

Republican Perspective
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by John Littig

The Electoral College Explained, Sort Of

Thanks in advance to my colleague Mike, a 1955 Brooklyn Catholic Youth All Star second baseman who actually earned a tryout with the Detroit Tigers. I owe Mike for allowing me to borrow from his knowledge of The Game---of which I have precious little.

Don't expect this to assuage the grief or quell the anger of those who believe the recent election should have been decided by the popular vote. It will not convert those who believe the Electoral College system is outdated or undemocratic and should be abolished (good luck with *that* one). It's just an explanation---of sorts.

The World Series is not a single game, but a series of four to seven individual games. The team winning the most games wins the World Series. It makes no difference which team scores the most runs. Rules are rules.

In the 1960 World Series, the losing New York Yankees scored 55 runs---more than twice as many as the winning Pittsburgh Pirates, who scored only 27 runs. The Yankees won three lop-sided games, while the Pirates won four close games. But the total number of runs is irrelevant--the World Champion is the team that wins the most games.

Our quadrennial presidential electoral system is not a single nationwide election. Each state holds an election to choose a slate of electors. Then the chosen electors vote to choose the president. Thus the election is decided by the states, through their chosen electors, not directly by the popular vote. This is provided for in Article II Section 1 of our Constitution.

In this way, candidates get credit for winning the electoral votes of individual states just as the Pirates got credit for winning individual games. Deciding the presidential election by the popular vote rather than by the electoral votes would be equivalent to deciding the World Series on total runs rather than on games won. In effect one extremely long game---not a Series at all.

It would be theoretically possible, of course, to abandon the current, Constitutionally mandated, electoral system in favor of a nationwide popular vote. This would place overwhelming elective power in the hands of the voters in just the few most populous states, and effectively disenfranchise the voters in the remaining states.

The chance of abolishing the Electoral College system in favor of a popular vote system is extremely unlikely. This is because it would require a Constitutional amendment---which in turn would require ratification by three fourths of the about-to-be-disenfranchised states. No dice.

More likely, the rules of the World Series will be changed to award the Championship to the team scoring the most overall runs. Fat chance.

In the 1960 World Series the Yankees scored more runs but the Pirates won more games---and thus the Championship. In the 2016 election, Hillary won more popular votes but The Donald won more electoral votes---and thus the Presidency.

This is probably because the Founding Dads, all being rich white males and foreseeing the 2016 Hillary candidacy, modeled our presidential electoral system after the World Series.