

How a Presidential Campaign Would Be Run Under National Popular Vote

September 2, 2017

It is reasonable to ask how a nationwide presidential campaign would be run if every vote were equal and the winner were the candidate receiving the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Some people have speculated that a nationwide presidential campaign might ignore rural areas and concentrate on big cities.

There is, however, no need for speculation about this matter, because there is plenty of real-world evidence as to how a presidential campaign would be run in an election in which every vote is equal and in which the winner is the candidate receiving the most popular votes.

This factual evidence comes from examining how real-world presidential candidates actually campaign today *inside* “battleground” states. Every vote is equal today under the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes *inside* a battleground state. Moreover, the winner (of all of the state’s electoral votes) is the candidate receiving the most popular votes. Thus, if there were any tendency of presidential candidates to de-emphasize rural areas or over-emphasize big cities, it would be evident today *inside* the battleground states.

Let’s start by looking at the battleground state of Ohio—the state that received the biggest share (73 of 253) of the entire nation’s campaign events in 2012.

- The 4 biggest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in Ohio have 54% of the state’s population. They are Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Toledo.
- The 7 medium-sized MSAs have 24% of the state’s population. They are Akron, Canton, Dayton, Lima, Mansfield, Springfield, and Youngstown.
- The 53 remaining counties (that is, the rural counties lying outside the state’s 11 MSAs) have 22% of the state’s population.

The table below shows how real-world presidential candidates—advised by the nation’s most astute political strategists—actually campaigned in Ohio when every vote was equal and the winner was the candidate receiving the most popular votes.

Distribution of Ohio’s 73 Campaign Events among Big Cities, Medium-Sized Cities, and Rural Areas in Comparison to Population in 2012

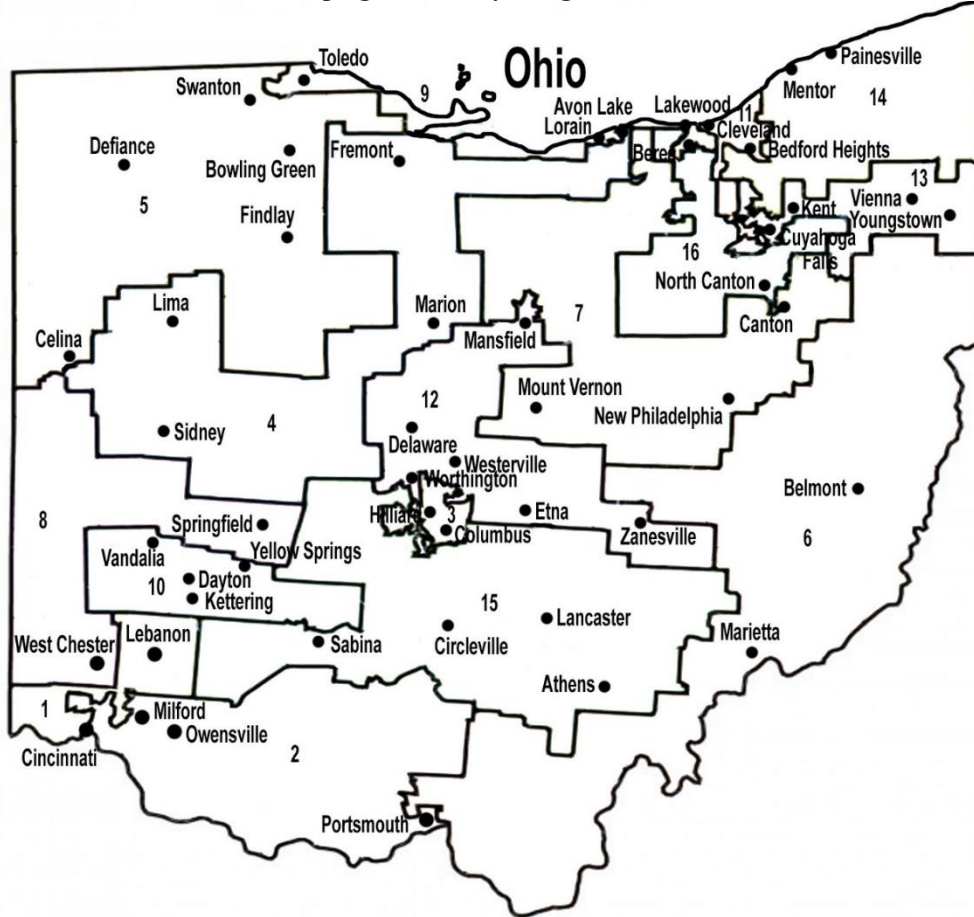
	Percent of Ohio’s population	Percent of campaign events
4 biggest MSAs	54%	52%
7 medium-sized MSAs	24%	23%
53 remaining counties (rural)	22%	25%

