

Appendix G

Does One Vote Make a Difference?

You bet! Several local elections in Palm Beach County over the past two decades have been decided by a handful of votes. Here are a few examples where a single vote decided the outcome of an important election or issue.

1820 President James Monroe won all but one vote. Monroe ran for a second term as president in 1820 and was so popular that he won all but a single vote in the Electoral College. John Quincy Adams, the former president and son of the second president, cast the one and only vote against Monroe. Adams stated that the reason he did this was "to make certain that only George Washington would ever have the honor of being elected President by a unanimous vote."

1845 One vote made Texas a state. When the Senate voted on statehood the vote was a tie. However, one Senator changed his vote making Texas the 28th state.

1846 One vote took the United States to war with Mexico. President James Polk asked for a Declaration of War but the U.S. Senate had to declare war and many senators were uncertain about the issue. Ultimately, the declaration passed by one vote. The United States won the ensuing war and added five states to the country: Arizona, California, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah.

1867 One vote made Alaska a U.S. territory.

1868 One vote saved President Andrew Johnson from being removed from office. The Congress tried to impeach Johnson but the U.S. Senate failed to vote to remove him by a single vote.

1876 One vote gave Rutherford B. Hayes the presidency of the United States. In the 1876 presidential election, Samuel Tilden received a half million more popular votes than Hayes. The Electoral College, the group that officially elects the president, was not in agreement about who should be America's next leader. A special commission was formed to make the final decision and, after much contention, decided on Hayes by a 185 to 184 electoral vote.

1948 Harry Truman won the presidency by approximately one vote per precinct (each county contains several voting precincts where citizens cast their votes). If Truman's opponent, Thomas E. Dewey, had received one vote more per precinct in Ohio and California, there would have been a tie and the House of Representatives would have decided the election. Because Dewey, the Republican, had more support and votes in the House than Truman, Dewey would have won the election.

1960 John F. Kennedy won the presidency by approximately one vote per precinct over Richard M. Nixon.

2008 George W. Bush became president by roughly 500 votes. Although Bush lost the popular vote to Al Gore by over 500,000 votes, he narrowly won the Electoral College by winning a controversial recount in Florida.

2011 A plan by the United Nations to recognize an independent Palestinian state failed by a single vote in the UN Security Council.