

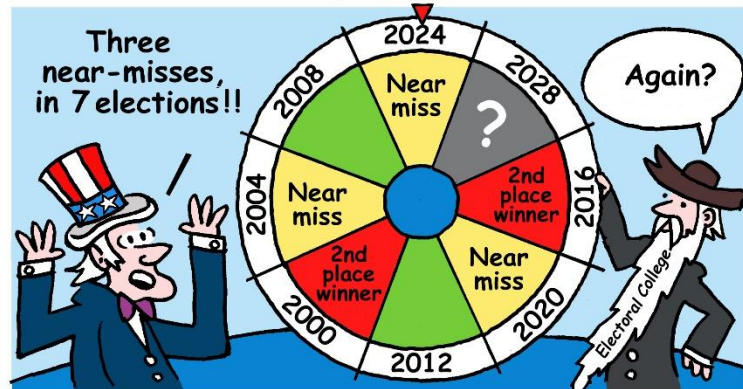
Shortcomings of the Current System of Electing the President

April 19, 2026

The seven shortcomings of the current system of electing the President stem from state-level “winner-take-all” laws that award all of a state’s electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in that particular state.

1. Five of our 47 Presidents came into office without winning the most popular votes nationwide.

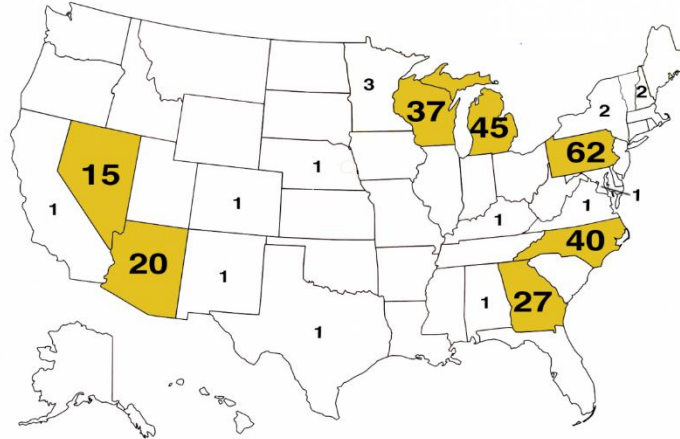
The loser of the national popular vote became President in two of the first seven presidential elections of the 2000s, namely 2000 and 2016. Moreover, there were three near-miss elections during this period in which a shift of a small number of popular votes in one state in 2004 and three states in 2020 and 2024 would have given the presidency to the loser of the national popular vote. Overall, there have been 14 such near-misses in the nation’s 60 presidential elections. In short, the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes does not reliably reflect the will of the people of the United States. In contrast, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact will guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.



2. Voters in 43 states and 80% of American voters are ignored in the general-election campaign for President.

The state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes compels presidential candidates to pay attention only to the voters in closely divided states. Presidential candidates do not visit, advertise, build a grassroots organization, poll, or pay attention to the concerns of voters in states where they are safely ahead or hopelessly behind. The reason is that they have nothing to gain or lose in such states under the winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes. In the seven presidential elections of the 2000s, between 91% and 100% of the general-election campaign events

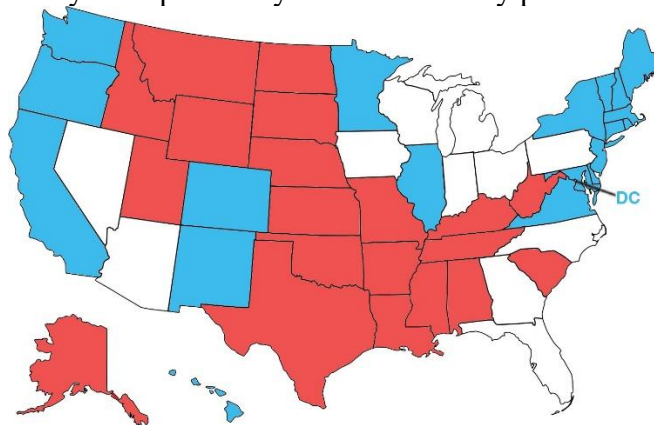
were concentrated in a small number of closely divided battleground states. In 2024, seven states received 94% (246 of the 262) of the general-election campaign events.



The voters living in the remaining states were mere spectators to the presidential election. The ignored states include almost all of the small states, rural states, western states, southern states, and northeastern states.