As can be seen from the table, candidates hewed very closely to population in allocating campaign events. Indeed, they did so with almost surgical precision. Candidates campaigned everywhere—big cities, medium-sized cities, and rural areas. There is no evidence that they ignored rural areas or favored big cities in an election in which every vote is equal and the winner is the candidate receiving the most popular votes.

Not only is there no evidence that presidential candidates ignored rural areas or concentrated on big cities, *it would have been preposterous for them to do so*. There is nothing special about a city vote compared to a rural vote in an election in which every vote is equal. When every vote is equal, every vote is equally important toward winning.

This conclusion is reinforced if you look at the distribution of campaign events among Ohio's 16 congressional districts. Presidential candidates campaigned in all of the districts, as shown in the map and table below of the 73 general-election campaign events in Ohio in 2012.

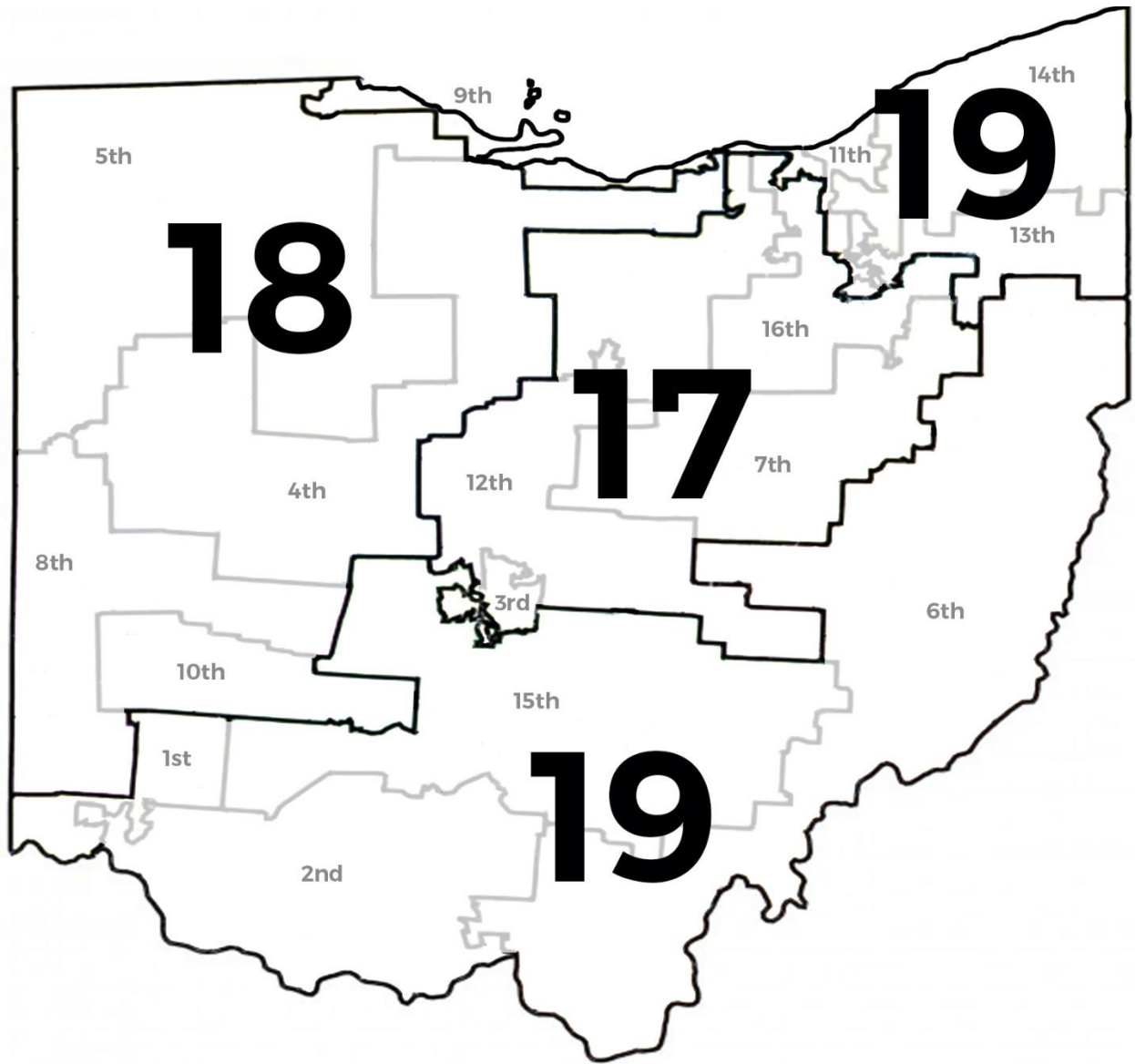
Presidential Campaign Events by Congressional District in Ohio



