

# THE EPOCH TIMES

16 Shares



### RELATED



**Delaware Governor Signs Bill That Would Give Electoral Votes to Winner of National Popular Vote**



**Democratic Senator Introduces Bill to Abolish 'Undemocratic' Electoral College**



Jake Krupa colors in an electoral map as states projected for Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump or Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton at an election watching party in Coconut Grove, Fla, on Nov. 8, 2016. (Rhona Wise/AFP/Getty Images)

### VIEWPOINTS

## The Electoral College—Does It Matter?



Gary L. Gregg

September 26, 2019 Updated: September 26, 2019

Print

Email this article to your friends

### Commentary

*This is the fifth and final article in a series based on questions asked by high school*

*students about the Electoral College. In the previous four, I laid out the origins, history, evolution, and current functioning of the institution. Here I take up the question, “Does it really matter?”*

Opponents decry the Electoral College system as “undemocratic” and “archaic.” Few of its most vociferous opponents argue that it doesn’t matter—that’s why they want to change it.

They know it does have a profound real-world impact on our politics. They just don’t like the impact it’s having. Supporters of the Electoral College know it’s important and so take what has become an unpopular opinion in mainstream media and in the academy and defend it.

But, for the average voter, I think the assumption is that the Electoral College doesn’t really matter much anyway, seems overly complicated, and seems undemocratic. They assume the system can be changed with just a tweak and life will otherwise go on pretty much as it has. Some [recent polls](#) found a [national popular vote](#) to be more popular than continuing on with the Electoral College.

Vocal opponents and supporters know the importance of the Electoral College, but for everyone else, here are three reasons why the Electoral College matters as much today as it ever has in U.S. history.

## **Does It Change the Outcome?**

First, though we can’t say definitively whether or not the existence of the Electoral College has changed who our presidents have been, we can assume with pretty strong evidence that it has. We all know George W. Bush received fewer popular votes across the nation than did Al Gore in 2000. We also know that [Donald Trump](#) received fewer votes than [Hillary Clinton](#) in 2016. It’s easy to assume the United States has these presidents rather than their alternatives because we use the constitutional math of the Electoral College to elect presidents rather than a simple popular vote.

If you don’t think it mattered that George W. Bush instead of Al Gore was president when the towers fell on 9/11, or that Donald Trump instead of Hillary Clinton has been president during the past few years, you must not have been paying much attention at all! Love ’em or hate ’em, who is elected president profoundly matters in the United States.

Second, the “rules of the game” created by the Electoral College structure the presidential campaigns so that Clinton and Trump spent a vital portion of their time in competitive swing states, rather than in dense urban population centers. If the rules of the game were different, the election results would likely have been different, but one can’t say definitively how it would have broken under different electoral incentives.

What we can say is that the Electoral College math helps give us competitive campaigns, helps spread influence around the nation, and gives us definitive winners and losers. Let me take up each in turn.

The United States has had good, competitive, two-party elections for a long time. Under our current system, the partisan pattern of our administrations over the last 50 years has

our current system, the partisan pattern of our administrations over the last 50 years has looked like this: D-R-R-D-R-R-R-D-D-R-R-D-D-R. Some of those elections have been razor-thin, some blowouts. But, the United States needs a competitive electoral system and the Electoral College math has given us that.

Money, it has been said, is the “mother’s milk” of politics and our campaigns are largely fought out on the airwaves. Well, where does most of the money in politics come from? Where are most of the media headquartered? The answers, of course, are the same. Most political money comes from the same zip codes around which our national media are headquartered. The Electoral College is the one force in our presidential politics that helps spread influence around the country. In the last election, rural and small-town Pennsylvanians, Michiganders, and Minnesotans had the chance to influence the election as well as did the urban and suburban donors and the media elite.

On that score, keep in mind that Clinton defeated Trump in one county alone—Los Angeles—by more votes than Trump’s winning margins in the whole states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Minnesota, North Carolina, Michigan, Iowa, Florida, Georgia, Wisconsin, and South Carolina *combined!*

The Electoral College math gives us a solid and legally legitimate winner every time. When popular margins are small, the Electoral College almost always exaggerates the size of the win, giving the incoming president more legitimacy with the public than they might have otherwise. When we have elections in which the president-elect actually wins with a plurality—not a majority—of votes cast, such as Bill Clinton, who received just over four in 10 votes cast for president, the president-elect receives a strong majority from the Electors.

Third, in an age when “federalism” has been under assault for nearly a century, the Electoral College reminds us that our founders bequeathed to us a “federal republic,” not one undifferentiated national democracy. All our elections are conducted within state boundaries and votes are counted within the states and according to their rules. In our federal system, the states are to be the locus of our politics, and in a period of centralization, the Electoral College serves as a bulwark for the founder’s vision.

It may be complicated and it may be old—as old as the Republic itself—but the Electoral College cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or something that can be tweaked or outright abolished without significant consequences to our politics and the future of the Republic. Bent on pruning as they are, our reformers need to be careful how close they may be hacking to the roots of the tree of liberty.

*Gary L. Gregg is the director of the [McConnell Center](#) and host of the podcast [Vital Remnants](#).*


*Views expressed in this article are the opinions of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of [The Epoch Times](#).*

### ***How is The Epoch Times different from other media?***

The Epoch Times is the fastest-growing independent media in America. We are different

from other media organizations because we are not influenced by any government, corporation, or political party. Our only goal is to bring our readers accurate information and to be responsible to the public. We don't follow the unhealthy trend in today's media environment of agenda-driven journalism and instead use our principles of Truth and Tradition as our guiding light.

We're working day and night to cover the CCP virus outbreak for you. Donating as little as the amount of a cup of coffee will help keep our media going. **Support us now by donating a 'COFFEE':**



-

3

+

\$3 each, \$9 total

ONE-TIME    MONTHLY

WEEKLY

Leave us a message (optional)

Support The Epoch Times

**Recent Top Supporters**

- Sean donated 1,000 coffees.
- Scott donated 500 coffees.
- Tim donated 334 coffees.
- Kevin donated 130 coffees.
- ObstJoyce donated 100 coffees.

**Recent Comment**

*"Unvarnished news in a multi shaded-news world. Thanks for pursuing and publishing the truth, clearly." See more*



SIGN THE PETITION

**Reject the**  
**Chinese Communist Party**

THE EPOCH TIMES

**TOP NEWS**