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## Electoral College Watch

By Gary L. Gregg

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Retro vs. Metro

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the third installment of a three-part defense of the electoral college. The first part is [here](#) and second is [here](#).

John Kerry recently went goose hunting in Ohio and posed for the cameras in his camouflage coat, a shotgun tucked under his arm. His website sports more pictures of him shooting, talking with veterans, and standing in the pulpit of churches. [One picture](#) is creatively cropped to perfectly center the name "Christ" behind Kerry's head. The battle for the presidency has now settled into rural areas in states like Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Colorado. And, it's all because of the electoral college.

Take a look at the results of the 2000 election and it becomes radically clear that the electoral college that produced the Bush victory is having an important and salutary impact on our political system. It's the electoral college that keeps the values of traditional America relevant in the 21st century and the electoral college that helps rural America balance the immense cultural, economic, and social power of urban centers.

Abolishing the electoral college would mean transferring near complete political power to metropolitan areas who are already producing the candidates and funding them as well. Al Gore demonstrated in 2000 that the national popular vote can be won by appealing to a narrow band of the electorate heavily secular, single, and concentrated in cities.

In 2000, Al Gore won the vote in major cities 71 percent to 26 percent for George Bush. Alternatively, Bush won rural communities 59 percent to 37 percent. These are very large margins showing a drastic difference in the geographic centers of the divided electorate.

In 2000 we discovered, though the media didn't focus on it, that the much discussed "gender gap" was really a marriage gap with Bush overwhelmingly winning the votes of married people and Gore solidly winning the votes of unmarried people. For instance, Gore bested Bush among unmarried women by more than 30 percent

while Bush actually won the vote among married women.

Among gun owners, Bush won by more than 25 percent. Among people with children in the home, Bush bested Gore by 7 percent. Among those who attend church at least weekly, Bush beat Gore by more than 20 percent. On the other hand, among those that never attend a house of worship, Gore beat Bush by almost 30 percent.

Partisan Democrats and cultural liberals have come to understand these vast differences in the electorate and it is a chief reason they wish to abolish the electoral college. With its slight benefit to smaller, more rural states, the electoral college forces candidates to appeal beyond a secular urban base to win the presidency.

John Sperling, the billionaire founder of Phoenix University, and those that have collaborated with him to produce the book [\*The Great Divide\*](#) have demonstrated this in their argument to abolish the electoral college so that Democratic candidates can dedicate themselves to a regime of thoroughgoing secular liberalism without having to try to appeal to the backward rednecks in rural America. Their language is stark, offensive, and demonstrates the radicalization of our politics that would come with an abolition of the electoral college. If you want to see what our future would look like with the abolition of the Electoral College, take a look at Sperling's book.

The electoral college is a democratic way of electing presidents that has produced good and moderate candidates in the past and gives some voice to the men and women who serve in the military, raise our families, and keep our communities of faith vibrant entities. Without it, you would see what Sperling calls "Retro" America ignored by candidates that could win the presidency while ignoring the entire middle of the nation.

Our politics would be radicalized as even more power came into the hands of a metropolitan elite who disdain the cultures and values of middle America.

— 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.