



Monday, November 1 2004

CLASSIFIEDS

Search Ads

Place an Ad

NEWSPAPER ADS

SUBMIT YOUR PR

HOME DELIVERY

COLUMNISTS

COMMUNITY LINKS

BREAKING NEWS

Get latest information from NewsHub!

write the editor >>

ARCHIVE SEARCH

browse archive >>

READER METER

What would be your preferred method of voting for president?

- Just like it is, with California's current "winner take all" electoral college system
- A "proportional" electoral college system (if candidate "A" gets 60% of the vote in California, he/she gets 60% of California's electoral votes)
- A straight, nationwide, popular vote

vote >>

Current results:

<p>19/143 13%</p>	<p>Just like it is, with California's current "winner take all" electoral college system</p>
<p>65/143 45%</p>	<p>A "proportional" electoral college system (if candidate "A" gets 60% of the vote in California,</p>



<< back

Networks Learning from Past Election Mistakes

10/31/2004
Signal Staff

By Rena' Cherrick
Signal Staff Writer

It was Election Day 2000. And what began as typical Tuesday balloting de-evolved into a heated debate that was finally decided 37 days after voters cast their ballots.

The confusion was sparked about 8 p.m., when every major television network began declaring then-Vice President Al Gore the winner of electoral votes in key state Florida. However, within the next two hours, as votes continued to come in from Florida's panhandle, all withdrew their earlier predictions.

The networks decided to again declare the winner — this time calling George W. Bush the new president at 2:15 a.m. following Election Day. But not long afterward, the pronouncement was recanted as Florida was said to be just "too close to call."

When the U.S. Supreme Court, on a 5-4 vote, halted recounts of Florida ballots, effectively making Bush president, many cried foul play.

Much of the confusion sprang from news media "calling" elections — declaring who has won before all ballots are counted. Such "calls" are based in part on exit polls — interviews with voters as they leave polling places asking how they cast their votes.

Election projections are also based on two other sources: vote returns from sample precincts and county vote tabulations, said Edison Media Research Executive Vice President Joe Lenski.

That election was a wake-up call for many.

"Many lessons were learned from the 2000 experience and changes were made to see that mistakes like the ones in 2000 would be very unlikely to occur again," Edison Media Research officials said in a prepared statement.

"We never saw an election like 2000," said Kathleen Frankovic, NBC News director of surveys. "The rules have changed."

In a bid to ensure the problems of 2000, and similar problems in 2002, are not repeated, the TV networks and The Associated Press have teamed up to form the National Election Pool to project election winners.

Two veteran polling firms, Mitofsky International and Edison Media Research, will conduct the exit polls to gather information. AP will count the votes, and each individual media outlet will use the information to make its own "calls."

The surveys will be conducted at randomly selected precincts throughout all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Voters of a predetermined frequency will be asked to complete a questionnaire about demographic information, their vote choices and issues relating to their choices.

Answers are voluntary and anonymous. The interviews help provide a snapshot of the American voter taken moments after leaving the polling booth and are used to project winners prior to completed vote tallies.

"They are picked in such a way to accurately depict the



he/she gets 60%
of California's
electoral votes)



59/143
41%

A straight,
nationwide,
popular vote



demographics," said Joe Lenski, executive vice president of Edison Media Research.

There will be 1,480 exit poll precincts across the nation; interviews will begin after polls open and continue until an hour before they close.

More than 100,000 voters will be queried nationwide with a minimum of 100 voters at each exit polling station, Mitofsky International President Warren Mitofsky said.

Once data is collected, it will be entered into computers, allowing projections to be made almost instantaneously.

Polling responses will be delivered in three waves on Election Day, with the final tally announced shortly after polls close.

"If the poll results are definitive enough, a race will be officially 'called' for a projected winning candidate. Otherwise a 'too close to call' notice will be posted until vote counts are processed," Edison Media announced in a prepared statement.

All the networks will have access to the same data. However, each organization will independently analyze and call each race. If the race is close, as expected, The Associated Press officials expect to call the race between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m.

"In a close race, you don't make estimations based on a sample poll," Frankovic said. "Exit polls don't include absentee votes or mail in votes."

Absentee voting accounted for 16 percent of the vote in the 2000 election and is expected to account for 20 percent in this presidential election. Increasing use of absentee ballots contributed to the misinterpreted data in the Florida 2000 election.

Many states do not count their absentee votes the day of election. In fact, many require only that an absentee ballot be postmarked by Election Day.

For example, Ohio will count ballots arriving as late as Nov. 12 if the ballot is postmarked by Nov. 2. Florida also counts overseas and military ballots that arrive within 10 days of Election Day.

However, National Election Pool officials said they are confident their polling strategies have accurately accounted for absentee voting.

More than 300 reporters will be stationed at phone centers in 13 states where absentee or early voting is popular. In 2000, research was only conducted in three such states.

Interviewers have already begun calling registered voters and data will be combined with Election Day results.

With better-designed computer models and a larger vote return sample, Tuesday's election results are expected to be much more accurate than the 2000 results. Designers also used a greater number of past voting counts for comparisons.

"Historical data has been programmed in about registered and actual voters and past voting patterns," said AP Managing Editor Mike Silverman.



This site is not meant to be an exact copy of the printed Signal publication but is instead a sample of each day's news.

[Terms and Conditions](#)

Copyright 2003 The-Signal.com - Site powered with DynamicBase by [ActiveQuest, Inc.](#)