

If you want to know how National Popular Vote for President Would Work—Look at Ohio

Some people have wondered whether a nationwide election for President might result in candidates' campaigning only in metropolitan areas, while ignoring rural areas.

This concern arises from the impression that the big cities are both bigger and more Democratic than they are and from incorrect assumptions as to how real-world political campaigns are run.

It's not a guessing game how National Popular Vote would work.

All you have to do is look to Ohio to see how presidential campaigns operate in an election in which every vote is equally valuable, and the winner is the candidate who receives the most popular votes.

Under the current state-by-state winner-take-all system of electing the President, all of Ohio's electoral votes go to the candidate who receives the most votes inside the state.

If it were true that candidates only concentrated on big metro areas, while ignoring rural areas, we would see evidence of this today—*under the current system*—in “battleground” states such as Ohio (which received over a quarter of all general-election campaign events in 2012 and a similar fraction of advertising expenditures).

Here are the facts about Ohio:

- The 4 biggest metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) in Ohio have 53.9% of the state's population and received 52.1% of the state's 73 campaign events in 2012—slightly less than (but very close to) their proportional share of the state's population.
- The 7 medium-sized metro areas have 23.6% of the state's population and received 23.3% of the campaign events—almost exactly their proportional share.
- The 53 remaining counties (that is, the rural counties lying outside the state's 11 MSAs) have 22% of the state's population and received 25% of the campaign events—slightly more than (but very close to) their proportional share.

The three parts of the state varied politically.

- 4 biggest metro areas—54% Democratic
- 7 medium-sized metro areas—52% Democratic
- Rural areas—58% Republican

In a nationwide election for President, in which every vote is equally valuable in all 50 states, and the winner is the candidate who gets the most popular votes, candidates would campaign everywhere—big cities, medium-sized cities, and rural areas—just as they now do in battleground states.