

## CHAPTER 7

# The Electoral College and Campaign Strategy

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THE PURPOSE OF this chapter is to sum up what we know, think, and suspect about the effects of the Electoral College on campaigns and campaign strategy. Our conclusions are organized under three headings: the distribution of campaign resources, coalition building, and the problem of unanticipated consequences. First, we conclude that the Electoral College does prompt candidates to concentrate their campaign resources on a relatively small number of competitive states. While most alternatives to the present system would provide incentives for distributing campaign resources more evenly geographically, no system would encourage campaigns to treat all voters equally. Second, we conclude that the Electoral College encourages coalition building to occur within the two major parties that dominate presidential campaigns. Popular elections with a majoritarian requirement — either attained through a two-stage runoff or by the instant runoff — could hinder the capacity of campaigns to develop broad coalitions. Third, we are wary of our capacity to anticipate the full set of consequences — either for how campaigns are conducted or for other aspects of our political systems — that might result from changing our electoral system. Recognizing the possibility and even the likelihood of deleterious unanticipated consequences should prompt caution in reforming or abolishing the Electoral College.

### **THE DISTRIBUTION OF CAMPAIGN RESOURCES**

One of the clearest impacts of the Electoral College on American politics is its effect on the distribution of campaign resources, such as personal appearances by the candidates and television and radio advertising. Presidential campaigns have a clear tendency to concentrate their resources on a relatively small number of

competitive states — states that both candidates have some legitimate prospect of carrying — while ignoring states that appear solidly to favor one camp or the other. Given the winner-take-all system used for awarding each state's electoral votes, a candidate who is already well ahead in a particular state gets no bonus for carrying that state by an even wider margin — nor does the losing candidate derive any benefit for narrowing his margin of defeat from, say, 40 percent to 20 percent.<sup>1</sup> Hence, candidates will tend to ignore or “take for granted” states where they are either very far ahead or very far behind. Massachusetts residents, for example, often observed that they literally did not see a single television ad for either major-party candidate during the entire 2000 general election campaign. By contrast, residents of Illinois often complained about being inundated by presidential campaign ads. The difference is explained, of course, by the fact that Massachusetts was always counted as a very safe state for Gore, while Illinois was seen by both campaigns as a competitive, “battleground” state.

This effect has also been measured in a more systematic fashion. In a study of the 1960 election, Stanley Kelley found that John Kennedy and Richard Nixon both spent 74 percent of their total campaign time in twenty-four “doubtful states”; in the final three weeks before Election Day, these same twenty-four states were the scene of 88 percent of the candidates' campaigning.<sup>2</sup> According to figures compiled by Jimmy Carter's campaign in 1976, eleven states did not receive a single visit during the general election campaign from either Carter or his vice-presidential runningmate, while twelve other states received just one visit.<sup>3</sup>

Some scholars have alleged a second type of bias in the current electoral college system: a bias in favor of large states.<sup>4</sup> We will not attempt to sort through this particular controversy here, but will simply offer two summary observations. First, when the distribution of measurable campaign resources (money, public appearances by the candidate) is examined, large states do, on the whole, get a larger than proportionate share. That is to say, if one state has three times as many people as a second state, the first state will generally get *more* than three times as much money and attention as the second state. Second, it is unclear, however, if this effect occurs because the current electoral college system is inherently biased in favor of large states, or because large states tend to be more competitive.<sup>5</sup>

It is less easy to generalize about what the distribution of resources would look like under any of the major alternatives to the current system. At first glance, one might think that the most equitable distribution would occur under a pure popular vote system. Since all votes count equally, regardless of geographic location, candidates would, presumably, allocate their resources in direct proportion to the number of votes available in a given state or locality.<sup>6</sup> Thus, for example, candidates would probably spend a lot more time and money in New York City than in Montana — simply because there are more people in New York than in Montana. But the amount of time or money *per voter* would be equal.

