



## WILLIAM E. BRYANT

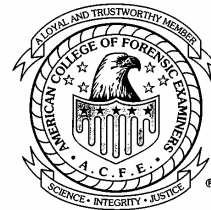
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November 12, 2004

Memo To: Paul Abdella

**Re: Electoral College vs Direct Popular Vote  
Disincentives & Distortions**

A few weeks ago we talked about the Electoral College, whether it was still practical to keep this institution in our politics. I firmly believe that the Electoral College system is not only outdated, but can distort the voting results and can lead to more controversy, such as we experienced in the 2000 election. In our modern era we should adopt the direct Popular Vote method

### **BACKGROUND**

The process for electing a president was initially spelled out in Article II of the Constitution in 1787, with some modifications later. Each state has electoral votes equal to its congressional representation. For example, Minnesota has 8 congressional districts plus 2 senators. Therefore, Minnesota currently has 10 electoral votes. Our most populated state, California, has 53 congressional districts plus 2 senators and accordingly, California has 55 electors. However, the constitution provides that each state shall have at least 1 congressional representative and 2 senators. This guarantees that each state shall have at least 3 electoral votes, regardless of the population of that state. That is why very rural populated states, such as Wyoming, North & South Dakota, Montana and etc., will always have at least 3 electoral votes.

### **WINNER TAKE ALL**

Under the Electoral College system, people don't actually vote for president, they vote for an "elector" who in turn votes for the president. These electors cast their votes when the Electoral College meets at each state capital, sometime in mid-December following the presidential election. The present electoral system has in place a "Winner take All" voting process for each state's electoral votes (except Maine and Nebraska). A candidate must merely win by one vote over their opponents (plurality) in order to win all of the electoral votes of that state. This is true even if you had 10 candidates with each receiving 10% of the votes; the winner would be the candidate that receives 10% plus 1 vote, to get the entire electoral votes of that state. Only Maine and Nebraska permit the electoral votes to be allocated based upon the winner of each congressional district, with the overall popular vote winner of the state getting the 2 "senatorial" electoral votes. This is still a distortion of the popular vote, but at least it is an attempt to correct the "winner take all" method. Colorado recently proposed to have their electoral votes (9 votes) be prorated based upon the popular votes cast in that state, regardless of whether a candidate carried any congressional district, but this initiative was not passed. In theory, we could improve the Electoral College system if all of the states adopted the "Colorado" method. But I would suggest that if we were to reach that point, it would just be easier to adopt the direct Popular Vote method.

## **DISINCENTIVES**

One of the main criticisms of the Electoral College system is that it can serve as a disincentive for voters that live in states where the popular vote outcome is predictable. In the 2004 election for example, there was little incentive for a Kerry voter living in Texas to get up and vote. Likewise, the same would be true for a Bush voter who lives in New York. The 2004 election was thereby reduced to 10 “battleground” states for which the outcome was not so certain. If we convert to the direct Popular Vote method, every vote in every state would be equal and every voter in every state would have an incentive to cast their vote in every election.

## **POTENTIAL CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS**

We were on the verge of a Constitutional crisis in 2000. We also had a chance of this happening again in 2004. The final electoral vote count was Bush 286 and Kerry 252 but consider another possibility. What if Kerry won had won Iowa (7) and New Mexico (5) just as Al Gore did in 2000. Then add to this Nevada (5) where Kerry was very competitive. This would have given Kerry 17 more electoral votes, for a total of 269 (252 plus 17). Bush would have had 17 less electoral votes for a total of 269 (286 minus 17). We would have had a tie at 269 vs 269 each. No recount or voter issues, just a bona fide tie. What then? Under the Constitution, the President and Vice President are chosen by the new Congress that begins its session the following January 3<sup>rd</sup>. The President is chosen by the new House of Representatives. Here again the Republicans currently have an advantage over the Democrats because there are more “red” states than “blue” states. The Constitution requires that each State in the House of Representatives cast 1 vote per state for President. This would be easy for Wyoming, Vermont, Alaska, North & South Dakota, Delaware and Montana since they only have one US Representative. But what about California, Texas, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio and New Jersey, all of these states have many US Representatives. If a state can not agree on their single vote for President they may abstain, but if no candidate receives at least 26 votes (a simple majority of states) then there is no President. In that situation, the Vice President (to be chosen by the new Senate) then becomes the “Acting President”. The Senate chooses the Vice President by giving each of the 100 senators 1 vote to cast for Vice President. It is possible for the President to be of one party and the Vice President to be of another party. Sounds crazy - but not really. No one could have predicted the 2000 Election fiasco, ending with the Supreme Court involvement. Can you imagine the Constitutional crisis that this scenario would create? This is another very important reason to abolish the Electoral College and adopt the direct Popular Vote method.

## **DISTORTION OF ELECTORAL VOTES**

Another concern is that not all electoral votes are “created equal”. As mentioned earlier, very rural states are guaranteed at least 3 electoral votes, regardless of its population. Currently, the Electoral College system favors the Republicans due to this circumstance. In other words when the popular vote is close, like the 2000 Election, the Republicans currently enjoy a slight edge over their Democratic rivals in getting to the magic number of 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency. I can prove this fact by using the figures from the 2004 election, even though it was not a factor in this election.

Luckily, I was able to download the 2004 voting data from a web site into Excel, please refer to page 6. Each state, their electoral votes (“EV”) and population are listed. Then I took the population of each state and divided it by their respective electoral votes (Pop. Per EV). Now look at the total population at the bottom. You will see a total population of 281,996,236. I then divided this number by 538 electoral votes to determine the national average of population per electoral vote – which equals 524,157.

Now turn to page 7. This is the same voting data, but I performed a sort function which lists the states in order from the least population per EV to the most population per EV. Wyoming is at the top of the list with only 165,101 people per EV. Contrast that to California at the bottom of the list, which has 616,924 people per EV. To the right of this column is a listing of each state carried by party, Republicans (red) and Democrats (blue). Now please note the yellow highlight line through Massachusetts. This yellow line represents the break point where your national average of population per EV is reached. All of the states above the yellow line are states that have less than our 524,157 national average of population per EV. Massachusetts, along with all of the states below the yellow line, are states that have more than 524,157 national average of population per EV. I reproduced the results of that worksheet, here:

	<b>Bush: Electoral Votes</b>		<b>Kerry: Electoral Votes</b>	
	States	EV's	States	EV's
Below the National Average of 524,157 per EV	24	151	10	49
Above the National Average of 524,157 per EV	7	135	10	203
<b>Totals</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>252</b>

As you can see, for Bush 24 of his 31 states carried were below the national average of 524,157 per electoral vote. But notice that these “below national average” states gave Bush 151 electoral votes toward his 286 total electoral votes. Therefore, more than half of his electoral votes came from states below the 524,157 per national EV average. Contrast this with Kerry. Half of his states were won from above national average EV's and half were from below national average EV's (10 and 10). But Kerry only got 49 electoral votes from his below national average states, while the remaining 203 electoral votes that he won came from above national average states. We acknowledge and emphasize that in this case George W. Bush won the popular vote in the 2004 Election. The skewing of the electoral votes was not a direct factor in the 2004 Election. This is because Bush improved his overall popular vote turnout in the “red” states compared to the 2000 Election. However, even in this 2004 Election there was a possibility that if Kerry won Ohio, Kerry would have won the electoral vote but lost the popular vote. This would have been an exact reversal of the actual 2000 Election outcome.

The underlying math illustrates the point that in a close popular vote contest, the Republican candidate currently enjoys a slight statistical advantage over his Democratic rival to get to the magic number of 270 electoral votes needed to win the presidency. This is because the Republican candidate does not have to generate as many popular votes per electoral vote as the Democrat. This will not always be the case in the future, as the populations in the “red” states grow over time. But this is the current situation today. Therefore, my conclusion is that the 2000 Election disaster was not a fluke, but instead a statistical probability – and it could happen again. This is why we should avoid any repeat of the 2000 Election by having each vote stand on its own. It has always been difficult to justify to foreigners that one candidate lost the election because he lost Florida by 537 votes, only to win the popular vote by 1,000 times that amount (543,816 votes to be exact).

## **ELECTORAL COLLEGE DISTORTS THE IMPACT OF 3<sup>rd</sup> PARTY CANDIDATES**

Another objection to the Electoral College system is that it makes it very hard for 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates to make inroads into our current political system. Every candidate is faced with needing 270 electoral votes to win the presidency, which makes 3<sup>rd</sup> party efforts very difficult in our “2-Party” system. The last 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidate to receive any electoral votes by actually winning a state was George Wallace in 1968 (5 states with 45 electoral votes plus 1 “faithless elector” for a total of 46 electoral votes).

Today, third party candidates are, more or less, seen as “spoilers” rather than legitimate candidates in their own right. If we adopt the direct Popular Vote method, third party candidates may have a chance to be seen as legitimate contenders, not spoilers, representing a constituency with an important point of view and that this view desires to be heard. Every vote cast for all candidates would then be equal in value. But the current electoral system can distort the true impact that 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidates have on the election outcome.

