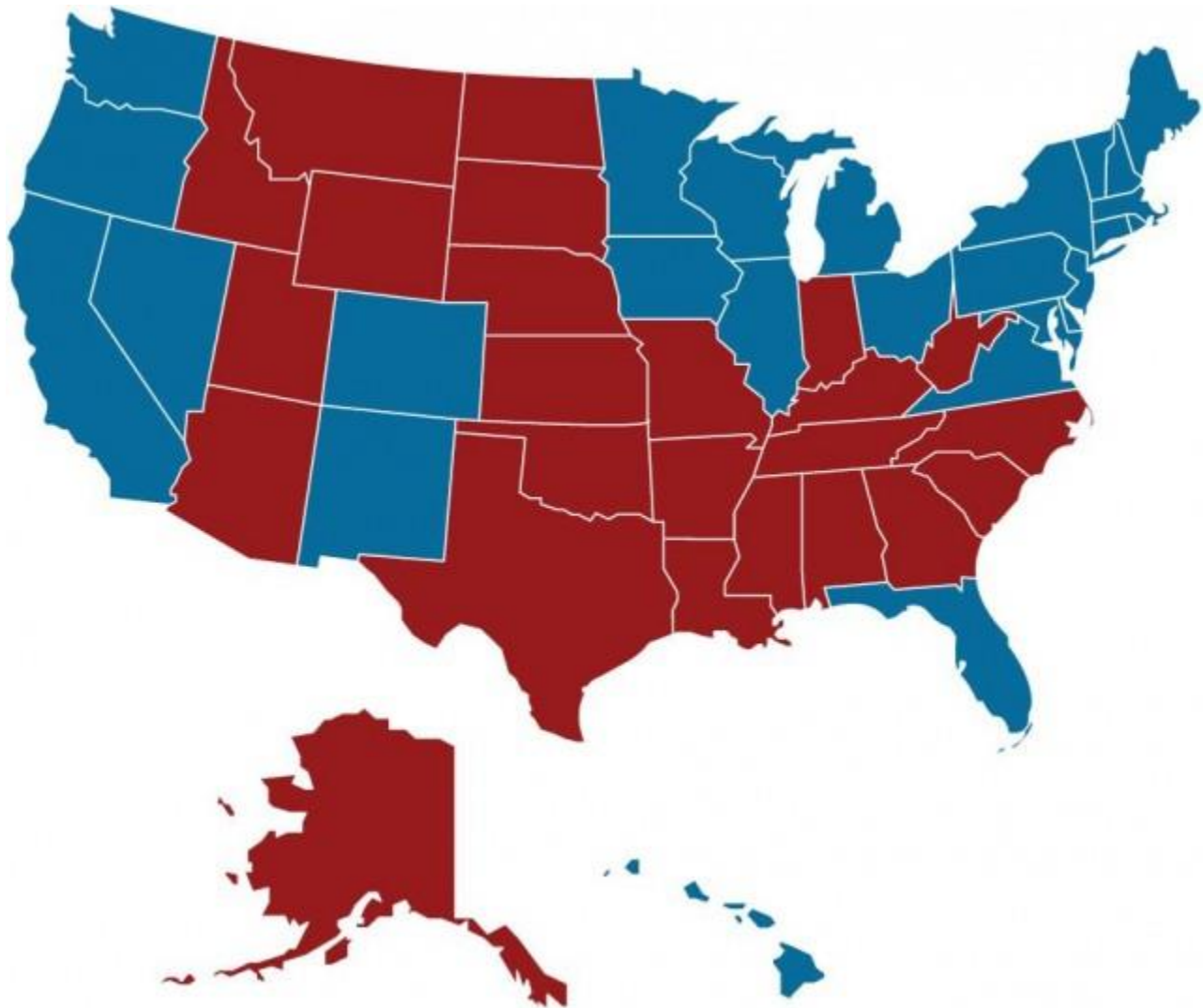


Oklahoma Senate Endorses Plan To Effectively Abolish The Electoral College

By Josh Israel on February 14, 2014 at 1:28 pm

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The Oklahoma Senate voted Wednesday to pass a bill that would add Oklahoma to the growing list of states working to ensure that the presidential candidate receiving the most votes becomes

president. It became the first legislative body in a GOP-leaning state to embrace the National Popular Vote, an interstate compact that would ensure that the candidate who garners the most votes in each presidential election would also receive a majority in the Electoral College.

Oklahoma is not a politically competitive states in presidential elections. No Democratic nominee has carried the Sooner State since President Lyndon Baines Johnson in his 1964 landslide victory — and Mitt Romney received more than twice as many votes as President Barack Obama in the 2012 race, carrying all 77 counties. As such, candidates on both sides of the aisle focus their travel and advertising budgets elsewhere, largely ignoring the state’s 3.8 million residents.

SB 906, which passed 28 to 18 and now proceeds to the Oklahoma House, would add Oklahoma to a growing group of states that have agreed to automatically give their electoral votes to the national popular vote winner, regardless of how the candidate does in their state. The compact, which has already been endorsed by ten jurisdictions possessing 136 electoral votes, would only go into effect when at least 270 electoral votes are governed by the compact. Oklahoma’s 9 electoral votes would bring the count to 145, about 53.7 percent of the needed total.

Perhaps concerned that Democratic nominees have received popular majorities in five of the last six presidential races, right-wing groups including the American Legislative Exchange Council and the Cato Institute, have opposed the change. U.S. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) has called the idea a “genuine threat to our country.” But 16 Oklahoma Senate Republicans joined all 12 Democrats in support of the bill, sponsored by Republican Assistant Majority Floor Leader Rob Johnson.

In 2000, then-Vice President Al Gore (D) received more than half-a-million votes more than George W. Bush, but lost the presidency due to the weighting of the electoral college. Andrew Jackson (1824), Samuel Tilden (1876), and Grover Cleveland (1888) similarly lost presidential elections even though they won the popular vote. If enough states adopt this compact, the basic notion that the candidate with the most votes wins would be enshrined nationally.