



Column / Don Newman

Trump's Long Shot

In his churlish, self-aggrandizing speech accepting the Republican Party's presidential nomination, Donald Trump gave the game away.

Without actually admitting it, he laid out the strategy for defeating Hillary Clinton and capturing the White House in the election on November 8.

"When I'm president," he shouted, "we will make things again in Wisconsin, in Illinois, in Michigan, and Pennsylvania."

That means he will continue running his back-to-the-future campaign aimed at disaffected, disenfranchised white men with limited education. He will continue to promise he can bring back the economy of 35 years ago, when well-paid manufacturing jobs were available to people like them.

And he will focus his campaign and his promises on those four states he named in his speech that almost never vote for a Republican presidential candidate, but are highly susceptible to his message this time.

American presidents are elected by the Electoral College, not by the direct votes of the voting public. Each state has the same number of votes as the number of seats it has in the US Senate and the House of Representatives. Each state has two senators, but larger states have more seats in the House of Representatives, so more votes in the Electoral College. In presidential politics, bigger is better.

So, 435 Electoral College votes from the House, and 100 from the Senate. In addition to the 50 states, Washington D.C. also has three Electoral College votes. That means there are

a total of 538 votes available. A candidate must win a majority—270—to be elected president.

A candidate gets all of a state's votes in the Electoral College by winning the popular vote in the state. It is winner take all, with the exceptions of Nebraska and Maine, where the winner of the statewide popular vote receives two votes in the college, while one vote goes to the winner of each of the state's congressional districts, three in Nebraska and two in Maine.

There is no second place. Even with the narrowest margin of victory in the popular vote all the state's votes in the Electoral College go to the winner.

Those states ringing the Great Lakes mentioned by Trump are among the biggest in the United States, rich in Electoral College votes. They used to be the industrial heartland of the US; home to the automobile industry, but also home to much of the country's heavy industrial base.

Now they are collectively known as the "Rust Belt." Many of their factories are shuttered, the high-paying, unionized jobs gone, gone to countries like China and Mexico.

The countries where the jobs have gone pay low wages, and have an ample supply of people willing to work for them. The products they make are not for their domestic markets, but are exported back into the United States because of either low or non-existent tariffs in the US

The people who worked in those manufacturing industries are now out of work, or working service in-

dustry jobs for \$15 an hour instead of unionized manufacturing jobs for \$40 an hour.

In the primaries, many registered as Republicans, voted for Trump and his promise to re-impose tariffs to bring back American manufacturing from overseas, and provided his unlikely victory.

In the 2012 election, Republican candidate Mitt Romney won 206 Electoral College votes, 64 short of the 270 needed to be elected president. He did not win any of states named by Trump in his speech.

Collectively, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan and Pennsylvania have 66 Electoral College votes. Add that to Romney's total four years ago and Trump is over the top. To add icing to the cake, if he wins those four states he is also likely to win Ohio, another rust belt state that swings back and forth in presidential elections but almost always goes with the winner.

That would give Trump another 18 votes in the Electoral College. With a total of 290 votes, Hillary Clinton would have 248 Electoral College votes and her dream of being the first woman president would be in ruins.

It is still something of a long shot for Trump to win so many states that are usually safe for the Democrats. But then his chances of being the Republican nominee for president were a long shot, too. **P**

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