Let’s take a closer look at 2 past elections to prove this point; here are the 1992 Election results:

William Clinton	Albert Gore Jr.	Democratic	44,909,806	43.01%	370	68.77%
George Bush	J. Danforth Quayle	Republican	39,104,550	37.45%	168	31.23%
H. Ross Perot	James Stockdale	Independent	19,743,821	18.91%	0	0.00%

We often forget the impact that Ross Perot had on the 1992 election. He received almost 19% of the vote, but because he did not carry a single state, he received no electoral votes. How do we justify that one candidate received almost 1 out of every 5 votes cast, but was not represented in the Electoral College. This is an example of where the Electoral College system distorts the election by understating the impact and importance of the popular votes received by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidate.

Now let’s take a look at the 2000 Election results:

George W. Bush	Richard Cheney	Republican	50,460,110	47.87%	271	50.37%
Albert Gore Jr.	Joseph Lieberman	Democratic	51,003,926	48.38%	266	49.44%
Ralph Nader	Winona LaDuke	Green	2,883,105	2.73%	0	0.00%
Patrick Buchanan	Ezola Foster	Reform	449,225	0.43%	0	0.00%

This election had the so-called “Nader factor”. Nader received less than 3% of the votes, but he managed to receive just enough votes in a few states to deny Al Gore the plurality needed to win that state. The focus was on Florida, with a 537 vote difference for Bush over Gore, while Nader received over 97,000 votes. Gore supporters argued and calculated that if Nader were not in the race, Gore would have received a 20% spread advantage from the Nader voters in Florida. This would have given Gore around 19,400 more votes over Bush, thereby winning Florida and thereby winning the presidency. However, Nader supporters content that he had a right to run for president regardless of the circumstance or affect on other candidates. Both positions have legitimate arguments and each are right.

But if we had the direct Popular Vote method in place, the “Nader factor” would have been a non-issue, no Florida controversy would have been necessary and Gore would have been elected president based upon his 543,816 vote lead nationally. This is an example of where the Electoral College system distorts the election by overstating the impact and importance of the popular votes received by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party candidate.

## **DISTORTION OF LAND AREA vs POPULATION DENSITY**

Democrats are often overwhelmed when they see the large map of the United States on the TV screen, on election night. They often see large seas of red cover the United States and think that they are losing by a landslide – not true. Because we use the Electoral College method, we are forced to look at a map of the United States, rather than a simple direct popular vote total.

The problem is that the individual states have land areas based upon political boundaries that are not drawn to scale based upon population density. This creates a distortion of the visual image of the Electoral map of the United States. The “blue” area is smaller than the “red” area but the “blue” area has more population density. For example, the state of Massachusetts has a population of 6.4 million people. This equals the combined total population of Idaho, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Yet you could fit 53 “Massachusetts” inside the combined land area of these rural states. On page 16, I have included a county map of the 2000 Election. You will see a vast area of red with very little blue. But in reality, the blue area contains just as many people as there are in the red areas. I also included a 2000 Electoral cartogram. This is a specialized graphic design that re-draws the electoral map based upon scale; 271 for Bush and 267 for Gore. As you can see, the red and blue areas are almost the same. If I had a 2000 Popular Vote cartogram, the blue area would be slightly larger than the red area, because Gore actually received more popular votes than Bush.

## **END THE CIVIL WAR: RED vs BLUE STATES**

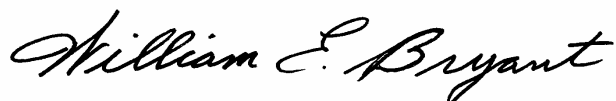
If we eliminate the Electoral College method and adopt the direct Popular Vote method, there would be no need for the “red states” vs “blue states” mentality, currently popularized in the media. This country is equally divided and polarized enough already. Converting to the direct Popular Vote method would end this divisive reference. Instead, on election night we would view a table of the votes tallied as they are reported – no electoral map of the United States is necessary, ending the “red” vs “blue” mantra.

Under the direct Popular Vote method, we may want to require a “run-off” clause (used in Louisiana). This requires another round of voting for the top two candidates if no candidate received at least 50% of the vote. This avoids someone winning an election with very little popular vote, by merely receiving a plurality of votes in a field of many candidates. Some would argue that the Electoral College system works because it prevents this problem from happening. But if we remember that only the candidate that gets the most popular votes in a state (majority or plurality) carries that entire state, then we see that the Electoral College system does not prevent this distortion from taking place. If this clause were in effect in the 2000 Election, only Bush and Gore would have been on the ballot for the 2<sup>nd</sup> round of voting run-off.

In conclusion we should adhere to the motto; “make every vote count and count every vote”. The direct Popular Vote method ensures the “one person – one vote” true equality that every American expects and deserves, without distortion or bias. We will then learn to appreciate all the votes cast in an election, without distorting the true margin of victory won by the winning candidate, or understating the important constituency that voted for the losing candidates, as the current Electoral College system portrays.

I hope that this discussion was helpful. It was my pleasure to work on this subject. Please review the following pages for more information and web sites that you might find useful for future reference.

Sincerely,



William E. Bryant, CPA, CVA

Enclosures: Tables, Charts, Historical Election Maps & Graphs

# Presidents that have won Re-Election since 1936

Candidate	VP Candidate	Party	Popular Vote	Popular %	Electoral Votes	Electoral %
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Generally, Candidates that received less than 1% of the popular vote are not listed.

## 1936

Franklin Roosevelt	John Garner	Democratic	27,752,949	60.80%	523	98.49%
Alfred Landon	Frank Knox	Republican	16,683,293	36.55%	8	1.51%

Roosevelt was also re-elected in 1940 and 1944, he was the only President to run for a 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> term.

## 1948

Harry Truman	Alben Barkley	Democratic	24,179,347	49.55%	303	57.06%
Thomas Dewey	Earl Warren	Republican	21,991,292	45.07%	189	35.59%
J. Strom Thurmond	Fielding Wright	State's Rights	1,175,930	2.41%	39	7.34%
Henry Wallace	Glen Taylor	Progressive	1,157,328	2.37%	0	0.00%

## 1956

Dwight Eisenhower	Richard Nixon	Republican	35,579,180	57.37%	457	86.06%
Adlai Stevenson	Estes Kefauver	Democratic	26,028,028	41.97%	73	13.75%

## 1964

Lyndon Johnson	Hubert Humphrey	Democratic	43,127,041	61.05%	486	90.33%
Barry Goldwater	William Miller	Republican	27,175,754	38.47%	52	9.67%

## 1972

Richard Nixon	Spiro Agnew	Republican	47,168,710	60.67%	520	96.65%
George McGovern	R. Sargent Shriver	Democratic	29,173,222	37.52%	17	3.16%
John Schmitz	Thomas Anderson	American	1,100,868	1.42%	0	0.00%

## 1984

Ronald Reagan	George Bush	Republican	54,455,472	58.77%	525	97.58%
Walter Mondale	Geraldine Ferraro	Democratic	37,577,352	40.56%	13	2.42%

## 1996

William Clinton	Albert Gore Jr.	Democratic	47,400,125	49.23%	379	70.45%
Robert Dole	Jack Kemp	Republican	39,198,755	40.72%	159	29.55%
H. Ross Perot	Pat Choate	Reform	8,085,402	8.40%	0	0.00%
Ralph Nader	Winona LaDuke	Green	685,297	0.71%	0	0.00%

