

THE CONTENTIOUS ELECTION OF 2016

As the eight-year presidency of Democrat Barack Obama drew to a close, a new chapter of American history began: the 2016 presidential election.

This election drew attention to the massive changes occurring in the United States and abroad, as voters hotly debated the issues they viewed as important in choosing a new leader. The changing American identity raised points that had not been as significant in prior elections. Growing numbers of young voters, increasing Hispanic populations, and a shrinking white working class shaped the discussion. Divisions in both the Democratic and Republican parties also revealed the increasing diversity of opinion in America. Out of the chaos of Twitter debates and disagreements in the press emerged a common theme: many voters felt the political system had left them behind.

PARTY POLITICS

Both parties contained members whose positions reflected both liberal and conservative views. However, some Democrats and Republicans voiced unhappiness with the changing ideals of their parties. Approval ratings for President Obama remained high, but many Democrats were still not satisfied by the progress he had made. They felt he had not set strict enough rules for banks after poor bank policies set off a major financial crisis in 2008. Perceived racial prejudice in the courts and within law enforcement, and the use of American troops to help other countries were also seen as problematic.

Republicans had attempted to stop many of Obama's efforts. In fact, they shut down the government for several weeks in 2013 in an unsuccessful attempt to block Obama's universal healthcare bill—a bill that provided health insurance

to all Americans. Republicans struggled to find their footing after being defeated on several issues, such as gay marriage, which was legalized by the Supreme Court in 2015, and the construction of an oil pipeline, which Obama vetoed that same year.

Limiting the entry of Mexicans into the country and gun ownership rights also emerged as major issues for both parties. Democrats and Republicans alike found themselves confronted by demands to address terrorism, gun violence, and police brutality. Many Americans believed the political system was run by insiders and influential special-interest groups they felt certain politicians would support.

WHAT MATTERED IN 2016

Percentage of registered voters saying each issue is "very important" to their vote in 2016

Economy	80	90	Social Security	66	68
Terrorism	74	89	Trade Policy	52	64
Immigration	65	79	Education	73	58
Foreign Policy	73	79	Treatment of ethnic and racial minorities	79	42
Health Care	77	71	Abortion	50	41
Supreme Court Appointments	62	70	Environment	69	32
Gun Policy	74	71	Treatment of LGBT People	54	25

SOURCE: www.people-press.org (Pew Research Center)

D Registered Democrats R Registered Republicans

CRITICAL VIEWING Which of the issues in the "What Mattered" graphic would be important to you as a voter? Do research to determine how that issue came into play in the 2016 presidential election.



Democratic presidential candidates (left to right) Jim Webb, Bernie Sanders, Hillary Clinton, Martin O'Malley, and Lincoln Chafee engage in their party's first presidential debate in October 2015 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

© Joe Raedler/Getty Images



Republican presidential candidates (left to right) John Kasich, Jeb Bush, Marco Rubio, Donald Trump, Ben Carson, Ted Cruz, Carly Fiorina, and Rand Paul appear during a presidential debate in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in November 2015.

© Morry Gash/AP Photo

PICKING THE CANDIDATES

The first Republican debates were held in August 2015, and the first Democratic debates in October. From there, the candidates geared up for the primary elections that would take place in February 2016. The results would determine who received each party's nomination for president.

The field of Democratic candidates was small. Former Secretary of State and New York Senator Hillary Clinton and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders quickly defeated their few challengers. Republicans vying for their party's nod were Texas Senator Ted Cruz, Florida Senator Marco Rubio, neurosurgeon Ben Carson, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, Ohio Governor John Kasich, former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina, real estate developer Donald Trump, and Jeb Bush, former Florida governor and brother of President George W. Bush. Jill Stein ran as the Green Party candidate and Gary Johnson represented the Libertarian Party.

