

Presidents Winning Without Popular Vote

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Q: How many times was a president elected who did not win the popular vote?

A: It has happened five times.

The 2016 election was the most recent when the candidate who received the greatest number of electoral votes, and thus won the presidency, didn't win the popular vote. But this scenario has played out in our nation's history before.

In 1824, John Quincy Adams was elected president despite not winning either the popular vote or the electoral vote. Andrew Jackson was the winner in both categories. Jackson received 38,000 more popular votes than Adams, and beat him in the electoral vote 99 to 84. Despite his victories, Jackson didn't reach the majority 131 votes needed in the Electoral College to be declared president. In fact, neither candidate did. The decision went to the House of Representatives, which voted Adams into the White House.

In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes won the election (by a margin of one electoral vote), but he lost the popular vote by more than 250,000 ballots to Samuel J. Tilden.

In 1888, Benjamin Harrison received 233 electoral votes to Grover Cleveland's 168, winning the presidency. But Harrison lost the popular vote by more than 90,000 votes.

In 2000, George W. Bush was declared the winner of the general election and became the 43rd president, but he didn't win the popular vote either. Al Gore holds that distinction, garnering about 540,000 more votes than Bush. However, Bush won the electoral vote, 271 to 266.

In 2016, Donald Trump won the electoral vote by 304 to 227 over Hillary Clinton, but Trump lost the popular vote. Clinton received nearly 2.9 million more votes than Trump, according to an analysis by the Associated Press of the certified results in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Update, Dec. 23, 2016: We have updated this article to include the results of the 2016 election.

Sources

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