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Will North Side voters come to Emanuel's rescue?

By THOMAS A. CORFMAN | 



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Amid worries about the city's financial woes and the chance that Rahm Emanuel might lose, lakefront voters are a key to the mayor's re-election chances.

Rahm Emanuel's re-election depends on whether the mayor can boost turnout along the North Side lakefront, which rewarded him with commanding vote totals four years ago.

Despite a large lead in the polls over challenger Jesus "Chuy" Garcia, a Cook County commissioner, several insiders predict a tight race. They say the surveys likely undercount minority voters and don't adequately factor in the intensity of support for Garcia, which increases the chances that his voters will come to the polls on April 7.

Emanuel was pushed into the runoff by the defection of African-American voters, who gave him strong support when he was elected in 2011. Garcia, who finished second in the four-way **general election on Feb. 24** , is more likely to win over many of the 100,000 voters who did not support either candidate the first time, experts say.

That increases the importance to Emanuel of the North Side, where concern over the city's financial woes and the realization that he might lose could prompt more people to vote. In February, he had a margin of 15,614 votes over his opponents in seven wards that stretch from downtown to Rogers Park, according to a Crain's analysis. That's less than half the 36,024-vote advantage he held in 2011, when turnout was higher, in six wards covering much of the same area.

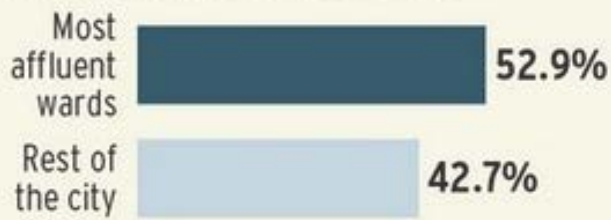
CHARTING THE VOTE

The results of the Feb. 24 mayoral general election reveal key issues for the April 7 mayoral runoff between Rahm Emanuel and Jesus "Chuy" Garcia.

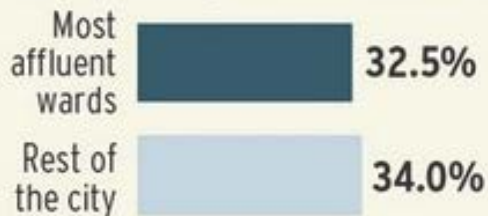
AFFLUENT VOTERS

12 wards with median household incomes greater than \$55,548 per year

Rahm Emanuel's vote share



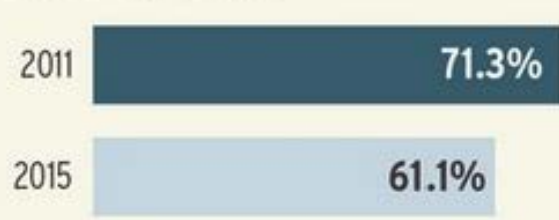
Jesus "Chuy" Garcia's vote share



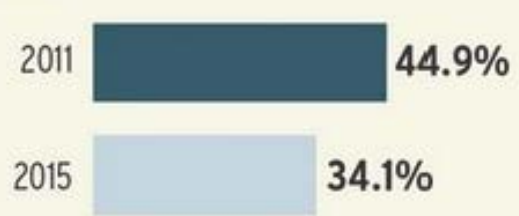
LAKEFRONT LIBERALS

Rahm Emanuel's share of the vote and turnout in North Side lakefront wards

Emanuel's vote share



Turnout



Sources: Chicago Board of Election Commissioners, Chicago Rehab Network's Affordable Housing Fact Book (income), Rob Paral & Associates (population)

"Take the wards where Emanuel did well four years ago, and he's got to work on upping his turnout," says David Yepsen, director of the **Paul Simon Public Policy** [Institute](#) at Southern Illinois University.

In the lakefront wards, Garcia received 28 percent of the vote in February, Crain's found. But "there's good reason to think that we will do better" in the runoff, says Clem Balanoff, political director of the Garcia campaign. "The assumption that (Emanuel) is going to do as well as he did four years ago is a fallacy."

To analyze voting patterns, Crain's looked at groups of wards because the 2012 remap makes individual comparisons difficult. Among the findings:

- In February, Emanuel got 53 percent of the vote in the 12 most affluent wards, compared with 43 percent for the rest of the city. He finished with 46 percent overall.

- Emanuel won 42 percent of the vote in 13 wards that are 65 percent African-American, compared with 23 percent for Garcia.
- Garcia got 58 percent of the vote in five wards that are 65 percent Latino. That's less than the 63 percent won in 2011 by two Hispanic candidates combined, former City Clerk Miguel del Valle and attorney Gery Chico.


A spokesman for the Emanuel campaign declines to comment, saying in an email that new ward boundaries mean "the comparisons really don't work."

Turnout citywide is likely to rebound to 45 percent of those registered from 34 percent in February, a near-record low, predicts veteran Chicago political consultant Tom Carey, who isn't involved in either campaign. If turnout goes above 45 percent, it helps Garcia; if it falls below, it helps Emanuel, he says.

GOOD SIGNS FOR EMANUEL?

Absentee ballot requests and early voting have been heavy in wards that supported Emanuel in 2011, a possible sign that **turnout in those areas will rise**.

In 2011, Emanuel racked up **71 percent** of the vote in six North Side lakefront wards where turnout was 3 percentage points above the citywide average of 42 percent. In February, he received 61 percent of the vote on turnout that was about the same as citywide. (The redrawn 2nd Ward, which begins in Streeterville and extends to gentrifying areas west of Lincoln Park, was included among the lakefront wards. In February, Emanuel received 65 percent of the vote there.)

Farther up the lakefront, in the 49th Ward, Emanuel and Garcia are running even, says Ald. **Joe Moore** , who supports the mayor. Emanuel received 44 percent in February.

"I've talked to a fair number of people who voted for one of Rahm's opponents in the first round to send him a message," but those voters now are backing Emanuel, he says.

Balanoff says Garcia is winning over voters in "white working-class areas," particularly on the Northwest Side, where jet noise from O'Hare International Airport is a major issue. And he predicts that Garcia will receive more than 75 percent of the Latino vote on a bigger turnout.

He won't say what percentage of the black vote he predicts Garcia will receive but adds, "I think we've done a good job of explaining who Chuy is and why it's important to elect him."

In the 6th Ward on the South Side, the two candidates are neck and neck, says Ald. **Roderick Sawyer** , who is neutral in the race.

"If the mayor stays competitive in the black wards, and, from my understanding, if the predominantly white wards are overwhelmingly supporting the mayor, it may bode well for him," he says.