



## More voters drop party labels

### Number of independents registered up 4 percent since 2004

by Matt Stone

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Ditching the traditional red and blue, more Arizonans are registering independent.

And with the Nov. 7 election only a day away, the Republican and Democratic parties are keeping an eye on the changing demographics.

Independents account for more than 26 percent of the 2.5 million registered voters in Arizona - a 4 percent increase from 2004, according to figures released last week by Arizona Secretary of State Jan Brewer.

In District 17 - the state legislative district that includes ASU's Tempe campus - independents account for about 29 percent of the more than 70,000 registered voters, according to the Arizona Secretary of State's Office.

There are no figures specific to ASU students.

The increase is due to a more moderate perspective, said Kate Farrar, head of the ASU chapter of Unity08, an organization that looks to elect a third-party candidate more suited to independent voters in the 2008 presidential election.

"You're in the center because you take beliefs from both sides," Farrar said. "It's pretty rare for someone to completely line up with all the Democratic ideals or all the Republican ideals."

Then there's always the constant fighting, Farrar added.

"The partisan bickering and the nonsense issues that are being discussed - the country just isn't going to put up with it," Farrar said. "I really think it's because the majority of people don't fall into far right or far left. Both of the parties have done a very good job of making the other side seem extreme."

The movement of independent voters is being watched closely, said Peter Jackson, a spokesman for the Arizona Democratic Party.

"You can't win in our state just by turning out our party base alone," Jackson said of the Democrats that make up 33 percent of registered voters.

Despite the shift away from major political parties, Jackson said the Democratic Party would not change their approach.

"At the end of the day, they still have to cast their ballot one way or another," he said.

The Republicans, on the other hand, would make adjustments to their campaign strategies, said Garrick Taylor, spokesman for the Arizona Republican Party.

"It's incumbent upon the Republican Party to not take any voter for granted," Taylor said. "Independent voters might receive a mailer about the same subject as a loyal Republican, though the language or something to that effect might be different just to play to the concerns of that particular voter."

The state's growth has played a big part in changing the political landscape, Taylor added.

"Anybody with a political message has to be willing to adapt to the electorate," he said.

Still, Errol Lord isn't convinced that the increased number of independents is a sign of an up-and-coming third party.

"I don't think enough [students] are fed up with the two parties," said Lord, a philosophy and political science senior. "[But] I think a lot of young people want to see a strong third party that represents their views more effectively."

The fighting between the two parties has driven voters away - but as long as the Democrats and Republicans have all the money, things won't change, he added.

"I think [it would be good] if the Republicans and the Democrats started to walk the walk, instead of just talking the talk," Lord said.

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