Notes:

In a discussion on Facebook, a friend objected when I pointed out that, while Hillary Clinton won the popular vote in 2016 by a margin of 2,868,524 votes, she won California by 4,269,978, which means that, without the California margin of victory (if they had tied in California), Trump would have won the popular vote by a margin of 1,401,454 votes. In this case, I was talking about some of the flaws of a strictly popular vote for choosing the president and the potential problem of the largest states being able to win or lose an election for any particular candidate, regardless of what the rest of the country might think of that candidate.

My friend got upset and said that it would be the same thing with big Republican states, like Texas. Me, being me, I wondered how big a problem that really is. Going back to the 1960 election (which is where I want to start my electoral project), I made a list of all of the states that have had 20 or more electoral votes in that time period, which gave me a base of 8 states (California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas). I looked up the margins of victories in each of those states in each of the elections. (I have added this information as a new page in my data workbook (which I am attaching to this, although that one page is all that is different from what I sent out yesterday.) I also posted the following message on Facebook to discuss what I found:  
  
"XXX, your comment got me interested. So, I have been looking at the victory margins in all of the presidential elections since 1960. I then compared those margins to the margins in the 8 largest states during that time (the states that have had 20 or more electoral votes in that period). Those states are California, Florida, Illinois, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Texas. I didn't look at who any of those states actually voted for, I just looked at the margins of victory in each of those states. What I was looking for was any single state that had a margin of victory that was high enough that they alone determined which candidate won if their vote totals had been reversed. This is ONLY looking at popular vote totals (because that is what we are talking about) instead of electoral vote differences. Here is what I have found.

In 1960, Kennedy's margin of victory over Nixon was 112,827. New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania all beat that margin. However, that was the margin when you separate the votes of the Southern Democrats who voted for "unpledged" electors so that they could vote for Henry Byrd as their Democratic candidate. If you combine all of the Democratic vote totals and compare them to the Republican vote totals, you get a Democratic margin of victory of 399,186. None of the states had a margin that could have overturned that. New York would have come the closest with a margin of 383,666 followed by Ohio with a 273,363 margin and Pennsylvania at 116,326... and none of those states had a significant showing for Byrd.

In 1964, the margin of victory for Johnson over Goldwater was 15,963,286. The combine margin of victory in all 8 of those states was only 9,161,657 so, obviously no single state could have swung the victory to Goldwater.

In 1968, Nixon's margin of victory was 511,944. The highest margin in any of the states was New York, with 370,538 with the highest margin for Nixon was California, with 223,346. No single state could have reversed Nixon's win.

In 1972, Nixon's margin of victory was 17,995,488. The combined margins of victory in all of those states was 7,830, 589, with Texas again having the highest margin for Nixon of 1,144,605.

In 1976, Carter's margin of victory over Ford was 1,683,247. The combined margins of victory for all of the states was 1,148.406, with New York having the highest margin of victory for Carter at 288,767.

In 1980, Reagan's margin of victory over Carter was 8,423,115. The combined margins of victory in all of the states was 4,272,482, with the highest state margin of victory for Reagan being California, with 1,544,490, followed by Texas with 1,484152.

In 1984, Reagan's margin over Mondale being 16,872,120. The combined margin in all 8 states was 7,389,170 in favor of Reagan. So, obviously, no single state could have swung the results.

In 1988, Bush I's margin over Dukakis was 7,077,103 with Illinois being the only one of the states to vote for Dukakis. The combined margins for the other 7 states, which all voted for Reagan, was 3,136,726. The margin in Illinois for Dukakis was only 94,999.

In 1992, Clinton beat Bush I by 5,805,256. The combined margins for all 8 states was 4,476,871. What makes this election tricky is that Perot got 19,743,821 votes. So, if his votes had gone to either Bush I or Clinton, that person would have won a decisive victory, but no single state could have swing it from Clinton to Bush I.

In 1996, Clinton beat Dole by 8,201,4547 votes. The combined margin was5,659,475, so no single state could have swung the election. Perot got a total of 8,085,422 so, even if all of his votes had gone to Dole, Dole still would have lost by 314,703 votes. The only one of the 8 states to vote for Dole was Texas. Even if you combined ALL of Perot's votes with the Texas margin (276,848), Dole STILL would have lost by 37,855.

