

Electoral College Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Because electoral votes decide the winner, presidential elections are really 51 separate contests for the electoral votes of each state and the District of Columbia. Presidential candidates must then devise strategies and allocate resources across the states to produce a majority in the electoral college. In this activity you will examine the results of presidential elections to plan a year 2004 electoral strategy for a Democratic, Republican, or Independent candidate.

EXAMINING THE RESULTS

Use the link: <http://pava.purdue.edu/pol101/Text/BOOK/Screens/scr3-5.html> or <http://www.grayraven.com/ec/>

A. Solid Democratic States

1. Which states did Clinton win in both 1992 and 1996?
2. Which of the states won by Clinton in 1992 and 1996 were also won by the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, in 2000?
3. Which Clinton states were won by the Democratic candidate, Michael Dukakis, in 1988?
4. Which Clinton states were won by Jimmy Carter, the Democratic candidate in 1976?
5. Which states voted Democratic in all five elections? The states that voted Democratic in all five elections can be considered strong Democratic states.
6. Which of these states even cast Democratic votes in 1980 and 1984, when Republican Ronald Reagan dominated the electoral college?

B. Solid Republican States

1. Far more states have consistently favored Republican candidates. What states did President George W. Bush win in 2000?
2. What states did Dole win in 1996?
3. Examine the states that George H. W. Bush won in 1992. Which of these states did he also win in 1988?
4. Among the states that George W. Bush won in 2000, which states did Gerald Ford win in 1976?
5. Which states voted Republican in all five elections? The states that voted Republican in all five elections can be considered strong Republican states.

C. Voting Profile of Southern States

Use the links:

<http://pava.purdue.edu/pol101/Exercises/Ex95/southern.html> Congressional Profile, 1955-1997

<http://clerk.house.gov/members/congProfile.php> Current Congressional Profile

1. Review the Congressional profiles from 1955 to the present. What do these results suggest about the political leanings of the southern states (Texas, Alabama, Oklahoma, Kentucky, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida.)?
2. Use the link <http://www.grayraven.com/ec/> to comment on Georgia's voting history.
3. What happened for the first time in 1964?
4. What happened in 1980? Why do you think this happened?
5. What did Earl Black, Professor of Political Science, Rice University, say is "essential to comprehending national political dynamics"? <<scroll down to the last paragraph>>

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~opa/sallyport/2002/fall/bookshelf/thesouthtransformed.html>

D. Map

At this point take a moment to select the strong Democratic and strong Republican states. Use one of the maps provided to color these states, blue for democrat, red for republican. This will give you a visual aid as well as an electoral total for the strong Democratic and strong Republican states. Include among the strong Republican states the Republican Delegation states: Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Florida.

E. Swing states

The remaining states are considered "swing" states--those that frequently alternate between parties in their electoral majorities. Because they carry so many electoral votes, large swing states are wooed heavily by both candidates, receiving more attention during the campaign than swing states with few electoral votes and the solidly Republican or Democratic states.

1. Given the importance of large swing states, which states would you expect to garner the lion's share of attention in the year 2004 campaign?
2. What are some of the other key swing states?

F. Election 2000 (and other close elections)

The 2000 election was probably one of the most controversial. However, it certainly was not the ONLY election tainted with controversy.

Use the link: <http://www.underdog-communications.com/mindtools/ElectoralCollege/DisputedElects.html>

1. How many controversial elections has the United States had?
2. Who were the candidates in the first disputed election?
3. How many times did the House of Representatives vote?
4. Despite Federalist support, why did the election turn out the way it did?
5. Describe what made the 1960 election controversial.
6. Describe the controversy surrounding one other election of your choice.

One of the arguments against George W. Bush's victory was that Al Gore had the "majority" of votes. A **majority** is defined as "in a contest of two or more choices, a number more than half of the total." A **plurality** is defined as "in a contest of more than two choices, the number of votes cast for the winning choice if this number is not more than one half of the total votes cast."

Use the link: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781450.html>

7. Many compared the 2000 election to the election of 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes versus Samuel J. Tilden. Was this an accurate comparison? Why or why not?
8. What proportion of the population voted for Bill Clinton in 1992? Against? Did he have the support of the majority of American voters?
9. What proportion of the population voted for Bill Clinton in 1996? Against? Did he have the support of the majority of American voters?
10. Since 1872, how many elections had a candidate win who had a plurality but who did not hold the majority vote?
11. Since 1872, how many elections had the person holding a plurality lose the election? Give the years and the candidates in the election.
12. How close was the 1880 election? How does this compare to the 2000 election?