The field of Republican contenders was remarkably diverse. An African American, two Latinos, and a woman were among the candidates. The candidates all focused on Republican unhappiness over two terms of Democratic leadership. Their platforms, or the

issues on which they campaigned, were similar. Many of their arguments against each other's candidacies hinged on who would be most able to defend the country and uphold traditional values. Never having held political office, Trump and Fiorina claimed their business experience made them superior candidates. Republican candidates primarily worked to appeal to white working class voters. Support from minorities was low. The group of candidates dwindled quickly as primary election results came in. Kasich and Cruz dropped out in May 2016, leaving Trump to claim the nomination at the Republican National Convention in July. He named Indiana governor Mike Pence to the vice presidential slot.

Clinton was long considered the likely Democratic nominee, but she found an unexpected challenger in Sanders. Sanders' populist platform called for free college education and tax increases for the wealthy. It appealed to many Democrats who felt Clinton favored private businesses over "regular" people. Clinton won in the primaries nonetheless. She became the first woman to lead the ticket for a major party in a U.S. presidential election. Clinton announced at the July Democratic National Convention that Virginia senator Tim Kaine would be her running mate.

A VOTER'S DILEMMA

Selecting a new leader is tough, and it is even harder when you are not sure if you like any of your options. The majority of the American public was not happy with their party's candidate, and according to one poll, 25 percent of the American population didn't like either candidate.

MUTUALLY UNFAVORABLE

U.S. adults with FAVORABLE opinions of the candidates

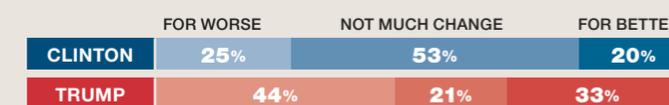


U.S. adults with UNFAVORABLE opinions of the candidates

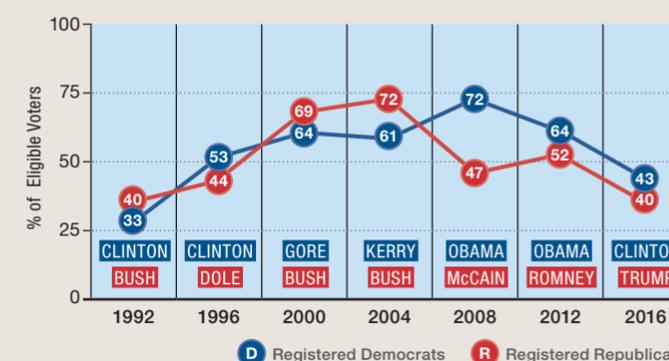


CHANGE . . . FOR THE BETTER?

Percent who say each candidate would change Washington



VOTER SATISFACTION WITH CANDIDATES

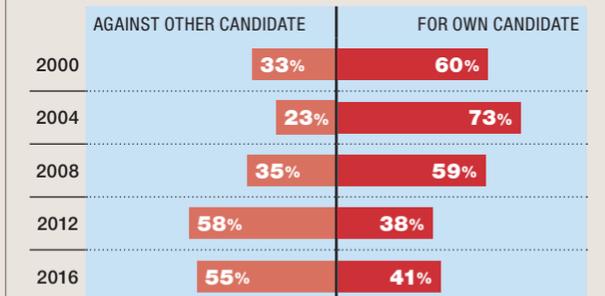


SOURCES: www.people-press.org (Pew Research Center); www.gallup.com (Gallup Polls)

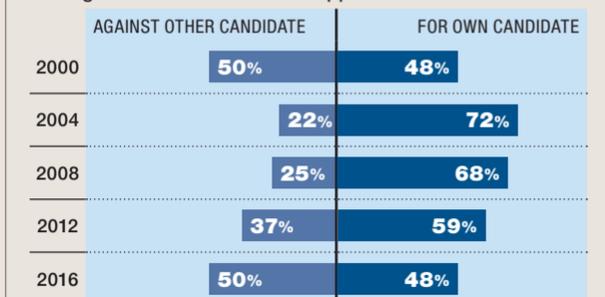
FOR OR AGAINST?

Large numbers of Clinton and Trump supporters saw their choice more as a vote against the opposing candidate than a vote supporting their candidate.

