



## Senator Feinstein Calls for Direct Popular Election of President January 6, 2005

**Washington, DC** – As Congress meets today to certify the Electoral College vote and officially declare President George W. Bush the victor in last November's election, U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) is calling for a direct popular election for President to replace the current Electoral College system.

**“A President can be elected without receiving the most popular votes – this is the fundamental flaw of our electoral system,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“It has happened four times in our history and there have been close calls in 22 other presidential elections. It will happen again and again unless we change the system.”**

There have been four instances in which the President who was elected won the electoral vote, but lost the popular vote – John Quincy Adams in 1824, Rutherford B. Hayes in 1876, Benjamin Harrison in 1888 and George W. Bush in 2000.

In 2000, Vice President Al Gore won the popular vote count by over 537,000 votes, but lost the Electoral College, and the presidency, by a margin of 272 to 266 electoral votes. According to some estimates, there have been 22 instances where a similar scenario could have occurred in close elections.

**“Altering the text of the Constitution requires careful thought, study and debate. But the problems posed by the Electoral College are so profound that a serious debate should ensue in this Congress,”** Senator Feinstein said. **“For me, the issue is simple -- fundamental fairness dictates that we have a single, nationwide count of popular votes. It is my hope that this proposal can serve as a starting point for a national discussion on how best to restructure the way our nation chooses a President and Vice President.”**

In 1979, the Senate voted 51 to 48 to abolish the Electoral College and replace it with direct popular elections. The legislation fell short of the necessary two-thirds required for a Constitutional amendment, but more than half the body supported the concept. In the 91<sup>st</sup> Congress, the House of Representatives voted 338 to 70 for the direct popular election of the President, but the effort fell short in the Senate.

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