

# The Election

- What is the function of the electoral college today?
- What are the flaws in the electoral college?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of proposed reforms in the electoral college?



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# The Electoral College

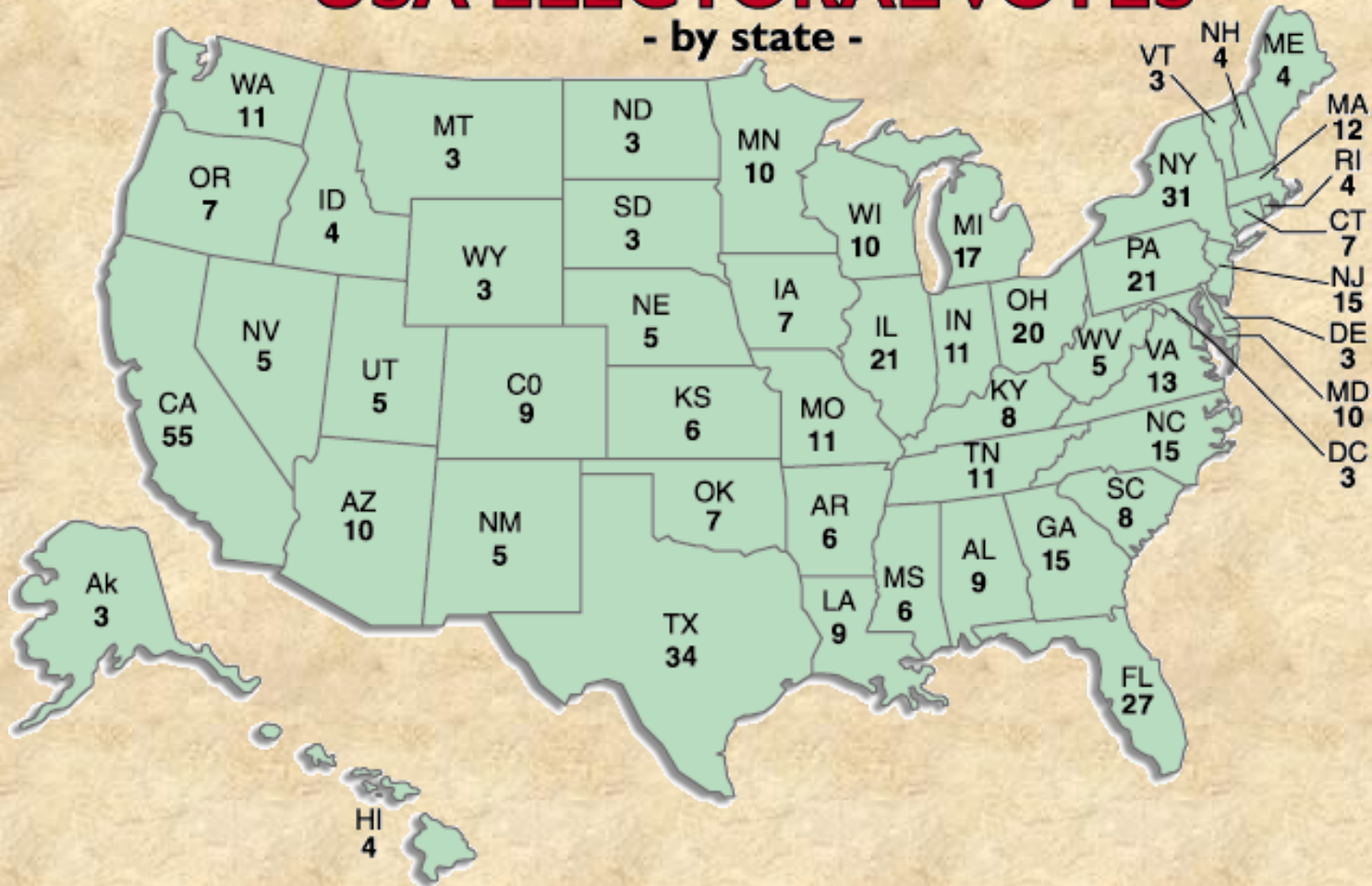
Voters do not vote directly for the President. Instead, they vote for electors in the electoral college.

- All States, except two (Maine and Nebraska), select electors based on the winner of the popular vote in that State on a “winner-take-all” basis.
- Electors then meet in the State capitals on the Monday after the second Wednesday in December and cast their votes for President and Vice President.
- On January 6, the electoral votes cast are counted by the president of the Senate, and the President and Vice President are formally elected.
- If no candidate wins a majority of electoral votes (270), the election is thrown into the House of Representatives.