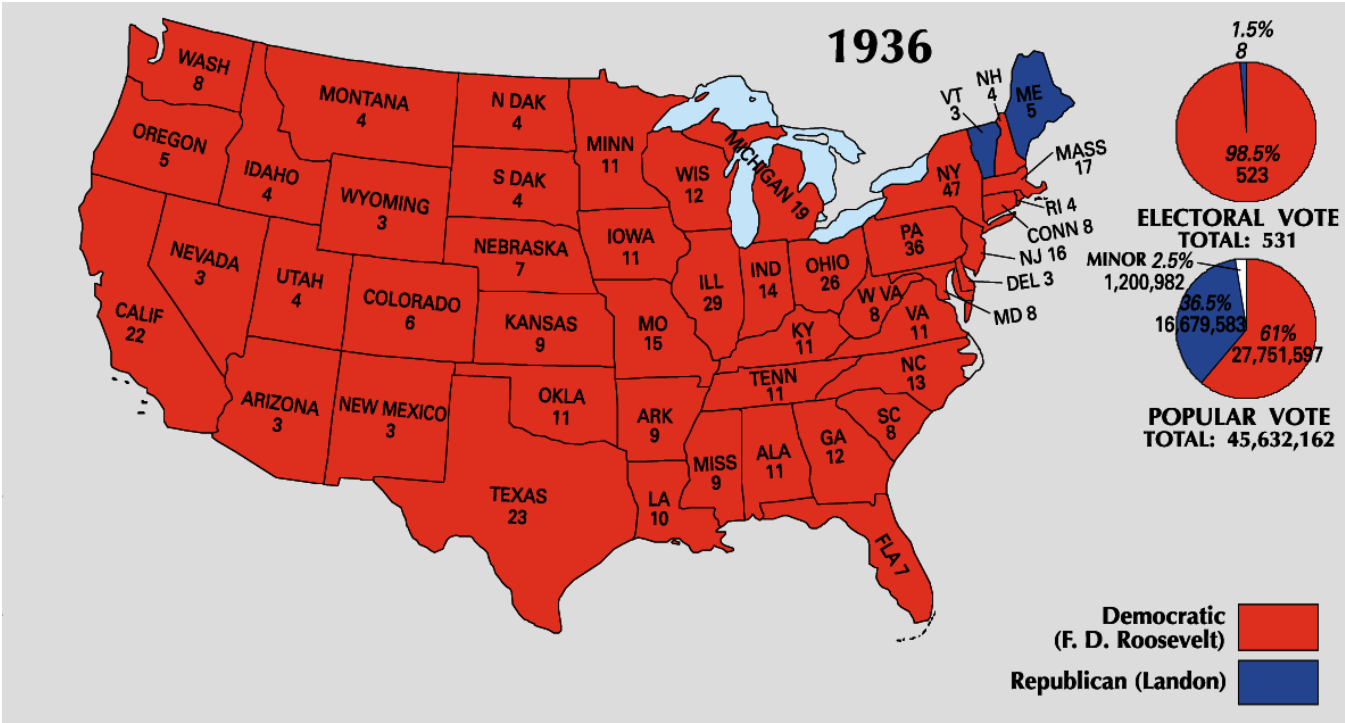
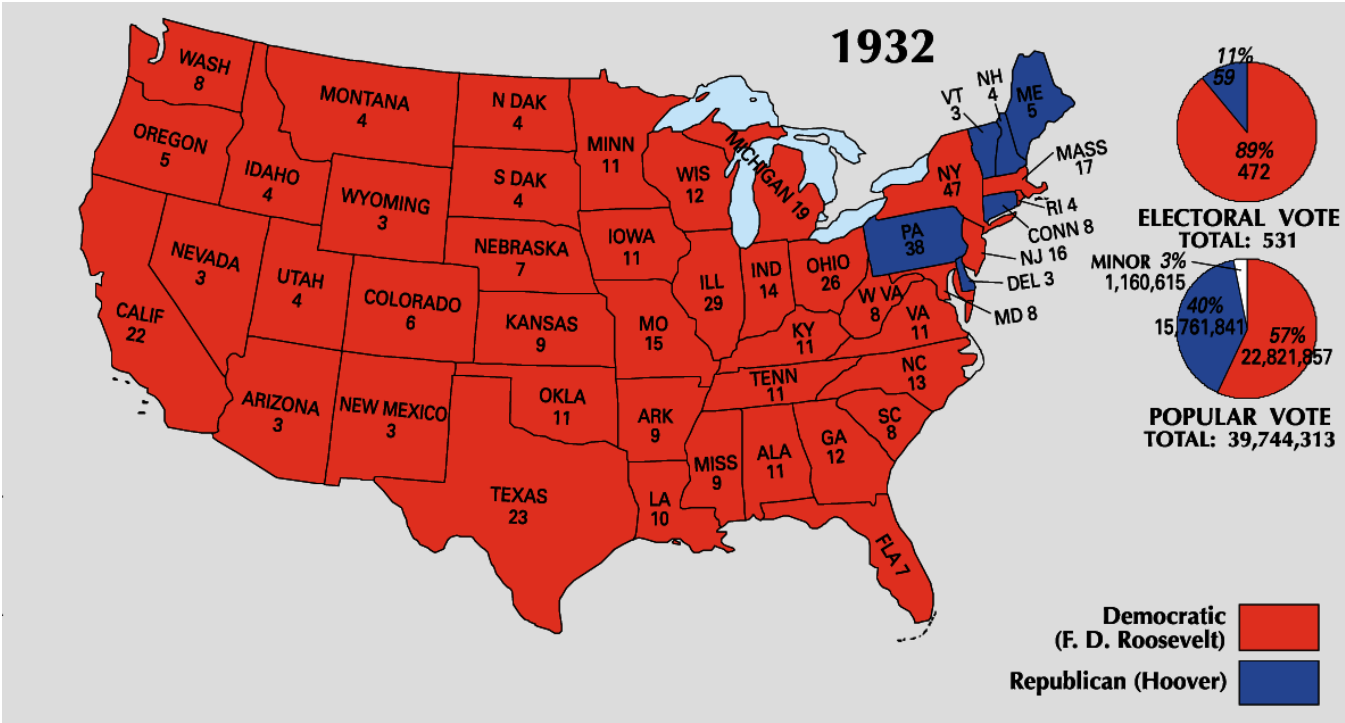
## 2004 (as of November 12, 2004)

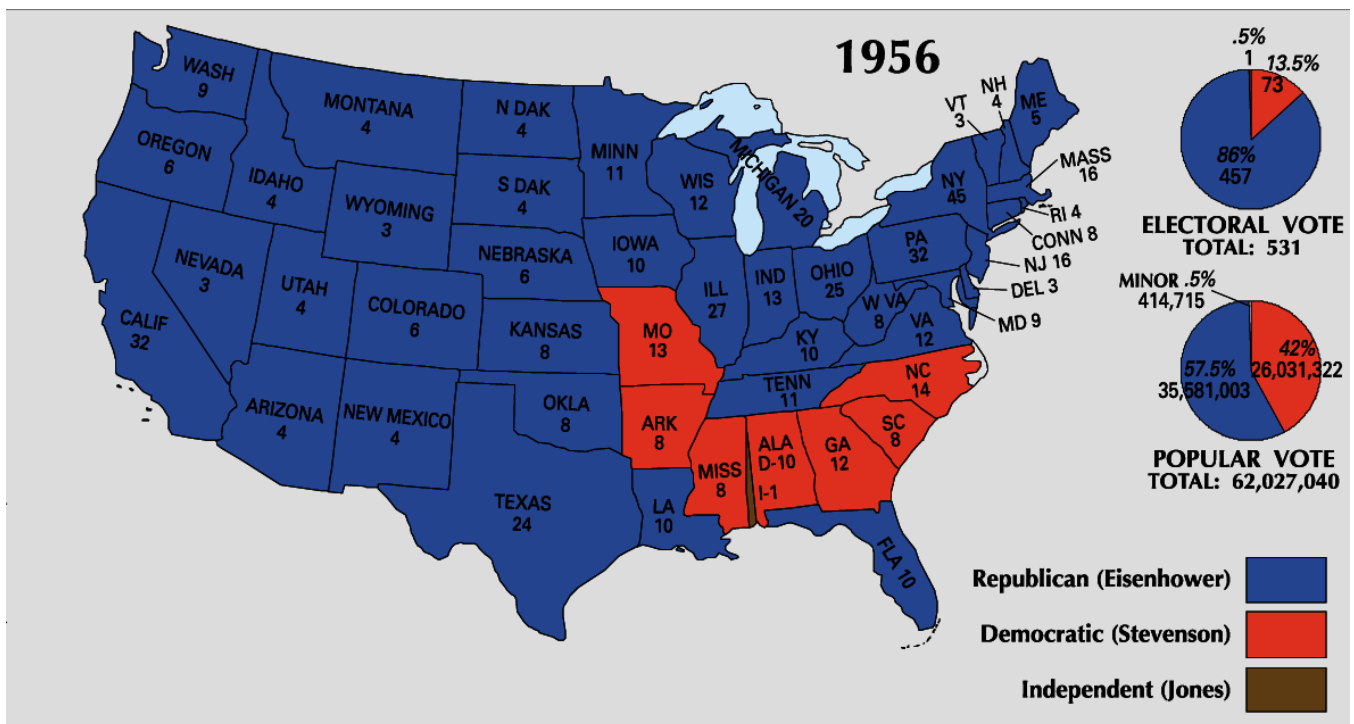
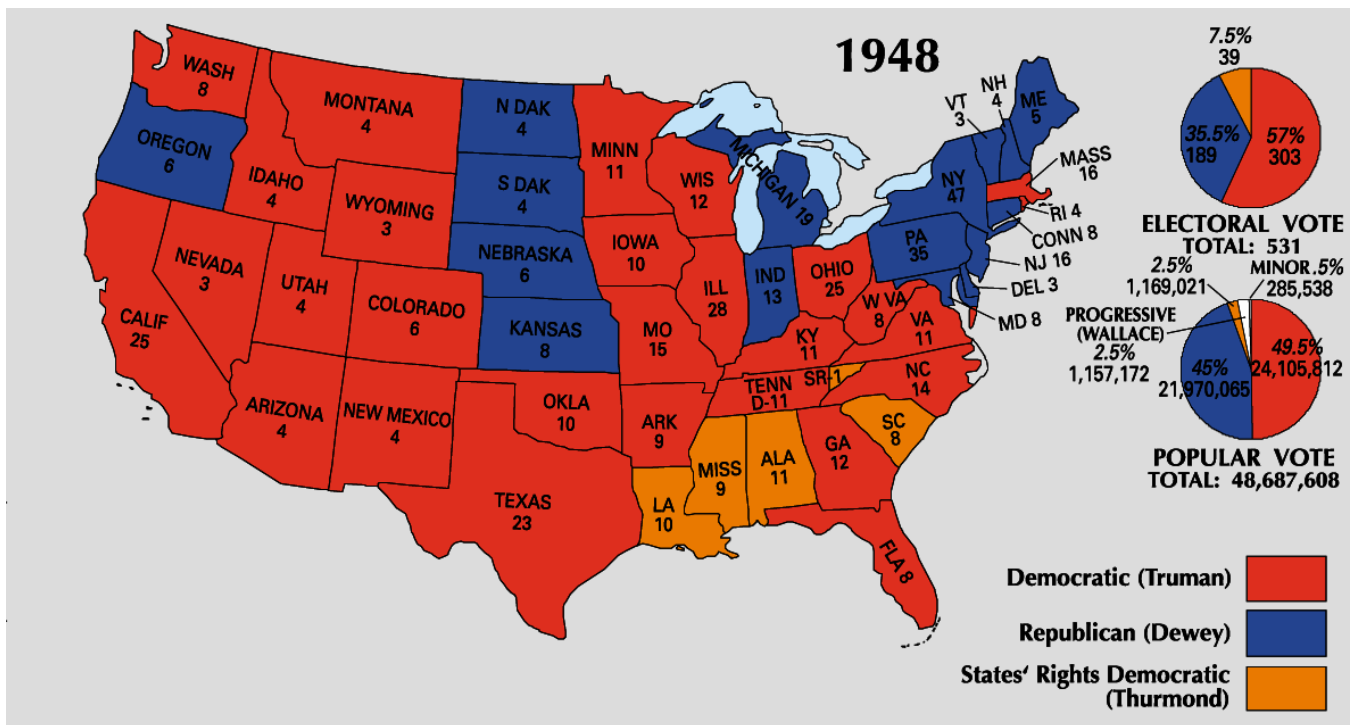
Page 8