Not everyone agrees with this conclusion. Immediately after the 2000 elec-

tion, when most newspapers and magazines ran articles about the future of the Electoral College, one of the major criticisms directed against a popular vote system was that it would lead the candidates to do all their campaigning in a very small number of high-density areas, while entirely ignoring the rest of the country. One such article noted,

According to many political experts, candidates [in a popular vote system] might divide the country into 10 major media and cultural markets. . . . Those nodes would encompass some 135 million people, or about half the U.S. population. But they would cover no more than 10% of the land mass. The vast interior would be excluded, from the western half of Virginia down to the Gulf Coast and across the Midwest into the Mountain States. That means farmers and ranchers in the Nowhere Zone would get short shrift for their concerns — and rarely see a Presidential prospect. Candidates “wouldn’t need to worry about putting nuclear waste in Nevada,” says Steve Frank, president of the National Federation of Republican Assemblies, a conservative grass-roots group. Adds Scott Reed, who managed Bob Dole’s 1996 bid for the White House: “You’d be hunting ducks where the ducks are, and leaving large swaths of the country essentially untouched.”<sup>7</sup>

It is hard to know what to make of this argument, given the rather abbreviated form in which it has been presented. To begin with, the article exaggerates, at least by implication, the amount of attention that Nevada and lots of other small states get under the current system. More importantly, if half of the U.S. population is located in one of these ten “megalopolises,” the obvious rejoinder is: the other half is not located there. Moreover, high-density areas tend to have diverse, heterogeneous populations, including some groups that are inclined to support Republicans and others that are tilted toward the Democrats — which suggests that no candidate could count on winning an overwhelming percentage of the vote in these ten areas. So it seems likely that this particular objection is greatly overstated, and that candidates would still spend a lot of time and money outside these ten high-density areas.

The one way that a popular vote system might lead to this sort of maldistribution of campaign resources is if there are “economies of scale” in campaigning. Do we have any reason to believe, for example, that \$10 million spent in a media market with 10 million people will buy more in the way of exposure or persuasion than a similar amount of money divided among ten different media markets, each of which has one million residents? No one we know of has ever systematically investigated this question, but at the very least, one can say that there is no obvious reason to think that such economies exist.

If, for various reasons, one wishes to retain the electoral college format but promote a more even distribution of campaign resources, it does seem likely that either the proportional or districted systems would move further in that direction. A proportional system, in particular, would give campaigns the incentive

to invest resources more widely, since relatively small shifts in the statewide vote percentages might enable a candidate to win more electoral votes. This would be particularly true in large states, but the basic principle also applies to the smallest states, with their three electoral votes.

A districted system would probably produce the same sort of general outcome, though to a lesser extent. Much like the current system, campaigns would write off some districts as uncompetitive and would concentrate on those that appear to be at least potentially winnable by either candidate. The advantage the districted system might offer, however, is that even in states that are safe for one candidate or the other, one or more congressional districts might be competitive. In the November 2000 election, for example, the Bush campaign never had a realistic chance of carrying the state of New York and, hence, did almost no campaigning there. Under a districted system, however, a number of individual New York districts clearly would have been up for grabs, thus giving both candidates an incentive to do some campaigning in the Empire State. It is also likely that there would be substantial spillover effects from this campaigning. If Bush hoped to win some of the districts in the New York City suburbs, for example, his campaign would probably have to advertise on television stations that would reach the entire New York metropolitan area. Similarly, if Bush or Cheney made a personal appearance in the New York suburbs, newspapers and television from all over the area would probably cover the event.

So the present system does lead to what most observers would call a geographical maldistribution of campaign resources, and most of the other alternatives would probably do somewhat better in this regard. But two important caveats need to be added to this argument. First, no matter what vote-counting system is used and no matter how the population is spatially distributed, no campaign treats all voters equally. Rather, campaigns are directed at what might be called the "potentially movable" category: those voters who are not so solidly in one camp or the other as to make all efforts at persuasion futile. These voters get most of the attention, while the hard-core, "yellow dog" partisans are ignored or taken for granted. (This is, in a sense, a corollary of the median voter theorem.) Such tactics explain, for example, why at the end of almost every recent presidential campaign, black leaders have claimed that they were ignored by the Democrats, while conservative white Christian voters say they were taken for granted by the Republicans. There is a good deal of truth in both charges, though not for the reasons frequently alleged. Black voters sometimes get ignored by the Democrats not because the Democratic leadership is racist or insensitive, but because the black vote is already so strongly in the Democratic camp that neither party sees any great payoff in competing for it.

Second, even if we could agree that campaign resources are distributed unequally under the present system and that some other system would result in a more even distribution, is this enough reason to drop the Electoral College?

Campaigns provide several benefits to the political system as a whole. They help educate the electorate, even if this is not their principal intention, and they help stimulate voter turnout. But it's not clear that making marginal improvements in these sorts of benefits is a good enough reason to undertake such a significant change in the Constitution.<sup>8</sup>

### COALITION BUILDING

One of the most important consequences of electoral systems in general is the effects they have on coalition building: on the incentives or disincentives they provide for parties and candidates to form alliances before or after the election. Here, too, there is widespread agreement about the tendency of the current system: it provides a strong, perhaps irresistible, push toward the maintenance of a two-party system in the United States. Since third parties rarely have any realistic shot at winning the presidency, many of those inclined to vote for an independent or third-party candidate finally conclude that a vote for their top choice would only be "wasted," and that their interests would be better served by voting for one of the major-party contenders. Thus, most recent third-party candidates have seen their support in the national polls peak during the summer or early fall, and then decline precipitously as Election Day draws nearer.<sup>9</sup>

There is less agreement, it should be added, on whether or not this is a good thing. The traditional view, to which most of the members of this panel subscribe, is that the United States has been well served by having a two-party system. Both parties, according to this argument, tend to present broad-based, moderate platforms, designed to appeal to a diversity of groups and interests. Partisan rhetoric aside, the parties are not that far apart on most issues and either party can win an election without posing a fundamental threat to the survival of the Republic.<sup>10</sup> More recently, however, the American two-party system has been attacked for being too narrow, for underrepresenting minority groups and interests, and for stifling the voices of those who might offer more serious challenges to mainstream ideas and policies.<sup>11</sup> In either case, the current Electoral College is one bulwark of the two-party system.

How would coalition building work under the alternatives we have been considering in this project? The proposal with the most radical consequences for the established parties is clearly the majority popular vote with a contingent runoff election. Under this system, it seems highly likely that a sort of two-stage election process would eventually develop, much like the system currently used in France. A large number of candidates would enter the first stage, since there is no obvious disincentive, for either the candidates or their supporters, for doing so. When no candidate succeeded in winning a majority the first time around, there would be a second election between the top two finishers, with the eliminated candidates from round one offering their endorsement and support to one of the two finalists, based on ideological compatibility or promises of future preferment.

Such would be the general outlines of the new system. A number of other details, however, are more difficult to anticipate:

1. Would the major parties continue to nominate candidates? And would these candidates enjoy any substantial advantage over other contenders? In France, one political party or another has formally nominated most of the candidates in the first election, and so might the case be in the United States. Alternatively, it might turn out that both candidates and public come to see the first election as, in effect, the entire nomination process. Suppose, for example, that in the lead-up to the 2004 campaign, John McCain, Bill Bradley, John Kerry, and Jesse Jackson all announce that they intend to be candidates in the first-round election, no matter whom their party nominates. If enough candidates pursue this course of action, and some of them are successful at it, winning a major party nomination might come to be seen as a quite unimportant and dispensable formality. That is to say, virtually everyone who aspired to the White House would run in the first election, without bothering to seek party approval, and the job of reducing that initial field to a manageable number of alternatives would be performed by that election, rather than by political parties. (This is essentially what occurs in a number of cities that have nonpartisan election systems, such as Boston.) In this case, parties would clearly be weakened, at least at the presidential level, for they would be deprived of what is perhaps the most important function they currently perform.

2. How many "major" candidates will run in the first round? As the initial field of candidates grows larger, candidate strategies are likely to take on a very different character. If only three or four significant candidates participate in the first round, each will probably conclude that he or she needs about 40 percent of the vote to make it into the second round, and thus will be compelled to go after a fairly broad, diverse coalition of voters. But if the first round includes seven or eight major contenders, the candidates and their strategists may conclude that they can get to the second round by winning as little as 20 or 30 percent of the vote. Rather than appealing to the electorate as a whole, candidates might find it more useful to go after a small but reliable constituency, particularly one defined in racial, geographic, or ideological terms.<sup>12</sup> For those who think that one of the best features of the current system is its tendency to foster moderate, broad-based candidates and parties, this would be a significant shortcoming.

3. What kind of bargaining would occur after the first election? In the French system, most of the candidates who run in the first round represent parties with a fairly well-defined position on the ideological spectrum. As a result, the first election generally has the effect of producing one candidate from the Right and one candidate from the Left, with all the defeated candidates and parties falling in rather naturally behind the candidate who most closely reflects their ideology. But if there are more candidates in the first round, and fewer have been endorsed by a political party, the results of the first election might set off a furious round of bargaining, where the losing candidates openly shop their support between the

two finalists, looking for a position in the new administration or concessions on major policies. Should the latter occur, it is almost inevitable that many voters and commentators would find such a process distasteful and even corrupt.<sup>13</sup>

How would presidential campaigns work under an instant-runoff system? Since nothing like this system exists anywhere in the United States, nor is it in widespread use elsewhere in the world, any answer we might give is highly speculative.<sup>14</sup> Again, it does seem likely that such a system would substantially lower the barriers facing third-party and independent candidates and thus lead (for better or for worse) to some weakening or modification of the two-party system.

