

Abstract

Under approval voting (AV), voters can vote for as many candidates as they like or find acceptable in a multicandidate election. If there had been AV in the 1992 presidential election, the candidates, especially George Bush, probably would have toned down their more strident rhetoric to try to gain the second-place approval of other candidates' supporters, but it is unlikely that such changes in campaign strategy would have altered the election outcome, based on three different projections made from responses to questions in the National Election Study. These indicate that Ross Perot would have been the major beneficiary of AV, more than doubling his 19% of the popular vote to about 42% approval, but Bill Clinton would have won with about 55% approval, beating Bush with about 49% approval. From a normative perspective, a less negative campaign, a possibly higher voter turnout, and a winning percentage that would have helped to legitimate Clinton's victory are viewed as desirable consequences of AV.