In 2000, the entire election was, as we all know, a giant clusterfuck. It's difficult to talk about the popular votes in which state could have swung the election to Gore because Gore DID win the popular vote by 547,398. The issue with this election, of course, was the Supreme Court getting involved to halt the recount in Florida, which gave Florida's 25 electoral votes to Bush II by a margin of 537 votes. Then, when you throw-in Nader, you just add another level of fuckery into the overall clusterfuck, so I'm not going to deal with that election here.

In 2004, Bush II beat Kerry by 3,012,457 votes. Of the 4 of the states that voted for Bush II, if you combined them all (2,342,040 votes), Bush II still would have won by 670,417 votes.

In 2008, Obama beat McCain by 9,549,1005 votes. If all of the 8 states had their votes reversed, when necessary) to have all been for Obama, then their combined total would have been 9,551,220 THEN McCain would have won by 2,115 votes. Of those states that voted for Obama (all of them except for Texas), their combined margin was 8,645,525 which would have still resulted in an Obama win by 903,580 votes.

In 2012, Obama beat Romney by 4,984,100 votes. The greatest margin of victory for Obama in any of those states was California, with 3,262,392 votes. To swing the election to Romney, you would have to combine the two states with the largest Obama margins... California AND New York (1,995,381). Combined, they give total margin of 5,009,708. If both of those states would have voted for Romney, he would have won by 25,608.

In 2016, as with 2000, we again have a case of the popular vote winner losing the election. H Clinton's margin over Trump was 2,868,524. This is the only election between 1960 and 2020 (not counting 2000 because I haven't analyzed it in depth) where swinging a single state (California, with a state margin of 4,868,524) which have had enough impact on the national vote to change which candidate would have won the popular vote. If you give H Clinton's margin in California to Trump, his margin of victory would have been 1,401,454 votes. If you were to simply erase all of the California votes for BOTH H Clinton and Trump, Trump would have won the general election by 10,155,246 votes. That SERIOUSLY, SERIOUSLY bothers me about what it says about the rest of the country. It says that we need to look hard and deeply about how to fix the many problems in this country that are illustrated by that number right there.

In 2020m Biden beat Trump with a margin of 7,060,220 votes. In that election, 5 of the 8 states supported Biden. Their combined margins are 6,558,082. If all of their totals were reversed and those margins when to Trump, he STILL would have lost by 502,138 votes.

So, between 1960 and 2020, California in the 2016 election was unique. No other state demonstrates the singular power to have been the sole reason one candidate beat the other in the popular vote totals.

"As a general beginning, I have gathered the electoral data (by congressional districts) for every election since 1968 (I have found no source for the data I need for 1960 or 1964). One thing I have found fascinating as I've delved into this data is that it shows much more than vote totals. There are many instances where I can identify racial biases and the effects of gerrymandering. The interesting thing about the gerrymandering is that it has always been my position that gerrymandering has no impact on presidential (or senatorial and other statewide races) elections BUT, if any form of a congressional district system (along the lines of what we have in Maine and Nebraska) is used, it can have a VERY noticeable impact. For example, in 2012, while Romney did not get a majority of the popular or electoral votes, he would have won under any of the 4 CD systems I am evaluating.

In case any of you are interested, here are a few observations I have made.

Under a strictly popular vote method, 5 elections since 1968 have resulted in no candidate receiving a majority of the votes and, thus, the decision would have gone to the House. Those elections were 1968, 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2016 (So, among other things, a popular vote would NOT have resulted in an automatic win for Hillary and, given the number of states that have a majority of Republican Representatives in the House, it would still have likely gone to Trump).

Another thing that I think is important with this kind of an evaluation is what the data demonstrates about the "myth" of the "landslide win". No matter how close an election might actually be, the use of "winner take all" systems for allocating electoral votes can create an illusion (delusion) of a much bigger "mandate" than the other methods show to be the real case. Maybe if result totals were more realistically determined, certain parties in positions of power within our government might be more hesitant to act without restraint in the exercise of that power.

1968 -- Popular vote would have gone to the house (220 - 227 - 77) but Nixon would still have won under any CD system.

1972 -- Historically, Nixon beat McGovern 521 - 17. While Nixon would have won under any evaluated system, it could have been as much of a difference as 339 - 196 - 3 (popular vote, whole votes) or 333.65 - 192.88 - 11.48 (popular vote, percentage votes).