Once the campaign gets underway, candidates would likely face two conflicting pressures. On the one hand, some candidates, particularly frontrunners, would find it very difficult to criticize the other candidates — even if these criticisms are clearly merited. Consider, for example, the predicament of a candidate who has 40 percent of the vote in the latest polls. If he attacks candidates who have only 10 or 15 percent, he runs the risk of angering their supporters and thus making it less likely that they will list him as their second or third choice.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the instant-runoff format would probably generate intense and bitter rivalries between candidates who are running close in the polls, especially if they are appealing to the same types of voters. By removing candidates from the bottom up, the instant runoff treats candidates very differently according to the rank order of their finish and thus magnifies the effect of very small differences in the initial vote. Suppose, for example, that there are two candidates with very similar ideologies, one of whom has 25 percent in the polls while the other has 23 percent. Clearly, the candidate with 23 percent would have an enormous incentive to attack his slightly better-situated rival — and if this sort of campaigning proved at all effective, the candidate with 25 percent would quickly begin to fire back.

How these two forces would balance out in any given election is difficult to predict, but again there are some discomfiting scenarios:

1. In some cases, the instant-runoff system might create a dynamic where the early frontrunners are separated, and the electorate ultimately comes to prefer one or more of the second-tier candidates simply because their faults and weaknesses have not been as widely exposed. (Something like this seems to have occurred in a number of hotly contested, multicandidate primaries, such as the Democratic Senate primary in Wisconsin in 1992.)<sup>16</sup>

2. If two candidates in an election take very similar positions and appeal to the same general kinds of voters, the assumption behind the instant runoff is that each candidate's supporters will list the other candidate as their second choice. But if the battle between these two candidates becomes bitter, there may occur a kind of "divisive primary" effect, where each candidate's supporters come to see the other candidate as more of an enemy than an ally.<sup>17</sup>

This suggests that if we are interested in dumping the Electoral College entirely for some kind of popular vote system, the least disruptive alternative, at least from the perspective of the party system and the established party coalitions, would be the plurality rule method, where a single election would be held and whoever gets the most votes wins. Though some members of this panel thought that this, too, might pose a threat to the two-party system, most felt that this method, similar to the one currently used to elect members of Congress, would also provide a strong disincentive to third-party and independent candidates.

### UNANTICIPATED CONSEQUENCES

As the preceding discussion should indicate, any attempt to think about the effects of "reforming" the Electoral College comes up against one very important problem: the further one moves away from the present system, the more difficult it becomes to anticipate the full set of consequences. More limited reforms, such as using a districted system, would probably not have radical consequences for campaign strategy.<sup>18</sup> But more limited reforms, by their very nature, also would not satisfy most critics of the Electoral College. Awarding electoral votes on either a districted or proportional basis, for example, would not eliminate the possibility that a candidate could lose the popular vote but win a majority in the Electoral College. In fact, it might make that outcome more likely.<sup>19</sup> Plans that do eliminate the Electoral College, by contrast, are also likely to produce other important changes in the American political system, many of which will be difficult to predict.

Anyone contemplating wholesale changes in the Electoral College would be well advised to give particularly close attention to recent changes in the presidential nominating process. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a group of "reformers" within the Democratic party succeeded in almost completely rewriting the basic rules governing delegate selection and convention decision making. They did this in the interest of pursuing greater intraparty democracy and, in many respects, they achieved their goal. After 1972, more people than ever before were involved in the presidential nomination process, party processes were considerably more accessible to outsiders and dissidents, established party leaders had much less control over both delegates and candidate selection. But in addition to these intended goals of reform, there were also a whole series of "unanticipated consequences." A dramatic increase in the length of the nomination race, a sharp rise in the number of presidential primaries, a nomination calendar that has become increasingly "front-loaded:" none of these was expected or desired by the party reformers, yet they did occur as a direct result of the new rules.<sup>20</sup>

The moral of the story is that the consequences of major institutional change are always difficult, perhaps impossible, to anticipate fully. Still, some such consequences will often occur. This does not mean that institutions should never be changed. But we would argue that it does create a general argument in favor of



the status quo. Longstanding institutions ought not be discarded for light or transient causes. In the end, this may be one of the compelling reasons to retain the Electoral College.

