

Solidifying Partisanship in Presidential Elections

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Nearly all states have established a winner-take-all rule in which all of their electoral votes are allocated to the statewide popular vote winner. Battleground states (meaning those states where the outcome is in doubt) receive nearly all campaign attention because only those contests might affect how many electoral votes the candidates earn.

The outcome of presidential elections in most states has become increasingly predictable. Since 1992, 32 states have been won by the same party in every presidential election, and 24 states have not been in a swing state position for more than two decades. In 2012, the number of swing states is likely to decline again, meaning that more voters will be ignored than ever before.

The following table provides a state-by-state review of presidential outcomes and competitiveness. It shows how some states have not been competitive for more 50 years and how most states now have a degree of partisan imbalance that makes it highly unlikely that they will become swing states in the foreseeable future

Definitions: A “*swing state*” is a state with a partisanship rating between 47% and 53% in a given election. A “*partisanship rating*” reflects what the outcome in that state would likely have been in that election if the major parties had tied in the national popular vote. A “*battleground state*” is a state that was won by less than 6% in an election.

State	Last Year as Swing State	Last Year as Battleground	Last Year Won by Party Losing in 2008	Elections in a Row Won by Same Party	State	Last Year as Swing State	Last Year as Battleground	Last Year Won by Party Losing in 2008	Elections in a Row Won by Same Party
AL	1984	1980	1976	8	MT	1992	2008	1992	4
AK	1972	1968	1964	11	NE	1912	1964	1964	11
AZ	1952	1996	1996	3	NV	2008	2004	2004	1
AR	2000	2000	1996	3	NH	2008	2004	2000	2
CA	1996	1988	1988	5	NJ	1992	1992	1988	5
CO	2008	1992	2004	1	NM	2004	2004	2004	1
CT	1992	1988	1988	5	NY	1976	1988	1984	6
DE	1992	1980	1988	5	NC	1984	2008	2004	1
DC	(never)	(never)	(never)	12	ND	1988	1976	1964	11
FL	2008	2008	2004	1	OH	2008	2008	2004	1
GA	1992	2008	1992	4	OK	1976	1976	1964	11
HI	1992	1980	1984	6	OR	2000	2004	1984	6
ID	1948	1964	1964	11	PA	2008	2004	1988	5
IL	1988	1988	1988	5	RI	1956	1984	1984	6
IN	1984	2008	2004	1	SC	1960	1996	1976	8
IA	2008	2004	2004	1	SD	1988	1996	1964	11
KS	1988	1992	1964	11	TN	2000	2000	1996	3
KY	1992	1996	1996	3	TX	1988	1996	1976	8
LA	1996	1992	1996	3	UT	1948	1912	1964	11
ME	2000	2000	1988	5	VT	1988	1988	1988	5
MD	1988	1988	1988	5	VA	2008	1996	2004	1
MA	1956	1984	1984	6	WA	2000	2000	1984	6
MI	2004	2004	1988	5	WV	1972	1988	1996	3
MN	2008	2004	1972	9	WI	2004	2004	1984	6
MS	1976	1996	1976	8	WY	1956	1992	1964	11
MO	2004	2008	1996	3					