**US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS 2016**

**Democracy can be Silly**

(If you ask a silly question, you get either a silly answer… or nothing. That was brexit, and we still don’t know what the answer was, is, or will be.)

If you use a silly voting system, you get a silly answer, and nothing else. That is now Trump. Clinton wins the largest minority. But Trump wins, and wins everything! Now isn’t that just silly?

The Founding Fathers wanted to break away from the “frightful despotism”[[1]](#footnote-1) of the British two-party political system, so they devised a new presidential electoral system: the winner wins, ok, and the runner-up is the Vice-President, (and they also devised formulas for proportional representation, pr). They did not, however, change the decision-making methodology; just as in old Europe, so too in the New World, they used binary voting, as first used in Ancient Greece. Hence, after about 30 years, the two-party system; hence the change in the presidential elections to a party ticket – so the winner wins everything; hence party political patronage and all that silly stuff; and hence, now, Trump.

The first-past-the-post electoral system, fptp, is one of the most primitive and inaccurate electoral systems ever concocted. It was and still is used by the (ancient) British, so has come to be used by many in the ‘Anglo-Saxon world’. Ireland uses pr-stv, the single transferable vote; Australia the alternative vote, av;[[2]](#footnote-2) New Zealand the German system, one half fptp the other pr-list; while Canada is currently reviewing its electoral system. But the usa is stuck, it seems, with this divisive and dangerous nonsense.

In addition, they have the Electoral College. With fptp, you might have a majority, you might have only the largest minority, you still win everything. The College works on the same basis – you win a State, even if by just a whisker, you get that State’s entire quota – except in Maine and Nebraska, where they do it by districts. As shown in Table 1, there were ten States in which the ‘winner’ did not get a majority. If the ‘minority’ candidates had not stood, (if the figure in column **C** is greater than the difference between **A** and **B**), the result could have been reversed. At most, Clinton could have won an additional 76 Electoral College seats, to give her a total of 308, whereas Trump’s would have fallen to 230.

**Table I States in the Balance**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| STATES  IN THE  BALANCE | | **Clinton** | | | **Trump** | | | **Others** | | |
| Votes | **A**  % | Electoral  College | Votes | **B**  % | Electoral  College | | Votes | **C**  % |
| Colarado | | 1,199,971 | 47.14% | 9 | 1,133,146 | 44.52% | – | | 187,388 | 7.36% |
| Florida | | 4,487,657 | 47.79% | – | 4,607,146 | 49.06% | 29 | | 270,249 | 2.88% |
| Maine | | 352,156 | 47.84% | 3 | 332,418 | 45.16% | 1 | | 51,508 | 7.00% |
| Michigan | | 2,264,807 | 47.33% | – | 2,277,914 | 47.60% | 16 | | 224,146 | 4.68% |
| Minnesota | | 1,364,067 | 46.41% | 10 | 1,321,120 | 44.95% | – | | 202,727 | 6.90% |
| Nevada | | 537,753 | 47.89% | 6 | 511,319 | 45.53% | – | | 37,299 | 3.32% |
| [N Hampshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_presidential_election_in_New_Hampshire,_2016) | | 348,497 | 47.62% | 4 | 345,810 | 47.25% | – | | 36,861 | 5.04% |
| New Mexico | | 380,923 | 48.26% | 5 | 316,134 | 40.05% | – | | 89,174 | 11.29% |
| Pennsylvania | | 2,817,409 | 47.60% | – | 2,890,633 | 48.84% | 20 | | 190,064 | 3.21% |
| Wisconsin | | 1,383,926 | 46.94% | – | 1,411,432 | 47.87% | 10 | | 137,391 | 4.66% |
| Total Electoral College seats = | | | | 37 |  | | 76 | |  | 0 |
| TOTALS | 60,017,405  = 47.80% | |  | 232  = 43.1% | 59,772,837  = 47.61% |  | 306  = 56.9% | | 5,758,719  = 4.59% |  |

Of the three other candidates, the Libertarian got 4,084,355 votes; the Green 1,225,174; and the Independent 449,190. Were they silly to stand?

**Conclusion**

It is indeed a silly system. It is hoped that this paper will help to prompt changes, not only in the us presidential electoral system, but also in decision-making in Congress.

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1. George Washington in his farewell address of 1796. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Also known as stv in the British Isles; as instant run-off voting, irv, in North America; and as pv, preferential voting, in Australasia [↑](#footnote-ref-2)