



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on November 21, 2016

Anti-Trump Activists Threaten Presidential Electors

Twenty-two-year-old Michael Banerian, a political science major at Oakland University, and one of Michigan's 16 electors, has received death threats from individuals who do not want him to cast his vote for Republican Donald Trump. Since Trump has apparently won Michigan, all 16 electors are Republicans.

"It's mostly just a lot of angry people who don't completely understand how the process works," Banerian said.

Either that, or they believe the end justifies the means.

Layne Bangerter and Melinda Smyser, two electors from Idaho — another state carried by the Republican nominee Donald Trump — have said they've been overwhelmed with e-mails, telephone calls, and Facebook messages urging them not to vote for Trump.

Presidential electors across the nation have told similar stories, with the efforts at persuasion varying from pleading to threatening. The last time such an effort was made was in 2000, when Republican Texas Governor George W. Bush trailed Democrat Vice President Al Gore in the national popular vote. In Florida, a state Bush carried by about 500 votes out of six million cast, the efforts were particularly intense.

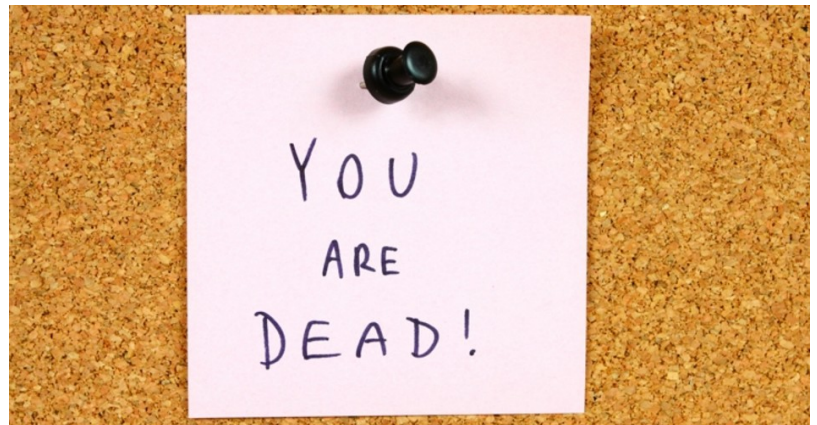
Carole Jean Jordan, a Florida elector in 2000, recalled that it was "unbelievably ugly," with efforts made by Gore supporters to intimidate her with nasty letters. It was considered serious enough that police watched her home until after the electors cast the state's votes. Electors were all lodged at the same hotel in Tallahassee (the state capital) and escorted by security officers to the Capitol.

In 2000, I was an elector, and I also received mail "encouraging" me to support Gore, even though I was nominated by the Fourth Congressional District Republican Convention as an elector, then chosen by the voters of Oklahoma to be one of the state's eight electors, when Bush easily carried Oklahoma. (Oklahoma has not gone Democrat since 1964, and no Democrat has even carried one county in the state since 2000). We were likewise housed in the same hotel in Oklahoma City, but we drove separate vehicles from there to the Capitol. There was a discussion of being bussed together to the Capitol, but then it was decided that it would be safer to travel separately. We did, however, choose an alternate elector, just in case one of us did not "make it."

I was not at all enthralled with Bush at the time (and grew even less so after seeing his performance as president); however, I had been nominated by the Republican Party with the understanding that I would cast my one electoral vote for the nominees of the party for president and vice-president, and therefore, there was no chance that I would have changed my vote.

But could this year's effort succeed?

It is not likely, since if Michigan's 16 electoral votes go to Trump, as expected, that would give him 306 electoral votes, with only 270 needed to win. This means that 38 electors, chosen by their state's





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Republican Party, would have to switch from Trump to Clinton for her to win. It should be understood that those individuals tapped as elector nominees are not just random people; they are almost always hard-core party loyalists. While they may not all be enthusiastic about their party's nominee, these Republicans are certainly not going to give the election to any Democrat — much less Hillary Clinton.

"Yes, I think it's a longshot, but I also think we're living in strange times. If it was ever plausible, it's this year," argued Danie Brezenoff, the Democrat activist who created an online petition in favor of Clinton, which has garnered over three million signatures.

