

The Electoral College FAQ Activity

Why was it created and how does
it work?

Who elects the President in the U.S.?

- In the U.S., voters don't directly elect the President
- A special group called "Electors" officially choose the president.
- **States** determine who electors are.
- The Founders wanted to remove selection of the President from the people...
- Why?

How does the Electoral College Work

- *Electing the President in Plain English*
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ok_VQ8I7g6I

1. Why do we have the Electoral College?

- It was a different world in 1787.
- Transportation and communication were very difficult and made a national campaign impossible.
- Without campaigning, Presidential Candidates could potentially come only from the largest/most populous states due to their vote advantage!
- UNFAIR to smaller states and NOT representative!!

1. Why do we have the Electoral College?

1. Didn't trust the voters to vote directly

- Transportation and communication were very difficult in 1787. This made a national campaign impossible.
- Without campaigning, due to their vote advantage!

Presidents would most certainly come from the largest/most populous states ONLY

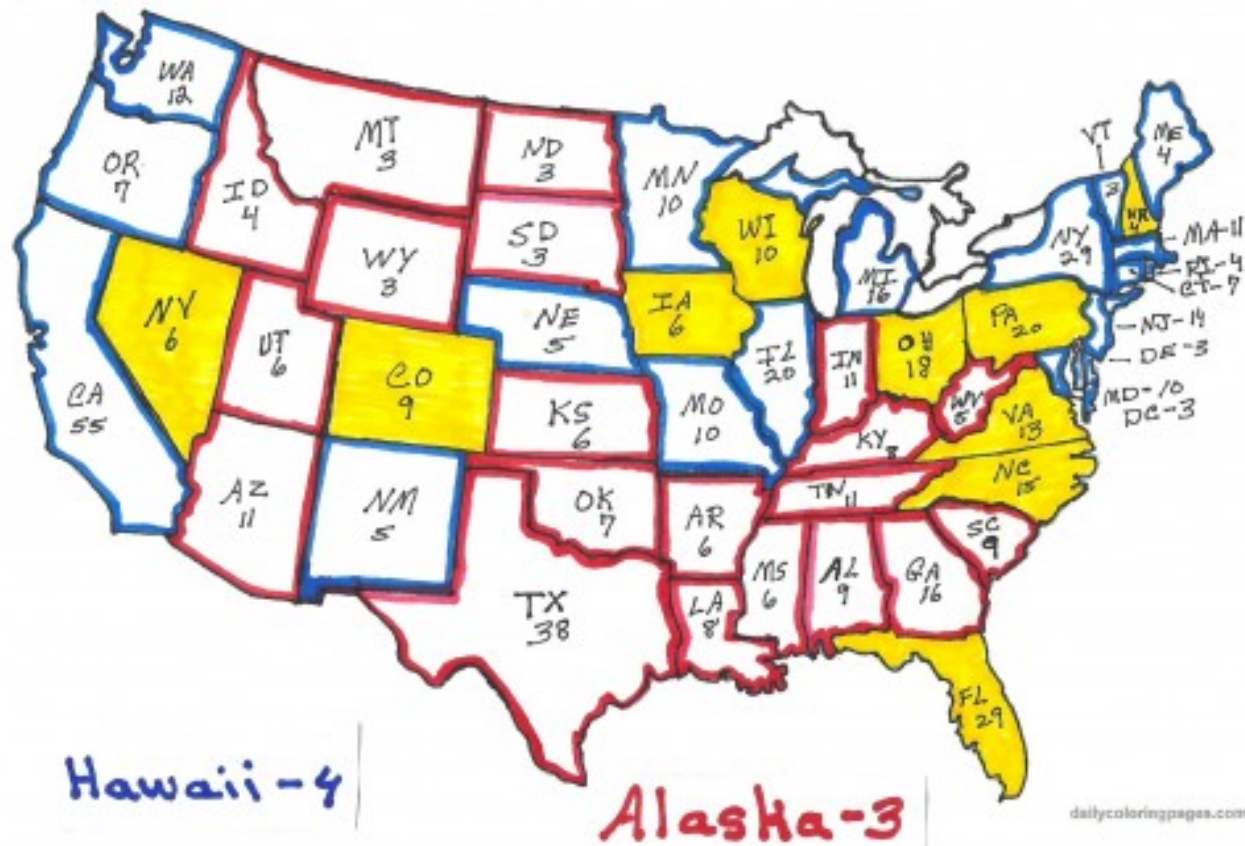
1. Why do we have an Electoral College?

2. Founders did NOT want a parliamentary system where Congress chose P.
 - Favored a FEDERAL system with separate legislative and executive branches (for checks and balances)
3. Also didn't want state legislatures to choose—could damage federal system, too.

