

JIS Alums first to vote Abroad

At the stroke of midnight a gathering of Democrats Abroad became the first in the world to vote in the 'Super Tuesday' USA presidential primaries thanks to Arian Ardie ('77) who helped organize a polling station in a Jakarta hotel. The first vote cast was by Jessica Buck, a JIS senior, and one of several JIS alums in attendance. An early tally at the hotel gave Senator Barack Obama a resounding 75 percent of the votes to 25 percent for Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton. Obama spent four years in Jakarta as a child after his mother married an Indonesian.

"Even though his exposure to Indonesia was in his early childhood, it would serve to benefit Obama's take on the world," says Arian. "Any international experience is good for a presidential candidate. Understanding how things work outside of the United States, and perhaps sometimes how they don't work, will help any president be a better leader. Even though Senator Obama was young when he lived in Indonesia, what he saw, what he experienced shaped his later outlook. It gave him an understanding of the extreme poverty which exists in many parts of the world. It gave him a better understanding of how others perceive Americans and what it means to be an American." (http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia) The midnight balloting in Jakarta created no small amount of media attention as democrats around the world began casting their ballots in the days following. Arian, as head of the Jakarta Democrats Abroad, was seen on CNN while speaking to his fellow democrats before the voting began. The Jakarta polling station was an opportunity to vote that, until this year, was rarely available in Indonesia. Thanks to Arian and Democrats Abroad, the dems who cast their ballot could be sure that their vote would count and did not have to rely on the mail to take part in the election process.

The Democratic National Convention in August will include 22 delegates from overseas. Under party rules, they get half a vote each for a total of 11. That's more than U.S. territories get, but fewer than the least populous states, Wyoming and Alaska, which get 18 delegate votes each.



The first voter in this year's historic Super Tuesday, exercising her right to vote for the first time, was none other than a JIS senior, Jessica Buck (left). Photo courtesy of Dita Alangkara (AP).



Maya Dunham-Soetoro, the half-sister of Senator Obama, attended JIS in the 1980s and would have graduated in 1988. This picture is from the 1984 yearbook when Maya was in eighth grade.



Arian Ardie speaking to the assembled Democrats Abroad just before casting their votes at midnight. Photo courtesy of Marcy Levy.