#### NOTES

1. Actually, two states — Maine and Nebraska — currently use a districted system, but the statement in the text does describe how about 98.5 percent of the Electoral College votes are awarded.
2. Stanley Kelley Jr., “The Presidential Campaign,” in *The Presidential Election and Transition 1960–1961*, ed. Paul T. David (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1961), 70–72.
3. For the actual data, see Larry M. Bartels, “Resource Allocation in a Presidential Campaign,” *Journal of Politics* 47 (August 1985): 930–31. For similar data from the 1988, 1992, and 1996 campaigns, see Daron R. Shaw, “The Effect of TV Ads and Candidate Appearances on Statewide Presidential Votes, 1988–96,” *American Political Science Review* 93 (June 1999): 359–60.
4. It is important to note that the bias alluded to here concerns which states the candidates visit and in which they advertise. This is a separate issue from another much discussed question: whether voters in large, medium, or small states have disproportionate weight in deciding who will become the next president. The latter issue is discussed in chapter 11.
5. On both of these points, see especially Steven J. Brams and Morton D. Davis, “The 3/2’s Rule in Presidential Campaigning,” *American Political Science Review* 68 (March 1974): 113–34; Claude S. Colantoni, Terrence J. Levesque, and Peter C. Ordeshook, “Campaign Resource Allocation under the Electoral College,” *American Political Science Review* 69 (March 1975): 141–54; and Bartels, “Resource Allocation in a Presidential Campaign.”
6. For a considerably more nuanced analysis that comes to much the same conclusion, see Eric R. A. N. Smith and Peverill Squire, “Direct Election of the President and the Power of the States,” *Western Political Quarterly* 40 (March 1987): 29–44.
7. Paula Dwyer and Paul Magnusson, “The Pitfalls of One Person, One Vote,” *Business Week*, 27 November 2000, 48–49. The same argument is also made, albeit more briefly, in Yuval Rosenberg, “Building a Better Election,” *Newsweek*, 20 November 2000, 20; and Ben Wildavsky, “School of Hard Knocks,” *U.S. News & World Report*, 20 November 2000, 52.
8. Indeed, it is far from clear that we even want campaigns to treat all voters equally. At the most basic level, campaigns are designed to help people decide how to cast their votes. In that sense, campaigns are supposed to focus very unequally on the undecided and those with weak commitments; hard-core partisans don’t need campaigns. But there are other dimensions to campaigning where a greater case for equality can be made. When candidates target a particular state or group, they not only make personal appearances and buy television advertising aimed at that group, they also generally make special commitments and promises to the group. As indicated by the above quotation from Steve Frank, when residents of small-population states such as Nevada express concern about how they will fare under a popular vote system, they are not anxious about whether Nevada’s economy will lose trivial amounts of advertising revenue or that Nevada voters will be insufficiently informed when they cast their ballots. Rather the concern is that the candidates will not take Nevada’s interests into account when making major policy decisions, such as deciding on the location of nuclear waste facilities. Similarly, black leaders would like the parties to pursue black voters more vigorously not because it might make those voters marginally better informed, but because it might lead the candidates to make more generous promises on issues of concern to blacks, such as affirmative action and welfare reform.
9. The best example is John Anderson in 1980, who had more than 20 percent in the polls between May and July, but his support fell to 14 percent in August and September, and then to just 6 percent on Election Day.
10. For a particularly vigorous defense of this position, see John Wildenthal, “Consensus after LBJ: The Role of the Electoral College,” *Southwest Review* 53 (Spring 1968): 113–30; and Judith