George W. Bush	Richard Cheney	Republican	60,418,140	50.99%	286	53.16%
John Kerry	John Edwards	Democratic	56,949,003	48.06%	252	46.84%

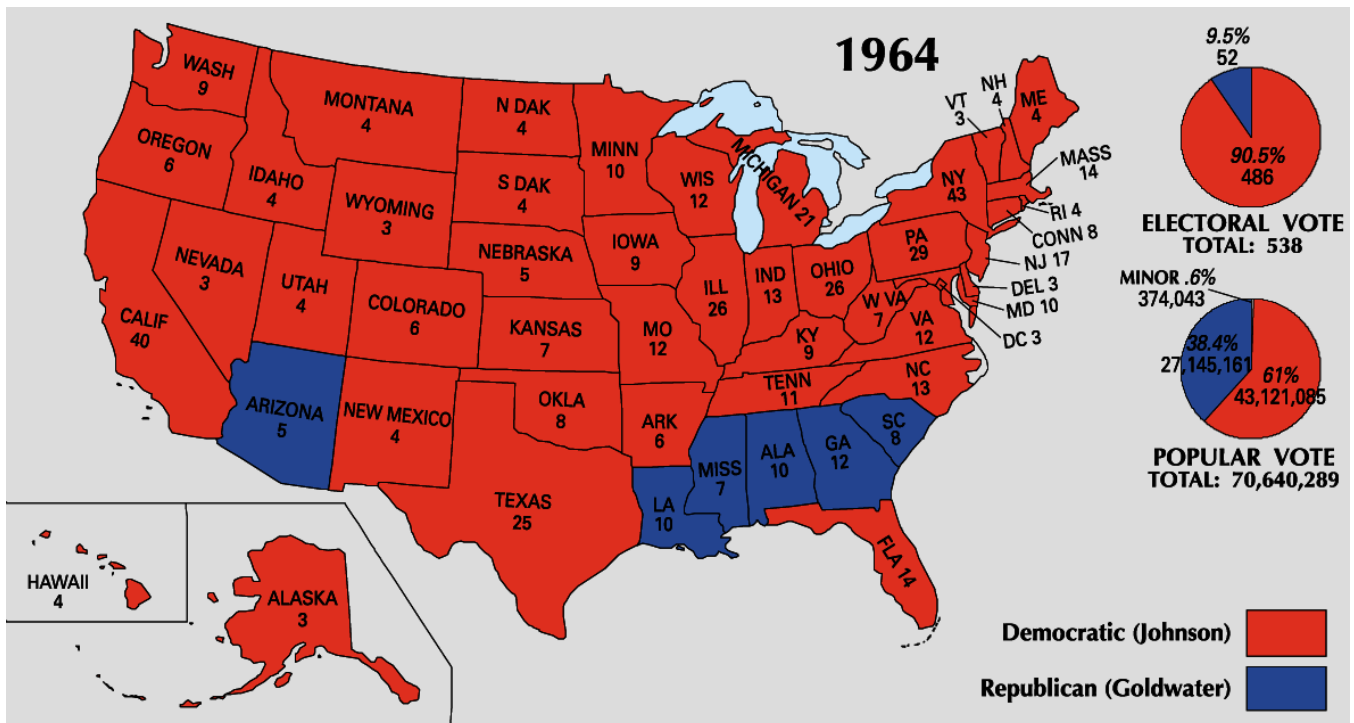
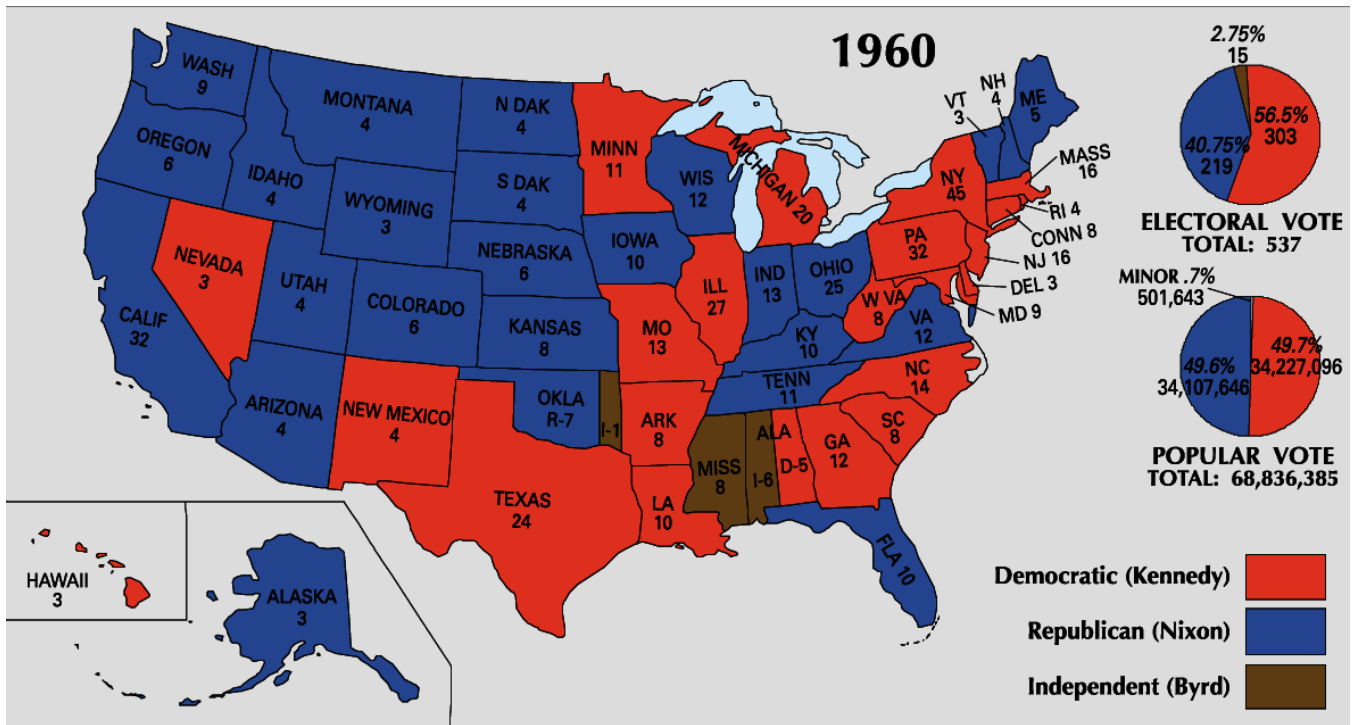
# Electoral Maps of Selected Elections

