grown by three states.

Kentucky (10), Colorado (6) and Arizona (4) moved from the Nixon column into the tossup class. Louisiana (10) went from the doubtful group into Kennedy's column. And Montana (4), rated last time as for Kennedy, slipped into the doubtful category.

Other tossup states: Ohio (25), Texas (24), North Carolina (14), Missouri (13), Tennessee (11) and Mississippi (8).

As before, the new AP survey combined the observations of its own veteran political reporters, the judgments of seasoned newspaper analysts, the opinions of political leaders and the results of certain reliable polls.

The material was gathered during the past week and might not reflect the full impact of the growing dispute between Kennedy and Nixon over the offshore Chinese islands of Quemoy and Matsu.

However, it does reflect some effects of the first two Nixon-Kennedy TV debates.

In Washington state (9) and Wisconsin (12), for example, some observers felt Nixon might have gained on Kennedy in the second face-to-face test. On the other hand, Kennedy seems to have benefited in Colorado (6) and Wyoming (3).

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