Art Sisneros, a Republican elector from Texas, has admitted that he has reservations about Trump, but he told the Associated Press that he won't vote for Hillary Clinton under any circumstance. "As a Christian, I came to the conclusion that Mr. Trump is not biblically qualified for that office." However, Sisneros signed a state party pledge that he would support the nominee of the Republican Party, and he could always resign if he could not cast his vote for Trump.

Although it appears to be gaining no traction so far in actually changing any elector votes, petition organizers are zeroing in on about 160 Republican electors in 15 states that Trump won that do not have any laws binding the electors to the winner. These states are Arizona, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Missouri, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and West Virginia.

In some other states, electors could theoretically break their pledges to vote for the candidate who carried their state's popular vote, and have to pay only a relatively small fine. Some organizers have even said, "We can be sure Clinton supporters will be glad to pay [their fine]!"

Alberto Gutier, a staunch Republican, told a Fox-affiliated station in Arizona that he has received "harassment" from Clinton supporters. "On Thursday, I started getting phone calls and emails at home and on my personal accounts," he stated, "telling me that we should basically abstain from voting for Trump."

One strategy that has emerged by those wishing to overthrow the results of the election is to get these Republican electors to vote for another Republican besides Trump, such as the 2012 nominee, Mitt Romney, or Ohio Governor John Kasich. But this strategy is bound to fail, because even if enough votes were cast by disloyal Republicans to deny Trump a majority, that could only throw the election into the House of Representatives.

If no one receives a majority of the electoral vote, the Constitution mandates that each state's delegation in the House of Representatives cast one vote for one candidate among the top three vote-getters in the electoral vote. Since Republicans hold a strong majority among the 50 state delegations, this means there is practically no chance that Democrat Hillary Clinton could emerge victorious. And, were the House Republicans to replace the Republican nominee, Donald Trump, with a Republican such as Kasich, who won very few votes in the primaries and caucuses, there would no doubt be retaliation at the polls in 2018 in Republican primaries. So, there is very little chance of that happening, either.

Most likely, the organizers of this effort realize this, and that their more practical goal is to attack the constitutional method of choosing the president, popularly known as the Electoral College (the term does not actually appear in the Constitution).

These opponents of the Electoral College generally ignore why the Framers of the Constitution created this process. Their arguments against the Electoral College center on the idea that it frustrates the will of the voters, contending that "Hillary Clinton won the popular vote."



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Actually, Clinton did *not* win the popular vote. She received 48 percent of the popular vote, which was better than Trump's 47 percent, but less than a majority. Fifty-two percent of those voting chose another candidate besides Clinton. To give her the presidency would frustrate the will of the voters, the majority of whom did not vote for her.

On the other hand, Donald Trump won a *majority* of the electoral votes, which is what the Constitution requires. The Founding Fathers deliberately created the electoral vote system because they were establishing a *federal republic*, and not a unitary democracy. Their goal was to create a government designed to protect the lives, property, and liberty of the people of the United States — not to simply give a plurality of the voters the right to impose their will on the majority.

The electoral vote system does not require a run-off and it is a system in which the states, in a federal republic, choose the president. That was the agreement reached at the Constitutional Convention, and it would be dishonorable to subvert that solemn agreement without a formal amendment of the Constitution that the Framers created. Election of a president by popular vote would require a run-off to actually ensure that the will of the majority prevailed, rather than a minority, and would require the creation of an election system run by the federal government rather than the states.

Fortunately, since it requires two-thirds vote of each house of Congress, and ratification of three-fourths of the states to amend the Constitution in order to abolish the Electoral College, any such action is highly unlikely.

This effort to ignore the results of the election by the rules provided for in the Constitution illustrates the disrespect that some hold for the rule of law. It also highlights the hypocrisy of those who are attempting to subvert our system. Before the election, there was feigned shock that Trump had said he might not "accept" the results of the election — meaning, of course, if he believed there was massive voter fraud and the like. Now, many of the same people who castigated Trump for his statement are the very ones refusing to accept the legitimate results of the election — all because their candidate did not win.

Does anyone really believe that these radicals who are now demanding overturning the election results would be urging and threatening electors to change their votes if Trump had won more popular votes, but Clinton had won a majority of the electoral vote?

If you believe that, you probably believed Obama when he assured us, "If you like your healthcare plan, you can keep your healthcare plan."



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