Governance—not just campaigning—is distorted when presidential campaigns concentrate on just a few states. Presidential candidates and sitting presidents contemplating their own reelection formulate public policy based on the concerns of the small handful of states that decide the presidency—not the nationwide constituency.

Moreover, the electoral map has become nearly stagnant—40 states voted for the same party in the most recent five presidential elections. Viewed over the last half century, the presidential battleground has shrunk considerably. The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact would make every voter in every state politically relevant in every presidential election.



3. A small number of votes in a small number of states regularly decides the presidency—thereby fueling post-election controversies that threaten democracy.

The fact that a few thousand votes in a handful of closely divided states regularly decide the presidency is an inherently recurring feature of the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes.

The “state-by-state” nature of the current system divides the nation’s voters into 51 separate state-level pools of votes. After this Balkanization, a certain relatively small number of the state-level races for President are closely divided. Inevitably, one, two, or three of these closely divided states end up being extremely close on Election Day. Then, a few thousand votes in a few closely divided states will decide the presidency.

Razor-thin results in a few states, in turn, generate post-election doubt, controversy, litigation, and unrest over real, imagined, or manufactured irregularities. The 2016 and 2020 elections were each decided by fewer than 80,000 votes, despite the fact that the national popular vote winner had multi-million nationwide margins. The presidency has been decided by an average of a mere 279,628 popular votes spread over an average of three states in the seven presidential elections between 2000 and 2024. In contrast, the average margin of victory in the national popular vote was 4,327,902—15 times larger.

The danger to our republic posed by post-election controversies is heightened because the country has been in an era of consecutive non-landslide presidential elections since 1992. All-or-nothing payoffs at the state level make the national outcome extremely sensitive to fraud, foreign interference, voter suppression, and random events. A sound election system should possess a high level of resistance to the impact of minor influences. The outcome of an election conducted under the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact would be based on multi-million-vote nationwide margins—not microscopic margins in a couple of states.

4. Every vote is not equal throughout the United States under the current system.

There are five sources of inequality in the value of a vote for President under the current state-by-state winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes, including

- inequality in the value of a vote arising from the two “senatorial” electoral votes that each state receives in addition to the number warranted by its population,
- inequality in the value of a vote because of imprecision in the process used to apportion U.S. House seats (and hence electoral votes) among the states,

- inequality in the value of a vote caused by the intra-decade population changes after each census that devalues voters in fast-growing states,
- inequality in the value of a vote created by voter-turnout differences that devalues voters in high-turnout states, and
- inequality in the value of a vote created by the fact that voters in one, two, or three states regularly decide presidential elections.

In contrast, every vote throughout the country would be equal under the National Popular Vote Compact.

5. Voter participation is lower in spectator states than in battleground states.

Many voters realize that living in a spectator state makes them politically irrelevant in the current process of electing the President. As a result, voter turnout is considerably lower in spectator states than in closely divided states. Compared to the rest of the country, voter turnout in the battleground states was

- 11% higher in 2024
- 11% higher in 2020
- 11% higher in 2016
- 16% higher in 2012
- 9% higher in 2008.

6. The current system could result in the U.S. House of Representatives choosing the President on a one-state-one-vote basis.

If no candidate receives an absolute majority of the electoral votes (that is, 270 out of 538), the U.S. House of Representatives chooses the President with each state having one vote. Thus, the loser of the national popular vote could win the presidency in this process. In the seven presidential elections of the 2000s, there have been numerous politically plausible combinations of states that could have produced a 269–269 tie in the Electoral College. The National Popular Vote Compact guarantees that one candidate will always receive a majority in the Electoral College, and therefore a presidential election will never be thrown into Congress.

7. Under the current system, an individual's vote for President is not counted as a vote for the presidential candidate preferred by that voter.

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In virtually every election in the United States—except for President—every voter's vote is added directly into the count of the candidate favored

by that voter. Then, the winner of the election is the candidate favored by most voters in the entire jurisdiction served by the office. However, under the current system of electing the President, a voter's choice gets reflected in the Electoral College only if that voter agrees with the choice made by a plurality of *other* voters in the voter's state. Under the National Popular Vote Compact, every individual's vote for President will be counted directly as a vote for the presidential candidate preferred by that individual voter.

For additional information, see chapter 1 of the 2024 edition of the *Every Vote Equal* book at www.Every-Vote-Equal.com