

Hillary Clinton leads by two million in US popular vote

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Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton's lead in the popular vote over Republican Donald Trump now tops 2 million votes, according to a tabulation of results reported by each state and reported by the nonpartisan Cook Political Report.

Clinton has received 64,223,958 votes to Trump's 62,206,395, with several million more votes remaining to be counted, mainly mail ballots in California postmarked by November 8 but received by election authorities after that date. Vote counting in California is slowed by the length of the ballot, which includes a large number of complex referenda proposals.

Under the antiquated Electoral College system, which grossly over-represents smaller rural states at the expense of California and other heavily urbanized states, Trump has won 306 electoral votes to Clinton's 232. A vote in the Electoral College, set for December 19, will officially entitle Trump to take the oath of office next January 20.

Clinton's lead of 2 million votes is far greater than the margin in any previous US presidential contest in which the popular vote loser was installed as president by the Electoral College. Her margin of victory in the popular vote, approaching 2 percent, is greater than that of seven candidates who actually won the presidency.

The antidemocratic character of Trump's election "victory" has not deterred leading Democrats, from Obama and Clinton on down, from prostrating themselves before the "president-elect." The newly elected Senate Democratic leader, Charles Schumer, made one passing reference to Trump losing the popular vote, suggesting this meant he had no "mandate," but he drew no conclusions from this about either the policies or the personnel of the new administration.

Trump himself raised the subject Tuesday in the

course of his hour-long, on-the-record discussion with editors, reporters and columnists of the *New York Times*. He noted criticism that he had not won the popular vote, and then argued that he could have done so if he had campaigned in the most populous states such as California, New York and Texas.

No one at the *Times* pressed the issue with him—or any other issue, for that matter. The transcript records a generally cordial discussion, punctuated at least 15 times by laughter. No one would guess, reading the transcript, that the newspaper had excoriated Trump not only in its editorial pages and op-ed columns, but also in its news pages, declaring him unfit for the presidency and a threat to American democracy. The verbal broadsides are forgotten, replaced by bowing and scraping before the new "commander-in-chief."

Despite the media cover-up, however, Trump's heavy defeat in the popular vote is significant. It underscores the fact that his installation in the White House is not the product of an embrace of his ultra-right policies by the American people.

Democratic candidates have won the popular vote in six of the last seven presidential elections, but in two of the six popular vote victories, the Democratic candidate—Al Gore in 2000 and now Clinton in 2016—fell short in the Electoral College.

In 2000, when Gore won nationally by 540,000 votes, the election was stolen through the Supreme Court intervention to halt the counting of legal votes in Florida. The notorious *Bush v. Gore* decision effectively awarded Florida's electoral votes to Bush and made him president.

A group of computer scientists and election lawyers charged this week that the 2016 election result is equally dubious. They presented a report to leading Democrats, including Clinton campaign chairman John

Podesta and general counsel Mark Elias, arguing that the vote totals in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania had been manipulated in favor of Trump.

The 56 electoral votes from the three populous industrial states were all awarded to Trump, who carried each state by a narrow margin: 27,000 votes in Wisconsin, 9,000 votes in Michigan, and 70,000 votes in Pennsylvania. If these electoral votes shifted to Clinton, she would win the Electoral College by 288 to 250.

The argument, presented by Alex Halderman, the director of the University of Michigan Center for Computer Security and Society, is suggestive, but not conclusive. It relies on the finding that Clinton received disproportionately fewer votes in counties that used electronic voting machines compared to counties that used paper ballots and optical scanners. In Wisconsin, the only state analyzed in detail, Clinton may have lost as many as 30,000 votes, more than Trump's margin of victory.

The analysts did not claim definitive proof, but urged the Democratic Party to file challenges in the three states to force reexamination of the tabulation and, if possible, full recounts. The deadlines are approaching fast: Friday, November 25 for Pennsylvania; Monday, November 28 for Wisconsin; and Wednesday, November 30 for Michigan.

There have long been suspicions of data manipulation by electronic voting machines, partly because of anecdotal reports of error—voters claiming they cast a vote for one candidate only to see the machine record it as a vote for another—and partly because the machines are manufactured by companies run by CEOs with close ties to the Republican Party.

The current claims, however, may well serve as an effort to whitewash the dismal performance of the Democratic Party in key working-class areas, particularly among minority workers in inner-city Milwaukee, Detroit, Pittsburgh and other urban centers.

There are additional problems with the claims of electronic manipulation. Michigan conducts voting entirely by means of paper ballots with optical scanners, making such manipulation difficult. Pennsylvania, on the other hand, has an entirely electronic voting system, with no paper ballots. However, the state government is under a Democratic Party administration, and would therefore seem

unlikely to steal the election for Trump.

Moreover, there have been attempts to link charges of election manipulation to the Russia-baiting by the Clinton campaign and the Democratic Party during the months before the election, when the Democrats claimed that the Russian government was responsible for hacking into the emails of campaign chairman Podesta and the Democratic National Committee. No evidence was ever presented of a Russian role in the release of these emails, which proved politically embarrassing, and the warnings that Moscow planned to disrupt the functioning of polling places on Election Day proved to be a false alarm.

The main obstacle to any serious investigation into possible rigging of voting machines or state tabulations, however, is the attitude of the Democratic leadership, above all the Obama White House, which has embraced Trump and promised a “smooth transition” to what will undoubtedly be the most reactionary, militaristic and dictatorial government in American history. *New York* magazine, which first reported the claims of vote manipulation in Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, noted the stance of the Obama administration, writing, “Also complicating matters, a senior Clinton adviser said, is that the White House, focused on a smooth transfer of power, does not want Clinton to challenge the election result.”



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