

Real World Graduation: Question 47: Presidential Elections

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Question 47

Suppose, in a U. S. Presidential election, candidate A gets 48% of the popular vote, candidate B gets 46%, and the remaining 6% is divided among various other minor-party candidates as officially reported by the election authorities in all the states. However, candidate B is declared the winner of the election, and takes the oath of office. How could this happen? Between the election and inauguration, neither candidate dies, is convicted of a felony, is found to be ineligible, or refuses the office. Also, none of the 6% gained by other candidates represented a victory in any given state.

- a) Candidate B engaged in large-scale election fraud, and was able to get many of candidate A's votes to be rejected. Although 48% voted for candidate A, less than 46% were counted.
- b) Candidate A was favored by the mainstream media, and they inflated the vote counts for their favorite, even though he was not as popular.
- c) The other minor-party candidates gave their votes to candidate B, so he ended up with 52%, and is clearly the winner.
- d) Since neither candidate got a 50% + 1 majority, a runoff was held in the U. S. House of Representatives, and candidate B was the winner.
- e) A combination of a) and c).

Answer to Question 47

This is a trick question. None of the answers are correct for U. S. Presidential elections.

Answer a) is wrong because the question states that the vote totals were as reported by the election officials; that is, after any electoral fraud.

Answer b) is wrong because the media cannot determine outcomes of elections by inflating pretended vote counts or polls; the votes are what they are per the reported results. In fact, the mainstream media routinely engages in this sort of vote-inflating cheerleading for their favorite, but in the long run, the candidates favored by the media lose most of the time. This indicates that the members of the media are out of step with the voting public, but nothing more.

Answers c) and d) are wrong because neither is permitted in the U. S. electoral system.

The correct answer is that the President is elected by an Electoral College, which is apportioned according to the number of seats in both houses of Congress (sum of the number of House Representatives plus 2 for each Senate seat). The Electoral College is a winner-takes-all system except in Maine and Nebraska, where electoral votes are assigned by congressional district. In the other 48 states, a candidate who wins the popular vote in that state gets all the states' electoral votes, whether he won the popular vote by one vote or if he won with all the votes. Therefore, it is possible for a candidate to win with wide margins in a few large states (thus increasing the popular vote count) and lose in a large number of smaller states, and end up with an insufficient number of Electoral College votes necessary to win the election. This has happened several times in our history, most recently with Bush defeating Gore in 2000 and Trump defeating Clinton in 2016.

Some mental-midget political activists want you to believe that Bush somehow stole the election of 2000 (by legal technicalities in the Supreme Court), and that Trump somehow stole the election of 2016 (by "colluding with Russia"), and that these were the only occasions in which a candidate had won the Presidency with a minority of the popular vote. In fact, it happened twice before Bush vs. Gore: Samuel J. Tilden won the popular vote in 1876, but lost in the Electoral College to Rutherford B. Hayes; and S. Grover Cleveland won the popular vote in 1888, but lost in the Electoral College to Benjamin Harrison. There is one other notable example. In the election of 1824, neither Andrew Jackson nor John Quincy Adams had enough Electoral College votes, so the election was decided by the House of Representatives (per Amendment 12 of the U. S. Constitution), and they chose Adams. But Jackson had won the popular vote.

Another correct answer, not given in the question, is that some electors chose not to cast their vote in the Electoral College per the popular vote. This is permitted by law; electors are not obligated to vote for the person who won the popular vote. This is a good method to prevent people like Hitler or Stalin from being elected, assuming the electors have the backbone for it.