

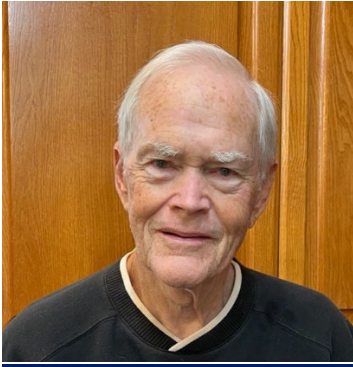
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The Electoral College: America's unique way of electing its president



By Alan Nevin

The Electoral College was placed in the Constitution to better ensure the equitable representation of all states. There is one electoral college vote for each senator and one for each member of the House of Representatives. In total, there are 538 electoral college votes available with 270 needed to elect the president.

Notably, the popular vote doesn't count, as Hillary Clinton found out. And with Electoral College voting, in all states except two (Maine and Nebraska), the winner of the popular vote takes all of that state's electoral votes.

In 2020, seven states were decided by fewer than three votes.

Most states have sufficient majorities of each party to ensure their electoral college votes will go to the Democrats or Republicans; however, there are a few states that are not slam-dunks (California isn't one of them; it never is).

The highly populous states leaning Democratic are Pennsylvania and Wisconsin. The only populous state leaning Republican is Texas. Two of the states said to be toss-ups are Michigan and Ohio.

Pennsylvania is a key state. It would be very difficult for either candidate to win the presidency without a definitive win in Pennsylvania.

There are a few other states that could play a minor role, depending on which way they lean: Arizona, Florida, Maryland, Montana, Nebraska and Nevada.

This ambiguous voting situation occurs, in part, because 42 members of the House and eight members of the Senate have decided not to run again. They are either leaving the House or Senate or running for another office (like governor).

The Cook Political Report (a neutral record-keeper) said the presidential election is a toss-up. To win, Kamala Harris would need 44 electoral votes from the toss-up states and Donald Trump would need 51. Their seats are all up for grabs.

I think the oddsmakers in Las Vegas will have a very difficult Election Day.

In terms of issues, I see three major and five minor issues that voters are considering.

- The major issues are Israel and Gaza, immigration, and Roe vs. Wade.
- The minor issues are housing, Social Security, Ukraine, Medicare and the state of the economy.

A few words on the state of the economy in the Trump and Biden years.

In the Biden years, the United States added 16.2 million total jobs. In the Trump years, we lost 3.1 million jobs (in all fairness, COVID-19 hit during Trump's last year in office).

In the last Trump year, there were 309,000 manufacturing job hires compared to 383,000 this year, Biden's last year in office.

The unemployment rate just prior to the COVID-19 pandemic was 3.6% compared to 4.3% today.

And mortgage interest rates were about 3.0% in the last Trump year compared to Biden's 6.32% today.

Retail sales were 34% higher in the third year of the Biden administration than in the third year of the Trump administration.

During both administrations, the Dow Jones Average increased approximately 11,000 points.

The one very puzzling statistic is consumer confidence. The University of Michigan Consumer Survey notes that at the beginning of the Trump administration, the index was at 98.7. This month it is at 67.9. The economy appears to be in very good shape with major employment gains and mortgage rates on the decline, yet consumer confidence doesn't reflect that.

With all of those factors as background, let me summarize the dominant programs that are espoused by the candidates in their publicly produced written materials and in the media.

Kamala Harris wants to build up the middle class; offer \$25,000 down payment assistance for homebuying; strengthen advances with like-minded nations; cut taxes for middle-class families; protect and strengthen Social Security and Medicare; and build 3.0 million affordable housing units in her first term.

Donald Trump wants to cut taxes for the wealthy; let the states manage abortion rights; eliminate the Department of Education; and have a mass deportation of 20 million undocumented immigrants.

I have voted in numerous presidential elections, but none of them compare with this one for the pure drama between two incredibly different candidates.

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