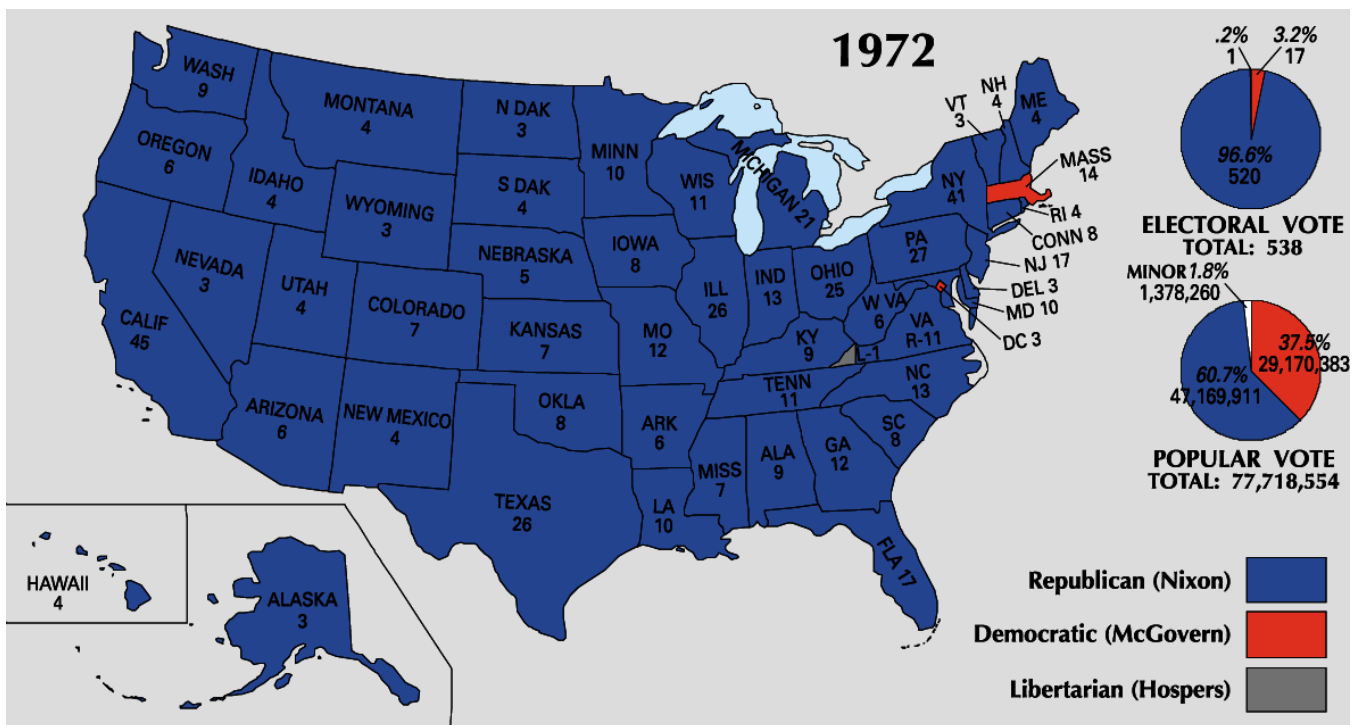
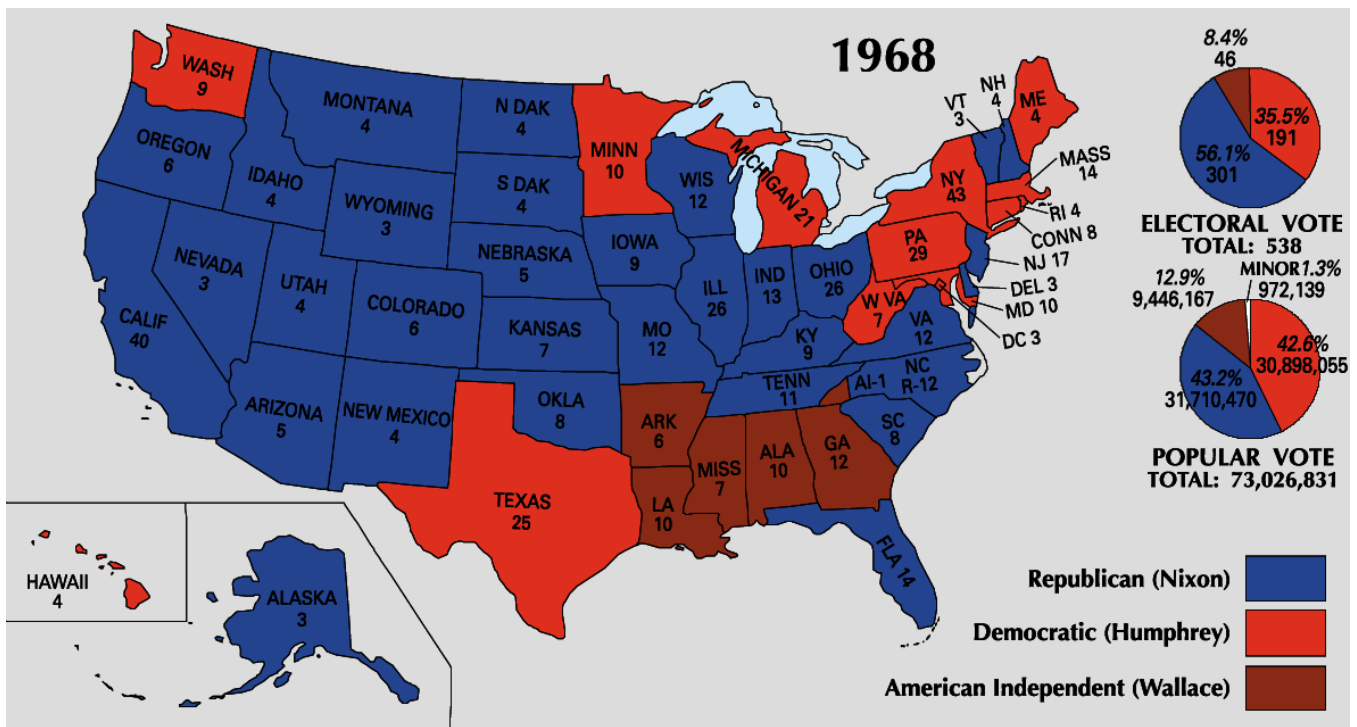
Note: On the following maps, Red = Democrat, Blue = Republican,

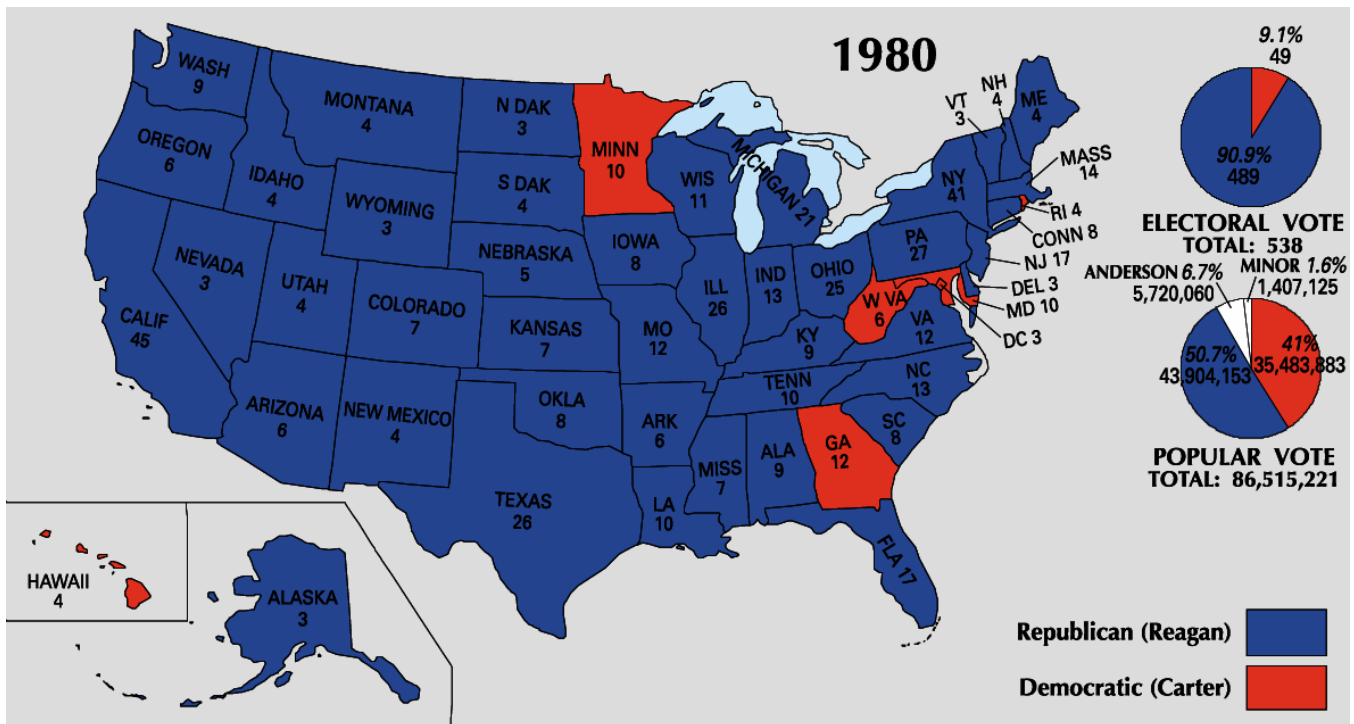
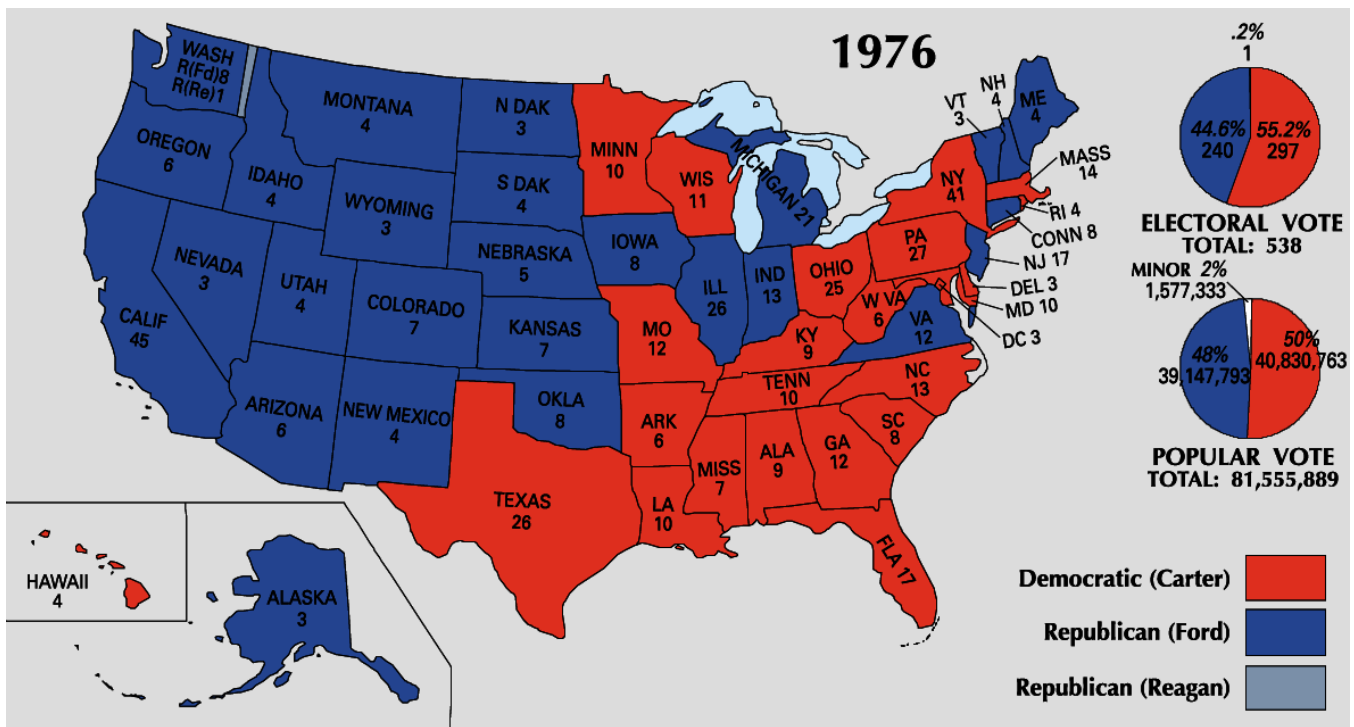