Use the link: <http://www.grayraven.com/ec/>

13. Suppose Al Gore had won Tennessee (his home state). How would this have changed the outcome of the election?
14. Suppose Al Gore had won Arkansas (Clinton's home state). How would this have changed the outcome of the election?
15. Suppose Al Gore had won Georgia. How would this have changed the outcome of the election?
16. Consider the 1976 election. Many northern states voted republican because they did not like the idea of a "Southern President." How would this election have turned out had Washington DC, with only 3 votes, voted republican?
17. Consider the 1968 election. How might this have been different had the "green states" voted as they traditionally did (democrat) and South Carolina and Florida followed suit? What events do you think lead to the support of this 3rd party candidate? What party was it?

G. An Electoral Strategy for the Year 2004

You have recently been hired as an "Electoral College Strategist" for either the Democratic, Republican, or Independent candidate (your choice) for the year 2004's presidential election. Your task is to devise a strategy for your candidate to win the election of 2004. Because you are an expert in your field, your candidate expects you to come up with a REALISTIC strategy for him or her to win. Keeping in mind what you now know about how states voted in recent presidential elections, develop a combination of states that your candidate must win in order to gain the necessary electoral votes for a victory.

Consult <http://www.grayraven.com/ec/> for illustrations of historical and recent trends in presidential electoral results.

Also available is <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781450.html> showing the margin of victory for the popular vote in each state.

Be realistic: avoid including states that your candidate has no chance of winning. To develop your strategy, do the following:

1. At the website <http://www.grayraven.com/ec/> double click on a state and assign it as republican or democratic (based on your map).
2. Then assign the states that lean toward a particular party. In other words, they may not have had that state in all five of the elections, but maybe in 4 out of five.
3. Next assign the “swing” states based on your observations from the past 2-3 elections. Color the states you feel pretty certain will go one way or the other the appropriate color.
4. Then, use green to color the uncertain states that you feel MIGHT go toward your party – these are your CRITICAL states.
5. Use yellow to color the states you are uncertain of, but feel MIGHT go toward the other party – these are also important.

You may analyze your strategy by examining the totals computed for you in columns at the bottom of the chart. If your assigned votes plus the critical votes add to 270 or more, then you have a potential strategy. If not, you need to decide what “yellow” MIGHT be “converted.”

6. What short-term forces will have the greatest influence on the election favoring your candidate?
7. Cite 5 to 10 states that were critical for your candidate's victory? In other words, in which states should your candidate heavily campaign?
8. Do any of the Democratic nominees have any clear advantage over the others in the Electoral College?

Answer questions 4, 5, and 6 on this page in paragraph form. This is your strategy to present to your candidate. You will attach your Campaign Strategy to your Electoral maps and the answers to the questions on this handout to turn in.

Give you answers to the questions on this handout in clear concise sentences. Do not write your answers on this sheet.

This will count as a test grade. Clear communication is as important as accuracy. Your grade for your strategy will be determined by how reasonable your model is. Obviously, we don't know how each state will vote. However, I would question the soundness of your model if you had something such as DC voting republican unless you can provide a compelling justification (never say never).

Election - 2004



Election - 2004



You may color these maps, or print the maps you used on the “calculator”. To do that, “capture” the image by using the PrintScreen key (above “insert”). Paste the image into Paint and then use the cropping tool to select just the map area. Then copy and paste into a word document.

<http://www.ruf.rice.edu/~opa/sallyport/2002/fall/bookshelf/thesouthtransformed.html> Article on Southern Political Profile

<http://pava.purdue.edu/pol101/Exercises/Ex95/southern.html> Congressional Profile, 1955-1997

<http://clerk.house.gov/members/congProfile.php> Current Congressional Profile

<http://www.cnn.com/2000/ALLPOLITICS/stories/12/13/got.here/index.html> Timeline of Florida recount

<http://argonautica.net/articles/elections/> Voting Patterns in US Presidential Elections

<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0781450.html> Presidential Elections, 1789–2000