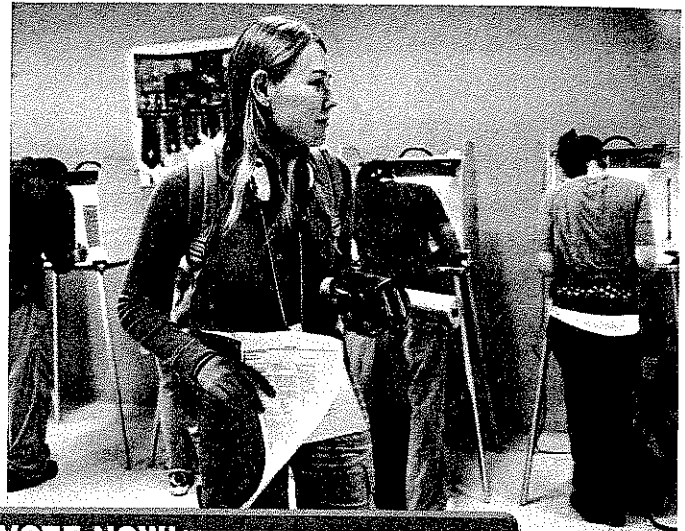


# Should We Elect the President by Popular Vote?

After hundreds of attempts to abolish the Electoral College, opponents are promoting a plan to work around it



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**YES** With the Electoral College, voters in two thirds of states are effectively disenfranchised from choosing the president because they don't live in a handful of battleground states.

Presidential candidates now have no reason to pay attention to states in which they are comfortably ahead or hopelessly behind. In 2008, candidates concentrated 98 percent of their time and money in just 15 states.

Another shortcoming of the Electoral College is that a candidate can win the presidency without winning the most votes nationwide. In fact, the second-place candidate was elected in 2000 (when George W. Bush lost the popular vote to Al Gore), 1888, 1876, and 1824. And in 2004, a shift of 60,000 votes in Ohio would

have given John Kerry a majority of the electoral votes, despite President Bush's 3.5-million-vote lead in the nationwide popular vote.

The National Popular Vote plan—which is based on the fact that the Constitution lets each state decide how to award its electoral votes—would solve these problems: It calls for states to award all their electoral votes to the candidate who gets the most votes nationally.

The plan has been passed by eight states (California, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Jersey, and Maryland) and Washington, D.C., and is being considered by the remainder of the states. It would take effect when it is approved by states representing a majority (270) of the 538 electoral votes.

More than 70 percent of Americans say they favor popular election of the president. It's time to make sure every vote in every state matters. ●

—JOHN R. KOZA

Chairman, National Popular Vote

**NO** The Electoral College was a key part of the compromise between large and small states at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, and it has served America well for more than 200 years.

There have been more than 700 attempts to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College; all have failed. The latest scheme is the National Popular Vote plan, which would circumvent the Electoral College, rather than abolish it. States would enter a compact promising all their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the popular vote nationally.

Under this plan, as few as 11 of the biggest states, which represent more than 270 electoral votes, could ignore the electoral votes of the remaining 39 states.

That's not what the Founding Fathers had in mind. They wanted to ensure that support for a president was broad as well as deep, so that a candidate who received 90 percent of the vote in one region and a slim majority of votes nationally would not be elected against the will of the rest of the country.

Minorities should also be alarmed by the National Popular Vote proposal. With the Electoral College system, blacks and Hispanics represent key voting blocs in a number of states. If we abolish the Electoral College, instead of being crucial to victory in several key states, black voters, for example, simply become 10 percent of the electorate, with less impact.

We cannot change one component of our federalist form of government without considering the others. The Founding Fathers had great wisdom, and the system they created should not be undermined. ●

—ROBERT HARDAWAY

Author, *The Electoral College and the Constitution*

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