Location of Presidential Campaign Events in Ohio in 2012

Place	Population	Candidate and date of campaign event	County	CD
Belmont	447	Ryan (10/20)	Belmont	6
Owensville	794	Ryan (9/12)	Clermont	2
Sabina	2,548	Ryan (10/27)	Clinton	15
Yellow Springs	3,526	Ryan (10/27)	Greene	10
Swanton	3,690	Ryan (10/8)	Fulton	5
Vienna	4,021	Ryan (11/5)	Trumbull	13
Milford	6,681	Biden (9/9)	Hamilton	2
Celina	10,395	Romney (10/28)	Mercer	5
Bedford Heights	10,751	Romney (9/26)	Cuyahoga	11
Circleville	13,453	Ryan (10/27)	Pickaway	15
Worthington	13,757	Romney (10/25)	Franklin	12
Marietta	14,027	Ryan (11/3)	Washington	6
Vandalia	15,204	Romney (9/25)	Montgomery	10
Etna	16,373	Romney (11/2)	Licking	12
Fremont	16,564	Biden (11/4)	Sandusky	4
Mount Vernon	16,812	Romney (10/10)	Knox	7
Defiance	16,838	Romney (10/25)	Defiance	5
New Philadelphia	17,292	Ryan (10/27)	Tuscarawas	7
North Canton	17,404	Romney (10/26)	Stark	16
Berea	18,980	Ryan (10/17)	Cuyahoga	9
Painesville	19,634	Romney (9/14)	Lake	14
Portsmouth	20,302	Biden (9/9), Romney (10/13)	Scioto	2
Lebanon	20,387	Romney (10/13)	Warren	1
Sidney	21,031	Romney (10/10)	Shelby	4
Avon Lake	22,816	Romney (10/29)	Lorain	9
Athens	23,755	Obama (10/17), Biden (9/8)	Athens	15
Zanesville	25,411	Biden (9/8), Ryan (10/27)	Muskingum	12
Kent	29,807	Obama (9/26)	Portage	13
Hilliard	30,564	Obama (11/2)	Scioto	15
Bowling Green	31,384	Obama (9/26)	Wood	5
Delaware	35,925	Romney (10/10)	Delaware	12
Marion	36,904	Biden (10/24), Romney (10/28)	Marion	4
Westerville	37,073	Romney (9/26)	Franklin	12
Lima	38,339	Obama (11/2), Ryan (9/24)	Allen	4
Lancaster	38,880	Biden (11/4), Romney (10/12)	Fairfield	15
Findlay	41,526	Romney (10/28)	Hancock	5
Mentor	47,023	Obama (11/3)	Lake	14
Mansfield	47,052	Romney (9/10), Ryan (11/4)	Richland	12
Cuyahoga Falls	49,245	Romney (10/9)	Summit	13
Lakewood	51,385	Biden (11/4)	Cuyahoga	9
Kettering	55,990	Romney (10/30)	Montgomery	10
Springfield	60,147	Obama (11/2)	Clark	8
West Chester	60,958	Romney (11/2)	Butler	8
Lorain	63,707	Biden (10/22)	Lorain	9
Youngstown	65,405	Biden (10/29), Ryan (10/12)	Mahoning	13
Canton	72,683	Biden (10/22)	Stark	7
Dayton	141,359	Obama (10/23), Biden (9/12)	Montgomery	10
Toledo	284,012	Biden (10/23), Romney (9/26)	Lucas	9
Cincinnati	296,550	Obama (9/17, 11/4), Romney (10/25), Ryan (9/25, 10/15)	Hamilton	1
Cleveland	390,928	Obama (10/5, 10/25), Romney (11/4, 11/6), Ryan (10/24)	Cuyahoga	11
Columbus	809,798	Obama (9/17, 10/9, 11/5), Romney (11/5), Ryan (9/29)	Franklin	3

