

**THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION NUMBERS GAME:  
PRIMARIES/CAUCUSES AND THE ELECTORAL  
COLLEGE**

**CIVEC/US SPECIALIZATION/WHOSONTHEBALLOT.ORG  
GUEST LECTURE ON PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS**

**SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY**

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## NUMBERS GAME: THE ARITHMETIC OF THE PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARY AND GENERAL ELECTION

- Counting Votes and Democratic and Republican Party Delegates in Primaries and Caucuses
- Counting the Popular Vote and the Electoral Vote in the General Election

# PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

Chronological Cumulative Delegate Counts

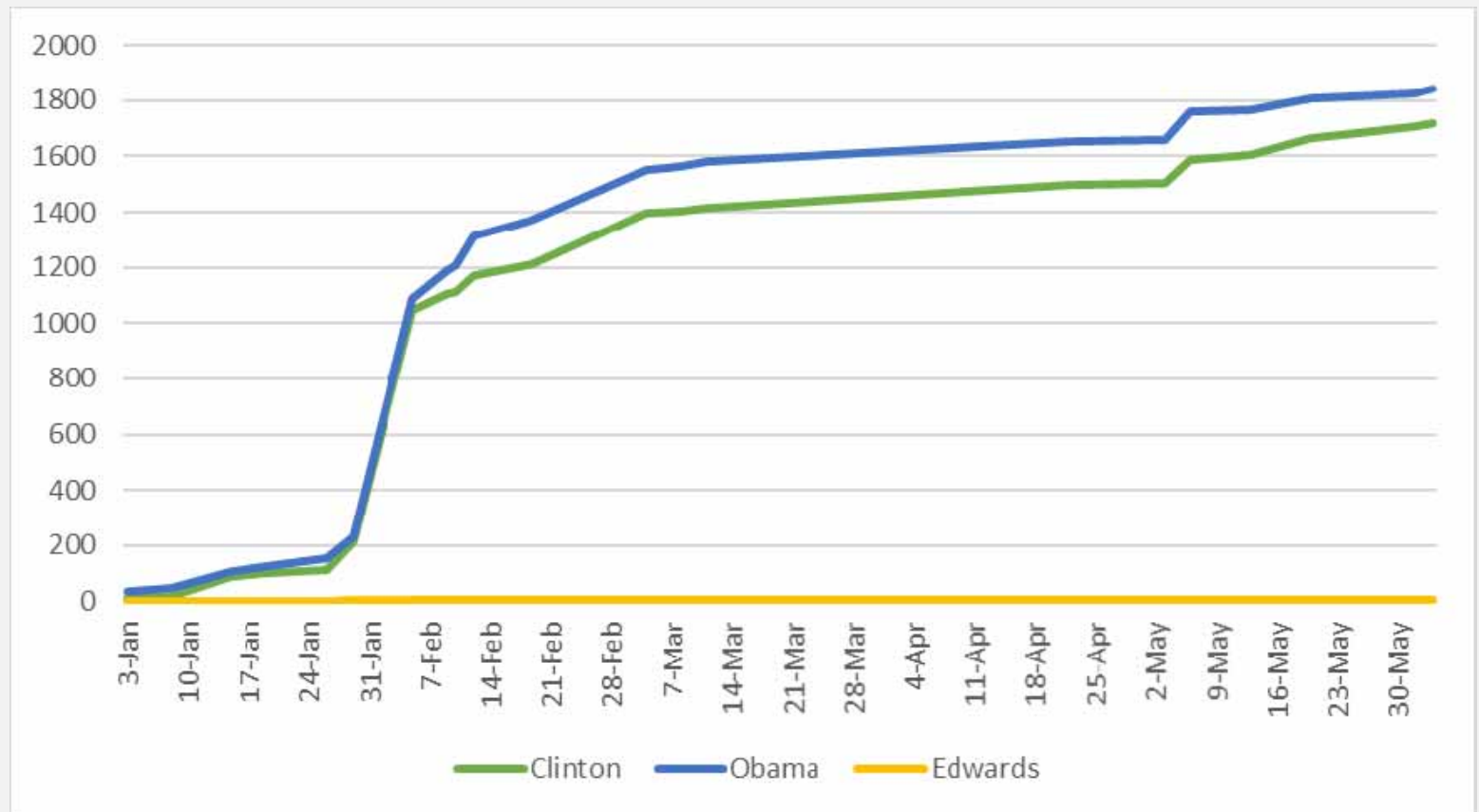
A Candidate Needs to Win a Majority of Delegates  
Who Will Vote for the Candidate at the Democratic  
and Republican Party National Conventions

(Will come back later to how the parties at the  
outset determine the numbers of delegates)

# THE IMPORTANCE OF “MOMENTUM”: THE ELECTIONS SINCE 2008

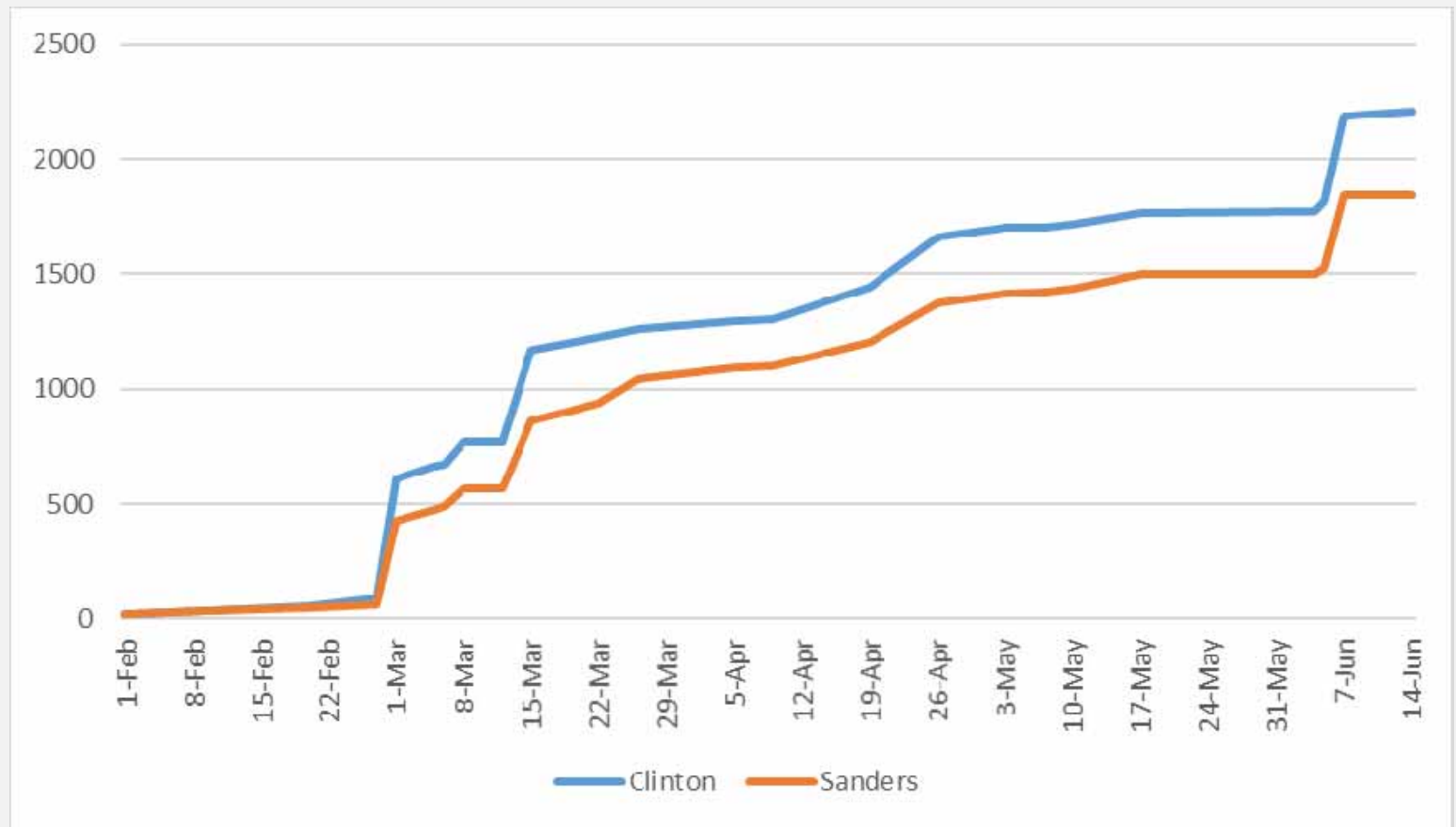
## CUMULATIVE DELEGATE COUNT IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES, 2008