Among Republican candidate supporters



Among Democratic candidate supporters



CLINTON vs. TRUMP

Trump's selection as the Republican nominee was controversial even among Republicans. His abrasive style and exaggerated promises offended some voters. For example, Trump made inflammatory comments about women and Muslims, and promised to build a wall between the United States and Mexico to stop the flow of immigrants over the border. This led to accusations of misogyny, the hatred of women, and xenophobia, the fear or dislike of immigrants. Critics claimed the media normalized this type of behavior by failing to accurately contrast it with Clinton's long record of service.

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HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

Clinton was born on October 26, 1947, in Chicago, Illinois. She was first lady during her husband Bill Clinton's term as president (1993-2001). She later served as a Senator for New York (2001-09) and U.S. Secretary of State (2009-13).

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DONALD J. TRUMP

Trump was born on June 14, 1946, in New York City, New York. He was the son of a real estate developer and expanded his father's business. He made a name for himself in reality television with the 2004 debut of *The Apprentice*, a business strategy competition show.

But some people liked Trump's disregard for typical campaign strategies and admired his business experience. Others praised his ability to use social media as a platform for his message. His tendency to lose his temper on Twitter, however, led others to question his ability to handle the stresses of the presidency.

Clinton's strategy included emphasizing her experience as a senator and as secretary of state. She maintained a large lead among African-American, Hispanic, and young voters. Her critics pointed to her use of a personal email account during her time as secretary of state, and the potential lack of security around classified information. Some also cast her as a "Washington insider" due to her long involvement in government.

In September and October, the candidates convened to debate the issues at hand. Clinton was widely viewed by the mainstream media as the winner of all three exchanges.

A NEW PRESIDENT-ELECT

In the days leading up to the November 8 election, Clinton was predicted to be the winner. However, Trump pulled off a surprise victory. He captured 290 electoral votes to Clinton's 232. In the electoral college system, the winner of the popular vote in nearly all states receives all of that state's electoral votes. While Trump's electoral college victory ensured him the presidency, Clinton actually won the popular vote by more than 2.5 million votes. Some voters and candidates questioned the accuracy of the results in the key states of Wisconsin, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, where Trump defied expectations and defeated Clinton. Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate, led a campaign for a recount in those states.

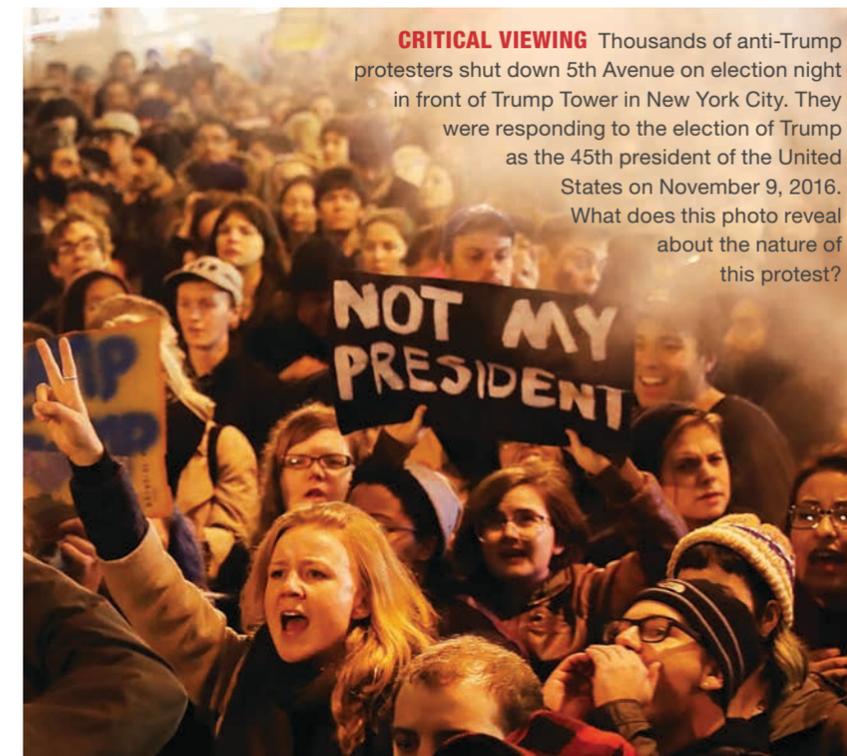
The surprising election results and Clinton's popular vote majority also led to renewed criticism of the electoral college system. Many feel it does not accurately reflect the will of the people. Some members of the 538-member electoral college refused to cast their votes for Trump, and tried to convince other electors to do the same. Seven so-called "faithless electors" cast their ballots for a candidate other than the one who won his or her state. Five were "faithless" to the Democratic candidate, and two to the Republican. One group of four electors even named themselves

the "Hamilton Electors," after Alexander Hamilton, who argued that the presidency should not be filled by an unqualified person.