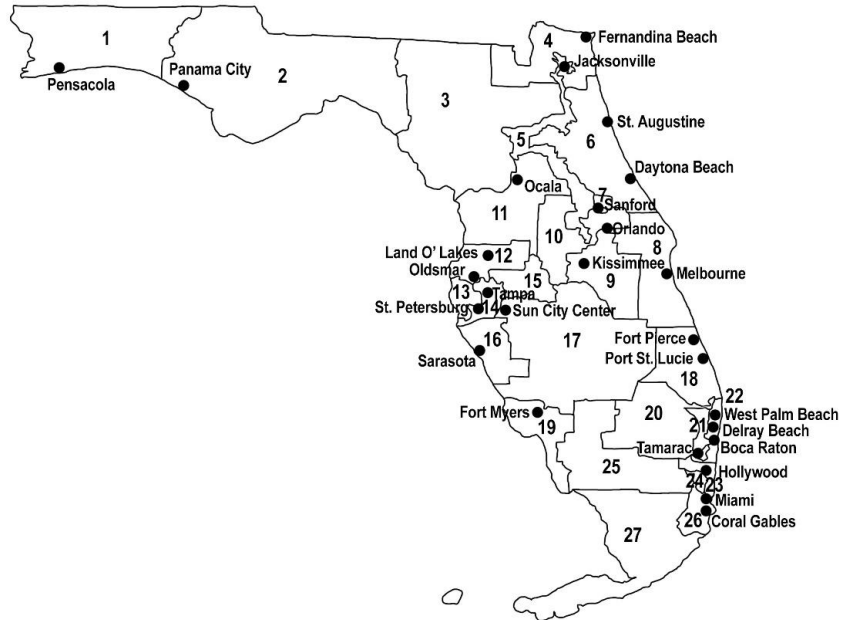
The fact that candidates hew closely to population in allocating campaign events may also be seen by dividing Ohio into four large geographic areas—each containing four of the state’s 16 congressional districts (and, therefore, each containing a quarter of the state’s population). As can be seen, each of these four geographic areas received almost exactly a quarter of the campaign events. Again, the reason is simple. When every vote is equal, every vote is equally important.



Four “battleground” states (Ohio, Florida, Virginia, and Iowa) accounted for over two-thirds of all campaign events in 2012. Therefore, let’s look at the other “battleground” states that accounted for virtually all of the remaining campaign activity.

In Florida (which received 40 campaign events), candidates campaigned throughout the state.