- 4,418 total delegate votes
- 3,566 pledged delegates
- 852 unpledged delegates
- 2,210 delegate votes needed to nominate



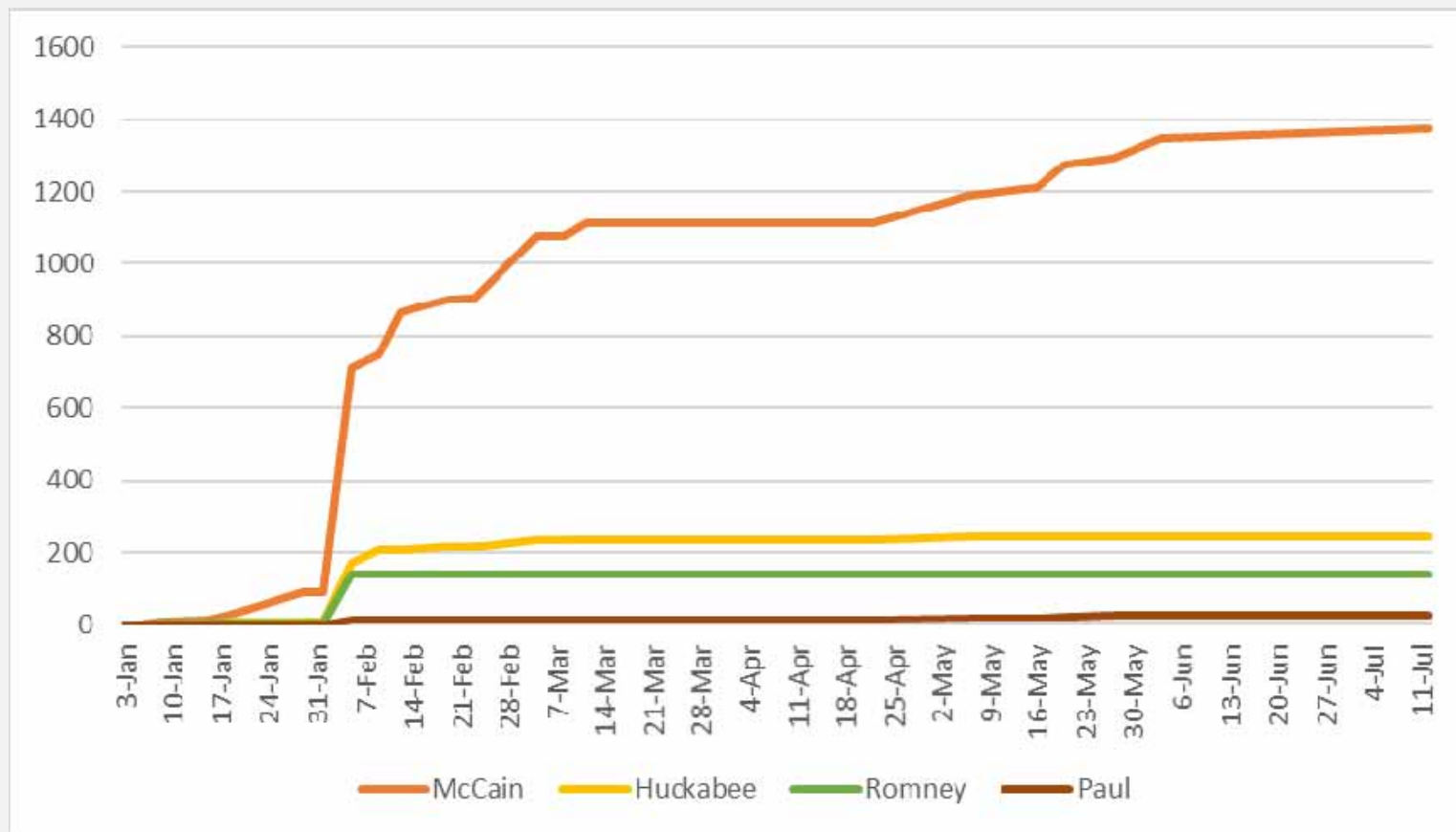
## CUMULATIVE DELEGATE COUNT IN DEMOCRATIC PRIMARIES, 2016

- 4,763 total delegate votes
- 4,051 pledged delegates
- 712 unpledged delegates
- 2,382 delegate votes needed to nominate



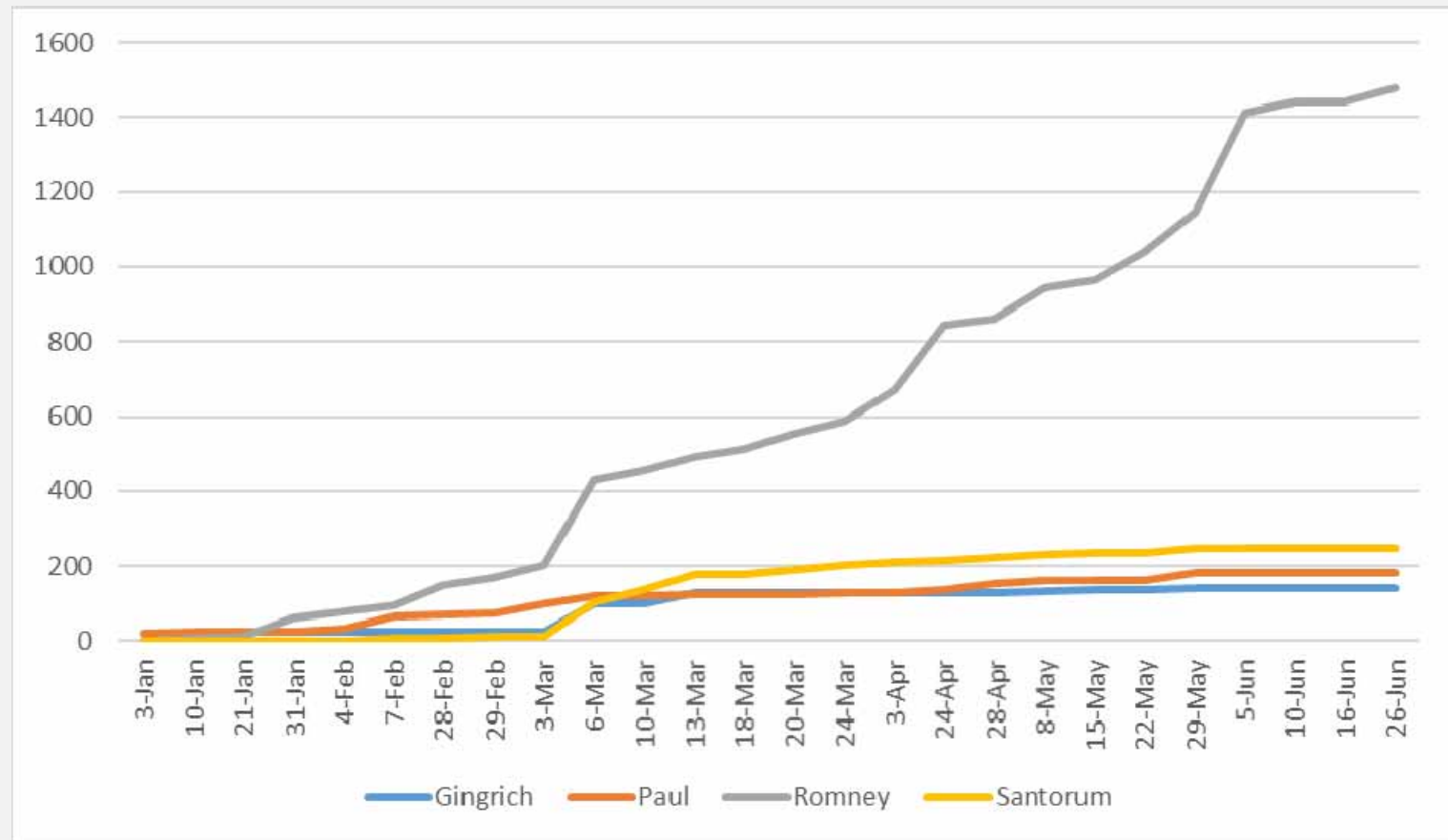
## CUMULATIVE DELEGATE COUNT IN REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES, 2008

