

Experts say voter turn-out will stay low

Less than 55 percent of Americans expected to mark the 'X' on the ballot this year.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The election is almost upon the country and about all that remains is to browbeat the American people for the next six days to shame them into voting.

Won't work. The experts say less than 55 percent of eligible Americans will participate, and they have some theories on what that says about the world's most celebrated — and maybe its most casual — democracy.

A century ago, 80 percent of Americans routinely voted. But in the last 30 years, turnout has gone down. From 64 percent in 1960, when John F. Kennedy was elected, it slid to just barely above 50 percent in 1988 before squiggling up to 55.2 percent four years ago.

But the 1992 race had an incumbent president on the ropes, an attractive challenger and a feisty third-party insurgent. This time around, none of those elements apply and that has a lot of people worried that the participants will barely outnumber nonvoters.

If people in only nine states got to elect the president next Tuesday, those in the other 41 would be outraged.

But that's what will happen, in effect. The number who will vote is roughly equal to all the voters in the nine largest states, California, New

York, Texas, Florida, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Ohio, Michigan and New Jersey.

"There seems little question that turnout will be down, perhaps sharply," says Curtis Gans, who has been thinking about voter turnout for 20 years. He directs the nonpartisan Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

Things would even be worse if Congress hadn't enacted the motor voter law, allowing people to register where they apply for drivers licenses and in other accessible places. That law registered between six million and nine million new voters this year.

Still, Gans predicts that turnout on Tuesday will range between the 50.1 percent participation in 1988 — the record low in modern times — and the 55.2 percent rate in 1992.

Compare that to a century ago. In 1896, when Democrat William Jennings Bryan ran against Republican William McKinley, 79 percent turned out — including an astonishing 96 percent in Iowa and Illinois.

In those days, the parties differed sharply; now they often gloss over differences. Believing their well-being was at stake, whole classes of people associated with a party.

"Parties don't do mobilizing any more," says Walter Dean Burnham, voting expert at the University of Texas. "The Republicans don't mobilize the lower orders," he said, and the party that traditionally played that role,

the Democrats, "became yuppified, gone upscale."

What worries Gans most is the tendency of young people to shun voting. Only 12 percent of those 18 to 20 voted in 1994, he says, and a majority of their parents don't vote either.

Voting matters, Gans says, because it is about the least one can do to participate in democracy. People who don't vote, he says, generally don't volunteer, don't write letters to the editor, don't organize — and that's not good for a society that depends on citizen action.

This week, all the candidates are appealing to voters to vote. Churches, editorials, civic groups beat the same drum.

Historically, the problem hasn't been getting registered people to the polls, but getting people to register.

In an Associated Press poll, 83 percent of registered voters said they were "absolutely certain" to vote.

On a purely mathematical basis, it is hard to make the case for voting, notes Patrick Stroh, an analyst with a political consulting firm in Pittsburgh. One vote in millions is rarely pivotal.

And studies show that nonvoters, if they did participate, would break about the same way as the voters.

"It is unclear that if we had a 98 percent turnout it would revolutionize anything," Stroh said. But another observer, Jane Mansbridge of Harvard, says people who don't vote pay; they don't get as good representation.

Analyst says younger people less concerned about voting

From The Associated Press

Tucked between music videos and episodes of Beavis and Butthead on MTV, young voters are being told about this year's presidential election.

But are they listening? Regardless of how the message is packaged, Melanie Weatherly says she won't be entering a voting booth next week.

"A lot of the candidates are old, pompous white males who give a lot of lip service," Weatherly said. "I don't feel like they represent America."

The 24-year-old psychology student has voted once since 1989, when she became eligible to vote. She represents many young voters nationwide who plan to stay away from the polls next Tuesday.

Curtis Gans, a Washington, D.C., political analyst who has studied voting patterns for 20 years, said apathy isn't the cause of the voting resistance.

"What makes them vote is a sense of hope in the future, a sense of mission in the election, a sense of idealism in the election," Gans

said. "That's not very evident in this election."

Most young voters won't fall for gimmicks intended to get them to vote, said Gans, director of the Committee for the Study of the American Electorate.

"People don't vote because rock stars tell them to vote," Gans said, referring to MTV's "Choose or Lose" campaign that uses celebrities to encourage young Americans to take advantage of their right to vote.

Most people will not vote until they think they have a greater stake in the process, Gans said. When people marry, have children and begin paying property taxes, they usually pay more attention to elections, he said.

"We know that it isn't simply a 'Generation X' phenomenon," said John Hibbing, a professor of political science at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. "Young people have never voted much."

Erica Rea, a senior at Lincoln Northeast High School, said she plans to vote next Tuesday for the first time. She said she doesn't identify strongly with either major party presidential candidate, but doesn't want to miss her first vote.

Clinton confident as campaign nears end

COLUMBUS, Ohio (AP) — Showing a front-runner's cockiness as Election Day nears, President Clinton brushed off noisy hecklers from Bob Dole's camp Tuesday by declaring, "I'll bet you they won't be doing that a week from now."

