

Popular vote margin against Trump hits 1.7 million

Patrick Martin
22 November 2016

Donald Trump is losing the popular vote in the US presidential election by the widest margin ever recorded for a victor in the Electoral College. While Trump leads Democrat Hillary Clinton by 302 to 236 in electoral votes—awarded to the winner of each state based on a formula that favors smaller and more rural states—Clinton's margin in the ballots cast by actual voters now exceeds 1.7 million.

The Associated Press first reported Clinton's lead passing the 1.5 million mark on Saturday, as vote counting continued mainly in the states of California and Washington, which Clinton carried by wide margins. The nonpartisan Cook Political Report released an updated tabulation Sunday night, showing Clinton's lead at more than 1.72 million votes, with millions of ballots still being counted.

Clinton leads in the percentage of the popular vote by a margin of 1.3 percent, 48 percent to 46.7 percent. The balance, 5.3 percent of the vote, went to the Libertarian, Green and other third-party candidates, who were supported by more than 7 million voters but did not win a single electoral vote. Out of 132.7 million people whose votes have been tabulated so far, a sizeable majority, some 70.7 million, did not vote for Trump.

It is quite likely, based on these trends, that Clinton's lead over Trump in the popular vote will eventually pass the two million mark—a greater margin than in election victories for such 20th century presidents as John F. Kennedy in 1960, Richard Nixon in 1968 and Jimmy Carter in 1976. But Trump will become the 45th president of the United States.

There is no historical precedent for such a large gap between the Electoral College and the popular vote. Yet neither the Democratic Party nor the corporate-controlled media have made this an issue.

Quite the contrary. Leaders of the Democratic Party,

including President Barack Obama, Vice President Joseph Biden, Clinton herself, and her chief opponent for the Democratic presidential nomination, Senator Bernie Sanders, as well as congressional Democratic leaders, have declared Trump to be the unchallengeable winner of the 2016 election.

Far from challenging Trump's supposed "mandate," they are seeking to curry favor with the right-wing billionaire and his fascistic aides, declaring their willingness to support him on issues where their policies overlap with his.

If the positions were reversed, there is no doubt what attitude the Republican Party would be adopting towards a President-elect Hillary Clinton who won the Electoral College but lost the popular vote by a margin of two million.

The Republicans would be howling that Clinton was illegitimate, that "the people" had chosen Trump, that her policies had been rejected, and that even if she were permitted to enter the White House, she would have to make major concessions, appoint a virtual coalition cabinet, and embrace significant portions of the Republican program. And Clinton would agree.

The historical parallels are instructive. In only five of the 57 presidential elections since George Washington has a candidate won the White House despite losing the popular vote. In 1824, John Quincy Adams trailed Andrew Jackson by 40,000 votes in a four-way election in which no candidate came close to a majority in either the popular or electoral vote. (At the time, many states still awarded electoral votes without a popular election, by decision of the state legislature). The Quincy Adams administration was crippled from its inception, and Jackson won the White House in a landslide in 1828.

In 1876, Democrat Samuel Tilden won the popular vote by 250,000, but not the Electoral College, where

the votes of several states were contested. Republican Rutherford Hayes was eventually installed as president in a backroom deal in which the Democrats extracted an immense price: withdrawal of federal troops from the South and an end to Reconstruction, opening the door to a wave of Ku Klux Klan violence and the eventual imposition of Jim Crow segregation throughout the region.

The 1888 election ended with Republican Benjamin Harrison winning the Electoral College but trailing incumbent Democrat Grover Cleveland by 89,000 in the popular vote. The North-South split mirrored the Civil War battles lines, with Cleveland winning the former Confederate states, the four former slave states that did not secede—Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware—and adding New Jersey and West Virginia. Harrison's was a weak administration and he was routed by Cleveland in 1892 when the former president sought reelection.

More than a century passed before another president would be elected despite losing the popular vote. But in contrast to the outcomes in the 19th century, when the electoral vote winner was crippled by the lack of a popular mandate, there have been two such results in the 21st century, both of them culminating in Republican victors being treated as unquestionably legitimate by the Democrats and the media, despite their lack of support from the American people.

George W. Bush was installed as president in 2000 by the Supreme Court, despite losing the popular vote by 540,000—a deficit twice as large as any previous minority “winner.” Democrat Al Gore capitulated ignominiously, and congressional Democrats proceeded to enact Bush’s tax cuts for the rich and rubber-stamp his wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Now Donald Trump is to enter the White House despite a popular vote deficit that may be four times as large as the previous record, set by Bush only 16 years ago. Not one prominent Democrat questions his right to the presidency or suggests that, given the vast disparity in the popular vote, Trump should proceed more cautiously in his right-wing rampage.

The reason is to be found in the fact that the Democrats, in addition to their congenital spinelessness, agree with the basic elements of Trump’s policies.

With the election decided, the ruling class is shifting

in the direction of economic nationalism, with substantial sections of the Democratic Party supporting the aggressive trade war measures proposed by Trump. At the same time, Trump’s agenda of war, the destruction of democratic rights, sweeping corporate tax cuts and an immense escalation of the assault on the working class has the backing of dominant sections of the ruling class and both of its political parties.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact