

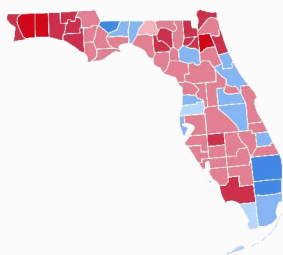
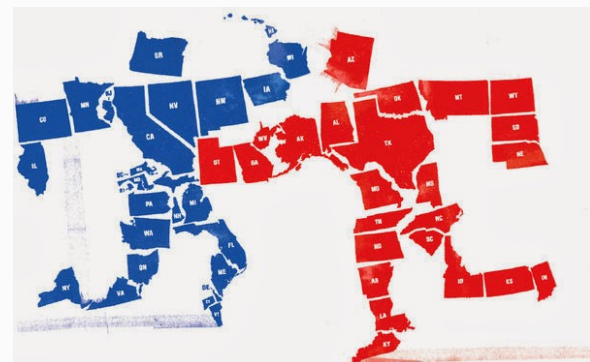


# CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

# Battleground States

*Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how “We the People” interact with the government and each other. Let’s help each other expand our civic literacy.*

All 50 states contribute to the election of a president. Some states traditionally and consistently vote Democrat (‘blue states’) or Republican (‘red states’). Other states are considered ‘purple states’ because the parties have an equal chance at winning the vote. These states are called battleground states or ‘swing states’, and they play a huge role in presidential campaigns. Candidates work hard to win the popular vote in those states, because the candidate that wins the popular vote in a state also wins its **Electoral College** votes (with **two exceptions**). It is the Electoral College vote, not the popular vote, that determines the winner of a presidential election.



For example, in the **2000 election**, Florida was an important state to win for both Republican George W. Bush and Democrat Al Gore. The winner of Florida would win the entire election! Ultimately, the winner of the state was decided by only 537 popular votes out of almost 6 million cast. Its 25 Electoral College votes (EV) gave Bush the presidency, with 271 Electoral College votes, only 1 more than what is needed to win the election.

### Data from the 2020 election shows how much attention battleground states get.

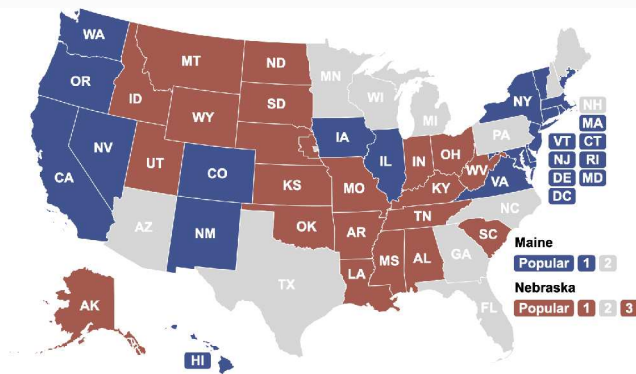
**96% of campaign events** (204 of 212) were held in just **12 states**: Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.

This means that if you live in one of these states, you are going to get a great deal of attention. If **you live a non-battleground state**, you might only see things from one candidate!

So, why do candidates pay more attention to these states than others? Like many things, it comes down to how the **Constitution dictates** a presidential election: the candidate who wins 270 Electoral College votes (EV), not the popular vote, wins the election. These battleground states, with their multiple electoral votes, then become the prizes to be won!

Candidates will pay a great deal of attention to these prize battleground states. This attention can take the form of money spent advertising, campaign staff hired and the number of campaign events in these states.

Battleground states play a huge role in elections. Already for the upcoming November election, the Trump and Harris campaigns have spent millions of dollars on advertising, mostly in the battleground states. Debate remains ongoing over whether the idea of battleground states would change if we got rid of the Electoral College, but for now, we can expect a great deal of attention to be paid to only a few states in the presidential election.



**To Think and To Do:** Track how many advertisements you see in one week from each presidential campaign. These may be billboards, mailers, or ads in newspapers or on television and radio. Which candidate advertised the most? Based on your research, could your state be considered a battleground state?

### Learn MORE about battleground states and the Electoral College

Free registration may be required.

- [Presidential Election Interactive Map](#), from 270towin
- [Top Battleground States](#), from Real Clear Politics
- [U.S. Political Parties & Organizations](#), from The Democracy Commitment, AACU



### Take Part in the 2024 Mock Election!

If you are in Florida, join us with [KidsVotingFlorida!](#)

Somewhere else?

Check out [DoubleClick Democracy](#)



**Lou Frey Institute**