2. How many electors?

- (a) **Each state gets the number of electors equal to the number of its U.S. Senators (always 2) plus the number of its U.S. Representatives in the House**
- In Oregon, it's 7 (2 + 5 House members/districts)
- (b) An absolute majority or **270 / 538** is the number required to win office
- (c) If no one gets **270 or more votes, the race goes to the House of Representatives** to choose the president from the top three contenders.

How Many Electors Does Each State Get?



3. Are all states equal?

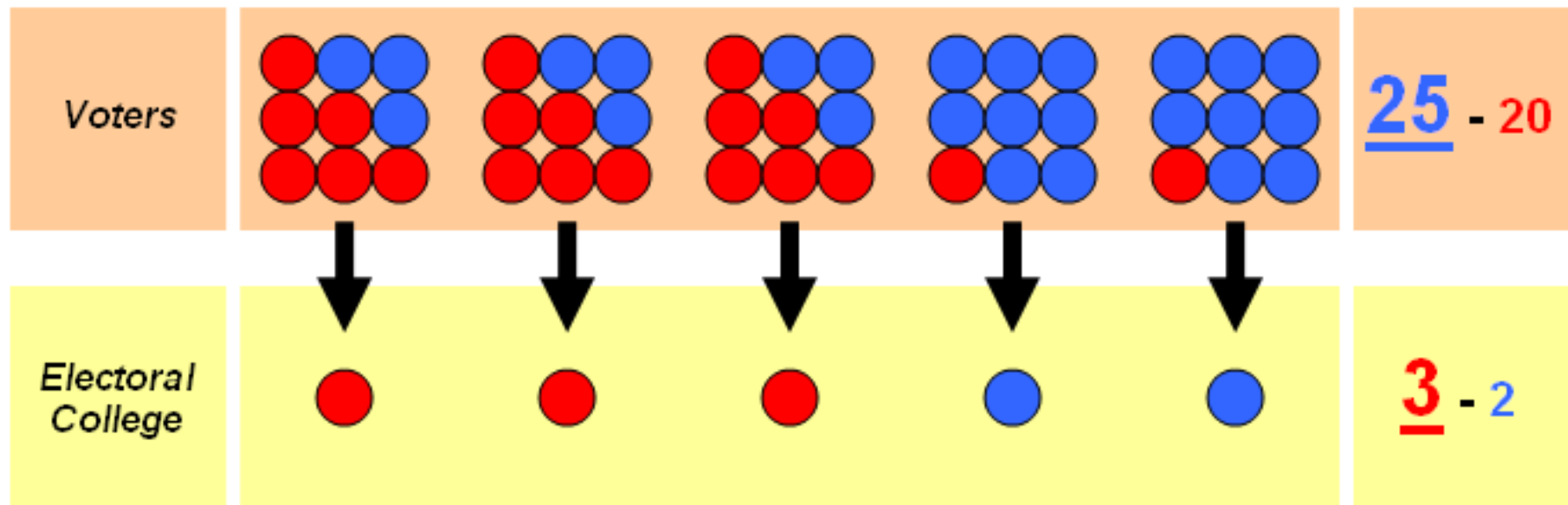
- No!
- Small states are overrepresented
- **Why?**- Because they are guaranteed THREE electoral votes, regardless of pop.
- **Wyoming** is MOST OVER represented state (1 electoral vote = 178,000 people)
- **California** is MOST UNDER represented state (1 electoral vote = 668,315 people)

4. Who are the Electors?

- Electors are people who cast votes for P
- Electors are chosen at state level
- States determine how electors are chosen
- They can NOT be elected officials
- They are usually people involved in state political parties
- They MUST vote as the majority of their state voted

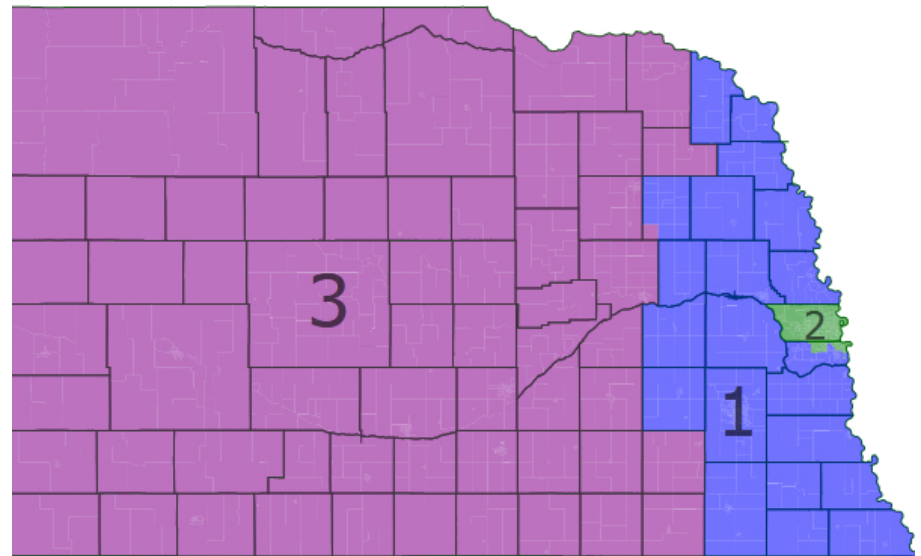
5. What is the Winner-take-all feature of the EC?