- 2,516 total delegate votes
- 1,189 pledged delegates
- 561 unpledged delegates
- 1,191 delegate votes needed to nominate



## CUMULATIVE DELEGATE COUNT IN REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES, 2012

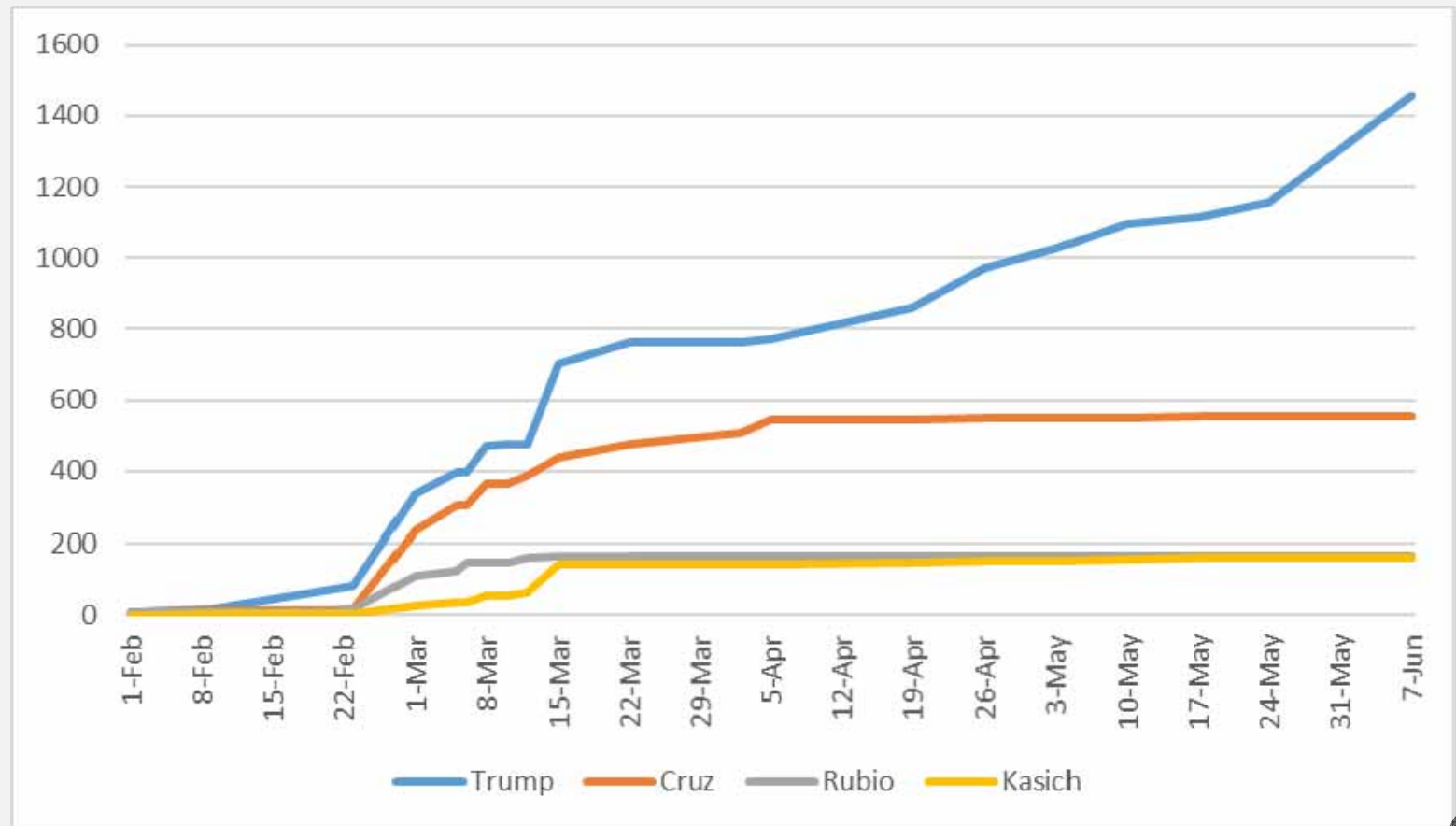
- 2,286 total delegate votes
- 1,871 pledged delegates
- 415 unpledged delegates
- 1,144 delegate votes needed to nominate