Presidential Campaign Events by Congressional District in Florida in 2012

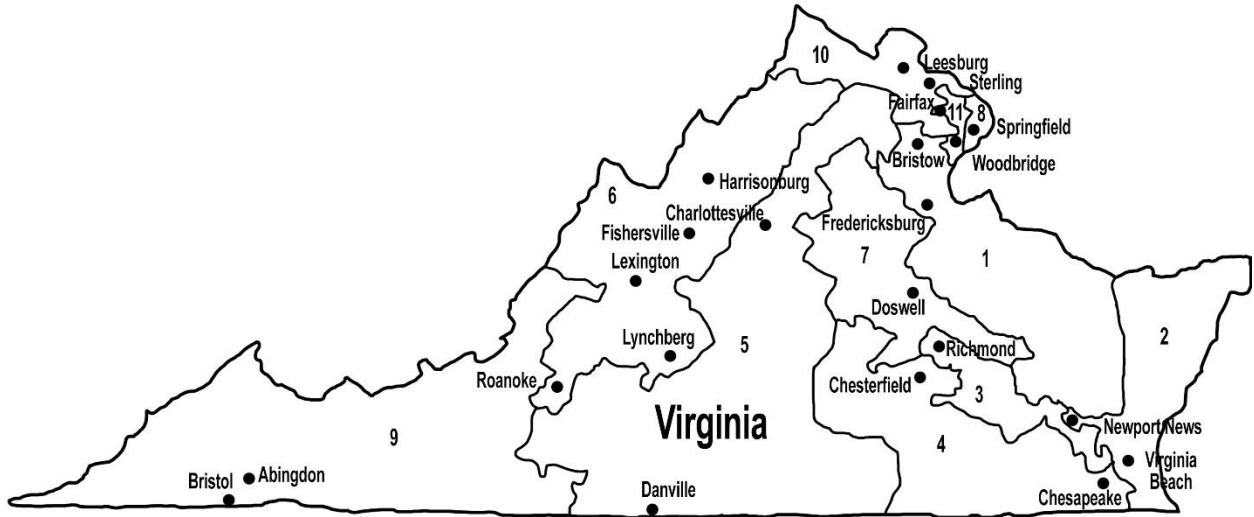


Location of Presidential Campaign Events in Florida in 2012

Place	Population	Candidate and date of campaign event	County	CD
Fernandina Beach	11,705	Ryan (10/29)	Nassau	4
St. Augustine	13,407	Biden (10/20)	St. Johns	6
Oldsmar	13,703	Ryan (9/15)	Pinellas	12
Sun City Center	19,258	Biden (10/19)	Hillsborough	17
Land O' Lakes	31,145	Romney (10/27)	Pasco	12
Panama City	36,167	Ryan (11/3)	Bay	2
Fort Pierce	42,645	Biden (10/19)	St. Lucie	18
Apopka	44,474	Romney (10/6)	Orange	5
Coral Gables	49,411	Obama (10/11), Romney (10/31)	Miami-Dade	26
Pensacola	52,340	Romney (10/27)	Escambia	1
Sarasota	52,811	Biden (10/31), Romney (9/20)	Sarasota	16
Sanford	54,651	Romney (11/5)	Seminole	5
Ocala	56,945	Biden (10/31), Ryan (10/18)	Marion	11
Daytona Beach	62,035	Romney (10/19)	Volusia	6
Delray Beach	62,357	Obama (10/23)	Palm Beach	22
Tamarac	62,557	Biden (9/28)	Broward	20
Kissimmee	63,369	Obama (9/8), Romney (10/27)	Osceola	9
Fort Myers	65,725	Biden (9/29), Ryan (10/18)	Lee	19
Melbourne	77,048	Obama (9/9)	Brevard	8
Boca Raton	87,836	Biden (9/28)	Palm Beach	22
West Palm Beach	101,043	Obama (9/9)	Palm Beach	22
Hollywood	145,236	Obama (11/4)	Broward	23
Port St. Lucie	168,716	Romney (10/7)	St. Lucie	18
St. Petersburg	246,541	Obama (9/8), Romney (10/5)	Pinellas	14
Orlando	249,562	Ryan (9/22)	Orange	7
Tampa	347,645	Obama (10/25), Romney (10/31), Ryan (10/19)	Hillsborough	14
Miami	413,892	Obama (9/20), Romney (9/19 x 2), Ryan (9/22)	Miami-Dade	27
Jacksonville	836,507	Romney (9/12, 10/31)	Duval	5

Likewise, presidential candidates campaigned throughout the state in Virginia (which received 36 of the nation’s 253 campaign events in 2012).