(a) The candidate who wins the most popular votes in each state, wins *all* of the state's electoral votes.



What about Maine and Nebraska?

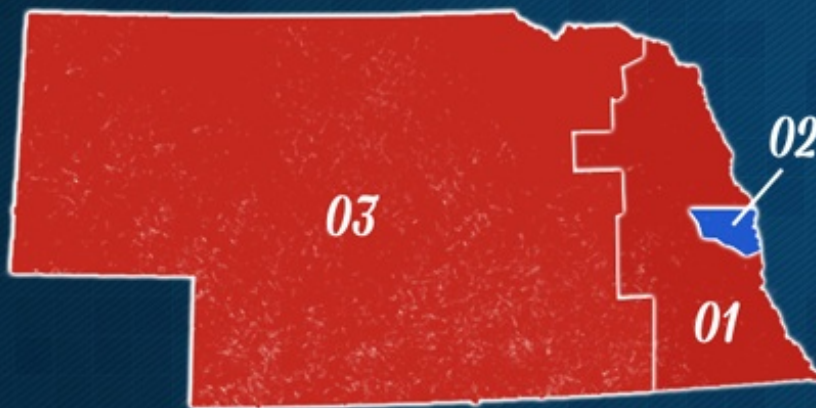
- (b) **Maine and Nebraska** split the state's electoral votes by district
- Winner of each district gets ONE electoral vote for that district
- **Winner of overall state vote, gets the TWO votes for Senate**



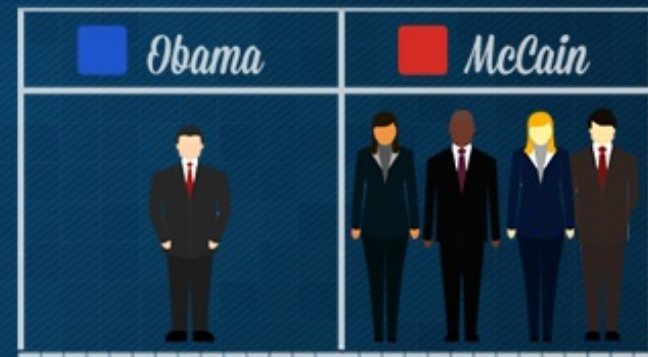
Nebraska...

In 2008, Barack Obama won the popular vote in Nebraska's second congressional district -- and received one of the state's electoral college votes as a result.

NEBRASKA CONG. DISTRICT VOTE

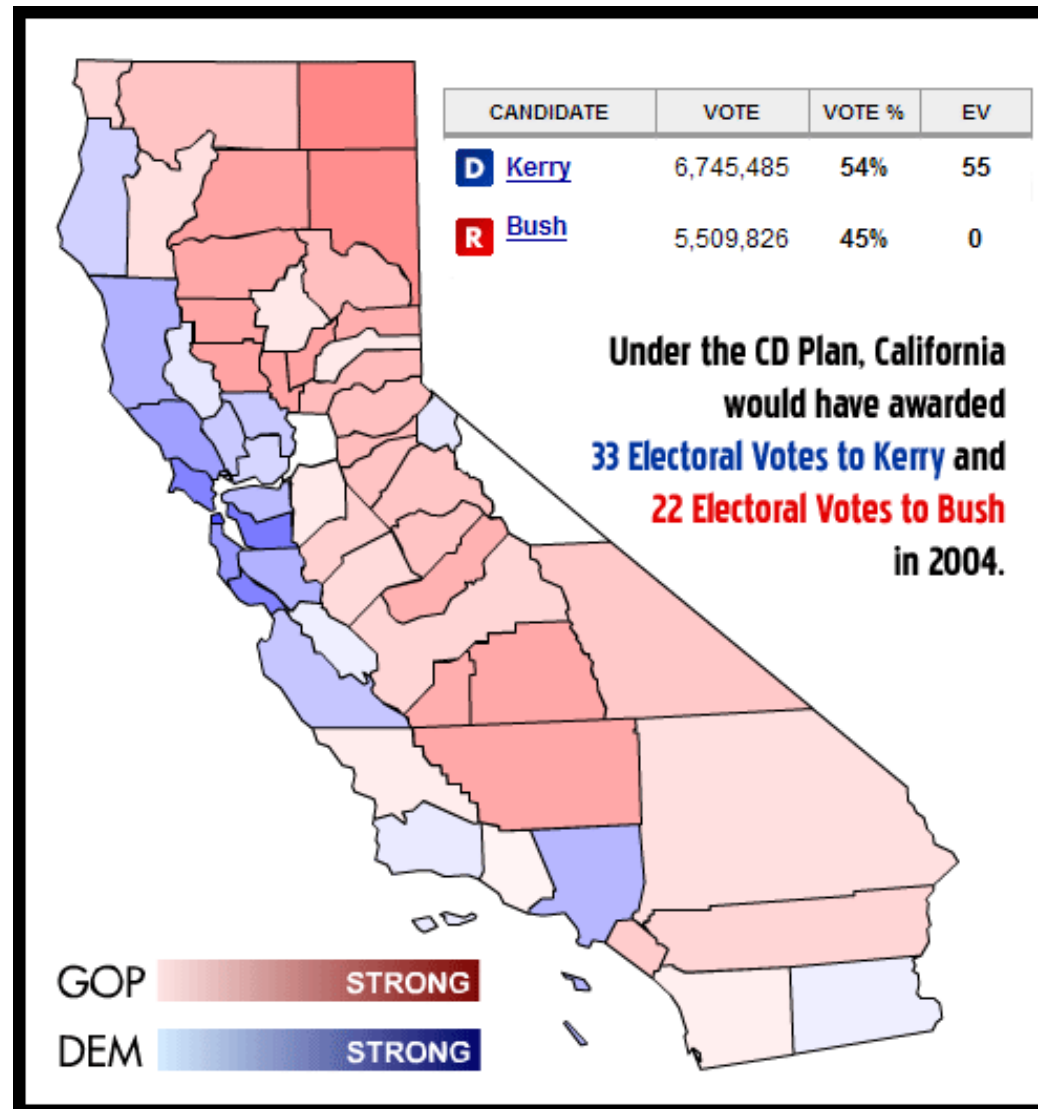


Nebraska Electoral Vote



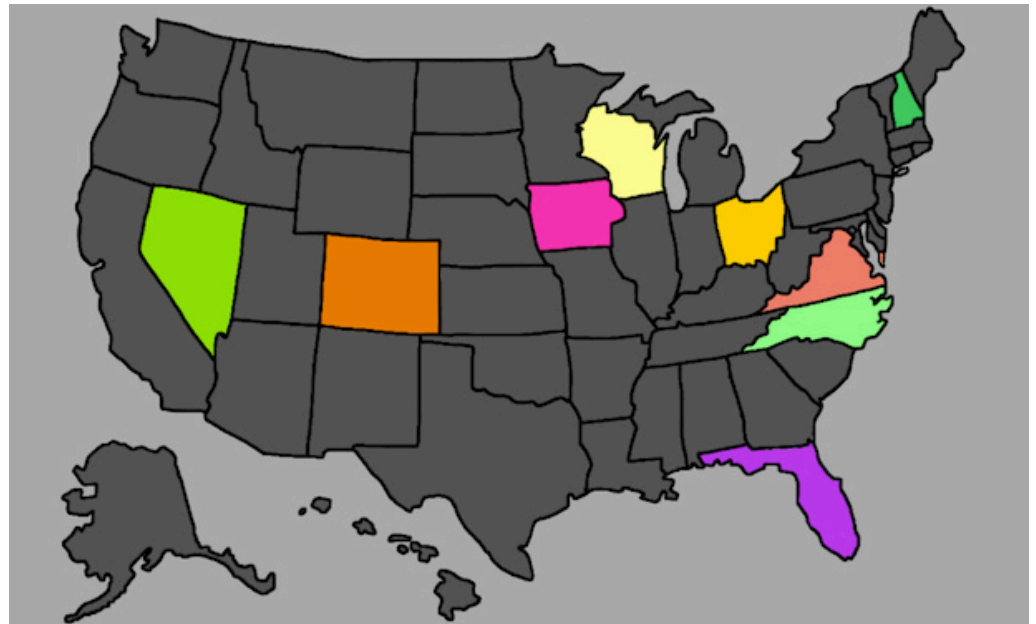
NEWSBOUND

What if California wasn't winner-take-all?



6. Which States Matter Most?

- About 40 States are clearly in favor of one of the two parties.
- About 10 states that are too close to call are called Battleground or Swing States



