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Electoral College Watch

By Gary L. Gregg

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The Electoral College Is Good for America

Part 1: It Saved us in 2000.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of a three-part defense of the electoral college.

The quadrennial attack on the electoral college has begun once again. The bumper stickers have come out and the trite calls for a "fairer" system have begun to populate op-ed pages and Internet chat rooms around the nation. Not too long ago we dodged a bullet aimed at the heart of our political system when proposals by Senators Hillary Clinton and Arlen Specter to abolish the electoral college fizzled and drifted off into the ether.

Why did the electoral college survive electing a president who failed to win a majority of the popular vote? Quite simply, we learned from 2000 that no matter what the drawbacks of the current system, it is imminently better than the alternative.

The electoral-college system serves to focus our political battles into state-by-state contests for the most votes. In 2000, the post-election battle centered on Florida and stayed there because the electoral college worked to give the winner of the Sunshine State the presidency. If a national plurality were allowed to choose the president, and the election were as close as it was in 2000, Gore and Bush being separated by less than one half of one percent, how would the post-election contest have been different?

Without the electoral college, Bush and Gore would have both realized that either of them could demand recounts and mount challenges against ballots in every precinct, in every county, in every state of the Union with the real hope of finding enough votes that the election could have been overturned. Thousands of lawyers would tie up hundreds of courts around the nation with little hope of any clean or clear conclusion. Rather than *Bush v. Gore*, we likely would have had hundreds of lawsuits winding their way to the Supreme Court.

In 2000 the electoral college saved us from a national nightmare

much worse than that which we suffered. Even with the electoral college, Kerry is said to have lined up 10,000 lawyers ready to mount legal challenges to the vote. Abolishing the electoral college would dismantle the firewalls protecting us all from a quadrennial national nightmare that would turn over our elections to lawyers and judges.

The alternative to the electoral college is a national nightmare of hanging chads and clever lawyers from the Carolinas to California.

— *Gary L. Gregg is director of the [McConnell Center for Political Leadership at the University of Louisville](#) and editor of [Securing Democracy: Why We Have an Electoral College](#) and [Considering the Bush Presidency](#) (with Mark Rozell). Gregg is also NRO's official electoral-college dean.*