# Reps + # Senators = # Electoral votes

## USA ELECTORAL VOTES

- by state -



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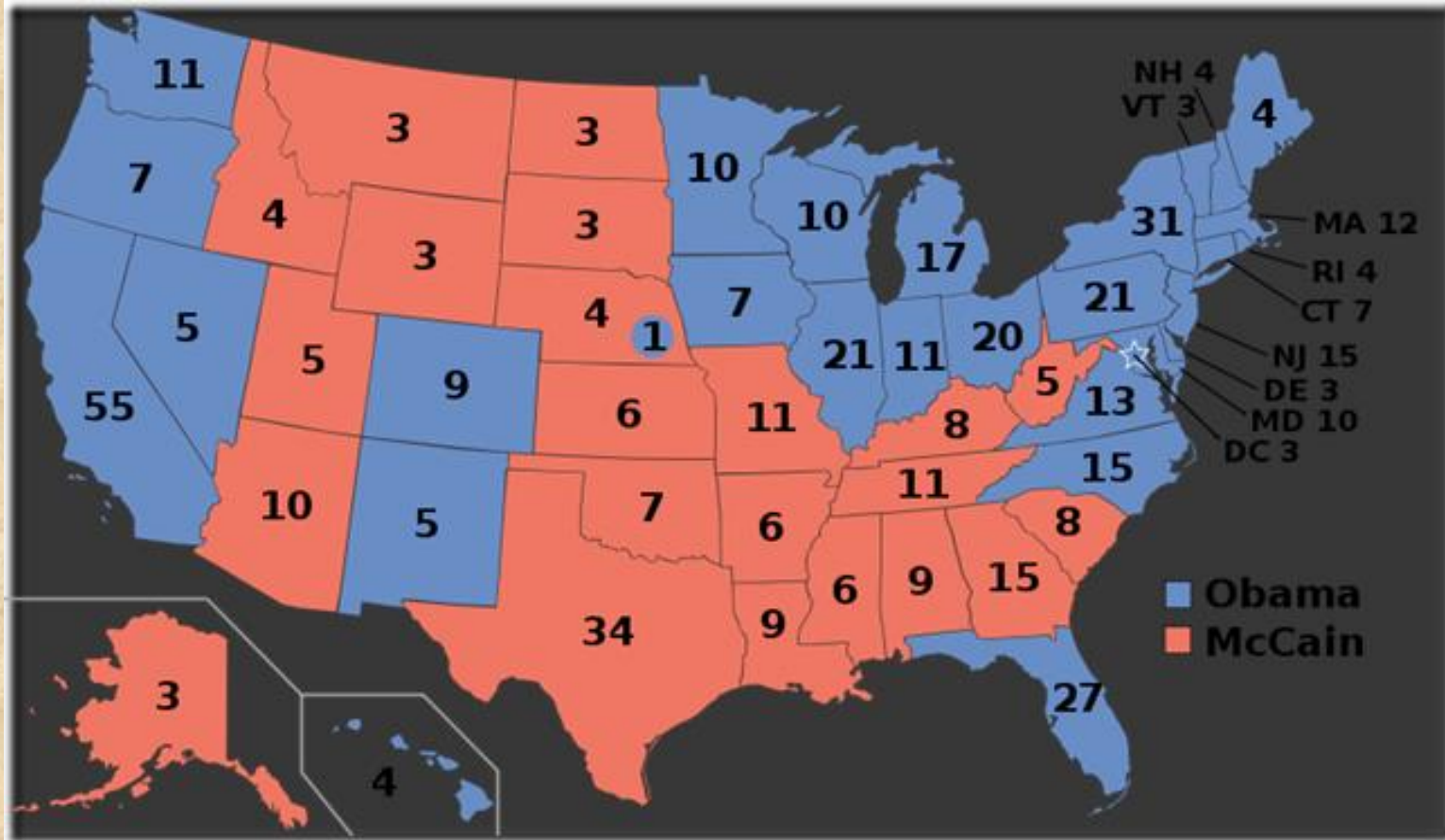
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# 2008 Electoral College results



Obama: 365

McCain: 173

[by 35%]

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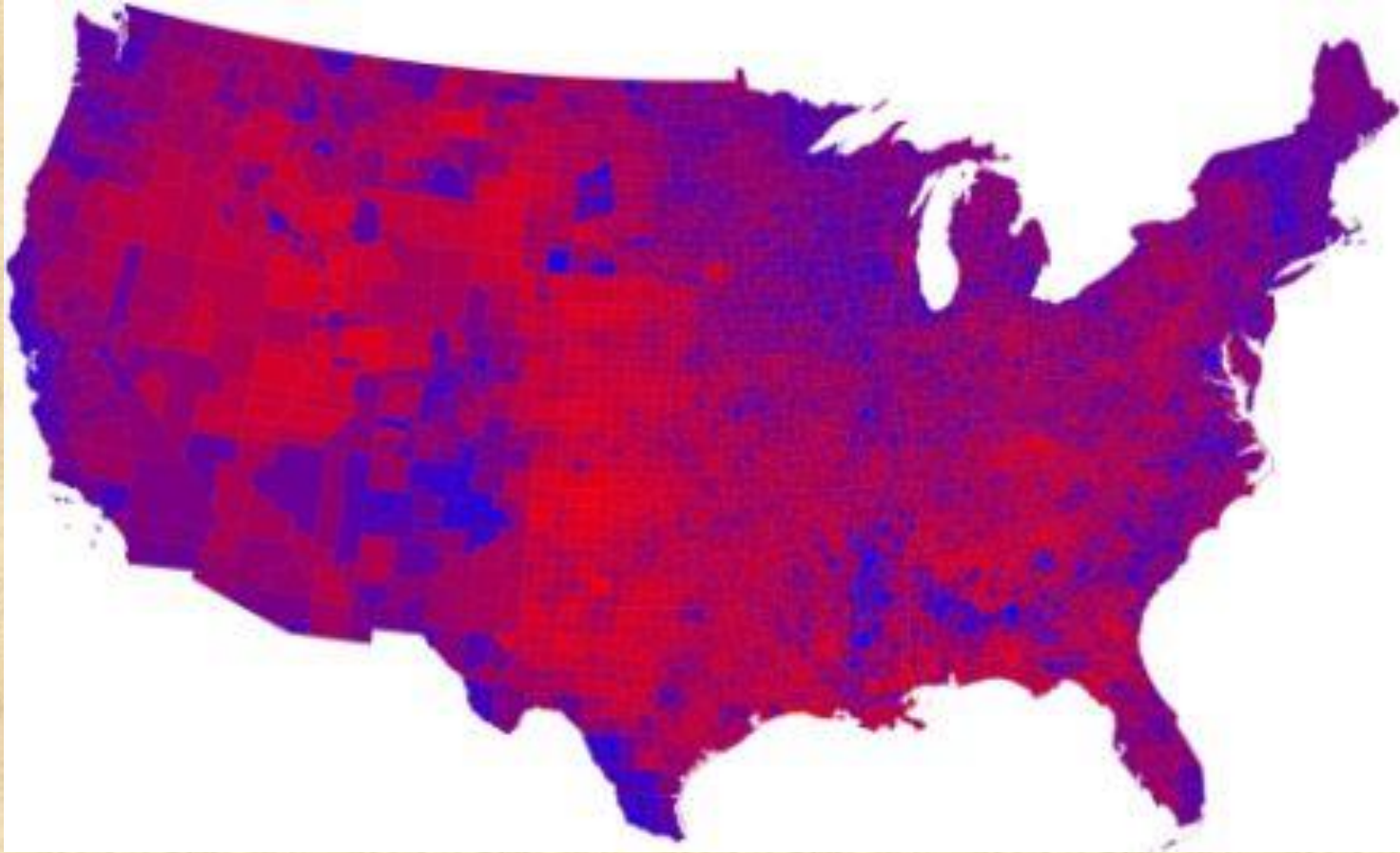
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# 2008 Popular vote



Obama: 69,456,897    McCain: 59,934,814 [by 7%]

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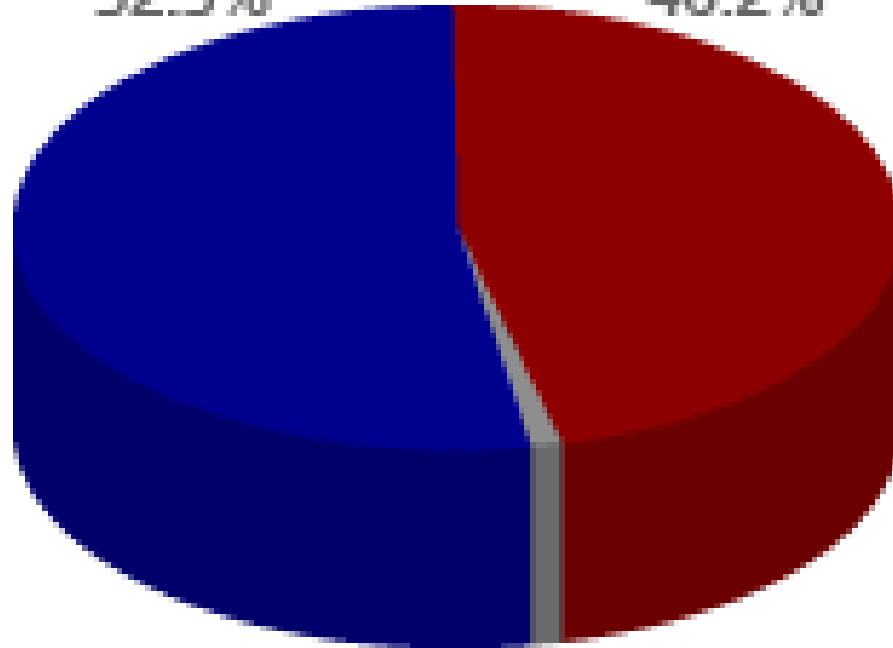
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# 2008 popular vote by 6.3%

## SHARE OF THE POPULAR VOTE

Barack Obama:  
52.5%

John McCain:  
46.2%



Others:  
1.1%

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# 2016 Popular vote

United States presidential election, 2008

2004 ← **November 4, 2008** → 2012

All 538 electoral votes of the Electoral College  
270 electoral votes needed to win

Turnout 58.2%<sup>[1]</sup> ▲ 1.5%



Nominee	<b>Barack Obama</b>	John McCain
Party	Democratic	Republican
Home state	Illinois	Arizona
Running mate	<b>Joe Biden</b>	Sarah Palin
Electoral vote	365	173
States carried	28 + DC + NE-02	22
Popular vote	69,498,516	59,948,323
Percentage	52.9%	45.7%

United States presidential election, 2012

2008 ← **November 6, 2012** → 2016

All 538 electoral votes of the Electoral College  
270 electoral votes needed to win

Turnout 54.9%<sup>[1]</sup> ▼ 3.3%



Nominee	<b>Barack Obama</b>	Mitt Romney
Party	Democratic	Republican
Home state	Illinois	Massachusetts
Running mate	<b>Joe Biden</b>	Paul Ryan
Electoral vote	332	206
States carried	26 + DC	24
Popular vote	65,915,795	60,933,504
Percentage	51.1%	47.2%

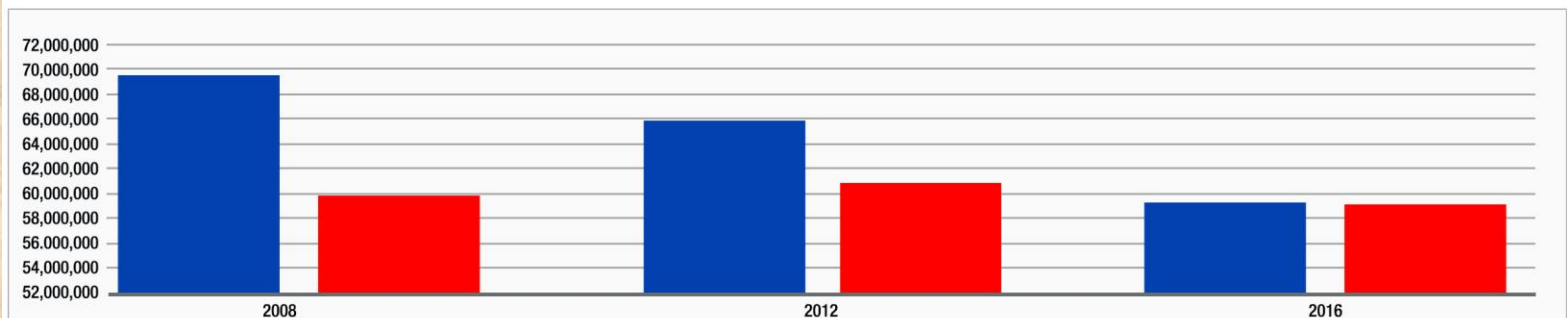
United States presidential election, 2016