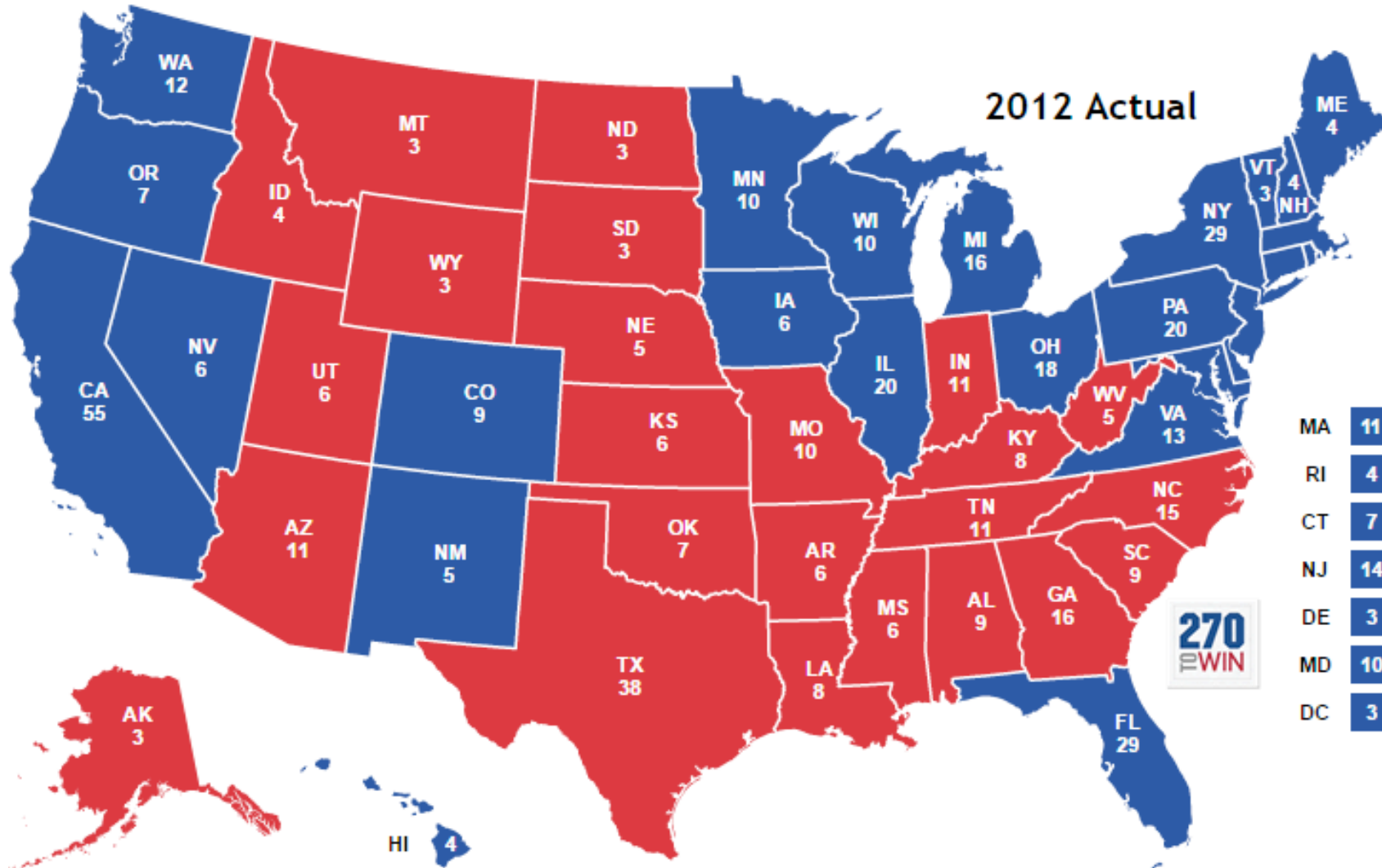
6. Which States Matter Most?

- **Battleground or Swing States** are states that can go either Democrat or Republican based on the election. It's a toss-up!
- Large battleground states are **MOST important** in elections
- Ohio, Nevada, Illinois, Arizona, Virginia, Florida
- Not all large states are battleground (California, Texas, New York). Why?