Presidential Campaign Events by Congressional District in Florida in 2012

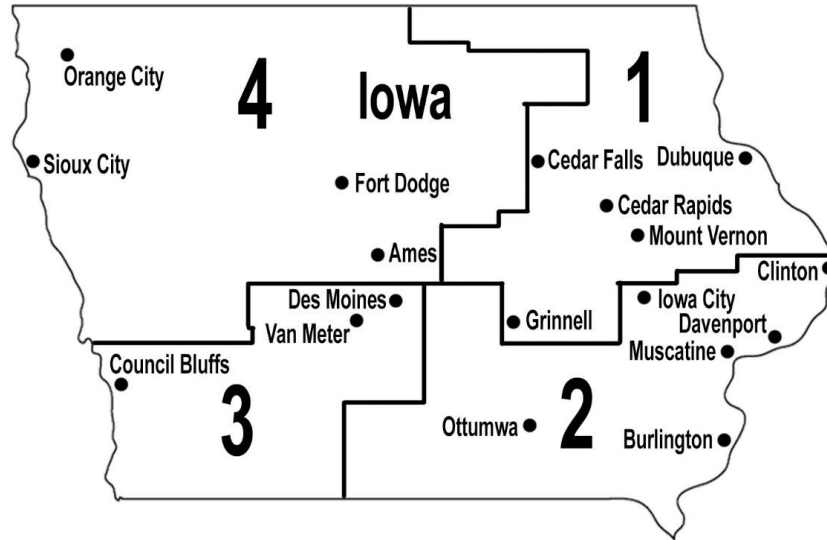


Location of Presidential Campaign Events in Virginia in 2012

Place	Population	Candidate and date of campaign event	CD
Doswell	2,126	Romney (11/1)	7
Woodbridge	4,055	Obama (9/21)	11
Lexington	6,998	Romney (10/8)	6
Fishersville	7,462	Romney (10/4)	6
Abingdon	8,188	Romney (10/5)	9
Bristow	15,137	Obama (11/3)	1
Bristol	17,662	Ryan (10/25)	9
Fairfax	23,461	Obama (10/5, 10/19), Romney (9/13, 11/5)	11
Fredericksburg	27,307	Ryan (10/16)	1
Sterling	27,822	Biden (11/5)	10
Springfield	30,484	Romney (11/2)	8
Danville	42,996	Ryan (9/19)	5
Charlottesville	43,956	Ryan (10/25)	5
Leesburg	45,936	Romney (10/17)	10
Harrisonburg	50,981	Ryan (9/14)	6
Lynchburg	77,113	Biden (10/27), Romney (11/5), Ryan (10/16)	6
Roanoke	97,469	Romney (11/1)	6
Newport News	180,726	Romney (10/8, 11/4), Ryan (9/18)	2
Richmond	210,309	Obama (10/25), Biden (11/5), Romney (9/8, 10/12), Ryan (11/3, 11/6)	3
Chesapeake	228,417	Romney (10/17)	4
Chesterfield	323,856	Biden (9/25)	4
Virginia Beach	447,021	Obama (9/27), Romney (9/8, 11/1)	2

Similarly, presidential candidates campaigned throughout the state in Iowa (which received 27 of the nation’s 253 campaign events in 2012).

