

Rainy day doesn't stop politics-minded crowd in Boulder

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BOULDER, Colo. -- A rainy Pearl Street was bustling on this Friday night in October. It was homecoming weekend for the University of Colorado with a game against Texas Tech scheduled for Saturday at Folsom Field. "The Stampede," a giant pep rally in the center of Boulder was in full swing, with the CU marching band, alumni and assorted athletes getting psyched for the coming along with the general public.

This was also the setting for a visit from Yahoo's Ask America van. While the city's strict zoning regulations prevented the Yahoo! team from parking the van on Pearl Street, they set up a tent in front of City Hall. When I arrived, the Yahoo! tent was quite the popular attraction, with a long line of people, many of them musicians from the CU marching band, lined up for a slice of warm apple pie and to give their opinions about the upcoming midterm elections.

The question asked by members of the Yahoo! team was, "Which political party do you think will win big in November?" The choices were the Republicans, Democrats, the Green Party and the Tea Party. Politically, Colorado is an extremely diverse state with pockets of strong liberalism and conservatism. Colorado Springs, home of the Air Force Academy, for example, is widely acknowledged as a stronghold conservative politics with a vibrant Christian community.

Boulder, on the other hand, is Colorado's "Left Pole." In addition to housing the main campus of the University of Colorado as well as the Buddhist-inspired Naropa University, the city is also known for its many medical marijuana dispensaries, yoga studios, art galleries, devotion to the outdoors and adherence to liberal politics. On any given day on Pearl Street, you can find tourists, backpackers, panhandlers and musicians playing guitars, banjos or drums.

While the crowd seemed preoccupied with the raucous proceedings of the stampede, the pie drew many. From the murmurs of the crowd, everyone seemed to understand the anti-establishment feeling in America. When asked who he thinks will win next week, Josh Halberstram of Superior, Colo., stated with a grin: "Anyone who's not in office!"

A common refrain was also: "Who do I want to win or who I think is going to win?" Some of the

crowd seemed to misunderstand the question and were simply voting for their political preference. Many of the older participants voted Republican, a trend that may have been influenced by the presence of many visitors from Texas who came to see the football game. Many of the Democrat votes seemed to come from the university students who were out in force. At 7:30 p.m., the count was 122 Democrats to 88 Republicans, seven Tea Party and five Green Party.

Despite the inclement weather, the Yahoo! team also assembled a computer bank of new iPads so that visitors could participate in the [Ask America virtual poll](#). The results of this poll gave an insight into Colorado's political schizophrenia. When asked whether they think it's foolish or principled for third candidates like Republican Tom Tancredo to risk Republican victory, 56 percent had voted foolish. In a moment of uncharacteristic optimism Coloradans believe that the U.S. economy is headed for a "Rocky Recovery." Paradoxically 68 percent did not believe that the government is not doing enough to rein in Wall Street excesses and 76 percent felt that current regulations will not prevent another meltdown.

Colorado has a decided environmental stance, which is extremely apparent in Colorado where recycling as well as the purchase of recycled, organic and fair-trade products is a way of life. A narrow 53 percent said they believed that oil companies should be taxed to subsidize alternative energy. Fifty-eight percent also said that the government should help birth "green revolutions." In a more conservative stance, 66 percent said that the courts should strike down the health care overhaul because it mandates that Americans purchase insurance.

On the whole, the experience was an interesting one, while the turnout was probably lower because of the cold, rainy weather and the Yankees-Rangers playoff game, which kept many people glued to televisions in Pearl's many sports bars.