

'76 Candidates Court Cuban Vote in Florida

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MIAMI, March 6 — "Most immigrant groups in America have taken political power first, then gained economic power. Here, it's been reversed," says Tony Ojeda, the special assistant for Latin affairs in the Dade County government.

The signs of Cuban-American economic progress have long been evident here and now, on the eve of the Florida presidential primary, the indicators of their political clout are the time, money and effort candidates of both parties have invested trying to win their votes.

Latin-Americans, the overwhelming majority of them Cuban, constitute a third of Dade County's population of 1.5 million. Cuban-Americans constitute 10 per cent of the county's registered voters and 23 per cent of its Republicans.

Latins tend to vote in higher percentages than the rest of the public. In the 1974 state primary election, 55 per cent of the Latin voters went to the polls compared with 32 per cent of other registered voters.



Dade County Latin voters, according to Reagan backer Al Cardenas, "may have as much as a 40 per cent impact at the polls."

Florida Republicans allot delegates to the national convention on a winner-take-all-per-district basis. Therefore, a strong Cuban swing either way in the two Dade congressional districts with heavy Latin registration could mean at least six

of the state's 66 delegates to either President Ford or Ronald Reagan, his GOP challenger.

On the Democratic side, a candidate who wins 15 per cent of the vote in one district gets at least one delegate, so districts of heavy Latin concentration also are important for three Democrats campaigning heavily here—Alabama Gov. George C. Wallace, Sen. Henry M. Jackson of Washington and former Gov. Jimmy Carter of Georgia.

All candidates are tough on Cuban Premier Fidel Castro, an absolutely essential political position here. Mr. Ford, in a campaign swing through the state a week ago, called Castro an "international outlaw."

Reagan supporters bought ads in the Spanish-language newspapers and radio stations to point out that Mr. Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger had eased sanctions against Cuba.

Wallace told a Miami Beach rally Tuesday night that in 1968 he called Castro "a bandit; I said he is nothing but a Communist, and as President of this nation I would never think about recognizing Castro Cuba . . ."

Wallace is conceded by Carter and Jackson supporters to have at least a third and maybe more of the Cuban Democratic vote in Dade County sewed up. Joe Carrollo, Cuban-born Dade County Wallace chairman and a Miami policeman, claims Wallace will get 80 to 85 per cent. Wallace is "anti-Castro and anti-Communist, and that's what counts," said Carrollo.

Jackson headquarters sent a 30,000-piece mailing to the Latin community Friday, and has heavily promoted Jackson's endorsement by former U.N. Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan. Moynihan will appear in the Cuban community on Jackson's behalf Sunday.

Carter's well-organized volunteers did a door-to-door campaign through the Cuban precincts.

Alfred O. Duran, a Latin community attorney who is supporting Carter, said that before Carter and Jackson got started Wallace had a huge advantage. "I think Cubans are convinced now

that Wallace will not be the next President of the United States and are looking elsewhere," he said.

Mr. Ford and Reagan have used extensive telephone surveys to campaign and check on their strengths. Reagan forces have spent about \$20,000 in the Cuban community, they estimate. Ford campaign officials said their figures aren't defined that way, "but we'll be very close to our \$1 million limit in the state," one said.

Jackson has spent about \$12,000 in the Cuban community and Wallace about \$5,000, according to spokesmen for their campaigns. Carter's Cuban effort has consisted primarily of volunteer help, his headquarters said.

All of the candidates' phone canvasses have sought to use Spanish-speaking or bilingual volunteers to carry the candidates' messages. In fact, it is possible in some sections of Miami to exist nicely without knowing a word of English. The most listened to radio station in the city is Spanish-language, and one page of the evening Miami News is in Spanish.

In the past, bilingual education was a political issue here, according to Ojeda, but Dade County now is officially bilingual.

"We've had very few problems when you consider that

there has been an influx of over 500,000 people of Latin extraction into Miami in 15 years," Ojeda said.

According to county statistics, nine out of 10 Cuban-families are economically self-sufficient. Because they tend to have larger families and more working family members, Dade's Latin-Americans have slightly higher average household incomes than non-Latins, according to a recent study.

According to 1972 statistics, the most recent available, there are almost 5,000 Latin-owned businesses in Florida doing \$363 million in business annually, and 72 per cent of them are in Dade County.

A recent study shows that 69.7 per cent of Latin families in Dade County own their homes, compared with 81 per cent of the rest of the population.

"Once we have put the money together to buy the home," said Ojeda, the Cuban population has taken on "all of the characteristics of a middle-class community. We've moved out of the core city into suburban areas."

With this has come an increasing Americanization and the realization that, for many, Cuba is no longer home.

"If we could go back to Cuba today," said Tony Perez, "95 per cent would stay here. The older people might go back." Perez came to Miami in 1955, before Castro. He had \$7 in his pocket and took a \$50-a-week job as an X-ray technician. Now he owns the building and lot that hold the Flagler Medical Center.