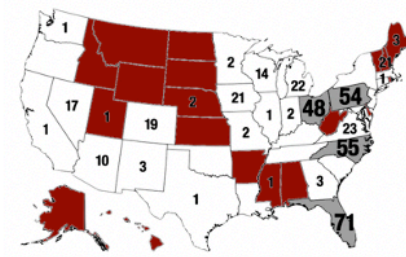


# ONE NATION, UNDER CONTROL:

## Analyzing the 2016 Electoral College's Influences on Vote Weight

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Campaign Data from: FairVote

### Background and Introduction

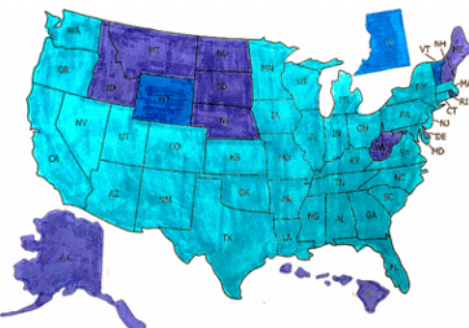
Many Americans erupted as Donald Trump won the 2016 presidency without winning the popular vote. Nearly all criticism pointed towards the Electoral College's *two-senator add-on* claiming it dilutes urban states and over-represents rural states.

Yet, little to no attention was paid to the nation's chiefly employed electoral vote allocation system, known as *winner-take-all (WTA)*. In such, a state exclusively allocates its electoral votes to its plurality winner and none to any other candidate.

WTA critics have a history of examining the skew the system creates on a national level – like electing an unpopular president, but seldom to its state-level effects. Thus, this report quantifies *both* electoral influences to compare their corresponding impacts on state's *vote weights*, or the relative impact each vote had on the 2016 presidential election.

### Research Questions

- What factors influenced state vote weights during the 2016 election?
- How does the winner-take-all electoral vote allocation method impact vote weight?
- How does the two-senators-per-state rule impact vote weight?



The map above illustrates the impacts of the *two-senator add-on*. Each state's shading represents:

Relative Vote Weight of Roughly 1

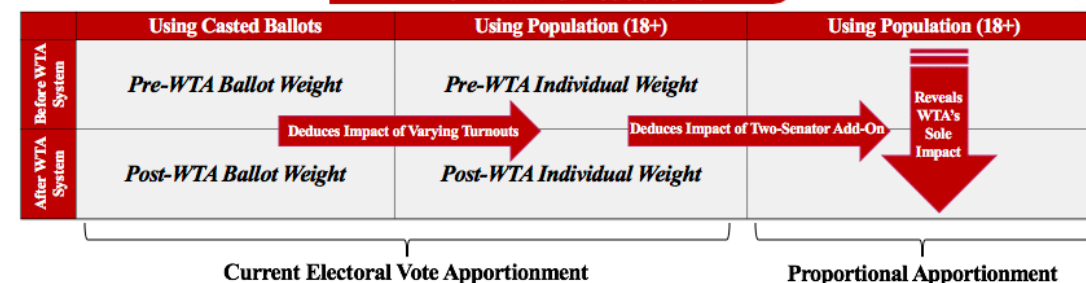
Relative Vote Weight of Roughly 2

Relative Vote Weight of Roughly 3

By re-distributing electoral votes proportionally to population alone, the report omits the current *two-senator add-on*. Then, by comparing states' vote weights during the 2016 election to a proportional apportionment reveals the add-on's specific impact.

The analyses find that small states *advantages* are much greater than the *disadvantages* placed on large states. For example, the greatest advantage was +2.1 (WY) while the greatest disadvantage was -0.2 (FL).

### The Data and Deductions



### Methodology and Analyses

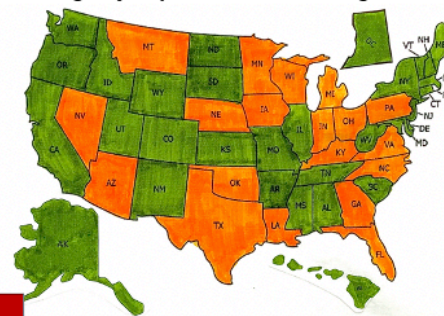
The map below encapsulates the relative impact caused by states' deployment of *winner-take-all*. The shading of each state represents:

Relative Vote Weight Decreases after WTA

Relative Vote Weight Increases after WTA

By controlling voter turnout, relative vote weights are compared before and after each state's electoral allocation – leaving WTA's exclusive impact. Once again, the positive impact certain states received greatly outnumbered the negative impact of others.

Using state party ID data, the report found a clear trend: the more diverse a state is, the more likely it is to receive orange shading – or to lose influence during the 2016 election. This means states' vote weight decreases as its diversity increases. However, most notably, *neither* influences placed higher vote weights on the overwhelming majority of the nation's swing states.



### Author's Acknowledgments

Remarkably, the above influences on states' vote weights are largely *inconsequential* in the current electoral environment. Winner-take-all systems have systematically removed rural states' electoral advantage by causing candidates to focus on competitive states. Likewise, more diverse states' high voter turnouts simultaneously decrease their votes' influence. Thus, the real problem is the two-party gridlock that WTA forces the nation's mixed electorate into.

The rise of NPVIC, a plan to remove the Electoral College's insulation, will further complicate this. In NPVIC, states will allocate their electoral votes to the *national* plurality winner, rather than their state winner. This report urges that NPVIC will solely transfer the current prioritization of diverse states to populous ones, upholding the two-party death grip. Rather than abolishing the nation's federalist elections entirely, simply appropriating or allocating electoral votes *proportionally* can solve this dilemma while keeping the system's state-based integrity.

### Conclusion and Main Findings

The U.S. map above accentuates the electoral discrepancy revealed by this report's analyses on the two-senator add-on and states' deployment of WTA. Each state is labeled by the number of campaign visits it received during the 2016 presidential campaign – with no label meaning zero visits. The 20 states coded in dark red possessed the greatest vote weights, or influence, during the 2016 election.

Despite this, the campaign tally looks as if the 2016 candidates actually *avoided* states with the greatest electoral influence. As a result, this report concludes candidates are no longer interested in states with the highest vote weights – a common argument used against the Electoral College. Rather, the universal employment of WTA causes candidates to cluster their attention towards states with high political *diversity*.

Summary of Influences on Vote Weights in 2016:

- ✓ Voter Turnout – Range: -0.4 to 0.7
  - 17 states' vote weights increased due to low turnout
  - As voter turnout increases, vote weights decrease
- ✓ Two-Senator Add-On – Range: -0.2 to 2.1
  - Exactly half of the states received a positive impact
  - The placed advantage was much higher than any placed disadvantage
- ✓ Winner-take-all System – Range: -0.2 – 1.2
  - More Republican states benefited from WTA than Democratic states in 2016
  - States w/ low political cohesion are most impacted



External Data Sources:

1. "Official 2016 Presidential General Elections Results." Federal Election Commission, 2017.
2. "Voting-Age Population by State." United States Census Bureau, 2016.
3. "2010 Census of Population and Housing." United States Department of Commerce, 2012.
4. "Democratic States Exceed Republican States." Gallup Partisanship Poll, 2018.

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