## CUMULATIVE DELEGATE COUNT IN REPUBLICAN PRIMARIES, 2016

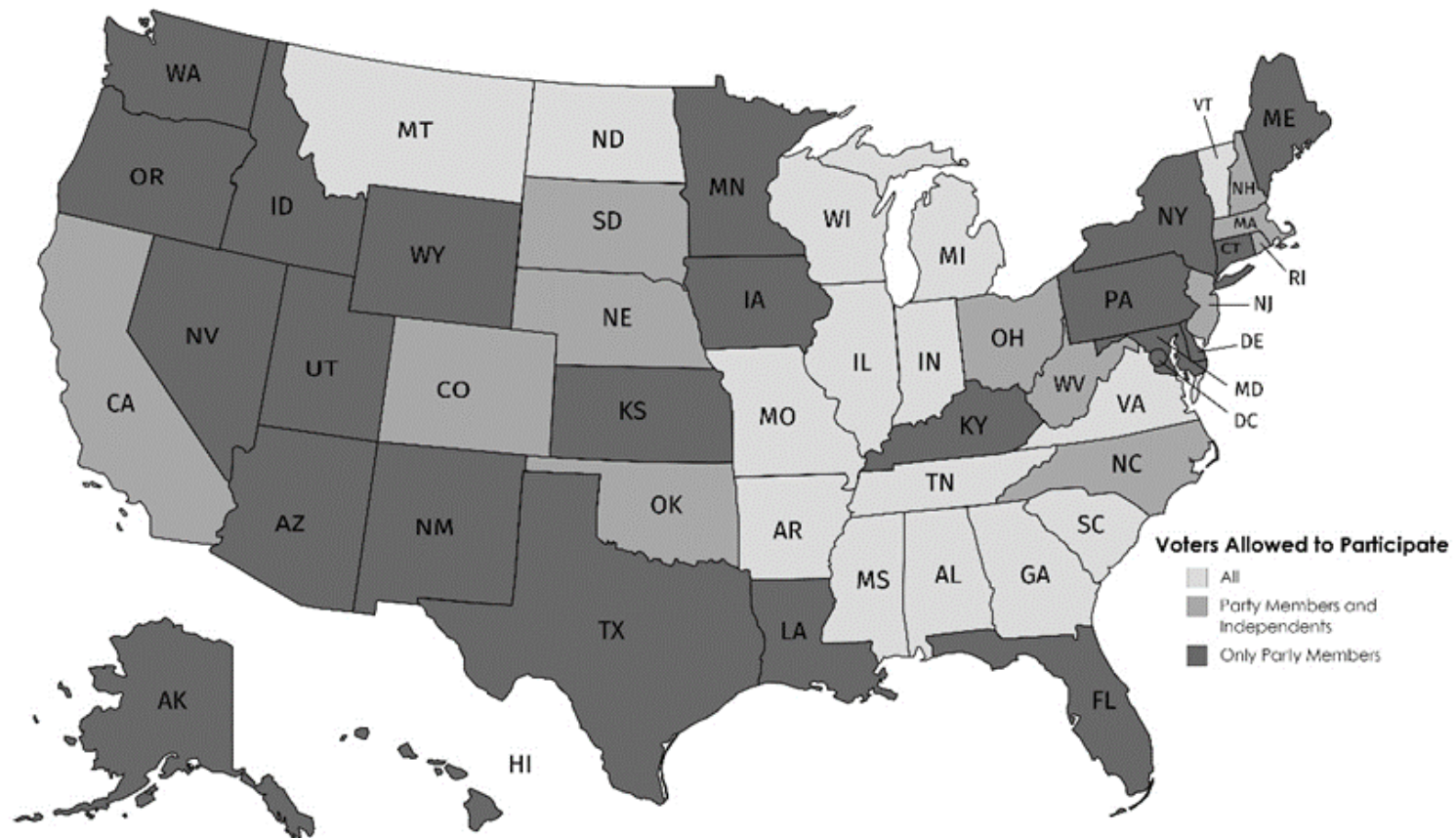
- 2,472 total delegate votes
- 2,363 pledged delegates
- 109 unpledged delegates
- 1,273 delegate votes needed to nominate



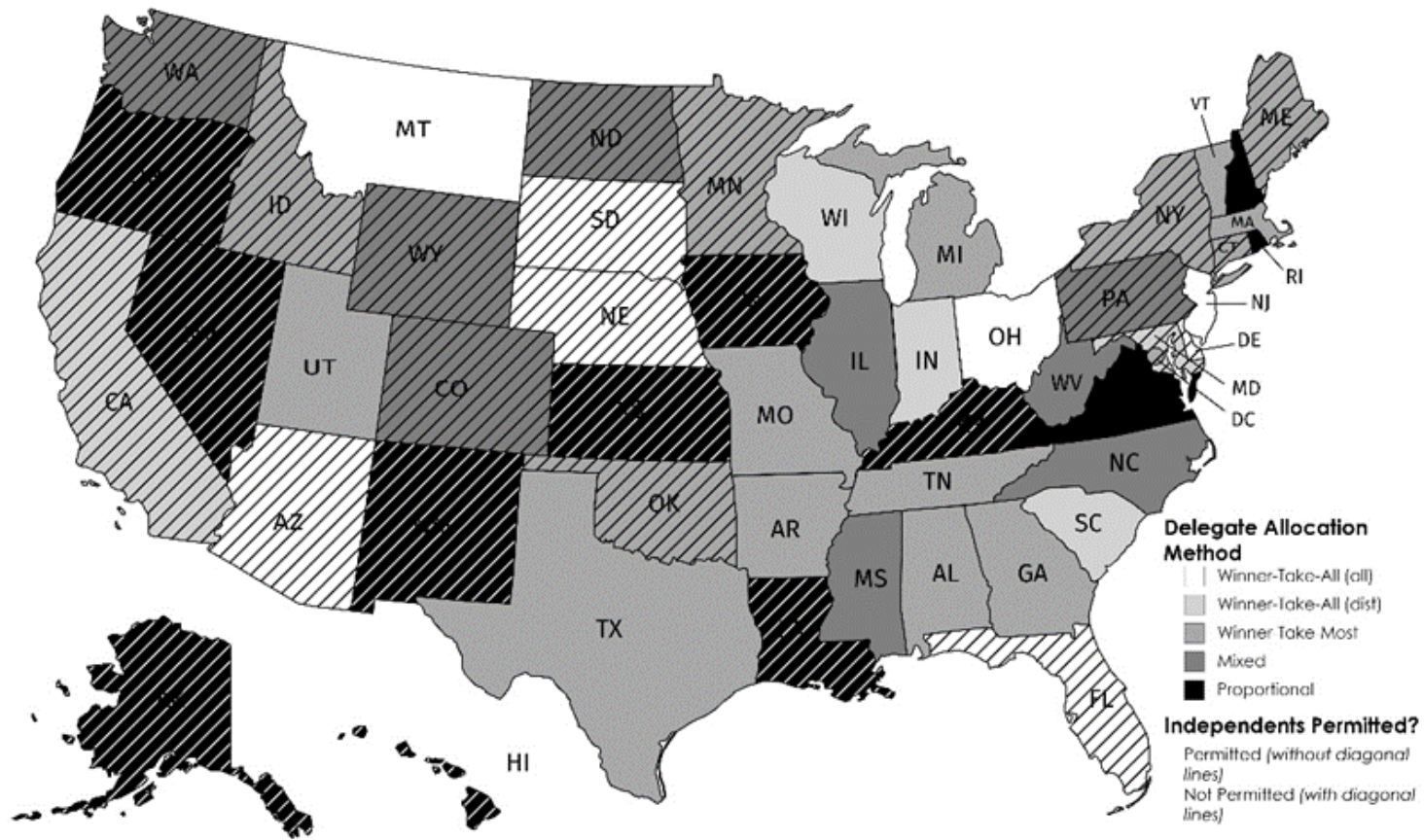
## THE 2020 ELECTION

- Voting and Delegate Allocation Rules Matter
- Open or Closed Primaries? Whether Independents Can Vote? Whether All Voters Can Participate?
- Delegates Are Allocated Proportionately in the Democratic Party Primaries to All Candidate Receiving at Least 15 percent of the Vote.
- Republicans Have More “Winner Take All” Primaries as in the Past

# DEMOCRATIC RULES FOR INDEPENDENT PARTICIPATION



# REPUBLICAN RULES ON DELEGATE DISTRIBUTION AND INDEPENDENT PARTICIPATION



## 2020 DISTRIBUTION OF DEMOCRATIC DELEGATES (OMITTING THE REPUBLICANS ASSUMING PRESIDENT TRUMP WILL BE THE THEIR NOMINEE)

- The Call for the 2020 Democratic National Convention mandates:
  - A base of 3,200 delegate votes is distributed among the 50 states and DC according to a formula that gives consideration to the three most recent presidential elections and the population by electoral vote:

$$A = \frac{1}{2} \left( \frac{SDV\ 2008 + SDV\ 2012 + SDV\ 2016}{TDV\ 2008 + TDV\ 2012 + TDV\ 2016} + \frac{SEV}{538} \right)$$

A = Allocation Factor  
 SDV = State Democratic Vote  
 SEV = State Electoral Vote  
 TDV = Total Democratic Vote

- Any state with a primary or caucus in April 2020 receives a 10 percent add-on of the base delegate vote.
- Any state with a primary or caucus between 1 May and 16 June 2020 receives a 20 percent add-on of the base delegate vote.
- Any state with a primary or caucus that is held in a regional cluster receives a 15 percent add-on of the base delegate vote.

