Trump’s popular vote deficit may approach two million

Patrick Martin, David North
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California state and local government officials reported Thursday afternoon that as many as five million votes remain to be counted in the presidential election. This includes both mail-in ballots postmarked no later than November 8 and provisional ballots cast by voters who went to the wrong precinct to vote because they had moved.

If the Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton maintains the 62 percent majority that she has won so far in California voting, the count of all the outstanding ballots would likely increase her popular vote lead from the current estimate of 400,000 to approximately two million votes.

If anything, this is likely to be a low estimate, since provisional ballots are disproportionately cast in low-income and minority working-class districts, where Clinton ran up margins approaching 90 percent. More than one million ballots remain to be counted in Los Angeles County alone, and 600,000 in San Diego County. Clinton won more than 80 percent of the vote in Los Angeles and nearly 60 percent in San Diego.

This means that Clinton, the loser in the Electoral College to Donald Trump, would have a margin in the popular vote exceeding at least three winners of US presidential elections in the last half-century. John F. Kennedy won the 1960 election over Richard Nixon by 112,000 votes; Nixon won the 1968 election over Hubert Humphrey by 510,000 votes; and Jimmy Carter won the 1976 election over Gerald Ford by 1.7 million votes.

Clinton’s margin in the popular vote could be four times the size of Al Gore’s in 2000. Gore carried the popular vote by 540,000 over George W. Bush, only to lose in the Electoral College after the Supreme Court intervened to halt a recount of ballots in Florida.

Up until now the media has said almost nothing about the scale of Clinton’s popular vote margin. A posting by David Leonhardt in the online edition of the *New York Times* is the only reference in national publications, along with occasional reports in the California-based media.

Trump’s vote total was actually below that won by Republicans Mitt Romney in 2012 and George W. Bush in 2004, and just barely above the total received by John McCain in 2008, when he lost to Barack Obama by a margin of ten million votes.

As the scale of Clinton’s lead in the popular vote becomes more widely known, Trump’s elevation to the presidency will be seen ever-more widely as politically illegitimate.

It is known, of course, that victory in a presidential election is determined by the allocation of votes in the archaic Electoral College. But in the first 211 years of American presidential history, between 1789 and 2000, there were only three occasions in which the presidency went to the candidate who lost the popular vote.

This first occurred in 1824, when—after a four-way contest in which no candidate received sufficient electoral votes to win—the House of Representatives awarded John Quincy Adams the presidency. There was widespread popular outrage over the “corrupt bargain” that denied Andrew Jackson—the winner in the popular vote—the White House. The presidency of Adams remained under a cloud, and Jackson defeated him in the election of 1828.

In 1876, Democratic candidate Samuel Tilden received approximately 250,000 more votes than Republican Rutherford Hayes, but failed to secure the necessary Electoral College majority. After several months of intense negotiations, the Democrats accepted the elevation of Hayes into the White House. However, the Democrats exacted from the Republicans an immense political concession: the withdrawal of Federal troops from the South, which effectively ended the post-Civil War Reconstruction.

In 1888, President Grover Cleveland lost his bid for reelection to his Republican opponent, Benjamin

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Harrison. In this case, the Republican candidate won a substantial majority in the Electoral College, but he received approximately 80,000 votes less than President Cleveland. Harrison entered the White House, but the fact that he had lost the popular vote—even though by a relatively small margin—undermined his political authority. Cleveland defeated him in the election of 1892.

For the 112 years after Cleveland's defeat in 1888, every winning presidential candidate obtained more votes than his rival. Throughout the twentieth century, the results in the Electoral College ratified the outcome of the popular vote.

But two out of the last five elections have resulted in the victory of Republican candidates—Bush and Trump—who lost the popular vote.

George W. Bush's popular vote deficit in the election of 2000 was significant: approximately 500,000 votes. In Trump's case, the deficit—which may reach between 1.5 and 2 million votes—will in all likelihood be so substantial that it can hardly be viewed as merely a peculiar anomaly.

The scale of Trump's defeat in the popular vote underscores the political cowardice that has been displayed by the Democratic Party in its response to the election. Given the circumstances, the Democrats are under no political obligation to do more than acknowledge that Trump, because of his electoral vote majority, has merely won the right to plant his backside in the presidential chair of the Oval Office.

However, there is no justification for the haste with which the Obama administration and the Democratic Party have rushed to build up Trump's authority and prestige. Neither Obama nor Clinton have issued a warning to Trump, stating bluntly that the unprecedented scale of his defeat in the popular vote has clearly deprived him of any right to claim a mandate for his reactionary agenda. Their silence is all the more criminal as demonstrations protesting Trump's victory are taking place throughout the country.

The dubious legitimacy of a Trump administration is being further undermined as its political physiognomy becomes clearer. On Friday, Trump reshuffled his transition team, putting his vice president-elect and Christian fundamentalist Mike Pence in charge as chairman, installing ultra-right figures like Rudy Giuliani and Newt Gingrich as vice chairs, and naming his three children and his son-in-law to the transition executive committee. The White House is to become another branch of the Trump family enterprise!

President Obama, the leader of the Democratic Party who campaigned throughout the country for Clinton, has said nothing at all about her victory in the popular vote and has repeatedly declared his determination to insure a peaceful and smooth transition to power for Trump and the Republicans.

Can anyone doubt that if the roles had been reversed, and Clinton had won the Electoral College while Trump rolled up a big margin in the popular vote, that the Republican Party would have proceeded far differently?

Always the more ruthless and aggressive of the two right-wing capitalist parties, the Republicans would have denounced a Clinton victory in the Electoral College as "rigged" and undemocratic, demanded her renunciation of the presidency, lobbied for the presidential electors to ignore the vote in their states and accede to the "will of the people" as expressed in the nationwide vote tally, and threatened obstruction and even impeachment of the new president.

The one area where the Democrats and those sections of the military and intelligence agencies that backed Clinton may be pushing for influence in a Trump cabinet is on foreign policy. They do not want to see a retreat on the aggressive attitude toward Russia, which was at the center of Clinton's election campaign.

California Governor Jerry Brown, soon to be the most powerful elected Democrat, has said nothing about the political implications of the landslide against Trump in his state, the most populous in the United States. Trump has threatened mass deportation of undocumented immigrants, who number in the millions in California, with millions more California citizens in their immediate families.

Again, if the roles had been reversed, with Clinton taking office as a minority president, Republican governors would have been up in arms, seeking to demonstrate their opposition to and defiance of a federal government they would declare illegitimate and oppressive. This was already the case with the Republicans under Obama.

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