2012 ← **November 8, 2016** → 2020

538 members of the Electoral College  
270 electoral votes needed to win



Nominee	Hillary Clinton	<b>Donald Trump</b>
Party	Democratic	Republican
Home state	New York	New York
Running mate	Tim Kaine	<b>Mike Pence</b>
Projected electoral vote	232 <sup>[1][2][3]</sup>	306 <sup>[1][2][3]</sup>
States carried	20 + DC	30 + ME-02
Popular vote	59,861,516 <sup>[4]</sup>	59,639,462 <sup>[4]</sup>
Percentage	47.7%	47.5%



source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_presidential\\_election,\\_2008](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2008)  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_presidential\\_election,\\_2012](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election,_2012)  
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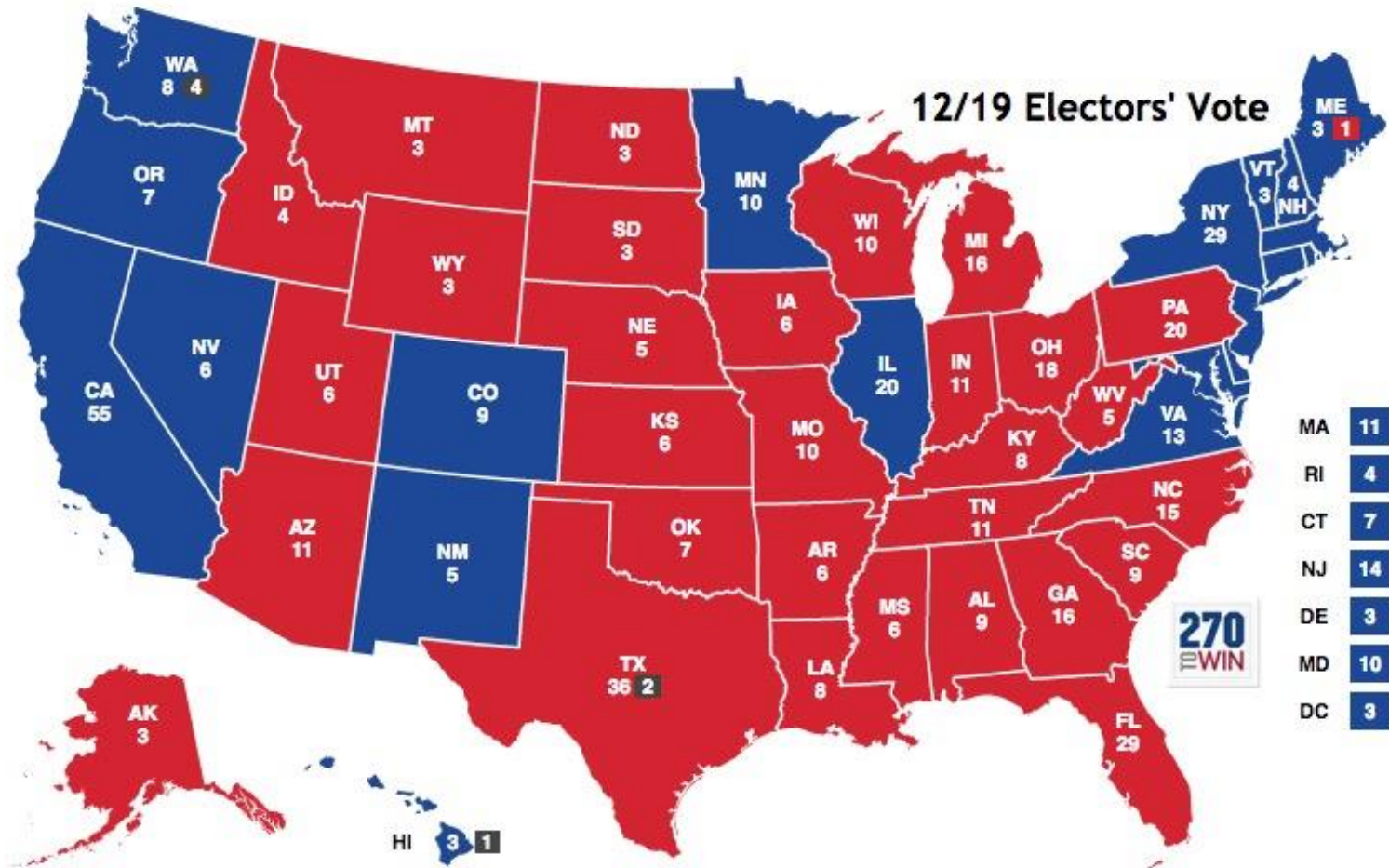
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# Electoral College in the 2017 Election

