



# WOULD NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE INCREASE VOTER TURNOUT?



Proponents of the National Popular Vote interstate compact (NPV) predict it would increase voter turnout in states that currently receive less attention late in presidential campaigns. There is little to support this claim. Numerous factors drive turnout, including a state's political and civic culture, the strength of political parties, and campaigns for other offices, such as governor or Congress, or for ballot measures.

Many states such as Minnesota, Oregon, and Washington consistently have among the highest turnout rates despite not being so-called "battleground" states, and in 2020 only three of the top ten states in voter turnout were considered competitive in the presidential election.

States with the highest turnout during presidential years also typically have high turnout during non-presidential years. Of the top ten states in turnout in 2020, seven were among the top ten in 2018.

Candidate visits and campaign spending don't correlate strongly with turnout — Massachusetts had a 70 percent turnout rate in 2016 with zero visits by any candidate and limited advertising (aimed at reaching New Hampshire voters) while turnout in Ohio and Pennsylvania was 64 percent with a combined 102 candidate visits and \$215 million in advertising.

If there were turnout gains in some states under NPV, the same logic suggests these would be partially or entirely offset by turnout decreases in other states, since campaigns would shift resources from "battleground" states to a new set of "battleground" media markets.

Because voter turnout is driven by many factors unrelated to presidential campaigns and campaigns would simply shift where they expend resources, NPV is unlikely to provide a meaningful boost to overall voter turnout.

## KEY POINTS

- Attention from presidential campaigns has only a modest effect on voter turnout, and many states with high turnout are not "battlegrounds."
- States with high turnout in presidential elections typically also have high turnout in non-presidential elections, and states with low turnout in presidential elections usually also have low turnout in non-presidential elections.
- Under NPV a slight increase in voter turnout in some states could be partially or entirely offset by decreases in other states as campaigns shift resources out of some states into others.