## DISTRIBUTION OF DELEGATE VOTES CONTINUED

- 15 percent of the base delegate votes shall be added to the number of votes allocated to represent pledged Party and Elected Official delegates.
- American Samoa, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands and the Virgin Islands each receive six at-large delegate votes.
- Democrats Abroad receive 12 at-large and one pledged Party and Elected Official delegate votes.
- Puerto Rico receives 44 base delegate votes.

## DISTRIBUTION OF DELEGATE VOTES CONTINUED

- Automatic votes are allocated to each state to accommodate the members of the DNC from that state in which they reside.
- Automatic votes are allocated to the following in the states in which they reside: Democratic President, Democratic Vice President, all former Democratic Presidents and Vice Presidents, all former Democratic Leaders of the Senate, all former Democratic Speakers of the House and Democratic Minority Leaders, and all former Chairpersons of the DNC.

## 2020 PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

Date	State	Committed Delegates
3-Feb	Iowa	41
11-Feb	New Hampshire	24
22-Feb	Nevada	36
29-Feb	South Carolina	54
3-Mar	Alabama	52
	Arkansas	31
	California	416
	Colorado	67
	Massachusetts	91
	Maine	24
	Minnesota	75
	North Carolina	110
	Oklahoma	37
	Tennessee	64
	Texas	228
	Utah	29
	Virginia	99
	Vermont	16

Date	State	Committed Delegates
10-Mar	Idaho	20
	Michigan	125
	Missouri	68
	Mississippi	36
	North Dakota	14
	Washington	89
17-Mar	Arizona	67
	Florida	219
	Illinois	155
	Ohio	136
24-Mar	Georgia	105
4-Apr	Alaska	15
	Hawaii	24
	Wyoming	14
	Louisiana	53
7-Apr	Wisconsin	84



## 2020 PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

Date	State	Committed Delegates
28-Apr	Connecticut	60
	Delaware	21
	Maryland	96
	New York	273
	Pennsylvania	186
	Rhode Island	26
2-May	Kansas	39
5-May	Indiana	82
12-May	Nebraska	29
	West Virginia	28
19-May	Kentucky	54
	Oregon	61
2-Jun	District of Columbia	20
	Montana	19
	New Jersey	126
	New Mexico	34
	South Dakota	16

- 13–16 July 2020: Democratic National Convention
  - 4,744 total delegate votes
  - 3,978 pledged delegates
  - 766 unpledged delegates
  - 1,990 delegate votes needed to nominate on first ballot
  - 2,373 delegate votes needed to nominate on subsequent ballots

## WILL CANDIDATE “MOMENTUM” PLAY OUT AS IN THE PAST FOR THE DEMOCRATS?

- Implications of Proportional Voting and Uncommitted (“Superdelegates” Not Permitted to Vote on the First Ballot)
- Depends on Whether More than Two Candidate Can Consistently Win at Least 15 percent of the Vote and Prevent One Candidate from Winning a Majority for the First Ballot at the Convention. What Happens Then? Will the Vote Be Considered “**democratic**”?
- Current Polling on the Election? (See [realclearpolitics.com](https://www.realclearpolitics.com))
- The Six Debates from January-April 2020 May Be Crucial

GENERAL ELECTION: THE ELECTORAL  
VOTE VS. THE POPULAR VOTE SINCE  
THE 1992 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

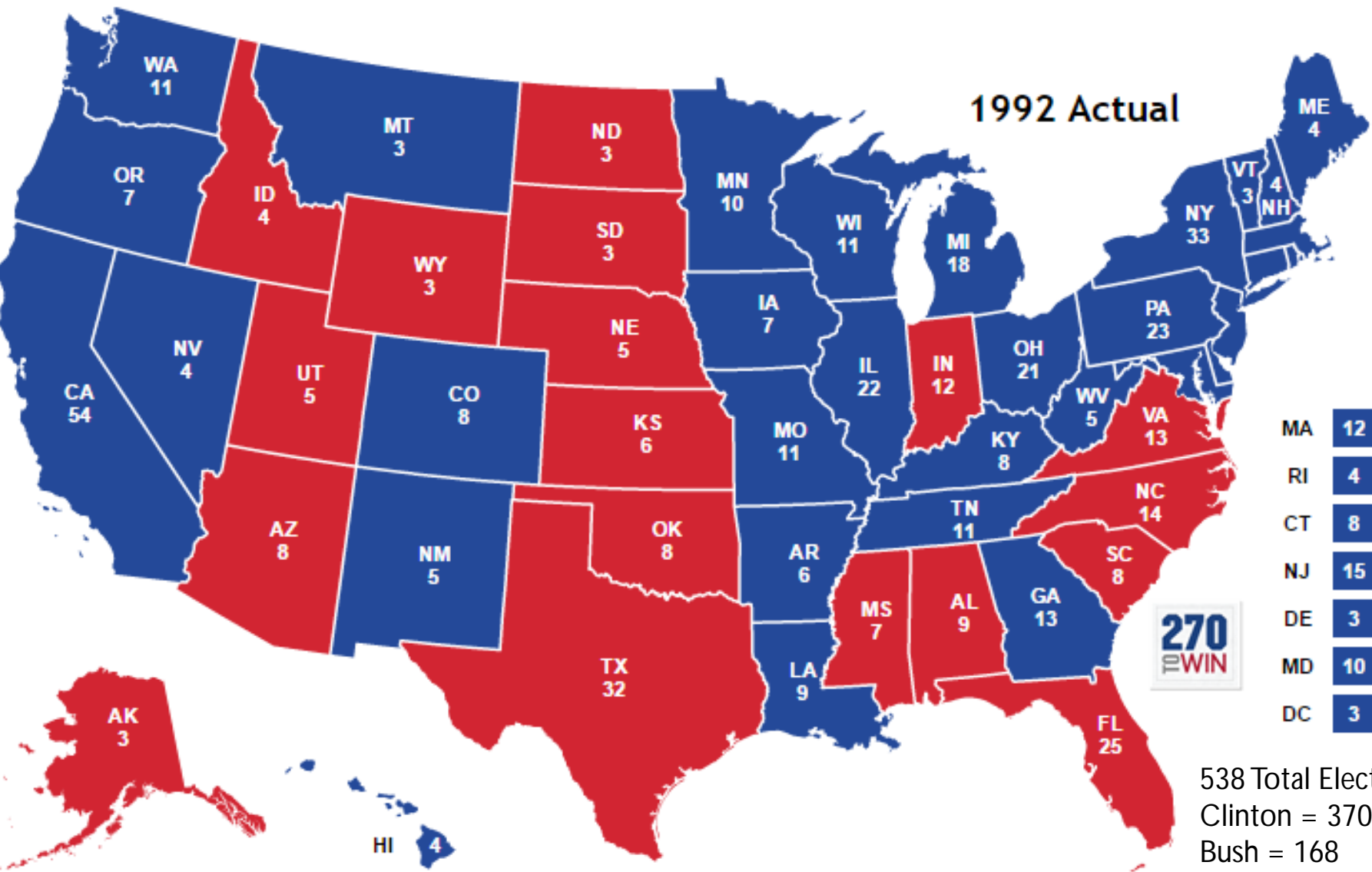
Electoral College Maps

THE NUMBER OF ELECTORAL VOTES  
EACH STATE HAS IS EQUAL TO ITS  
NUMBER OF SENATORS AND HOUSE  
MEMBERS, WITH THE DISTRICT OF  
COLUMBIA HAVING THREE ELECTORAL  
VOTES