Three faithless electors cast their votes for former Secretary of State Colin Powell. One voted for Faith Spotted Eagle, a member of the Yankton Sioux Nation. Republican John Kasich, Independent Bernie Sanders, and Libertarian Ron Paul also received votes. Had 37 or 38 faithless electors "gathered," the election would have been decided by the House of Representatives, which could have installed Trump or a different person as president. But that didn't happen. Faithless electors have never determined the outcome of a presidential election.

Following Trump's victory, protests erupted around the country. Many felt his attitude toward minorities and women and his lack of experience were disqualifying factors. Further inflaming tensions was the suggestion that Russia had coordinated computer hacks against the Democratic Party in an attempt to discredit Clinton and pave the way for a Trump victory.

Trump nevertheless insisted that he would bring the country together during his term as president. Though Democrats were skeptical, they agreed to work with him to unify the nation, while still opposing some of his policies. Yet with Republican majorities in both the House and Senate, a movement toward more conservative legislation during Trump's term was assured.



CRITICAL VIEWING Thousands of anti-Trump protesters shut down 5th Avenue on election night in front of Trump Tower in New York City. They were responding to the election of Trump as the 45th president of the United States on November 9, 2016. What does this photo reveal about the nature of this protest?

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2016 ELECTION BY THE NUMBERS

Donald J. Trump, Republican **306** | Hillary Rodham Clinton, Democrat **232**

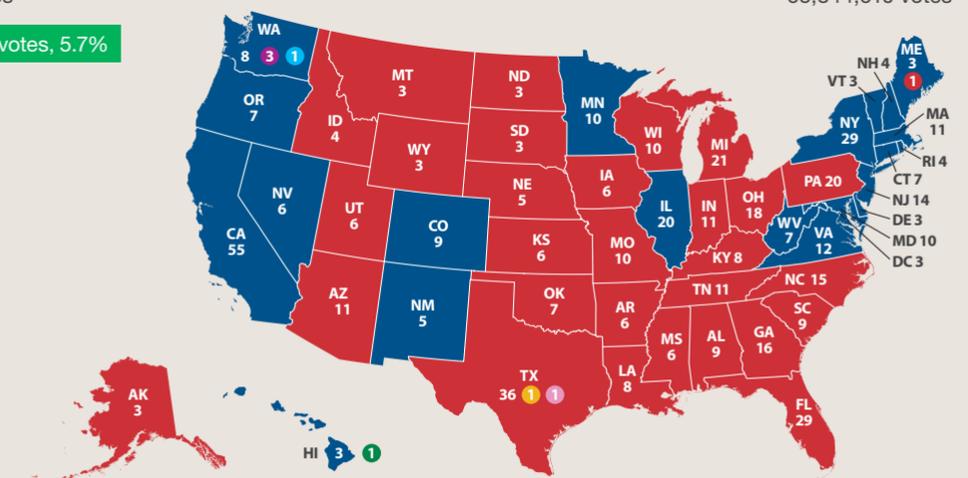
Electoral Vote: 306 votes, 56.9% | 232 votes, 43.1%

Popular Vote: 46.1% | 48.2%

Write-Ins & Others: 7,804,213 votes, 5.7% | 65,844,610 votes

Recipients of Electoral Votes from Faithless Electors:

- Colin Powell: 3 votes
- Bernie Sanders: 1 vote
- John Kasich: 1 vote
- Ron Paul: 1 vote
- Faith Spotted Eagle: 1 vote



SOURCE: Cook Political Report <http://cookpolitical.com>