

ISSUE BRIEF

“Information to Action”

Topic: The Electoral College

Title: *HOW THE WORLD SERIES CAN HELP EXPLAIN THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE* by Michael Maibach

The idea of “majority rule” can be a complicated thing. Those who disfavor the Electoral College say that the majority should always rule. And yet one can compare the presidential vote in each of our fifty states to a separate contest. Since 1900 only two Presidents have been elected without winning the majority of those state contests: John Kennedy and Jimmy Carter. (Biden and Trump tied, each winning twenty-five states.)

The sports world can teach us something here. For example, do teams reach the Super Bowl by scoring the most points, or winning the most games? And in March Madness, do the Final Four get there on total points or total games won? Games it is!

We see this same principle in baseball’s World Series. The winner of the Series - the rules tell us - is the team that wins four out of seven games. Seems fair, right? Did you know about the four World Series results below? In each, the losing team scored more runs than the winner in the seven-game series, yet the winners won the most games and thus the World Series. A complaint about this has virtually never been heard.

- **In 2022, the Anaheim Angels won 4 games with 41 runs; the San Francisco Giants won 3 games with 44 runs.**
- **In 1997, the Florida Marlins won 4 games with 37 runs; the Cleveland Indians won 3 games with 44 runs.**
- **In 1991, the Minnesota Twins won 4 games with 24 runs; the Atlanta Braves won 3 games with 29 runs.**
- **In 1960, the Pittsburgh Pirates won 4 games with 27 runs; the New York Yankees won 3 games with 55 runs.**

We live in a “Nation of States.” Delegates from the states wrote our Constitution in 1787, and separate state conventions then ratified it. Among the thirteen original states, the nine smaller states feared that the four most populous states (VA, PA, NY, MA) would always elect our President. They were concerned that citizens and their interests in the smaller states would be ignored.

By giving every state two U.S. Senators, and thus two electoral votes equally, our small states sought to even the playing field. And this system - our Electoral College system - has served us very well for 234 years.

It gives incentives for Presidential candidates to visit states beyond just those nine that today are home to 50% of the American people, or just the urban areas like New York City which has more people than 39 of our states, and LA County which has more people than 41 of our states.

The Electoral College design makes sure that rural and smaller states like Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota - the states that feed the cities - have their voices heard, too. In this manner, we have kept our Union together. Americans can learn a lot from sports, and from the deep wisdom of our Founders found within our Constitution - the oldest in the world.