

## **27. REFORMING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE: THE AMENDMENT FOR THE POPULAR ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT**

In the year 2000 presidential election, the American people experienced the “disaster scenario” that is implicit in that venerable old institution known as the Electoral College. The popular-vote winner did not also win the Electoral College and become President of the United States. Therein lies the main reason to reform the Electoral College by abolishing it.

But there is another, equally-compelling reason to get rid of the Electoral College once and for all. That reason is the fact that the existence of the Electoral College distorts the way in which candidates campaign for President. The Electoral College makes voters in large- and midsize-population states, and swing states, much too important. The Electoral College makes voters in small-population states, and states strongly supporting one candidate or the other, of no importance whatsoever. Similar to so many other aspects of the United States presidential selection system, the Electoral College is unfair and does not treat the voters from one state to another in an equitable manner.

Citizens of the United States, no matter which state they live in, should be allowed to directly vote for their President. If candidates for President knew that

every citizen possessed an equal vote, candidates for President would direct their campaigns to a national electorate rather than just emphasizing a group of hotly contested states with large-to-medium numbers of electoral votes.

How much did the Electoral College distort the year 2000 presidential election campaign? The following table divides the 50 states and the District of Columbia into four groups: (1.) States that received a *maximum* amount of campaign attention from the candidates. (2.) States that received a *moderate* amount of campaign attention. (3.) States that received minimal campaign attention because they strongly supported George W. Bush. (4.) States that received minimal campaign attention because they strongly supported Albert Gore, Jr.

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

**MAXIMUM CAMPAIGN ATTENTION**  
**STATE                      ELECTORAL VOTES**

California	54
Florida	25
Georgia	13
Illinois	22
Michigan	18
Minnesota	10
Missouri	11
Ohio	21
Pennsylvania	23
Tennessee	11
Washington	11
Wisconsin	11
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>230</b>

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

**MODERATE CAMPAIGN ATTENTION**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Arizona	8
Arkansas	6
Colorado	8
Delaware	3
Iowa	7
Kentucky	8
Louisiana	9
Maine	4
Nevada	4
New Hampshire	4
New Jersey	15
New Mexico	5
North Carolina	14
Oregon	7
Vermont	3
West Virginia	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>110</b>

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**

**MINIMAL CAMPAIGN ATTENTION (safe for Bush)**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Alabama	9
Alaska	3
Idaho	4
Indiana	12
Kansas	6
Mississippi	7
Montana	3
Nebraska	5
North Dakota	3
Oklahoma	8
South Carolina	8
South Dakota	3
Texas	32
Utah	5
Virginia	13
Wyoming	3
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>124</b>

**MINIMAL CAMPAIGN ATTENTION (safe for Gore)**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Connecticut	8
District of Columbia	3
Hawaii	4
Maryland	10
Massachusetts	12
New York	33
Rhode Island	4
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>74</b>

The table indicates that George W. Bush and Al Gore did *maximum* campaigning in only 12 states and *moderate* campaigning in 16. Therefore, because of the Electoral College, voters in just 28 states, with approximately 60 percent of the electoral votes, were exposed to the year 2000 presidential election in an intense way. These lucky voters had major presidential candidates visiting their state, giving speeches and shaking hands. These voters had presidential campaign television ads playing on their TV sets.

On the other hand, voters living in 16 states that strongly supported George W. Bush saw virtually no campaigning candidates and very few presidential campaign television ads. The same was true for voters in 6 states, and the District of Columbia, heavily committed to Albert Gore, Jr.

The 16 strong Bush states added to the 7 committed Gore states equals 23 states, with 198 electoral votes, in which the voters were, for most intents and purposes, totally uninvolved in a participatory way in the year 2000 presidential election campaign. These voters did get to vote, and they could sit in front of their television sets and watch the candidates campaigning in other states, but that was about the extent of their participation.

The following table analyzes state voter involvement in the 1992, 1996, and year 2000 presidential elections. It measures the extent to which, over time, a

particular state falls into the *maximum*, *moderate*, or *minimum* campaign exposure category, or some combination of the three.