1976 -- Carter beat Ford 297 - 240 but it could have been as close as 269.76 - 258.16 - 10.09 (popular vote, percentage votes). I rounded Carter up to 270 (and the win) because he did win a bare majority of the votes cast.

1980 -- Reagan beat Carter 489 - 49, but it could have been as close as 271 - 224 - 42 (popular vote, whole votes).

1984 -- Reagan won with an even bigger total than Nixon in 1972, 525 - 13. The best case scenario would have changed it to317.91 - 216.09 - 4.0 (popular vote, percentage votes).

1988 -- Bush I beat Dukakis 426 - 111. Best case against him would have been 287.86 - 224.75 - 5.39 (popular vote, percentage votes).

1992 -- Clinton beat Bush I (and Perot). A popular vote total (either way) would have gone to the House because no one won a majority of the votes cast. It could have been 230.62 - 202.41 - 104.97 (popular vote, percentage votes). Clinton would still have won, however, under any of the CD allocation methods.

1996 -- Clinton beat Dole (and Perot) A popular vote total (either way) would have gone to the House because no one won a majority of the votes cast. It could have been 263.69 - 220.24 - 54.06 (popular vote, percentage votes). Clinton would still have won, however, under any of the CD allocation methods.

2000 -- Bush II "beat" Gore. A popular vote total (either way) would have gone to the House because no one won a majority of the votes cast. It could have been 258.79 - 259.58 - 54.06 (popular vote, percentage votes). Bush would still have won, however, under any of the CD allocation methods.

2004 -- Bush II beat Kerry 286 - 241. The closest it could have been would have been 274.92 - 257.59 - 5.49 (popular vote, percentage votes). but Bush II would have won under any of the systems.

2008 -- Obama beat McCain 365 - 173. Obama would have won under any of the systems. The closest McCain could have gotten would have been 279 - 243 - 16 (popular vote, whole votes).

2012 -- Obama beat Romney 332 - 206. Under ANY of the Congressional Districts allocation systems, however, Romney would have won, with either 273 or 276 votes (depending on the method used). Under either popular vote method, Obama would have won with just 273 votes.

2016 -- Trump beat H. Clinton but, under either popular vote method would have gone to the House because neither won a majority of the popular votes cast. H. Clinton's best result against Trump would have been 263 - 268 - 17 (popular vote, whole votes). Trump's worst total would have been 253.12 (T) - 256.94 (H) - 27.94. Under any of the Congressional District allocation methods, Trump would have won with 293, 294, or 295 votes.

2020 -- Biden beat Trump 306 - 232. The closest it could have been would have been 273.73 - 254.85 - 9.42 (popular vote, percentage votes). Can you imagine the problems that Trump and his people would have caused with that result?"

1.) Gerrymandering, just as two examples (one from Republicans and one from Democrats)...

California in 2020... with a district allocation method, Democrats get 47 or 48 votes and Republicans 7 or 8. If, however, you look at the breakdowns by percentage of votes, Democrats would get 35 votes and Republicans would get 19.

National 2012, Romney got a lower percentage of votes than Obama but, by a congressional district allocation, he gets a majority of the electoral votes.

There are some REALLY egregious ones, but I'll have to go back through the pages to find them... where the winner of the state by total votes gets significantly fewer electoral votes when allocated by district wins.

Basically, look at wide-swinging differences between percentage vote totals and district vote totals.

2.) Racism, this one is more subtle and only becomes apparent when you look at all of these results that are consistent across a long period of time. What you look for are "supermajorities" for one party in a state of, say, 75% or more with none for the other party. This is called "packing" a district... you cram as many of one party into that district as you can so that there will be fewer of them in several more districts. Some of the time these are just because of what population is where. The 1st Congressional District in Indiana, for example, is always a Democratic supermajority but, most of the black people in the state happen to live in Gary, close to Chicago. The same thing with the 1st and 2nd Districts in Illinois.

Now, look at Pennsylvania in 2012. Democrats got 52% of the votes compared to 46.6% for the Republicans. If you break it down by Congressional Districts, the Democrats win 6 or 7 electoral votes while the Republicans get 13 or 14. Now, look at the percentages in the districts... there are 2 Democratic districts with super majorities (4 if you drop the cutoff line to 66%, aka 2/3) while there are no supermajority districts for the Republicans (and 2 that are in the low 60s%). I don't even need to see the district maps to know that those districts are not drawn in a fair and non-partisan method.

