

Chapter 255 - Lincoln Becomes America's Sixteenth President

Time: November 6, 1860

Lincoln's Sweep In The North Gives Him The Presidency



Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865)

Public interest in the 1860 election is high, as reflected in the 81% turn-out level.

Percent Of Eligibles Voting For President

	1840	1844	1848	1852	1856	1860
Turn-out	80%	79	73	70	79	81

As both expected and feared, November 6 offers up two elections in one: a Northern race pitting Lincoln against Douglas, and a Southern contest between Breckinridge and Bell. The result is that no candidate comes close to winning a popular vote majority – although Lincoln with his 39.8% share enjoys a sizable margin over the runner-up, Douglas.

Percent Of The Popular Vote For Each Candidate

Lincoln	Douglas	Breckinridge	Bell	Total
39.8%	29.5%	18.1%	12.6%	100.0%

What gives Lincoln the presidency then is the sheer dominance of the Northern states in the Electoral College and the winner-take-all rules on a state by state basis. He takes every state up north with the exception of New Jersey to rack up 180 electoral votes against the 152 needed to win. In the South, he is shut out entirely, without even appearing on many state ballots.

Full Results Of The 1860 Presidential Election

1856	Party	Pop Vote	Electoral	South	Border	North	West
Lincoln	Republican	1,865,908	180	0	0	173	7
Douglas	No. Democrat	1,380,202	12	0	9	3	0
Breckinridge	So. Democrat	848,019	72	61	11	0	0
Bell	Con. Union	590,901	39	15	24	0	0
Other		531					
Total		4,685,561	303	76	44	176	7
Need To Win			152				

The Republican campaign has concentrated on five Northern states that Buchanan carried in 1856, and is able to “flip” 59 of the 63 electoral votes there to Lincoln in 1860.

Key State “Flips” Between 1856 And 1860 Explaining Lincoln’s Victory

	Penn.	Indiana	Illinois	California	New Jersey	Total
Electoral Votes At Stake	27	13	11	4	7*	63
Popular Vote % To Win						
Buchanan in 1856	50%	50%	44%	48%	48%	
Lincoln in 1860	56%	51%	51%	32.3%	48%	
Nearest Rival	39(D)	42(D)	47(D)	31.7(D)	52(F)	

* In NJ Lincoln loses the popular vote (48/52%) to a “fusion ticket” of Douglas/Bell/Breckinridge, but still takes 4 of 7 electors.

Lincoln carries most Northern states with 54% or more of the popular votes. Douglas’ only outright win is in Missouri. Bell carries his home state of Tennessee, along with Kentucky and Virginia. Breckinridge is dominant across the Lower South.

State By State Results In The Presidential Election Of 1860

Lincoln By Majority	Electoral	Lincoln	Douglas	Breckinridge	Bell	“Fusion”
Vermont	5	75.8%	19.4%	4.2%	0.5%	
Minnesota	4	63.4	34.3	2.2	0.1	
Massachusetts	13	62.9	20.3	3.6	13.2	
Maine	8	62.2	29.4	6.3	2.0	
Rhode Island	4	61.4	38.6	0	0	
Connecticut	6	58.1	20.6	19.2	2.0	
Michigan	6	57.2	42.0	0.5	0.3	
New Hampshire	5	56.9	39.3	3.2	0.6	
Wisconsin	5	56.6	42.7	0.6	0.1	
Pennsylvania	27	56.3	3.5	0	2.7	37.5%
Iowa	4	54.6	43.2	0.8	1.4	
New York	35	53.7		0	0	46.3
Ohio	23	51.2	42.3	2.6	2.8	
Indiana	13	51.1	42.4	4.5	2.0	
Illinois	11	50.7	47.2	0.7	1.4	
Lincoln By Plurality						
Oregon	3	36.1	28.0	34.4	1.5	
California	4	32.3	31.7	28.4	7.6	
NJ Fusion	4	48.1				51.9
Total - Lincoln	180					

Breckinridge-Majority						
South Carolina	8			Leg pick		
Texas	4			75.5	24.5	
Florida	3		1.7	62.2	36.1	
Mississippi	7		4.7	59.0	36.3	
Alabama	9	0	15.1	54.0	30.9	
Arkansas	4		9.9	53.1	37.0	
North Carolina	10		2.8	50.5	46.7	
Breckinridge-Plurality						
Georgia	10		10.9	48.9	40.2	
Maryland	8	2.5	6.4	45.9	45.1	
Delaware	3	23.7	6.6	45.5	24.2	
Louisiana	6		15.1	44.9	40.0	
Total - Breckinridge	72					
Bell By Plurality						
Tennessee	12		7.7	44.6	47.7	
Virginia	15	1.1	9.8	44.5	44.6	
Kentucky	12	0.9	17.5	36.3	45.2	
Total - Bell	39					
Douglas By Plurality						
Missouri	9	10.3	35.5	18.9	35.3	
NJ Fusion	3	48.1				51.9
Total - Douglas	12					
Grand Total	303					
Needed To Win	152					

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Republicans Also Pick Up Congressional Seats

In the Senate, Democrats hold a one seat edge when the 37th Congress opens on March 4, 1861. But this margin will rapidly disappear, as a total of eleven Southern states secede, leaving their seats vacant and handing the majority over to the Republicans of the North.

Election Trends In The Senate

Party	1856	1858	1860
Democrats	37	38	30
Republicans	20	25	29
Whigs	3	2	0
Know Nothings	4	0	1
Vacant	1	0	8
Total	65	65	68

In the House, the Republicans extend their lead over the Democrats after massive vacancies occur across the South.

Election Trends In The House

Party	1856	1858	1860
Democrats	133	98	45
Republicans	90	116	108
Opp/Unionists	0	19	30
Know Nothings	14	5	0
Vacant	0	0	56
Total	237	238	239