

Debate persists over Electoral College system

By Robert Tanner
The Associated Press

More than a third of this year's Democratic presidential electors say they want to re-examine or scrap the Electoral College that takes the final vote on the next person in the White House, while fewer than 1 in 10 Republicans think the nation should even consider tinkering with the system, an AP survey found.

The partisan breakdown is not surprising, given that the Democratic candidate, Al Gore, may lose the presidency while winning the popular vote. Republican George W. Bush, if declared the victor in Florida, would win the crucial electoral vote.

The Associated Press interviewed 342 electors, or nearly two-thirds of the 538-member Electoral College.

"It's silly," said Gore elector Lana Boldi, a political coordinator for United Auto Workers in Michigan. "We're 200 years or more past when we really need that safeguard. I think the average voter is intelligent enough to cast a popular vote."

"It's a well thought-out system. I believe it's just as valid today as it's ever been," said Bush elector W.R. Timken Jr. of Ohio, a manufacturing executive who was also an elector for Bush's father in 1988. "If it was pure popular vote, the election would be all about the biggest cities

and biggest states, and the rest of the country would be forgotten."

Ninety-four Democratic electors, or 35 percent of the 267 Gore electors certified so far, wanted either reform or debate on the future of the Electoral College. Of 161 Democratic electors reached by the AP, that comes to 58 percent. Twenty-five of that group wanted to abolish the system entirely; 27 wanted to reform it. Just under a third, or 52, said keep it the way it is. Fifteen would not comment or had no opinion.

Republican electors, on the other hand, clearly stood on the other side of that argument. Of 181 Bush electors, only 14 had any doubts at all; only one of those suggested

abolishing the system. A full 73 percent said the system works fine. Thirty-five electors had no comment or offered no opinion.

"We do not live in a democracy. It's a representative republic," said South Carolina elector Danny Faulkner, a college physics professor.

One thing's for sure — there are no swing voters here.

The presidential campaign was defined by the undecided political center. This post-election campaign is in the land of the partisan patriot, the unswerving.

Electors of both parties scoffed at even the notion of breaking their pledge to their candidate. Some Democrats, including nine Democrat-

ic electors, suggested Republicans should switch to Gore in light of allegations of voter irregularities in Florida. Not one Republican said they would consider it.

"Not if you had a gun to my head," said Marcy Benson, a Colorado elector for Bush. The idea of switching gets the same response from Gore electors: "Not unless I was psychotic," said Sala Udin of Pennsylvania.

Partisan passions are expected — electors get picked by their respective parties. Voters at the polls, though the ballot said Bush or Gore, were actually voting for slates of electors pledged to those candidates. The electors who win vote Dec. 18.

Student leaders resign positions to focus on school

■ Barely avoiding hearings for impeachment, two ASUO student senators recently submitted their resignations

By Emily Gust
Oregon Daily Emerald

After a month of missed meetings and office hours, two ASUO student senators finally resigned from their positions, narrowly avoiding what could have been a lengthy impeachment process.

Former senators Jessica Burmaster and Kristin Dean stopped at-

tending meetings about a month ago, Senate President Peter Watts said. They also failed to show up for their weekly office hours.

For two weeks, Watts and Senate Ombudsman Skye Tenney tried to contact Dean and Burmaster, but there was no response.

"They've been almost impossible to reach," Watts said.

Last Wednesday, Tenney censured both senators, suggesting punishments for their failure to attend the meetings and office hours. She said that Dean and Burmaster

should be removed from their positions and their monthly stipends should be suspended.

Dean and Burmaster submitted their letters of resignation the next day.

"I took on way too much this term ... and I just didn't have the time for it — time or energy, really," Burmaster said.

Dean said she resigned due to a change in major from business to computer information science.

"My grades were really going down the tube," she said.

If the senators had not submitted resignations by the next meeting, the Senate would have had to conduct a hearing for each one.

Senate impeachment hearings require a minimum of 30 minutes of argument each from the senator being tried and the ombudsman who lodged the complaint, not to mention time for both rebuttals and closing remarks.

Even if neither Dean nor Burmaster had appeared at their respective hearings, the Senate would have still let the clock run for the allotted

The ASUO Student Senate will not meet this Wednesday because of Thanksgiving break. It will meet again 7 p.m. Nov. 29.

Meetings are every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the EMU Board Room on the third floor of the EMU. They are open to the public.

time in accordance with ASUO rules.

"A trial would've been extremely unpleasant for all parties involved," Watts said.

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With recounts under way in two Democratic-leaning counties and a third set to begin, Gore had a net gain of 78 votes, which if allowed would cut Bush's lead to 852. On Sunday, both sides objected to county vote-counting procedures.

Gore narrowly won the national popular vote and holds a slight edge over Bush in the all-important Electoral College tally, though neither man can reach the required total of 270 electoral votes without Florida's 25.

The Texas governor spent the day with his family in Austin, Texas. In church, the pastor said, "We continue our prayers for the political process in this country ... May your patience be their patience."

Gore canceled plans to attend a long-scheduled conference in Tennessee, the home state that deserted him for Bush on Election Day. About 100 pro-Bush protesters packed the sidewalks across from his official residence in Washington. "We want Bush!" they shouted.

The identity of America's 43rd president rests with the courts and in the ballot-counting rooms of Palm Beach, Broward and Miami-Dade counties, where more than 1.5 million ballots were cast, a majority from Democrats.

"It seems to be that they're doing everything they can to stop the recounting of votes because they're slightly ahead and they fear that after the recounting they won't be," said Democratic vice presidential candidate Joseph Lieberman, who conducted a rare tour of all five major news shows Sunday.

Bush's camp continued its assault on the Gore-backed recounts, depicting the process as riddled with human error and Democratic bias. Montana Gov. Marc Racicot, a GOP ally in Austin to help Bush, said Gore is trying to change ballot-checking rules in south Florida to pad his vote totals.

"To reverse the results of this election, Al Gore supporters are less

interested in accuracy and more interested in changing the rules to generate votes they need to win," Racicot said at a campaign news conference.

Gore's advisers were frustrated Sunday by small recount gains, particularly in Palm Beach County, where the election tempest first began when Democratic voters complained of a confusing ballot.

The vice president's team accused the local elections board of imposing a too-strict standard for approving ballots.

A senior Gore aide speaking on condition of anonymity said the vice president will have a difficult time overtaking Bush unless Palm Beach eases its threshold for accepting ballots.

In Broward County, Gore's count by midday Sunday showed a net gain of 90. More than half the 609 precincts remain to be counted. Republicans accused the elections board of bowing to political pressure and reversing a decision to throw out ballots that did not have two corners poked out of the "chad" — the tiny pieces of paper in a punch-card ballot.

"The Gore campaign now wants to lower the bar because it needs more votes," said Ed Pozzuoli, chairman of the county GOP.

Democrats said the ruling allows voters' intentions to be noted. "These chad marks didn't get on the ballot by osmosis," said Democratic attorney Charles Lichtman.

Miami-Dade County began mechanically sorting ballots by machine in preparation for a hand count. Bush's attorneys protested the action, saying it would alter the delicate ballots, but a circuit judge gave the go-ahead.

There was conflict in the overseas count, too, as the GOP charged Democrats with systematically challenging votes cast by members of the armed forces.

President Clinton, wrapping up a trip to Vietnam, told CNN the nation doesn't need "all this hand wringing" and added: "Everybody ought to just relax and let the process play out."

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