3.) "CD system" is allocating electoral votes by congressional district. This is important because each state gets a number of electors equal to the number of members they have in The House and the Senate. Within a state, each congressional district is drawn so that each district has approximately the same number of people as every other district in the state.

4.) California DID give Hillary a popular vote win, but the problem I have is with that result coming solely because of a single state. She won the overall popular vote by 2,868,524. However, her margin of victory in California was 4,269,978. So, if she and Trump had tied in California, Trump would have had 1,401,454 more votes nationwide than Clinton got. If you remove all of the votes of California completely for both Clinton and Trump, in the other 49 states, Trump would have won the popular vote by10,155,246.

The problem I have with people saying that if we elected our presidents by the popular vote total but not considering the total number of votes cast for ALL candidates, not just the major party candidates. In 2016, NEITHER candidate won a majority victory when you take all votes cast into account. And I have a problem with the idea that a victory for any one candidate is reliant solely on one single state.

Also, when you look at elections like in 1992, because of Perot, Clinton won with a plurality of the votes cast (43%) instead of a majority. I don't like that idea that a candidate can win with just a plurality of the votes. The Framers created a system that required a candidate win a majority of the electoral votes cast in order to win the presidency. If no candidate wins a majority of the electoral votes, then the House decides who wins the presidency, but they will vote as many times as it takes for a candidate to win a majority of the states (each state gets a single vote, no matter how many Representatives or electoral votes they might have). Whatever system makes the decision, it still requires a candidate to win a majority vote by that system.

5.) "Winner takes all", yes, in every state except Maine and Nebraska, whoever gets the most total votes in a state gets all of the electoral votes in that state.

6.) I'm not sure what you mean? By "and down", I have no breakdown of results for the 1960 or 1964 elections because I cannot find a source anywhere that gives results by congressional districts and, so, all I have is the overall statewide vote totals.

1968 is confusing because of George Wallace. Wallace did win some states and did win some electoral votes. As a result, while Nixon won a plurality of the total votes cast, he did not win a majority. Yes, 1968 is a mess because of Wallace. 1960 would be the same because in the south, many Democratic (conservative) voters did not want to vote for Kennedy. So, instead of voting for Democratic electors for Kennedy they voted for "unpledged" Democratic electors who could vote for whoever they wanted. Those electors voted for Henry Byrd who, thus, won states and won electoral votes. As with 1968 (and 1992 and 1996) no candidate won a majority of the votes cast.

7.) Yes, all of the electoral votes are shown for all elections. Look under the columns marked "Historical." At the bottom, it shows have many electoral votes each candidate got in the actual elections.

8.) I'm not what your asking for about the "first person mentioned." For each election, I list the candidates... the Democratic candidates are shown in blue, the Republicans in red and, where they are included, third-party / independent candidates are shown in green. Those same colors are used across the worksheets even without the candidate names being used in the other columns.

9.) The "as close as" numbers are the ones that go the farthest in either direction from all of the different scenarios. For example, if the results are shown as XXX.XX%, then they are from the "Hypothetical (Proportional/Percentage)" columns. If they are shown in whole numbers, then they usually come from the "Hypothetical (Proportional/Whole Number)" columns, or might be from one of the CD methods. They are not from the same location across all of the elections, they are just examples of the most extreme possible case for a particular election. For example, in 1976, the lowest of the possible results for Carter were under the "Hypothetical (Proportional/Percentage)" columns. In that scenario, Carter would only have won 269.76 electoral votes which is technically less than the 270 votes needed to win in the electoral college but, since he did win a majority of the votes cast nationwide (50.1%), then the 269.76 would properly round up to exactly 270 electoral votes. So, Carter would have won under any of the scenarios BUT, the scenario in which he came closest to not winning was that one.

10.) Yes, Gore won more popular votes than Bush did BUT, again, I think it is important to point out that NEITHER of them won a majority of the popular vote totals so, by using the popular votes, the election would have gone to the House (and the Senate for the VP).

11.) In 2000, Gore won 48.4% of the votes cast, Bush won 47.9% of the votes cast, and 3.7% of all of the votes cast went to other candidates. So, neither of them won a majority of the popular votes cast. However, under any of the CD allocation systems, Bush got more than 270 votes in all of them. The closest Bush got to losing was the actual historical vote count in which he only got 271 electoral votes compared to 266 for Gore (and 1 faithless elector from DC abstained from voting).