

Record turnout in New Hampshire primary

by UPI

CONCORD, N.H. -- A record number of New Hampshire voters kicked off the presidential primary season Tuesday, with Barack Obama and John McCain the favorites. The Manchester (N.H.) Union-Leader said 500,000 Granite State residents -- more than half the state population -- were expected to cast ballots in the first presidential sweepstakes without an incumbent or sitting vice president in the mix in years. The previous high turnout was 396,000 in 1992. Polls opened at 6 a.m. and close at 8 p.m. EST. Obama, the junior Democratic U.S. senator from Illinois who scored a surprise victory in last week's Iowa caucuses, got in some last-minute campaigning in a bid to cement his front-runner status over Sen. Hillary Clinton, D-N.Y., who finished third in Iowa behind Obama and former Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C. "Today, it is your turn to stand up and be counted," Obama told a morning rally at Dartmouth College, The Washington Post reported. "Today, you have your turn to say that you are fed up with the petty politics of Washington." Clinton pledged to stay in the race for the long haul, no matter Tuesday's results. On the Republican side, John McCain, the senator from Arizona, was poised to top former Massachusetts Gov. Mitt Romney, who was already spinning a second-place finish as good news. Romney finished second to former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee in the Iowa caucuses. A CNN/WMUR-TV poll released Monday night showed McCain leading former Romney by a margin of 31 to 26 percentage points. Huckabee was third with 13 percent. Among Democrats, Obama had a 9-percentage-point lead over Clinton, 39-30. Edwards was third with 16 percent. The weather cooperated to boost the turnout with temperatures in the 40s and 50s and no precipitation forecast.

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