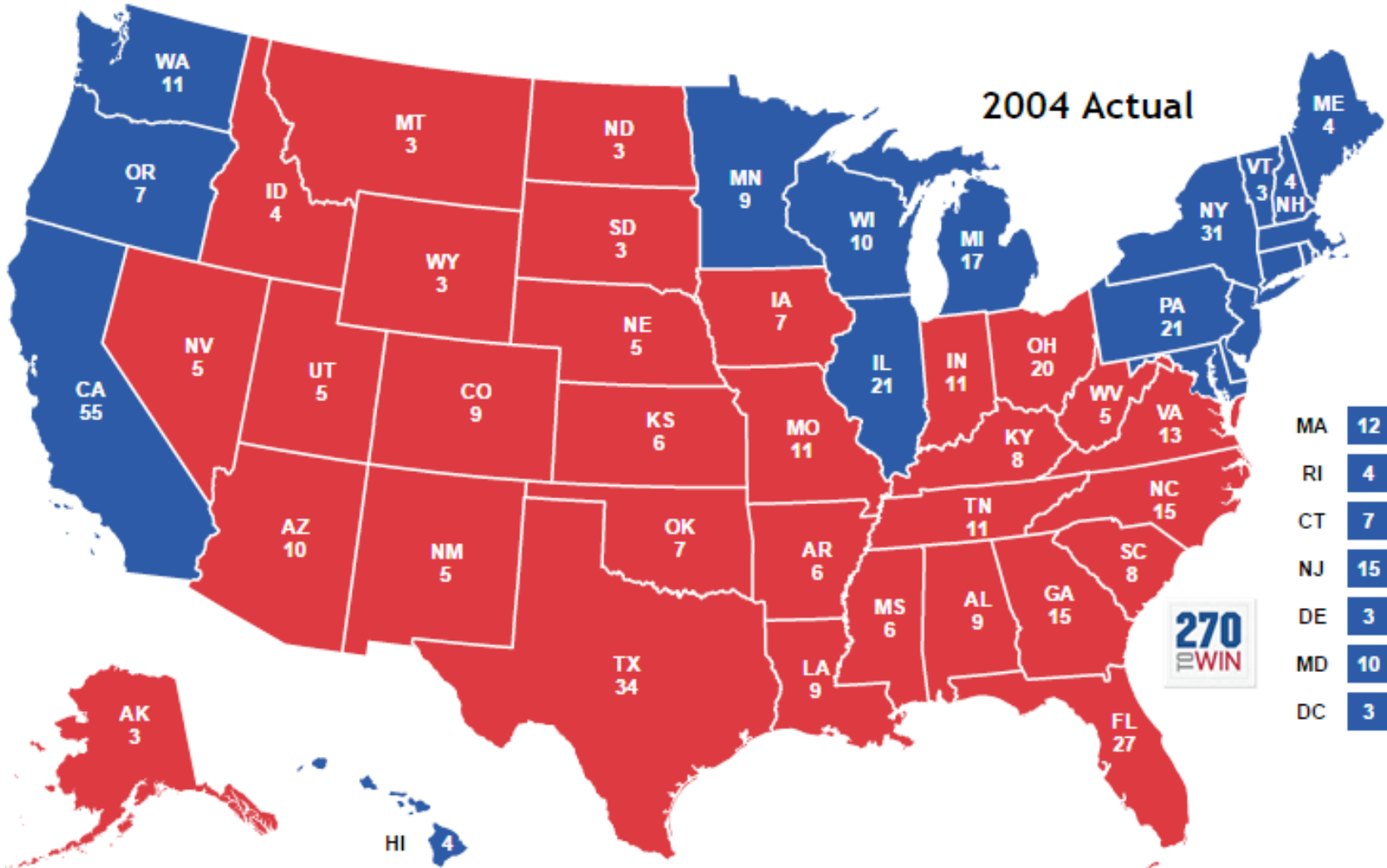
7. How can winner of the popular vote lose the election?

- In 2000 & 2016, Gore and Clinton (Democrats) **won a higher percentage of the popular vote** in a small number of highly populated states
- Bush and Trump **won more total states**—many of them small, overrepresented states.
- In a close election, the electoral college favors the candidate who wins more states because rural/small states have proportionately more say than large states.