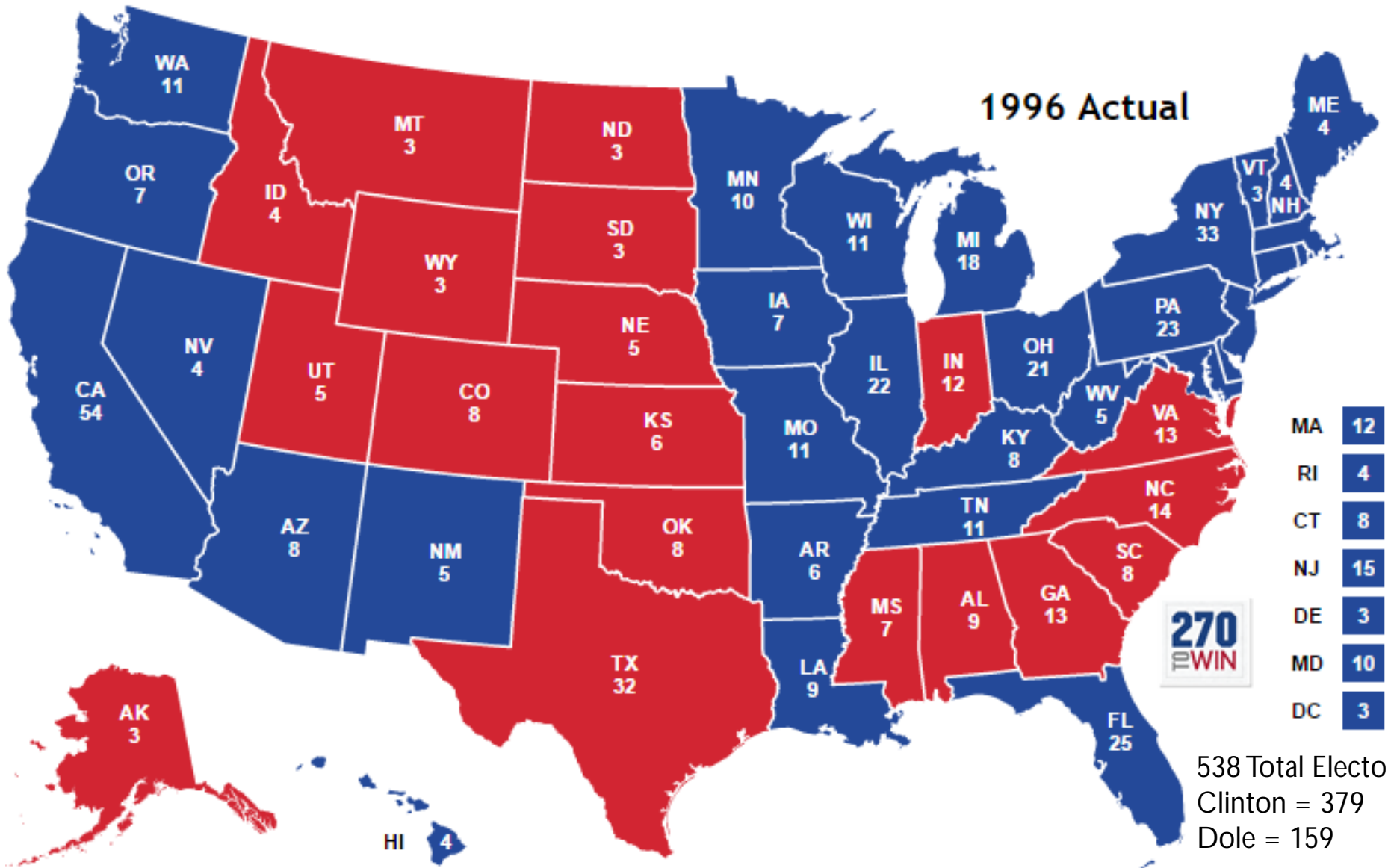
THE CANDIDATE WITH A MAJORITY OF THE ELECTORAL VOTE (270 OR MORE OUT OF 538) WINS THE PRESIDENCY). IF THERE IS NO WINNER, THE DECISION ON THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT GOES TO THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE....

THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

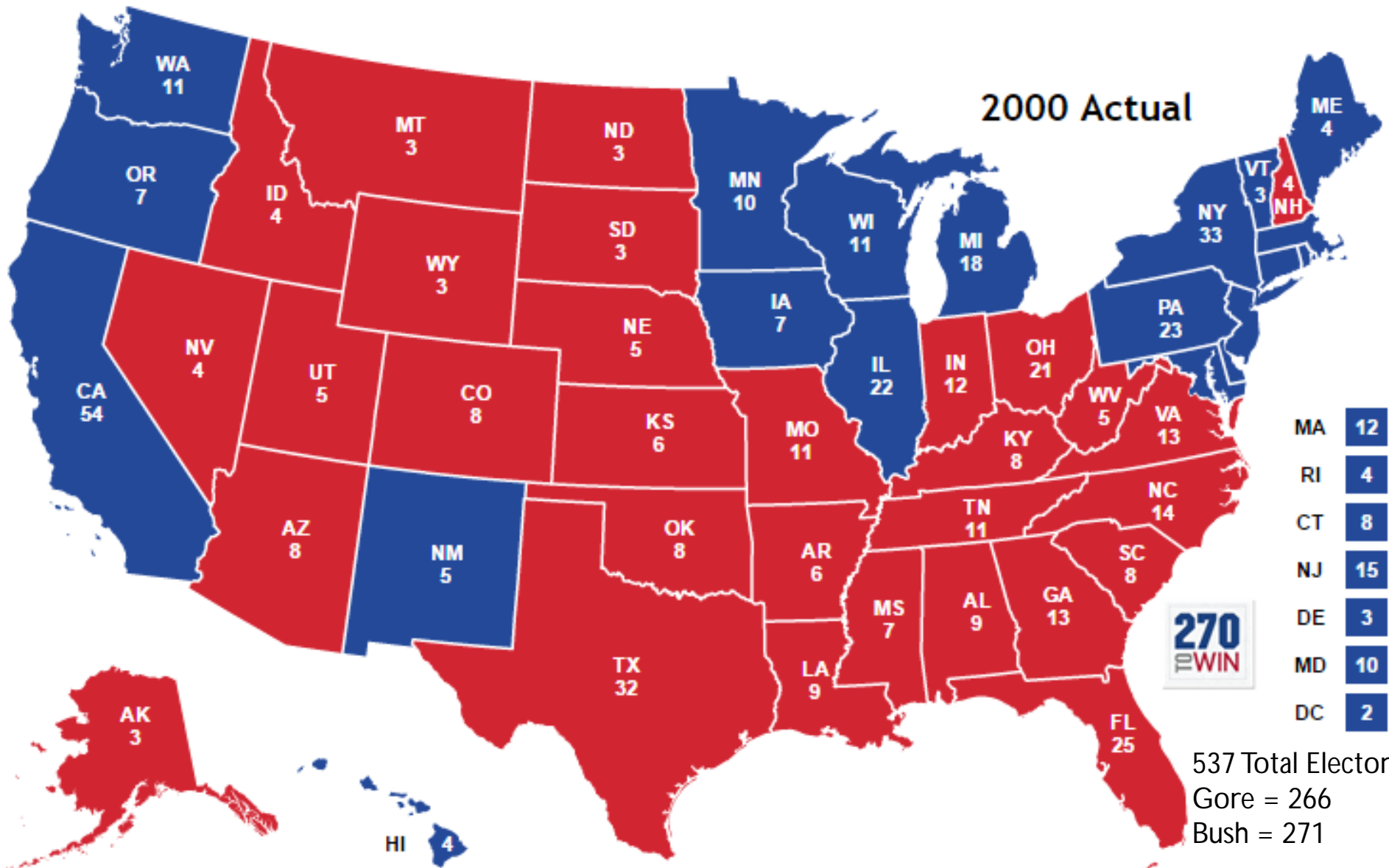
THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE MAP  
AND THE RECENT HISTORY OF THE  
DEMOCRATS "BLUE WALL"

