

Clinton stays alive

by The San Diego Union-Tribune

In the Democratic presidential sweepstakes, Hillary Clinton fended off Barack Obama's mid-winter surge in the polls, winning California, New York and some other key states. But Obama's showing was impressive enough - taking Illinois, Georgia, Connecticut and Minnesota - to keep him firmly in the race, thus leaving the outcome of the nominating battle still uncertain.

Only a few weeks ago, Clinton appeared to be succeeding in her bid to make her victory appear inevitable. Clinton's strategists had hoped, in fact, to make yesterday's Super Tuesday balloting the decisive turn that would ensure her nomination.

But Obama's late-blooming appeal among both Democrats and independent voters spoiled Clinton's hopes. All the same, Obama failed to quash Clinton's front-runner status Tuesday. The result is that the contest for the Democratic nomination will continue, perhaps for weeks to come, even as the Republican Party appears increasingly ready to anoint John McCain as its nominee.

The delegate count between Clinton and Obama is relatively even, thanks in part to the proportional awarding of delegates in Democratic primaries and caucuses. Clinton's advantage in delegates at this juncture is due largely to her backing from so-called "super-delegates," party officials around the country who are not determined by proportional representation.

As the Democratic contest stretches into a potentially protracted fight, Obama's best hope is that his pledge to unite Americans behind a new political culture in Washington will in time woo more primary voters than Clinton's pledge to put her experience to work on her very first day in the Oval Office. In either case, the Democratic Party is poised to make history by choosing either the first woman or the first African-American as its standard-bearer.

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