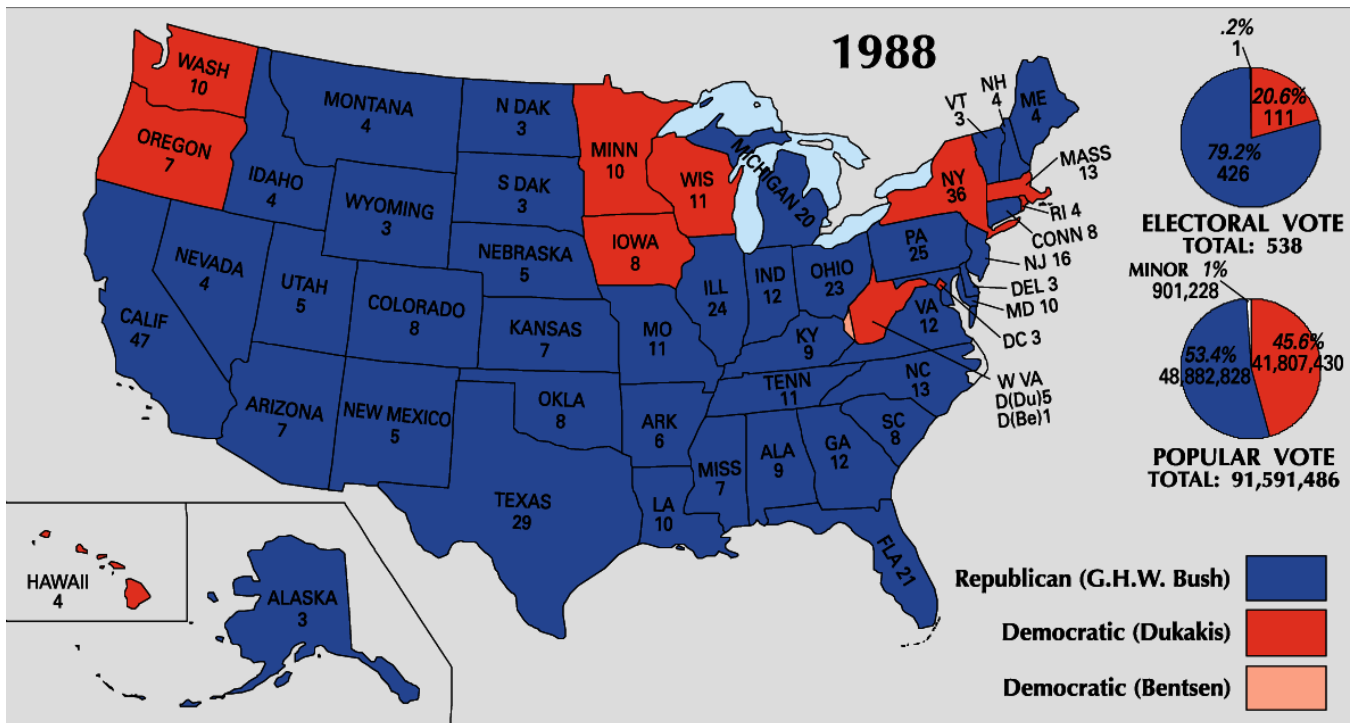
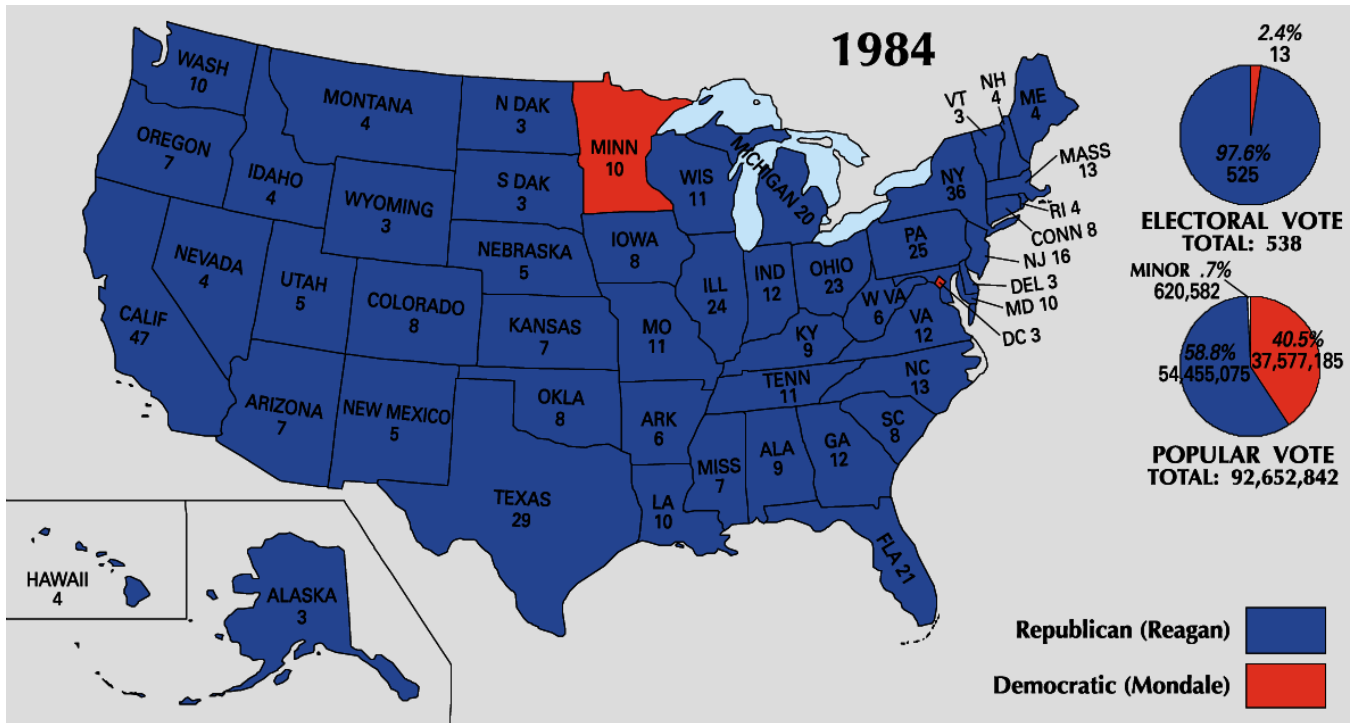


