

# With Electoral College, not all votes are equal

## Ballots for people in four states carry the most weight

By Seth Benenson  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON—When it comes to electing the president, not all votes are created equal. And chances are yours will count less than those of a select few.

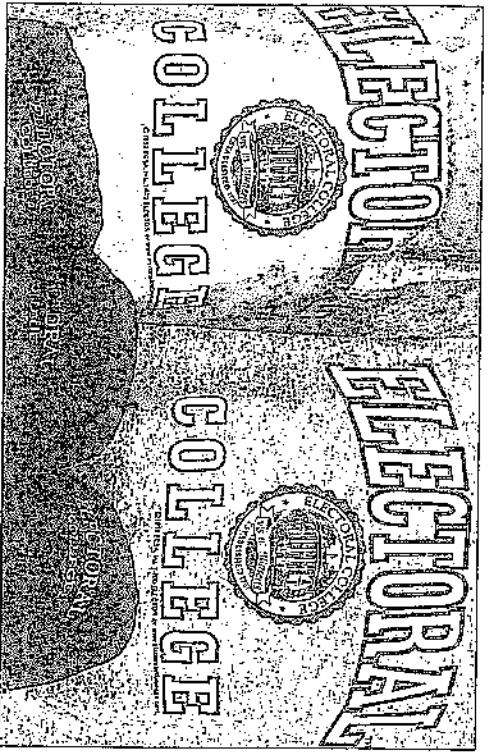
For example, the vote of Dave Smith in Sheridan, Wyo., counts almost three-and-a-half times as much mathematically as those of his wife's aunts in northeastern Ohio.

Why? Electoral College

A statistical analysis of the state-by-state voting-eligible population by The Associated Press shows that Wyoming has 139,000 eligible voters — those 18 and older; U.S. citizens and non-felons — for every presidential elector chosen in the state. In Ohio, it's almost 476,000 per elector, and it's nearly 478,000 in neighboring Pennsylvania.

But there's mathematical weight and then there's the reality of political power in a system where the president is decided not by the national popular vote but by an 18th century political compromise: the Electoral College.

Smith figures his vote in solid Republican Wyoming really doesn't count that much because it's a sure Mitt Romney state. The same could be said



Each state's Electoral College votes are based on the size of its congressional delegation, not its population. Because of that, a presidential vote in Wyoming mathematically counts more than three times as much as a vote in Ohio, at least in terms of choosing electors.

for ballots cast in solid Democratic states like New York or Vermont. In Ohio, one of the biggest battleground states, Smith's relatives are bombarded with political ads. In Wyoming, Smith says, "The candidates don't care about my vote because we only see election commercials from out-of-state TV stations."

The nine battleground states where Romney and Barack Obama are spending a lot of time and money — Ohio, Florida, Virginia, Colorado, New Hampshire, Iowa, Nevada, North Carolina and Wisconsin — have 44.1 million people eligible to vote. That's only 20.7 percent of the nation's 212.6 million eligible voters. So nearly four of

The biggest winners in the system, those whose votes count the most, live in just four states: Colorado, New Hampshire, Iowa and Nevada. They have low voter-to-electors ratios and are in battleground states.

Only 4 percent of the nation's eligible voters — 1 in 25 — live in those states.

It's all dictated by the U.S. Constitution, which set up the Electoral College. The number of electors each state gets depends on the size of its congressional delegation. Even the least populated states — like Wyoming — get a minimum of three, meaning more crowded states get less proportionally.

If the nation's Electoral College votes were apportioned in a strict one-person, one-vote manner, each state would get one elector for every 395,000 eligible voters. Some 156 million voters live in the 20 states that have a larger ratio than that average: That's 73 percent — nearly three out of four. "It's a terrible system; it's the most undemocratic way of electing a chief executive in the world," said Paul Finkelstein, a law professor at Albany Law School who teaches at Duke University. "There's no other electoral system in the world where the person with the most votes doesn't win."

The statistical analysis uses voter eligibility figures for 2010 calculated by political science professor Michael Mc-

Donald at George Mason University. McDonald is a leader in the field of voter turnout.

Former Sen. Alan Simpson of Wyoming defends the Electoral College system for protecting small states in elections, which otherwise might be overrun by big city campaigning: "Once you get rid of the Electoral College, the election will be conducted in New York and San Francisco."

Sure it gives small states more power, but at what price? asks Douglas Army, a political science professor at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts: "This clearly violates that basic democratic principle of one person, one vote. Indeed, many constitutional scholars point out that this unfair arrangement would almost certainly be declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court on those grounds. If it were not actually in the Constitution."

Article 2 of the Constitution says presidents are voted on by electors (it doesn't mention the word college) with each state having a number equal to its U.S. senators and representatives. While representatives are allocated among the states proportional by population, senators are not. Every state gets two.

So Wyoming has 0.2 percent of the nation's voting-eligible population but almost 0.6 percent of the Electoral College. And since the number of electors is limited to 538, some states get less proportionately.



Socratic Seminar "Ticket"

"Electoral College"

*Should We Keep, Reform or Abolish The Electoral College?*  
[Minimum 3 Reasons Per Column]

	KEEP	REFORM	ABOLISH
1.		1.	1.
2.		2.	2.
3.		3.	3.
4.		4.	4.
5.		5.	5.