## “Winner Take All!”

**304** ✓ Trump (R)      **227** Clinton (D)      **7** Other (O)

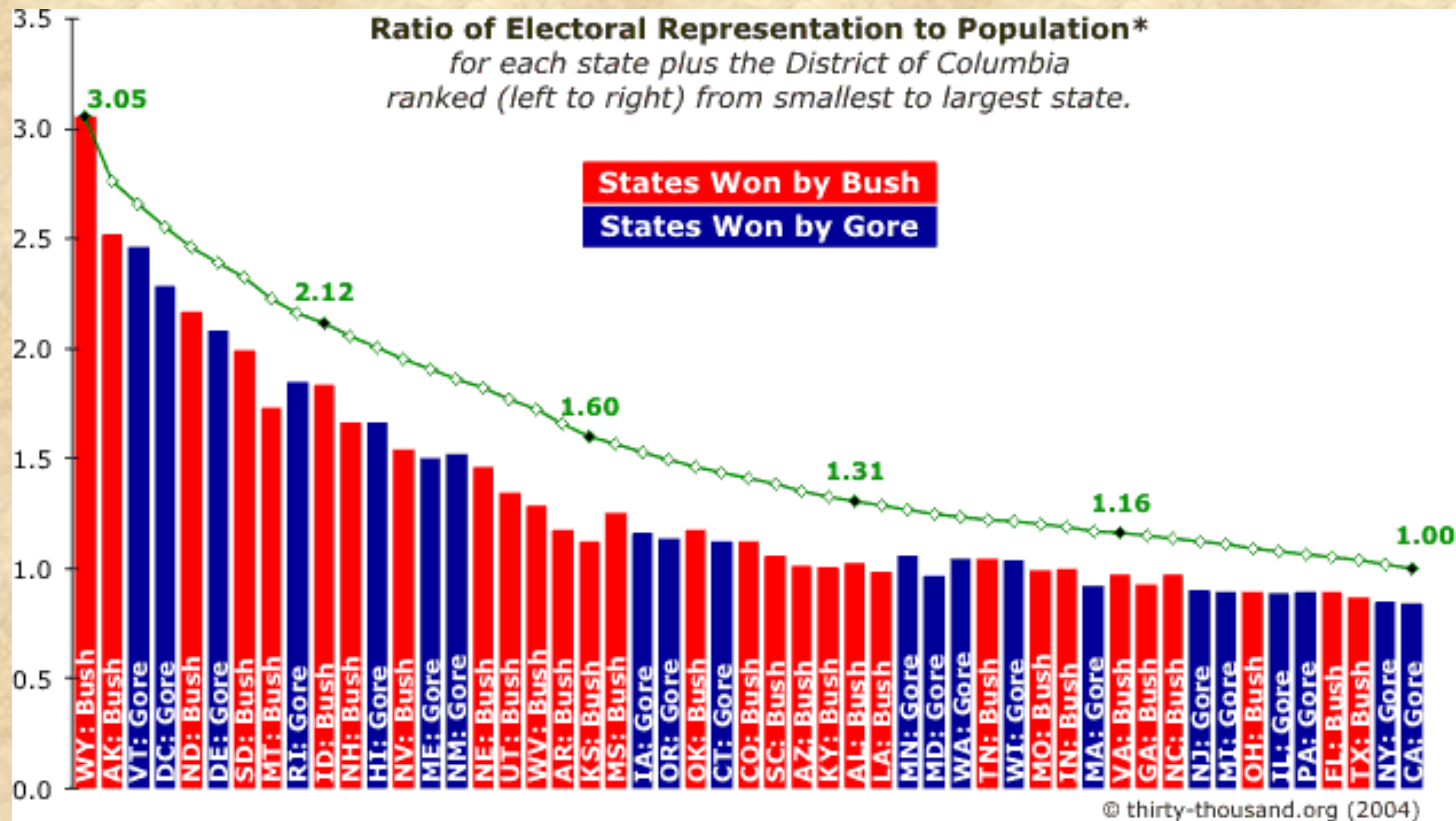


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# One way to look at it: Ratio to Population