- Best, *The Case Against Direct Election of the President: A Defense of the Electoral College* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1971).
11. See, for example, Douglas Amy, *Real Choices/New Voices: The Case for Proportional Representation Elections in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and Robert Richie and Steven Hill, *Reflecting All of Us: The Case for Proportional Representation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).
  12. Nelson W. Polsby has made the same argument about the way that the proliferation of primaries and the emphasis placed on early results has affected the nature of candidate strategies in the presidential nomination process. See *Consequences of Party Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 64–71.
  13. The closest parallel to this sort of bargaining in American political history took place in the presidential election of 1824, before the emergence of a stable two-party system. The electoral vote that year was split among four major candidates: Andrew Jackson, who won 99 votes; John Quincy Adams, who won 84; William Crawford, 41; and Henry Clay, 37. Since no one candidate received a majority in the Electoral College, the task of choosing the president devolved upon the House of Representatives, which, under the provisions of the Twelfth Amendment, could only consider the top three finishers in the electoral vote. This made Clay's support a very valuable commodity, especially since he was then the Speaker of the House. Clay eventually endorsed Adams, who won the presidency and who then appointed Clay his secretary of state. Though there is no evidence that Clay and Adams struck an explicit deal on the matter, from the moment that Clay was appointed, the Jackson partisans claimed that Adams had won his office through a "corrupt bargain." This charge haunted Adams throughout his four years in office and, according to many accounts, undermined his effectiveness.
  14. Though "transferrable vote" electoral systems were once used in a large number of American cities, the only city that still uses this system is Cambridge, Massachusetts. But Cambridge uses it only to elect an eight-member city council, with all members elected at large. In terms of the issues we are considering here, this creates a quite different strategic dynamic. If two liberal candidates are running for president, the inescapable bottom line is that only one of them can win: they are unavoidably competitors. But if two (or more) liberal candidates are running for the Cambridge city council, it is possible for *both* of them to get elected so they may not see themselves as direct competitors and may even cooperate on such things as get-out-the-vote drives.
  15. Perhaps the closest parallel to this sort of situation in recent American politics was the way that Bush and Clinton treated Perot during the 1992 general election campaign. By the time Perot rejoined the race, in early October, it was clear that he had no real chance to win the election (the first Gallup poll after his reentry showed him with just 10 percent of the vote). Equally important, the polls also showed that Perot had a rather amorphous following that, if it deserted Perot, might plausibly go to either of the major party candidates. Since it was widely expected that Perot's vote would decline further as Election Day drew nearer (as has happened to every other significant third party candidate in modern times), both Bush and Clinton gave Perot pretty much a free ride during the fall campaign. In the first debate, for example, Clinton criticized Bush and the Republicans on 23 separate occasions, while Bush attacked Clinton and the Democrats 17 times. But Perot was criticized only five times by Bush and just twice by Clinton.
  16. For a description of the Wisconsin Democratic Senate primary of 1992, see *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* (12 September 1992), 2735–36; and (7 November 1992), 16.
  17. According to the divisive primary hypothesis, the same sort of effect sometimes occurs under the present system. That is to say, if two Democrats fight a pitched battle for their party's presidential nomination, the supporters of the losing candidate may develop strong negative feelings about the winner and thus be less inclined to support him during the general election. See, among others, James I. Lingle, "Divisive Presidential Primaries and Party Electoral Prospects, 1932–1976," *American Politics Quarterly* 8 (July 1981): 261–77; Priscilla L. Southwell, "The Politics of Disgruntlement: Nonvoting and Defection among Supporters of Nomination

Losers, 1968–1984,” *Political Behavior* 8 (1986): 81–95; and Emmett H. Buell Jr., “Divisive Primaries and Participation in Fall Presidential Campaigns: A Study of 1984 New Hampshire Primary Activists,” *American Politics Quarterly* 14 (October 1986): 376–90.

Under the present system, however, there is, at least, a three- to five-month “cooling-off” period between the end of the primaries and the general election, during which the supporters of the losing candidate can get over their initial disappointment and begin to view the general election contest in more dispassionate terms. For evidence that this actually occurs, see Lonna Rae Atkeson, “From the Primaries to the General Election: Does a Divisive Nomination Race Affect a Candidate’s Fortunes in the Fall?” in *In Pursuit of the White House 2000: How We Choose Our Presidential Nominees*, ed. William G. Mayer (New York: Chatham House, 2000), 294–98. The problem with the instant-runoff format is that there is no cooling-off period: voters register their second and third choices at the same time they make their first choice.

18. The districted system might, however, have radical consequences for other aspects of American politics. In particular, it would almost certainly increase the stakes in congressional redistricting.
19. According to some counts, Jimmy Carter might have lost the 1976 presidential election to Gerald Ford under a districted system, even though Carter beat Ford by a quite healthy margin — 2.1 percent — in the popular vote.
20. For evidence on this last point, see Michael G. Hagen and William G. Mayer, “The New Politics of Presidential Selection: How Changing the Rules Really Did Change the Game,” in Mayer, *In Pursuit of the White House 2000: How We Choose Our Presidential Nominees*, 1–55.