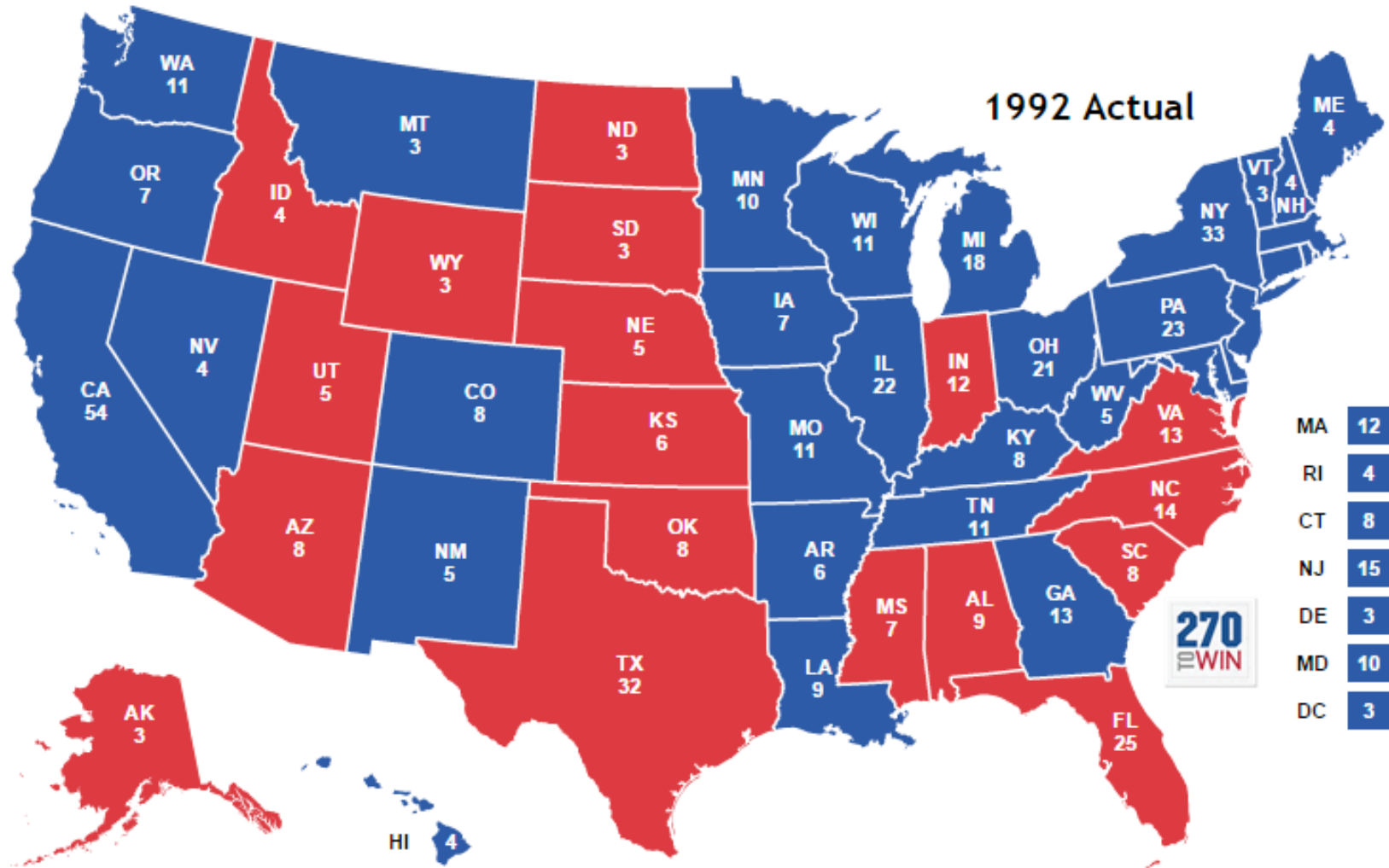
2012- Obama v. Romney



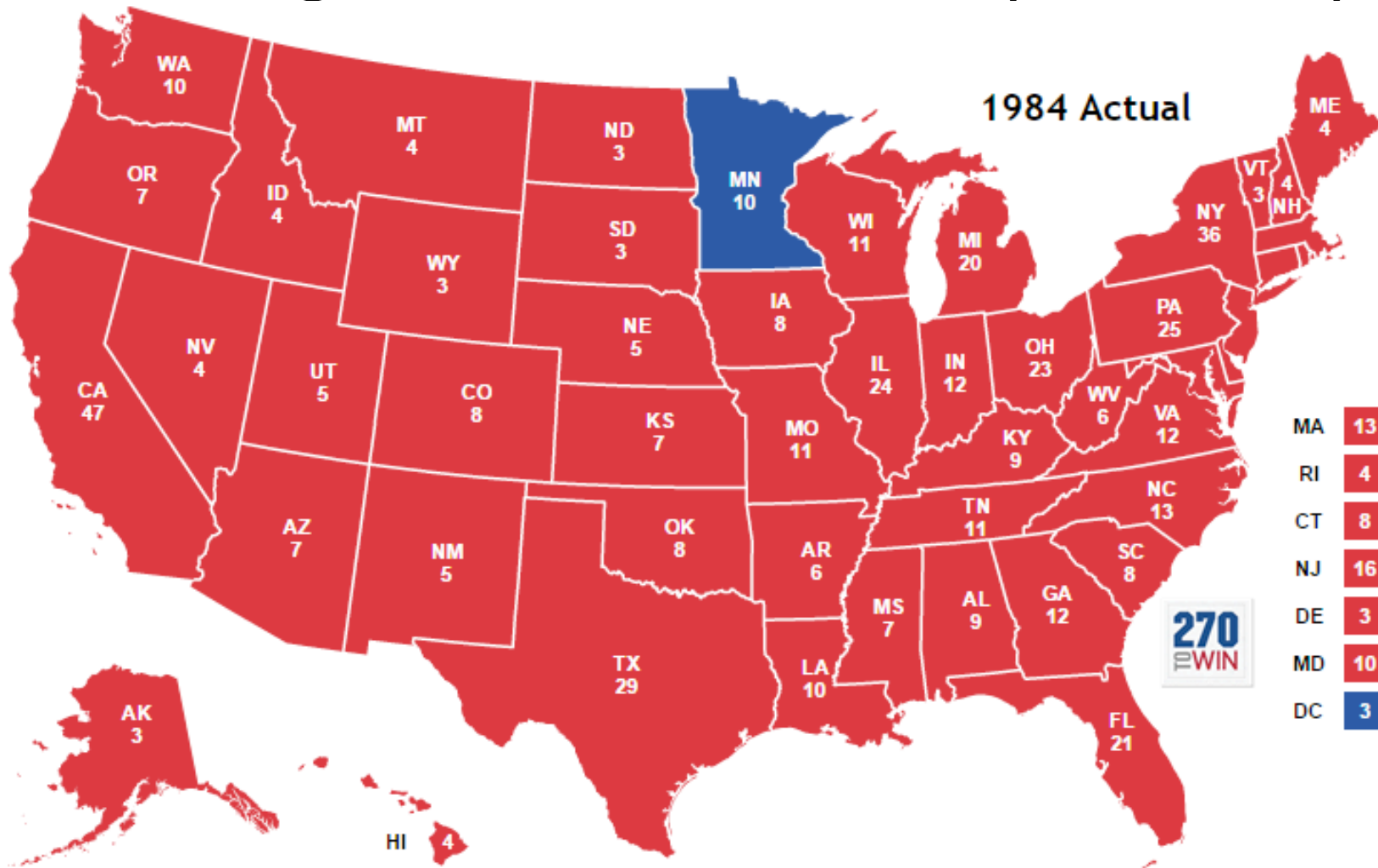
Bush v. Kerry



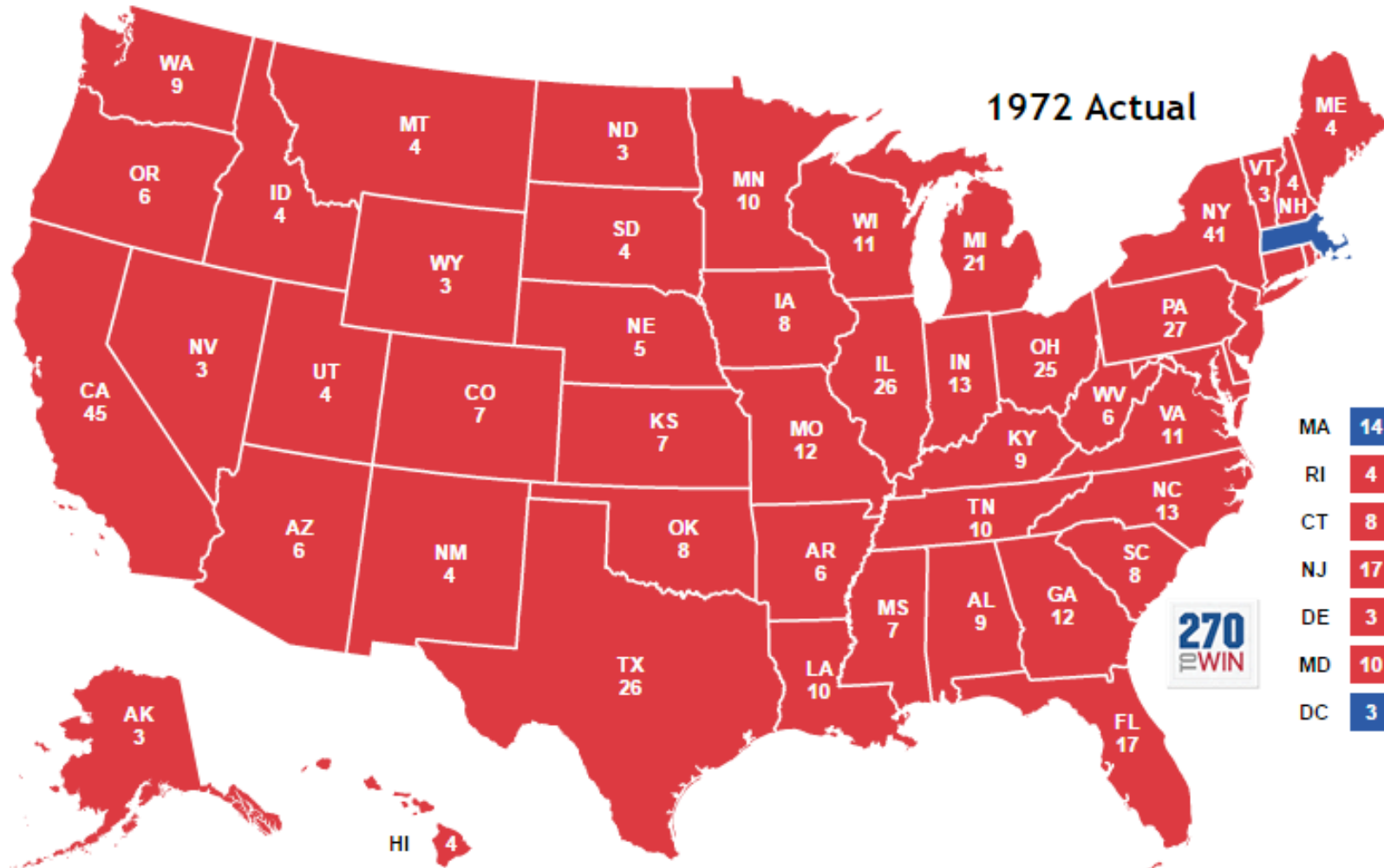
Clinton and George Bush Sr.



Last time OR went R Reagan v. Mondale (525-13)



Nixon v. McGovern



FDR v. Landon (523-8)