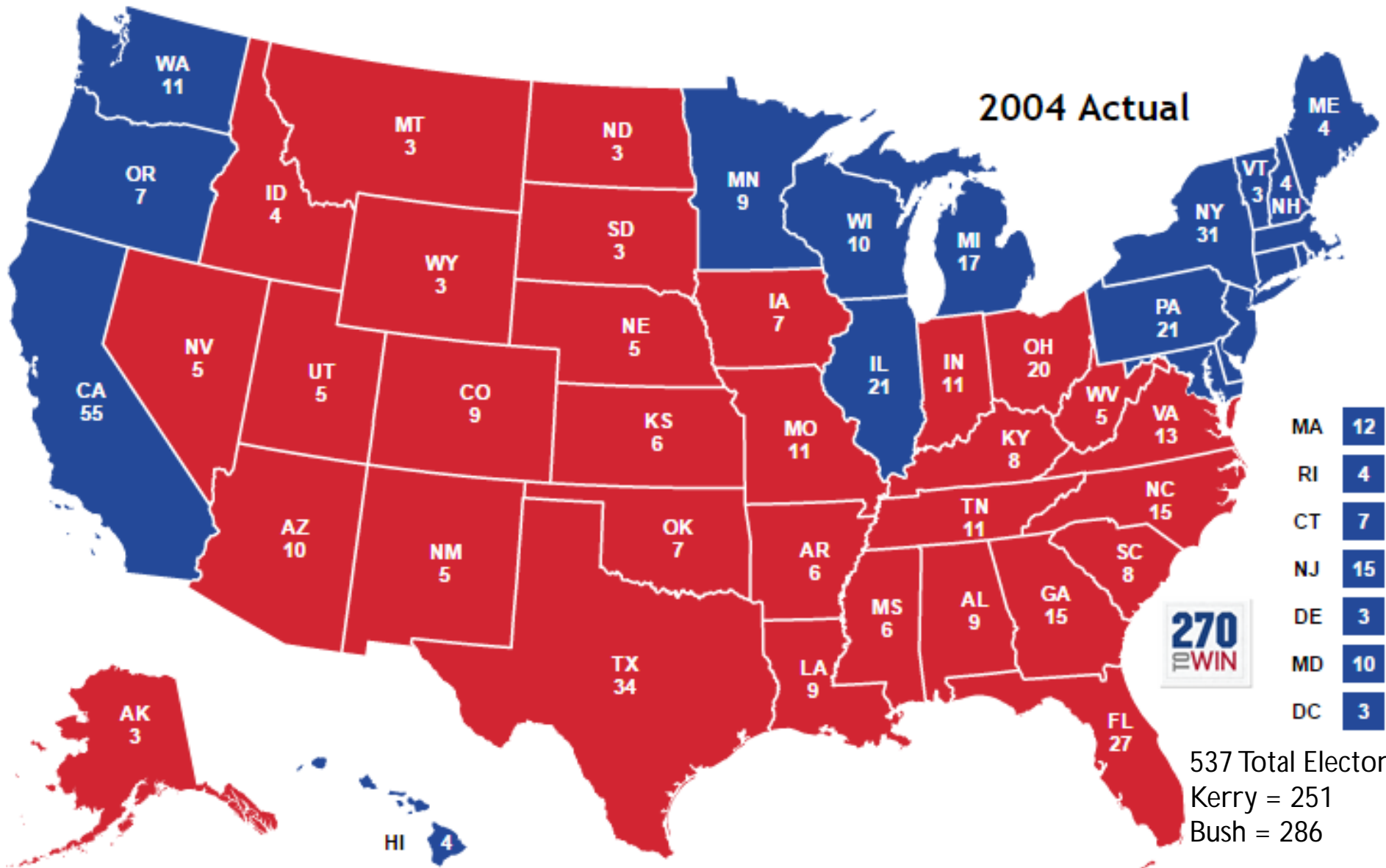


538 Total Electoral Votes  
 Clinton = 370  
 Bush = 168

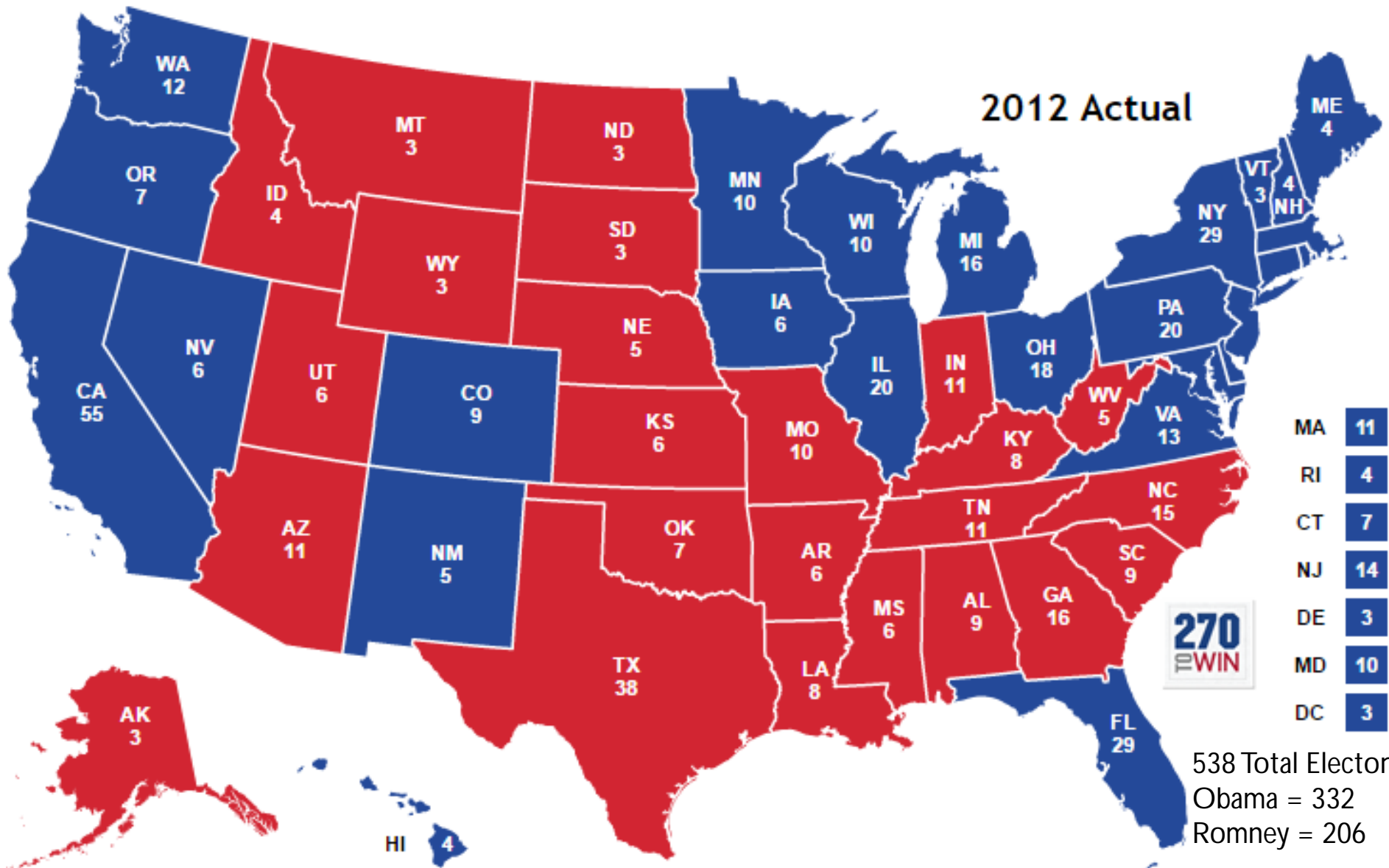








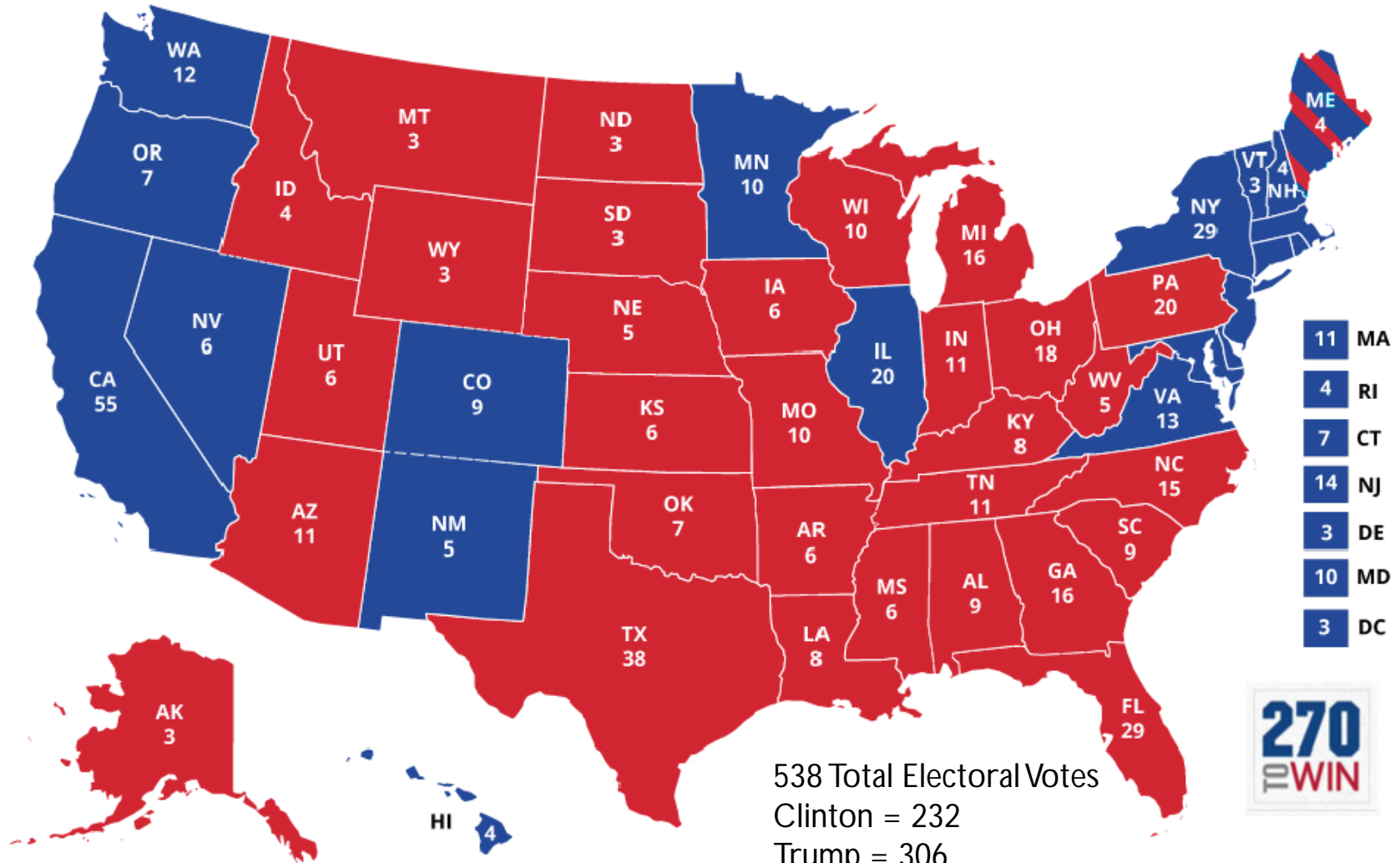




Democrat **232**

**306** Republican

**2016**





## THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE IS NOT "DEMOCRATIC"

- And what happens if no candidate gets a majority of the Electoral Vote
- The House of Representatives Selects the President (How?...)
- The Senate Selects the Vice President (How?...)
- What Was the Original Purpose of the Electoral College?
- How to Get Rid of the Electoral College? By Constitutional Amendment. Or by "The National Popular Vote Bill."

## THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE BILL

- The bill would ensure that every vote counts equally.
- The Presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and DC would win the Presidency.
- The bill was first introduced in 2005, but the debate over whether to eliminate the Electoral College reignited after the 2016 general election.
  - Hillary Clinton won approximately 3 million more votes nationwide, but ultimately lost the election to Donald Trump, who won 306 of the total 538 electoral votes.
- State winner-take-all laws and the Electoral College have allowed five presidents to enter office despite losing the popular vote.



## THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE BILL (CONTINUED)

- The bill has been enacted in 16 states since 2006—comprising of 196 electoral votes.
  - The bill will take effect when enacted by states with 74 more electoral votes (for a total of 270 out of 538).
- After the bill comes into effect, each individual voter in all states will acquire a direct vote in the choice of all of the presidential electors from all of the states that enacted the compact.
- The bill is considered to be a state-based approach that maintains state control over how the President is elected and retains the Electoral College.
  - Electors still determine the general election, but states will shift the way in which electors are allocated (by national popular vote v. winner-take-all).

## ARGUMENTS FOR THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

- Contributes to the country's cohesiveness
