

# JOE BIDEN WINS US ELECTIONS AFTER RECORD VOTER TURNOUT

By Alex Pollock



Former Vice President Joe Biden has been elected the 46<sup>th</sup> president of the United States, narrowly emerging victorious from a contentious White House campaign that stretched days past election night, as vote tallies in several swing states were slowed by an unprecedented surge in mail-in ballots...And with his victory, his running mate, California Senator Kamala Harris, will become the first female vice president. She'll also become the nation's second Black candidate, following former President Barack Obama, to serve as president or vice president. *(Associated Press)*

## ***The Results***

Former Vice President Joe Biden was elected president with 290 of the 538 electoral college votes. Mr Biden beat out Republican incumbent President Donald Trump, who won 214 electoral votes. The remaining electoral votes are yet to be officially cast. A majority of 270 was needed to secure victory. The election results took several days to be announced as an unprecedented number of voters cast ballots by mail because of the on-going coronavirus pandemic.

Mr Biden received 75 million votes, more votes than any other presidential candidate in history, beating the record previously held by Barack Obama. Mr Trump had received 70.7 million votes at the time of the victory call. Despite the winner being announced, there are several million votes left to be counted. A record number of voters cast ballots in 43 states, in an election that saw the highest voter turnout in a century (over 70% of registered voters).

Mr Biden claimed the victory by securing several key 'swing states' that Mr Trump had won in 2016, including Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Nebraska. Mr Trump held early leads in all these states, however, more Democrats cast mail ballots, which are counted after ballots cast in person.

Mr Biden and his running mate, California Senator Kamala Harris, appealed to minority voters, as well as a majority of younger voters. Ms Harris made history on several fronts as she became the first female, first black, and first child of immigrants to be elected to the office of vice president.

This election was not only for the president but also involved seats in the Senate and Congress. At the time of writing this article (10 November), the majorities seem to remain intact. Republicans held a 53-47 majority in the Senate, with 35 seats up for re-election this year. As of Monday 9 November, 31 out of the 35 seats had been called, with the Democrats gaining one seat. A party needs 51 seats to have the Senate majority. All 435 seats of the House of Representatives (Congress) were up for re-election this year and going into the contest Democrats had the advantage. With 411 seats called, the Democrats are projected to hold their advantage, despite losing four seats to the Republicans.

The Biden-Harris campaign promised to undo several Trump policies and decisions, including Mr Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Accords, which became official the day after the election.

One of his first actions as president-elect was to put together a transition team focused on developing a strategy to combat the coronavirus pandemic, of which the United States still leads the world in new cases and deaths. Mr Biden also promised to rework Barack Obama's healthcare plan, invest trillions into clean energy, and make large investments in education for elementary and college students.

## ***Trump's legal challenges***

Several states have laws where vote recounts can be requested by a candidate if the margin of victory is less than one per cent. Mr Trump's party filed over half a dozen legal challenges during election week, including attempts to stop vote counting in Pennsylvania and Michigan, both states that he won in 2016. The 'vote halting' lawsuits were both unsuccessful. The Republican Party also contested the validity of counts in Georgia, saying ballots brought in after the cut-off time could have been mixed with eligible ballots. Several of the 'battleground states' that Mr Trump contested have defended their election processes, and no claims of fraud have been substantiated. Mr Trump has also threatened to take the election results before the Supreme Court, an action the court says has little possibility of happening. Mr Trump's legal challenges are not expected to delay official results or have any effect on the final number of electoral votes.

## ***Process of transition***

Despite the many legal challenges presented by Republican Party leaders, it is projected that Mr Biden and Ms Harris' inauguration will take place as scheduled on 20 January 2021.

Mr Biden will set up a transition team for the period between results day and the inauguration, to ensure a smooth transition of power. Mr Biden will select his cabinet members, who will be affirmed by the senate, and will discuss primary policy concerns with his team before officially taking office. While it is customary for the exiting president to concede to the new with a phone call, it is not obligatory for the transfer of power.

## ***International response***

Several foreign leaders expressed their congratulations to Mr Biden following the announcement of his victory, including many from the Middle East, where Donald Trump left a large mark with his policies.

Saudi Arabian Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman sent his congratulations over 24 hours after Mr Biden's victory was announced. Under the previous administration, Mr Trump provided a "buffer" for the Kingdom against criticism for the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, its involvement in the Yemen war, and for the detention of women activists. Mr Biden has expressed his intention to demand more accountability from Saudi Arabia as well as ending US support for the Yemen war.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani used the change in administration to plead for an end to "Trump's damaging policy" and "as an opportunity to make up for past mistakes." Mr Biden has campaigned to re-enter the 2015 Iran deal, a deal agreed to by Washington when Mr Biden was vice president.

Turkish vice president Fuat Oktay was quoted as saying the change in leadership would not affect relations between the two countries, however, Mr Biden is expected to increase pressure on Turkey to adjust its international military interventions, as well as push for improved Turkey-Russia relations.

Celebrations have taken place in India as Ms Harris is the daughter of an Indian biologist, however, both Ms Harris and Mr Biden have criticised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist agenda, something Mr Trump did not do during his presidency.

Relations between Mr Biden and the United Kingdom's Boris Johnson are yet to be revealed, as the two leaders need to negotiate a new trade deal before the Brexit transition period ends on 1 January 2021.

## ***FROM A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE***

As one of the most tumultuous election cycles in recent history ends, several million people have a renewed sense of hope, while another several million feel they have lost their hope. Both Mr Biden and Mr Trump profess Christianity, however, their administrations draw support from different groups of Christians. A *Pew Research* study shows that a majority of self-claimed Republicans are older white Americans, while many self-claimed Democrats are under the age of 30 and come from much more diverse ethnic backgrounds. This political divide is mirrored in the American Church. While Donald Trump represents a previous view of American Christianity (middle class, white, protestant), Mr Biden (a Catholic)

and Ms Harris (a Southern Baptist) represent a new, fast-growing American Christian demographic (multi-racial, multicultural, socio-economically diverse).

Ms Harris' ethnic, racial and cultural biography represents a growing slice of the US population – raised in a multi-cultural, diverse religious home (an Indian Hindu mother, and Christian Jamaican father), and married to a Jewish man – which a younger generation of Americans can identify with. Mr Biden and Ms Harris have centred their election platform on unifying a deeply divided America, and thus a divided American Church.

This is not a task that can be accomplished by human effort alone, and it will surely need a mighty work of the Holy Spirit to unite the Church across its current political divides. As the biggest Christian nation in the world, that also sends out the most missionaries globally, God surely has much more work for the American Church to do, no matter who the ruling party or president is. As one part of the body of Christ in America is celebrating their political victory and the other part is coming to terms with their political defeat, may both sides remain focussed on God's Kingdom in order for His will to be done in, and through, the American Church in this new season.

Please pray with us:

- For the new administration to be receptive to the Lord's guidance in this new season for America
- For there to be a healing of rifts within American society and the Church
- For believers to embrace this new season and to continue to pray for their leaders to govern their nation righteously and in a God-fearing manner

Image: REUTERS/Jim Bourg