Ending a seven-state tour before beginning a nonstop dash to Nov. 5, Clinton campaigned in Ohio and Pennsylvania in an effort to pad his commanding lead in national polls and help in the Democrats' struggle to reclaim control of Congress.

"Will you be there next week?" he shouted to thousands of supporters on a sunny fall day on Hill Field at the University of Pennsylvania. "God bless you, we can do it!"

In Columbus, a dozen or more protesters shouted persistently from choice seats above the stage in Ohio State University's basketball arena. They waved signs, chanted "Dole-Kemp" and shouted, "Stop lying to

the American public."

The president tried to hush them, tried to ignore them and finally lashed back by attacking spending reductions proposed in Republican budgets that he vetoed.

"I would be screaming too if I were in a country that took Head Start and Big Bird away from 5-year-olds, school lunches away from 10-year-olds, summer jobs away from 15-year-olds and college loans away from 20-year-olds. I might be screaming too."

The crowd roared approval. "We got some juice in the audience," Clinton said afterward. "That was great."

Indeed, there is a buoyant, confident mood among the president's people as the race moves toward the finish line. Campaign crowds are large and enthusiastic. Despite long days on the road, Clinton's aides are relaxed.

Dole remains optimistic for California victory

IRVINE, Calif. (AP) — Bob Dole ended a four-day California swing and headed East on Tuesday after a blistering attack on President Clinton's foreign and economic policies.

"The Clinton administration is more like a wrecking crew than a bridge builder," Dole told a breakfast gathering in Orange County, normally one of the most Republican areas in the nation.

He asserted that a win in California would make capturing the presidency a "piece of cake" and said he'd be back this weekend pursuing that goal.

Combing the country for a comeback in the meantime, Dole's strategists were setting his schedule day by day, even hour by hour, as the campaign entered its final week. It was not an easy task for Dole, trailing by 15 to 20 percentage points in most national polls.

"Maybe they're accurate, maybe they're not," Dole said. "Our own polls

show there's a lot happening out there. A lot of undecideds. ... People are still making up their minds."

Dole renewed his assertion he would wrest California — and its 54 electoral votes — from Clinton, starting with a big win in Orange County, a GOP bastion.

"We are fighting for California, for every vote, up and down, all over this place," he said. "Coming back on Saturday or Sunday. We understand the importance of this state."

A poll in Tuesday's Los Angeles Times found Clinton leading Dole 51 percent to 34 percent in California, with 12 percent for Ross Perot.

Furthermore, an Oct. 19-21 survey released over the weekend by the same newspaper found Dole carrying Orange County by between 19,000 and 25,000 voters — far below the 300,000-vote margin typically needed to offset the heavily Democratic balloting in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Yeltsin may have surgery next week

Doctor says president's conditions improving, prognosis looks good

MOSCOW (AP) — Boris Yeltsin's condition is improving, and the Russian president could undergo heart surgery as early as next week, an American surgeon consulting on the case said Tuesday.

Dr. Michael DeBakey told The Associated Press that he would travel to Russia this weekend to consult with Yeltsin's doctors. No date has been set, but "we hope to go ahead with it next week," DeBakey said from Houston.

He said Yeltsin's condition has been improving, and that doctors had made progress in treating Yeltsin's severe anemia and thyroid dysfunction. Those problems, he said, appear to have been "pretty well corrected."

DeBakey said Yeltsin needed a triple or quadruple coronary artery bypass, although he would not know specifically what the Russian doctors

plan to do until he arrives in Moscow. The date of the operation has been a moving target, with Yeltsin at first saying he expected surgery in September. The Kremlin later said it would take place sometime between mid-November and mid-December.

DeBakey has said several times that the prognosis for the 65-year-old Russian leader is good.

There was no comment from the Kremlin about DeBakey's assessment. Kremlin doctors said earlier Tuesday that the "final stage of preparations" for surgery had begun. Their statement, carried by Russian news agencies, said Yeltsin's condition was satisfactory. It did not mention a date for the operation.

The Kremlin, which has been less than forthcoming about Yeltsin's health, chose instead to emphasize the

fact that the president spoke on the phone with his chief of staff.

It wasn't much to work with, but the president's men were relentless in their campaign to burnish Yeltsin's image as a can-do kind of guy despite his illness.

"He has his own vision of the problem, his own understanding of his body," Dr. Sergei Mironov said. "So if we change his treatment in any way, or use a new medicine, we first have to convince him that it's necessary."

Yeltsin scrapped all meetings this week to undergo medical tests, but his staff Tuesday made it sound as if he were working nonstop.

He gets "reports every day and works on documents from 1 1/2 to two hours," Mironov said in the interview.

Corrections Clarifications

CORRECTION

The Daily Nebraskan listed the wrong date for completion of the parking structure near Memorial Stadium. It will be finished in August 1997.

CLARIFICATION

Husker fans who cannot find a retailer sponsoring the Windsor Canadian contest described in Friday's Daily Nebraskan can write for an application and rules to "Windsor Greatest Sports Fan Contest," c/o Shandwick USA, 8400 Normandale Lake Blvd. Suite 500, Minneapolis, Minn., 55437.

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MATCH POINT

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