  - No one geographic region dominates the electoral college with an absolute majority (270 electoral votes)
- Enhances the status of minority groups
  - The minority votes can make a difference between a candidate winning all of a state's electoral votes or none of them
  - Ethnic minority groups tend to concentrate in states with a high number of electors, meaning their votes are particularly important to candidates.

## ARGUMENTS FOR THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (CONTINUED)

- Contributes to national political stability
  - Encourages a two-party system
  - Prevents a transitory third-party from winning the presidency
- Maintains a federal system
  - The electoral college was designed to represent each state's choice for president.
  - This system prioritizes state viewpoints over those of political minorities.
  - The importance of collective opinions of state populations outweigh those of the national population when taken as a whole

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

- Electing a minority President
  - Electoral votes are split in a way that no candidate reaches the necessary majority
  - One candidate's popular support is heavily concentrated in a few states, while another candidate maintained a popular lead in enough states to win a majority of electors
  - A third party candidate draws enough votes from the top two that no candidate receives 50 percent of the national popular total
- "Faithless Electors"
  - An elector who pledges to vote for their party's presidential candidate, but ultimately votes for another candidate

## ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (CONTINUED)

- Depressing voter turnout
  - Each state maintains the same number of electoral votes regardless of voter turnout. Thus, there is no incentive to encourage participation in the election.
- Failure to reflect the national popular will
  - The distribution of electoral votes over represents rural states.
  - The winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes (the candidate with the most popular votes in the state wins the electors) makes it difficult for third-party candidates to be represented in the electoral college.

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