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 1992, 1996, AND 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**MAXIMUM CAMPAIGN ATTENTION  
IN ALL THREE ELECTIONS**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Florida	25
Georgia	13
Michigan	18
Ohio	21
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>77</b>

**MAXIMUM OR MODERATE CAMPAIGN ATTENTION  
IN ALL THREE ELECTIONS**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Colorado	8
Kentucky	8
Louisiana	9
Missouri	11
New Jersey	15
North Carolina	14
Nevada	4
New Mexico	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>74</b>



**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 1992, 1996, AND 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**MAXIMUM, MODERATE, OR MINIMAL CAMPAIGN ATTENTION  
IN ALL THREE ELECTIONS**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
California	54
Connecticut	8
Illinois	22
Minnesota	10
Pennsylvania	23
Tennessee	11
Texas	32
Washington	11
Wisconsin	11
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>182</b>

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 1992, 1996, AND 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**MODERATE OR MINIMAL CAMPAIGN ATTENTION  
IN ALL THREE ELECTIONS**

<b><u>STATE</u></b>	<b><u>ELECTORAL VOTES</u></b>
Alabama	9
Arizona	8
Arkansas	6
Delaware	3
Indiana	12
Iowa	7
Maine	4
Montana	3
North Dakota	3
New Hampshire	4
Oregon	7
South Carolina	8
South Dakota	3
Vermont	3
Virginia	13
West Virginia	5
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>98</b>

**CAMPAIGN ATTENTION TO THE FIFTY STATES  
IN THE 1992, 1996, AND 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**MINIMAL CAMPAIGN ATTENTION  
IN ALL THREE ELECTIONS**

**STATE                                  ELECTORAL VOTES**

*Safe Republican*

Alaska	3
Idaho	4
Kansas	6
Mississippi	7
Nebraska	5
Oklahoma	8
Utah	5
Wyoming	3
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>41</b>

*Safe Democratic*

District of Columbia	3
Hawaii	4
Maryland	10
Massachusetts	12
New York	33
Rhode Island	4
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>66</b>

The table reveals that 4 states, with a total of 77 electoral votes, received *maximum* campaign attention in all three presidential elections. In another 8 states, with 74 electoral votes, *maximum* or *moderate* campaign attention was paid. Taken together, these 12 states have 154 electoral votes, about 30 percent of the 538 total votes in the Electoral College. In presidential election years, the fortunate citizens of these 12 states always have presidential candidates campaigning in their midst and presidential campaign television ads sprinkled throughout their televiewing.

At the other extreme are the 8 states that are “Safe Republican” and the 5 states and the District of Columbia which are rated “Safe Democratic.” In these 13 states and the District, with a total of 107 electoral votes, it is a rare event indeed when a presidential candidate stops by. If the citizens of these states, comprising about 20 percent of the national population, see a presidential campaign television ad, it is usually one that accidentally filters through on a national television network.

The Electoral College has a much greater effect on presidential campaigns than most citizens of the United States realize. The effect is one that leads to unfairness and inequality between voters in the presidential selection process. A simple desire to give every American an equal vote, an equal say in who their

President will be, demands the elimination of the Electoral College and its replacement by a system of direct popular election of the United States President.

It is the responsibility of the United States Congress to rid the nation of the Electoral College. A constitutional amendment is in order. The United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate should move forward, by the required two-thirds vote in each house, a constitutional amendment providing for direct election of the President. Once the amendment is approved by three-fourths of the state legislatures (38 out of 50 states), the Electoral College will be gone, once and for all.

Under the provisions of an Amendment For The Popular Election Of The President, votes for President would be counted on a national basis instead of by each individual state. Whichever candidate received the most votes nationally would be elected President. In a three-way or four-way contest, a plurality of the vote would decide the victor. A majority of the total vote cast would not be required to win.

A tie vote would be virtually impossible in a nationwide popular vote for President. But, if the election were too close to call, the Supreme Court of the United States should have the power to make that determination. The Supreme Court would then send the election to the U.S. House and Senate for final decision.

Meeting together, the two houses of Congress would select the next President, from the top two candidates in the election, by a majority vote. If there should be a tie in the voting in Congress, the nine-member Supreme Court would make the final choice between the two.

Only two officials in the United States Government are elected from a national constituency, albeit a national constituency divided up into 50 separate states and the District of Columbia. Those two officials are the President and Vice President. The United States House of Representative and the United States Senate do a more than competent job of representing the individual states and seeing to their particular interests. The time has come to do away with the Electoral College and elect the President and Vice President on a nationally-based, rather than a state-based, election plan.