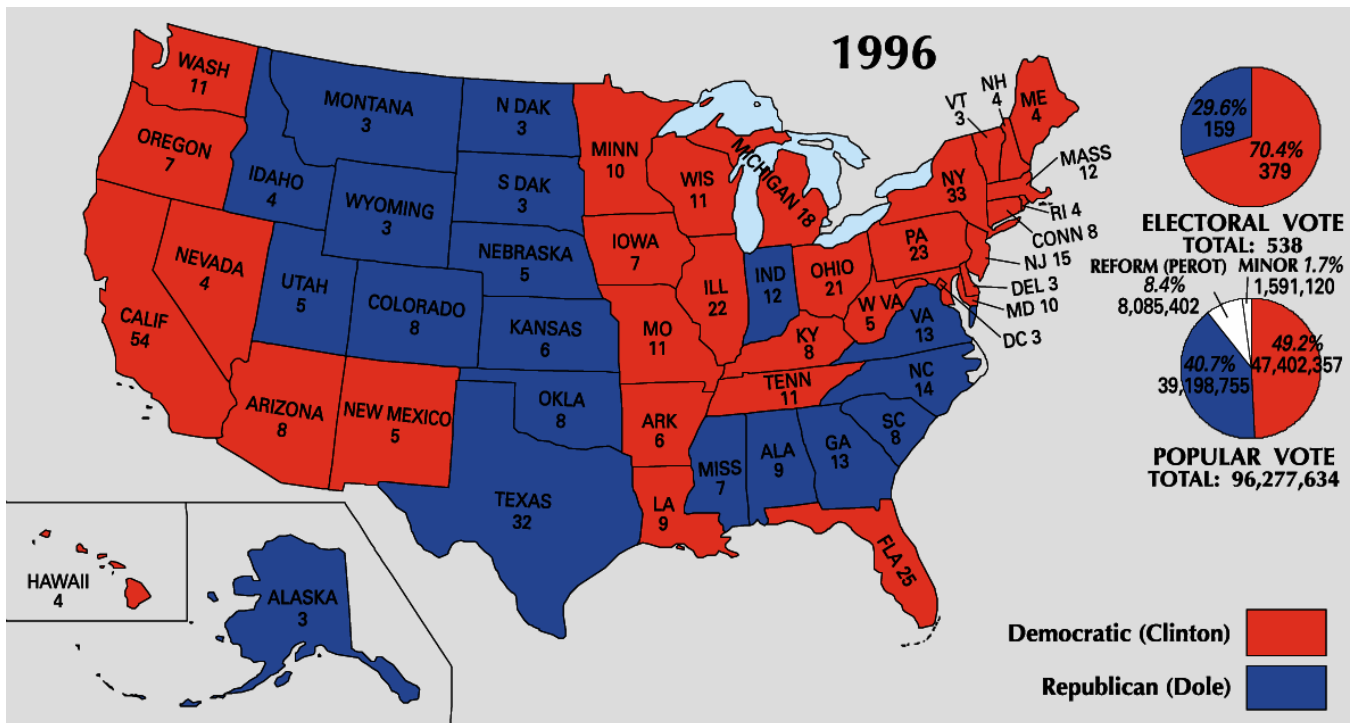
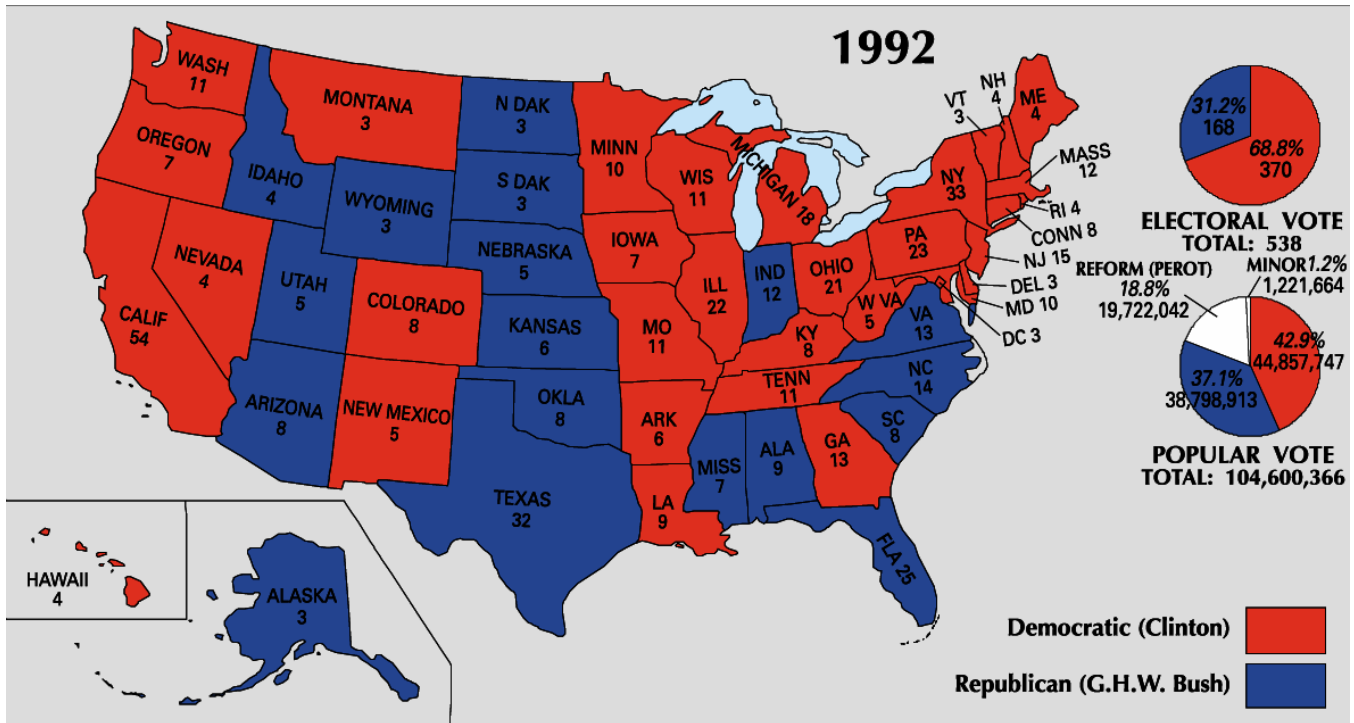