Presidential Campaign Events by Congressional District in Iowa in 2012



Location of Presidential Campaign Events in Iowa in 2012

Place	Population	Candidate and date of campaign event	County	CD
Van Meter	1,016	Romney (10/9)	Dallas	3
Mount Vernon	4,506	Obama (10/17)	Linn	1
Orange City	6,004	Romney (9/7)	Sioux	4
Grinnell	9,218	Biden (9/18)	Poweshiek	1
Muscatine	22,886	Biden (11/1), Ryan (10/2)	Muscatine	2
Fort Dodge	25,206	Biden (11/1)	Webster	4
Ottumwa	25,023	Biden (9/18)	Wapello	2
Burlington	25,663	Biden (9/17), Ryan (10/2)	Des Moines	2
Clinton	26,885	Ryan (10/2)	Clinton	2
Cedar Falls	39,260	Ryan (11/2)	Black Hawk	1
Dubuque	57,637	Obama (11/3), Romney (11/3), Ryan (10/1)	Dubuque	1
Ames	58,965	Romney (10/25)	Story	4
Council Bluffs	62,230	Biden (10/4), Ryan (10/21)	Pottawattamie	3
Iowa City	67,862	Obama-Biden (9/7)	Johnson	2
Sioux City	82,684	Ryan (10/21)	Woodbury	4
Davenport	99,685	Obama (10/24), Romney (10/29)	Scott	2
Cedar Rapids	126,326	Romney (10/24)	Linn	1
Des Moines	203,433	Obama (11/5), Romney (11/3), Ryan (9/17, 11/5)	Polk	3

In summary, presidential candidates—advised by the nation’s most astute political strategists—hew closely to population in allocating campaign events. The reason is simple. When every vote is equal, every vote is equally important in an election in which every vote is equal and in which the winner is the candidate receiving the most popular votes.

How a Nationwide Presidential Campaign Would Be Run

In a nationwide campaign, candidates would campaign nationwide just as they do today *inside* “battleground” states—that is, *they would allocate their campaigning based on population*. If you divide the country’s population (309,785,186) by the number of 2016 general-election campaign events (399), you get 776,404. The table below distributes 399 campaign events among the states by dividing each state’s population by 776,404 and rounding-off. The table shows that candidates would campaign in *all 50 states* (whereas they campaign today only in a relative handful of closely divided “battleground” states under the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes).

State	Population 2010	Campaign events based on population	Actual 2016 campaign events
Alabama	4,802,982	6	
Alaska	721,523	1	
Arizona	6,412,700	8	10
Arkansas	2,926,229	4	
California	37,341,989	48	1
Colorado	5,044,930	6	19
Connecticut	3,581,628	5	1
Delaware	900,877	1	
D.C.	601,723	1	
Florida	18,900,773	24	71
Georgia	9,727,566	13	3
Hawaii	1,366,862	2	
Idaho	1,573,499	2	
Illinois	12,864,380	17	1
Indiana	6,501,582	8	2
Iowa	3,053,787	4	21
Kansas	2,863,813	4	
Kentucky	4,350,606	6	
Louisiana	4,553,962	6	
Maine	1,333,074	2	3
Maryland	5,789,929	7	
Massachusetts	6,559,644	8	
Michigan	9,911,626	13	22
Minnesota	5,314,879	7	2
Mississippi	2,978,240	4	1
Missouri	6,011,478	8	2
Montana	994,416	1	
Nebraska	1,831,825	2	2
Nevada	2,709,432	3	17
New Hampshire	1,321,445	2	21
New Jersey	8,807,501	11	
New Mexico	2,067,273	3	3
New York	19,421,055	25	
North Carolina	9,565,781	12	55
North Dakota	675,905	1	
Ohio	11,568,495	15	48
Oklahoma	3,764,882	5	
Oregon	3,848,606	5	
Pennsylvania	12,734,905	16	54
Rhode Island	1,055,247	1	
South Carolina	4,645,975	6	
South Dakota	819,761	1	
Tennessee	6,375,431	8	
Texas	25,268,418	33	1
Utah	2,770,765	4	1
Vermont	630,337	1	
Virginia	8,037,736	10	23
Washington	6,753,369	9	1
West Virginia	1,859,815	2	
Wisconsin	5,698,230	7	14
Wyoming	568,300	1	
Total	309,785,186	399	399