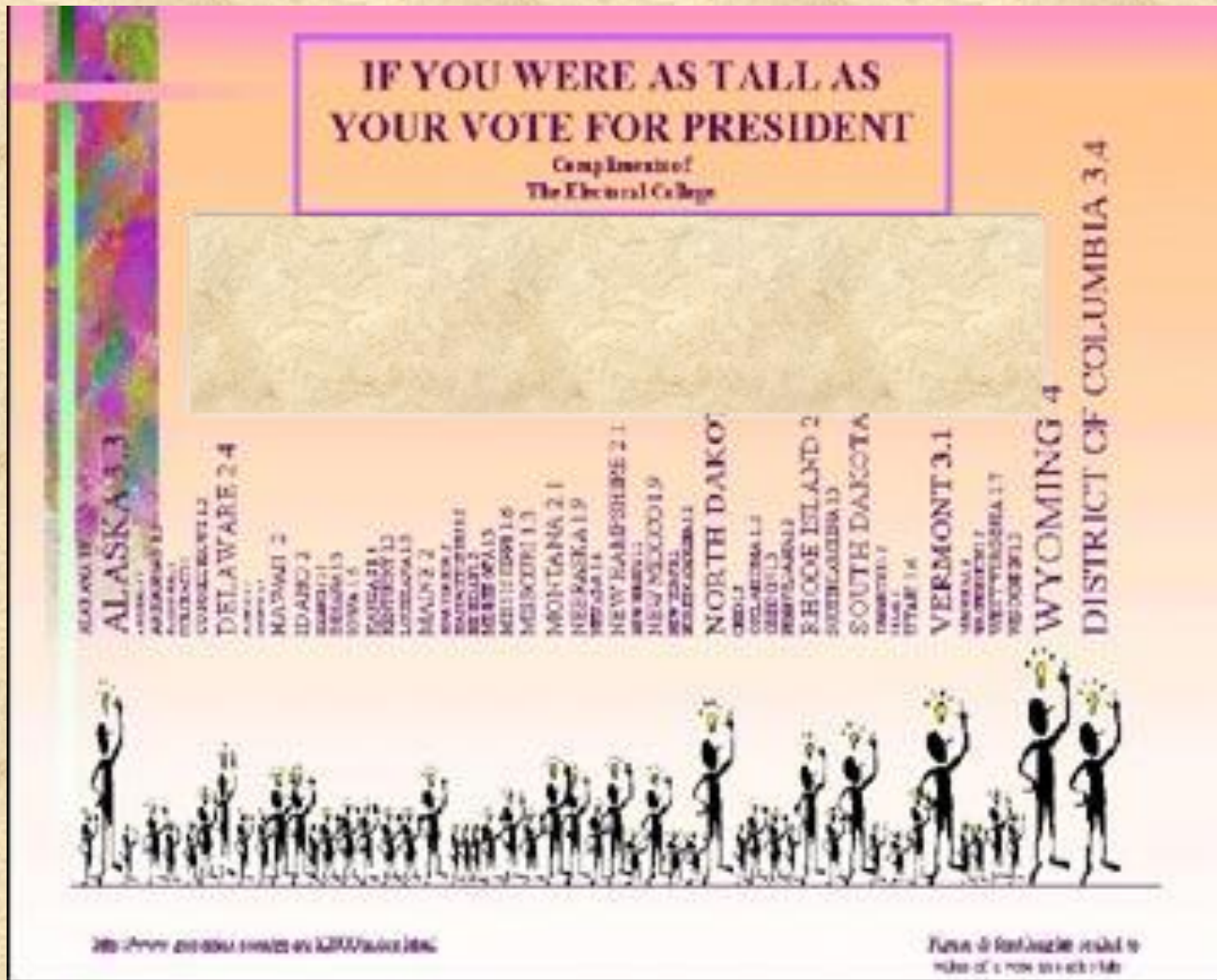


\* This is the ratio of each state's proportion of representation in the Electoral College to that state's proportion of population for the 2000 Presidential election (which was based on the 1990 apportionment). **For example:** Wyoming had .5576% of the representation in the Electoral College, but only .1827% of the population. The ratio for Wyoming is  $.5576 : .1827 = 3.05$ .

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# Another way to look at it: representation per person



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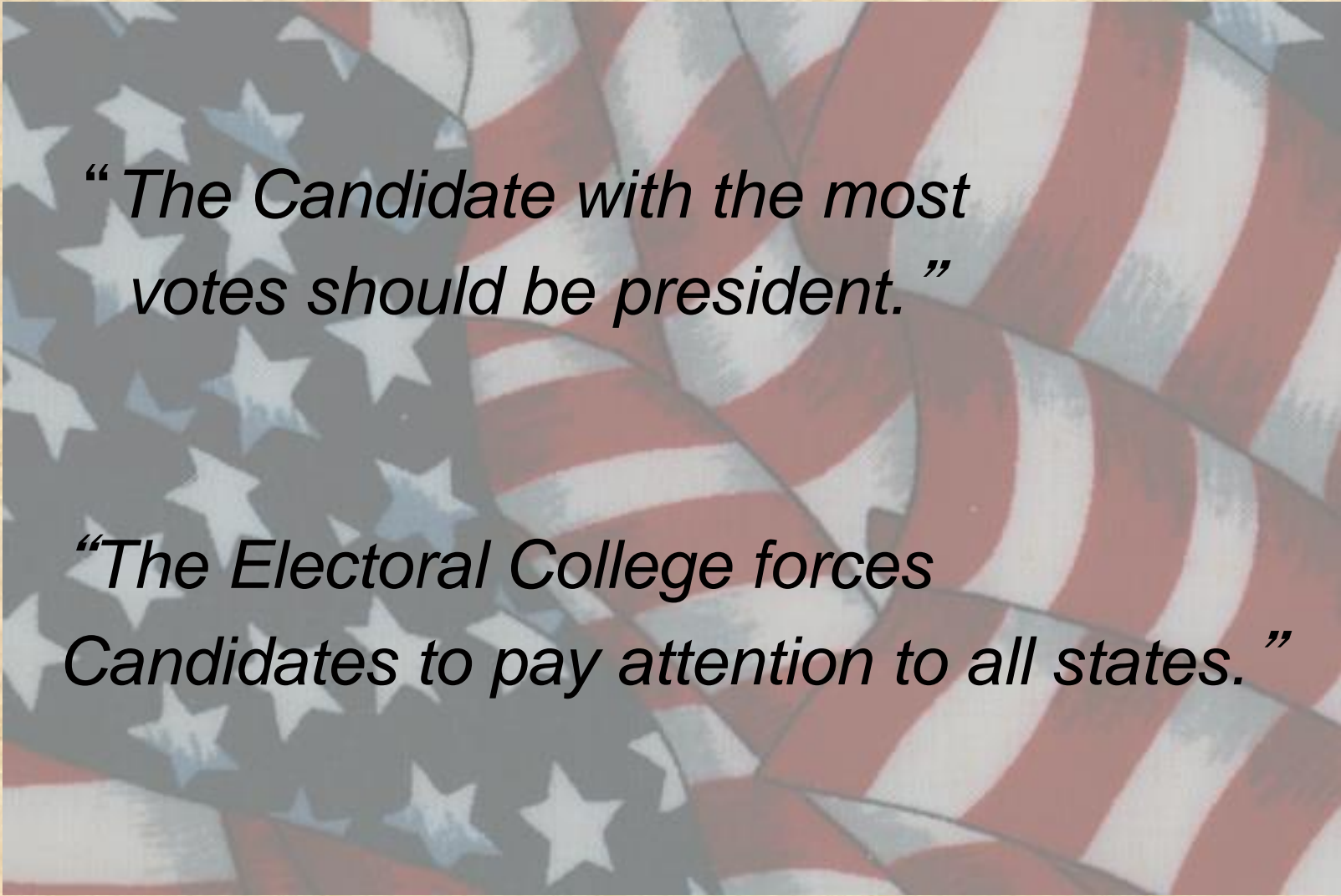
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A large, semi-transparent image of the American flag serves as the background for the text. The stars and stripes are clearly visible, though slightly faded to allow the text to stand out.

*“The Candidate with the most votes should be president.”*

*“The Electoral College forces Candidates to pay attention to all states.”*

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Prentice  
Hall



# Flaws in the Electoral College

## There are three major defects in the electoral college:

- (1)** It is possible to win the popular vote in the presidential election, but lose the electoral college vote. This has happened four times in U.S. history (1824, 1876, 1888, and 2000).
- (2)** Nothing in the Constitution, nor in any federal statute, requires the electors to vote for the candidate favored by the popular vote in their State.
- (3)** If no candidate gains a majority in the electoral college, the election is thrown into the House, a situation that has happened twice (1800 and 1824). In this process, each State is given one vote, meaning that States with smaller populations wield the same power as those with larger populations.