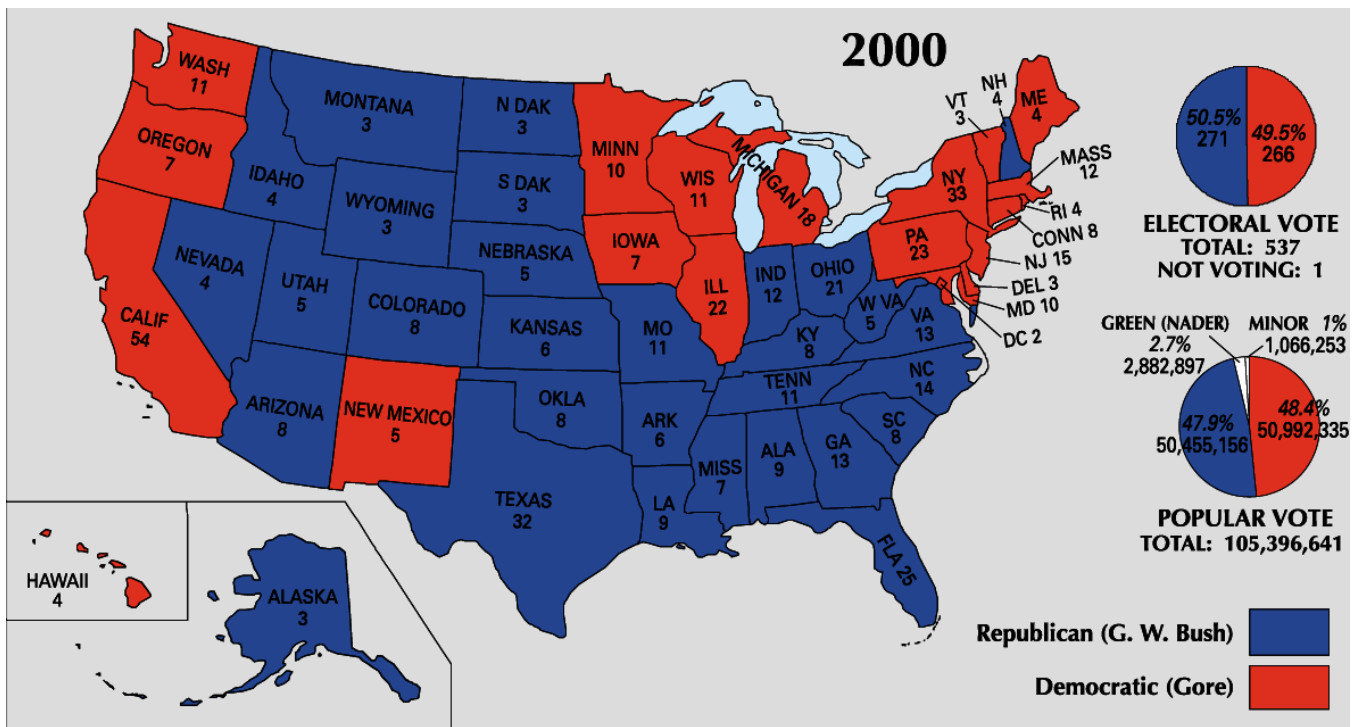




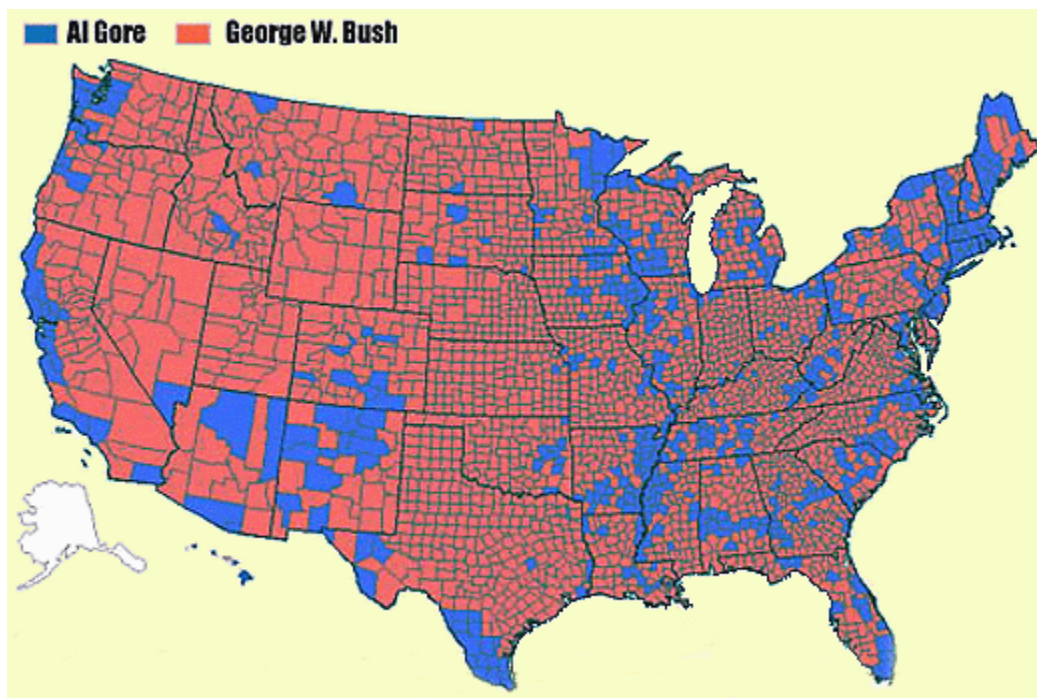








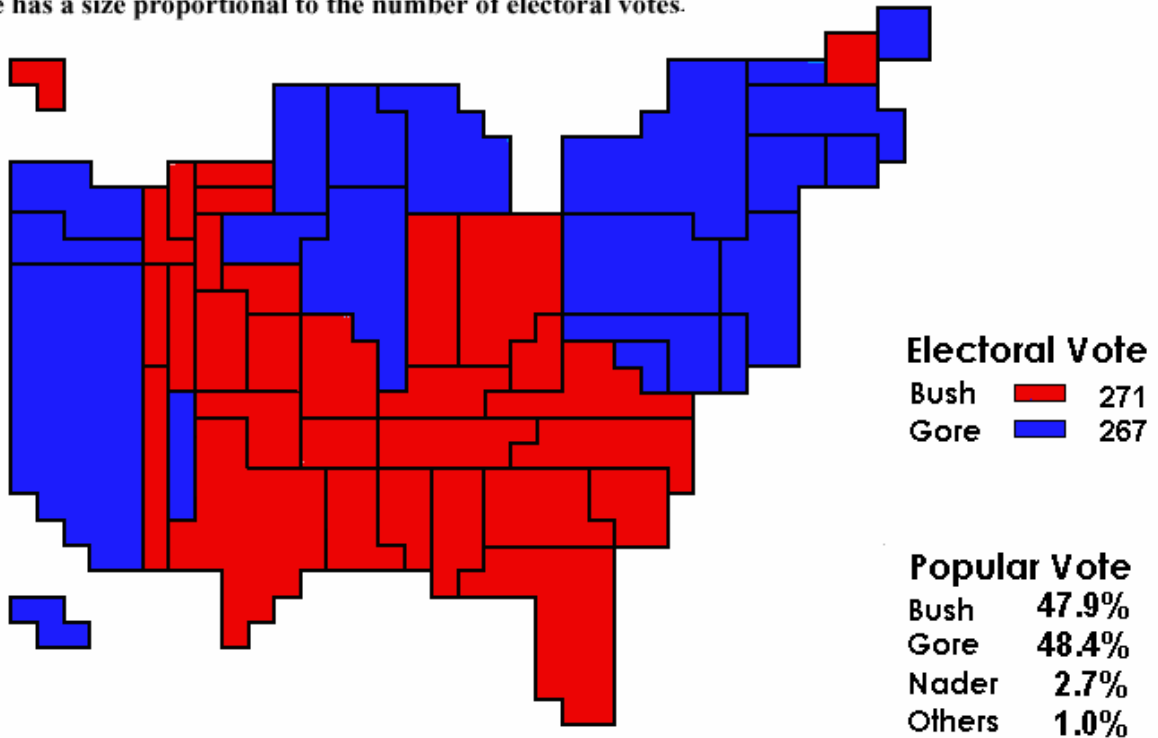
2000 Election by County: Red = Republican, Blue = Democrat



In the above map, the Blue area actually represents more population than the Red area.

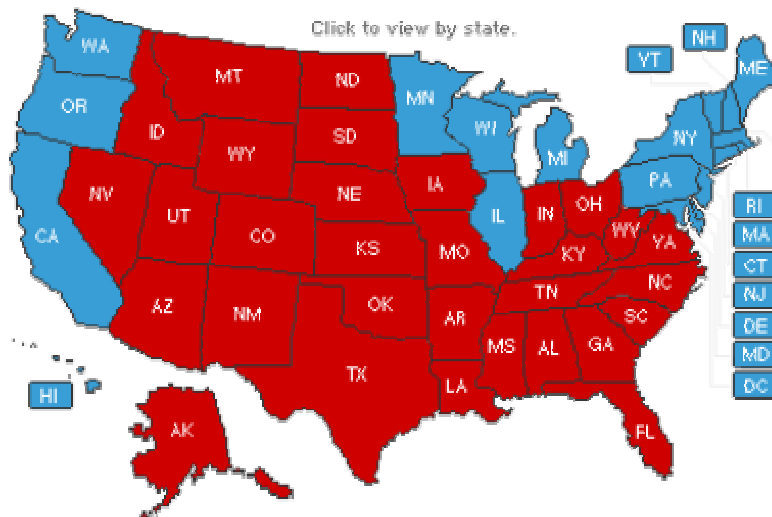
## 2000 Electoral College Results

Each state has a size proportional to the number of electoral votes.



Final vote tallies -- NARA & WashPost

## 2004 Election Results

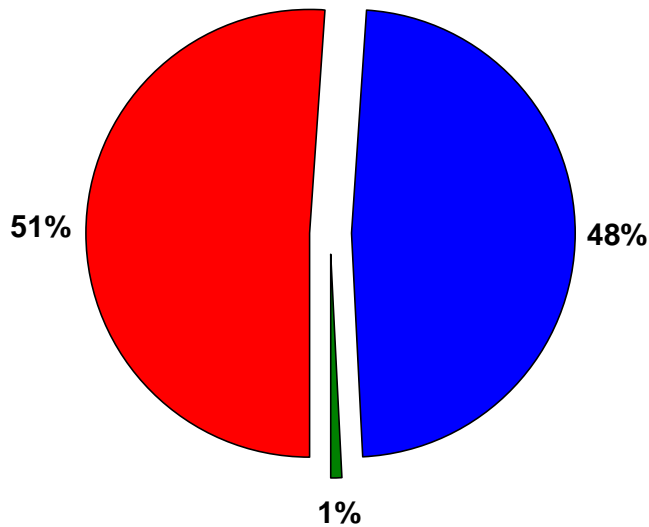


Red = Republicans    Blue = Democrats

As of November 12, 2004

George W. Bush	Richard Cheney	Republican	60,418,140	50.99%	286	53.16%
John Kerry	John Edwards	Democratic	56,949,003	48.06%	252	46.84%

## 2004 Election - Popular Vote %



■ George W. Bush : Republican
 ■ John Kerry : Democrat  
■ Ralph Nader : Green & Others

## Example of Land Area vs Population Density:

Take a look at the vital statistics for the State of Massachusetts:

State	Population	Land Area– Sq Miles
Massachusetts	<b>6,349,097</b>	<b>10,555</b>

Now compare the above figures to the 6 rural states listed below:

State	Population	Land Area – Sq Miles
Idaho	1,293,953	83,574
Montana	902,195	147,046
North Dakota	642,200	70,704
South Dakota	754,884	77,121
Utah	2,233,169	84,904
Wyoming	493,782	97,818
<b>Totals</b>	<b>6,320,183</b>	<b>561,167</b>

You will note that Massachusetts has roughly the same amount of population as the 6 rural states (actually a little bit more). But the 6 rural states combined are 53 times bigger than Massachusetts in land area ( 561,167 divided by 10,555 = 53.17 ). Remember this the next time you look at an electoral map of the United States.



**Other Supplemental Information:**

<b>Since 1932 the following Incumbent Presidents lost their bid for Re-Election</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>Incumbent President</b>	<b>Defeated by</b>
1932	Herbert Hoover	Franklin Delano Roosevelt
1976	Gerald R. Ford	James Earl Carter
1980	James Earl Carter	Ronald Wilson Reagan
1992	George H. W. Bush	William Jefferson Clinton

Web Site References:

<http://www.electoral-vote.com/>

<http://www.uselectionatlas.org/USPRESIDENT/>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S.\\_Electoral\\_College](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/U.S._Electoral_College)

<http://www.nationmaster.com/encyclopedia/U.S.-presidential-election>

[http://www.archives.gov/federal\\_register/electoral\\_college/](http://www.archives.gov/federal_register/electoral_college/)

<http://www.netstate.com/>