

Only a Few States Will Decide the Presidency by John Koza, Chair, National Popular Vote

The map shows where the presidential candidates campaigned in the first week since the conventions.

The reason why voters in only a small handful of states matter is that almost all states award all of their electoral votes to the candidate who gets the most votes inside the state. Thus, candidates have no reason to pay attention to voters unless they live in a state where the race is within a few percentage points.

Based on TV time bought by the candidates, the presidential campaign will expand, in the next few weeks, to a total of about a dozen states (adding Florida, North Carolina, Arizona, Ohio, and maybe one or two others). About three-quarters of the states will be totally ignored.

"The nation as a whole is not going to elect the next President. Twelve states are," as former governor Scott Walker bluntly said in 2015 while he was running for President.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Popular Vote bill will guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The shortcomings of the current system stem from state “winner-take-all” laws that award all of a state’s electoral votes to the candidate receiving the most popular votes in each state.

These state winner-take-all laws have enabled 5 of our 45 Presidents (including two of the last three) to come into office without winning the most popular votes nationwide.

Trump became President in 2016 even though he lost the national popular vote by 2.8 million votes. Trump won in the Electoral College (and hence the White House) because he carried Michigan by a bare 11,000 votes, Wisconsin by 23,000, and Pennsylvania by 44,000. These 78,000 votes in these three states were **36 times more important** than the 2.8 million votes from the rest of the country that they canceled out.

Because of current state winner-take-all laws, presidential candidates regularly ignore three-quarters of the states in the general-election campaign. Candidates ignore states where they are safely ahead or hopelessly behind.

In 2016, virtually all (94%) the general-election campaign events (and virtually all campaign expenditures) were in the 12 closely divided states where Trump's support was between 43% and 51%. Thirty-eight states were virtually ignored, including 12 of the 13 smallest states and almost all rural, agricultural, Southern, Western, and Northeastern states.

Voter participation is depressed in states that are ignored in presidential elections. Voter turnout was 11% higher in 2016 in the dozen closely divided battleground states.

The U.S. Constitution (Article II) gives states exclusive control over awarding their electoral votes: "Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors...."

The winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes is not in the U.S. Constitution, was not debated at the 1787 Constitutional Convention, and was not mentioned in the *Federalist Papers*. It is purely state law, and state laws may be changed the same way as they were originally enacted (namely by action of the state legislature).

The National Popular Vote compact will take effect when enacted by states with a majority of the electoral votes (270 of 538). After the compact comes into effect, all the popular votes for each candidate from all 50 states and DC will be added together. All of the electoral votes from all of the enacting states will be awarded to the candidate getting the most popular votes in all 50 states and DC. The presidential candidate supported by the most voters in all 50 states and DC will thereby win a majority of the electoral votes in the Electoral College (at least 270), and thus become President.

The compact has been enacted by 15 states and the District of Columbia

(together possessing 196 electoral votes), including 4 small states (DE, HI, RI, VT), 8 medium-sized states (CO, CT, MD, MA, NJ, NM, OR, WA), and 3 big states (CA, IL, NY).

The compact will take effect when enacted by states with 74 more electoral votes (for a total of 270). The compact has already passed at least one legislative chamber in 9 additional states possessing 88 electoral votes (AR, AZ, ME, MI, MN, NC, NV, OK, VA).

The National Popular Vote bill will ensure that **every** vote, in **every** state, will matter in **every** presidential election.

Learn more at [National Popular Vote](#).