# Proposed Reforms

- In the **district plan**, electors would be chosen the same way members of Congress are selected: each congressional district would select one elector (just as they select representatives), and two electors would be selected based on the overall popular vote in a State (just as senators are selected).
- The **proportional plan** suggests that each candidate would receive the same share of a State's electoral vote as he or she received in the State's popular vote.
- A commonly heard reform suggests that the electoral college be done away with altogether in favor of **direct popular election**. At the polls, voters would vote directly for the President and Vice President instead of electors.
- The **national bonus plan** would automatically offer the winner of the popular vote 102 electoral votes in addition to the other electoral votes he or she might gain.

# Electoral College Supporters

There are two major strengths of the electoral college that its supporters espouse:

- It is a known process. Each of the proposed, but untried, reforms may very well have defects that could not be known until they appeared in practice.
- In most election years, the electoral college defines the winner of the presidential election quickly and certainly.



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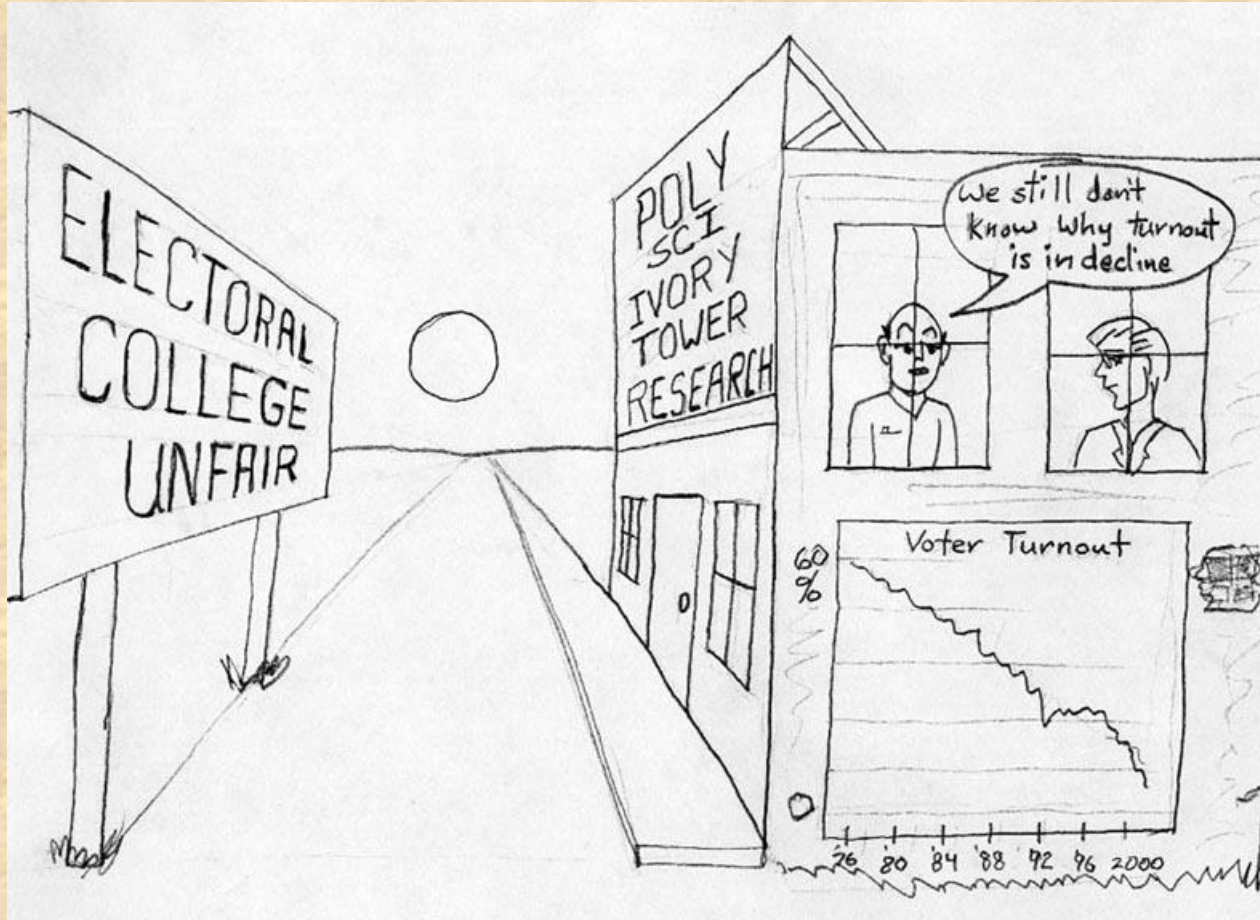
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# Perception that every vote doesn't count



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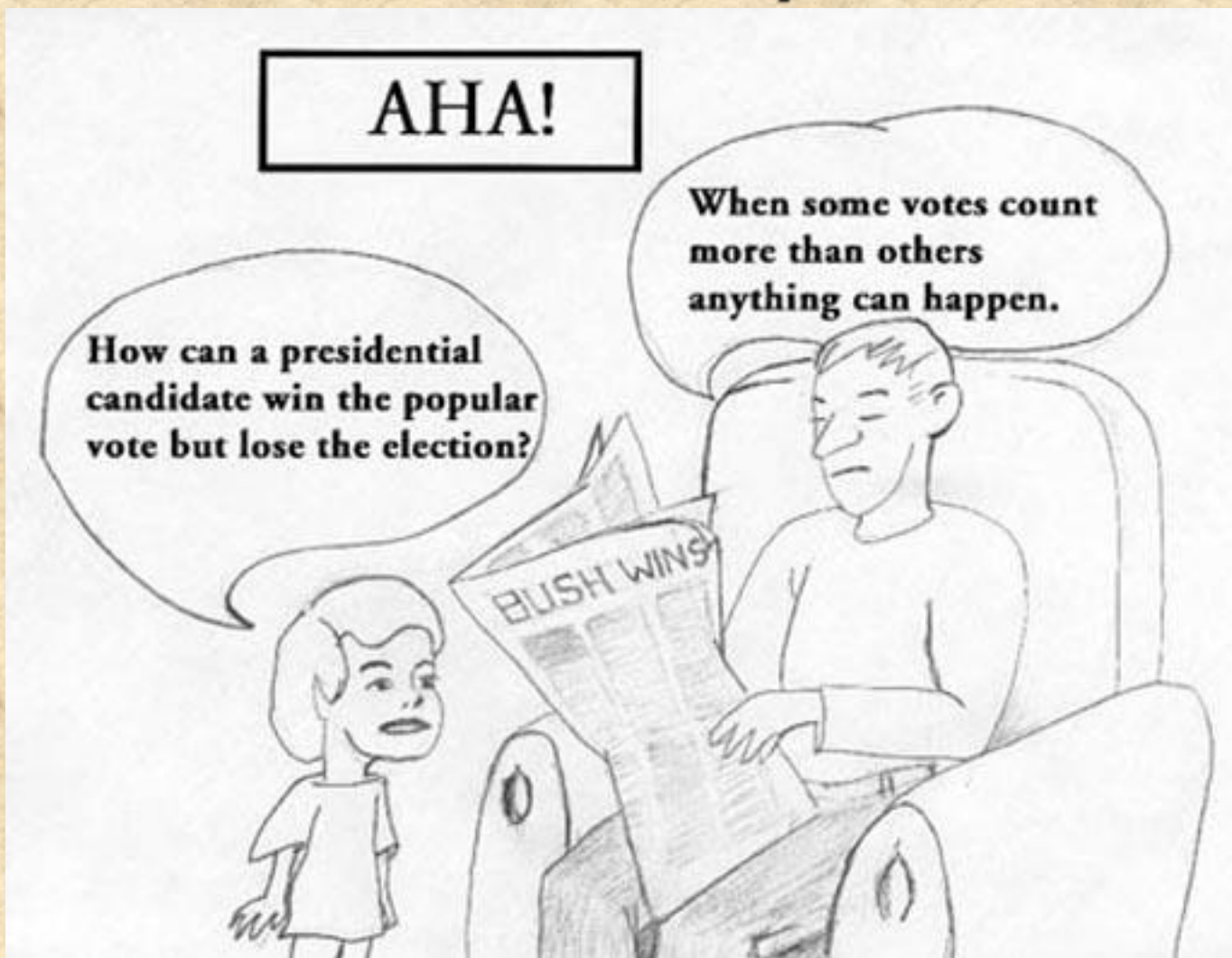
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# States with small populations have more electoral “power”



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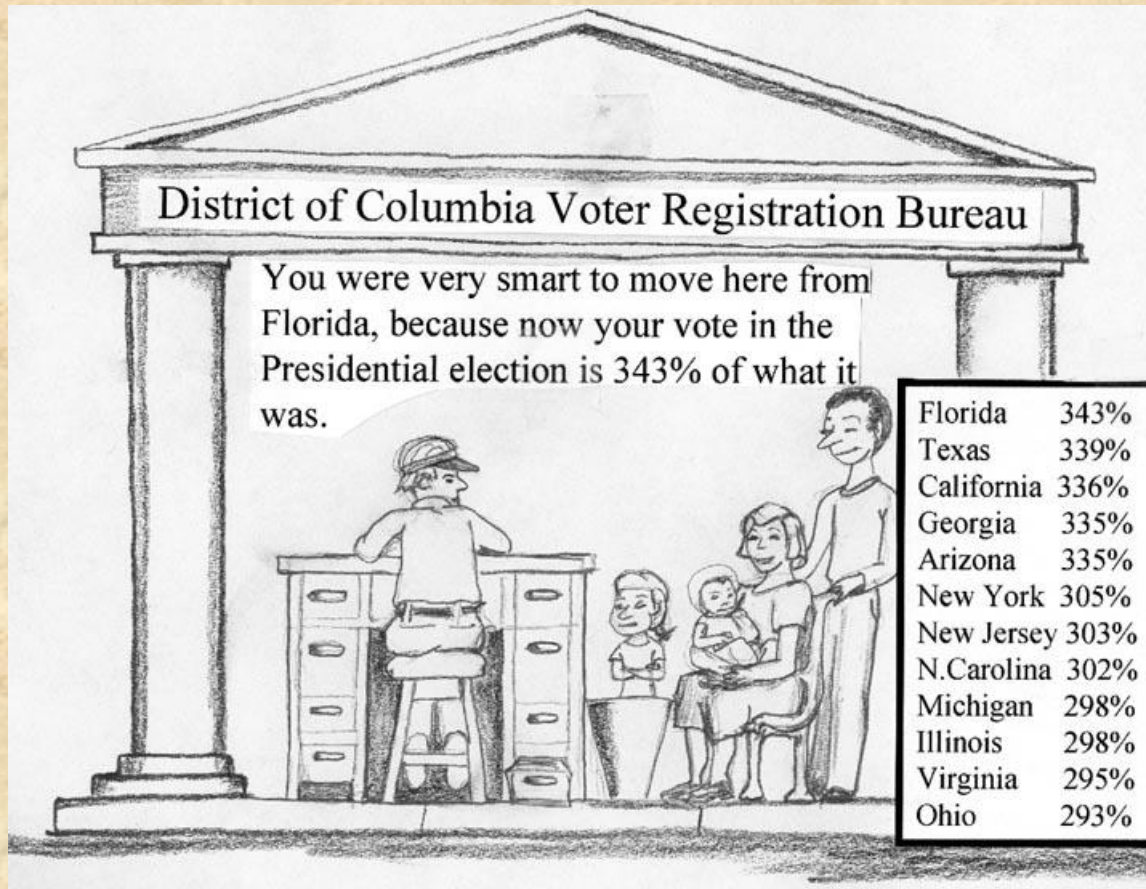
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# One example



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Question: Under federalism is the electoral college more representative than a popular vote for president would be?

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