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How Al Gore lost 15,914 votes in Florida, and maybe the presidency

WASHINGTON, DC — Instead of blaming “voting irregularities” for his apparent loss of the presidency, Al Gore should blame the War on Drugs — which cost him 15,914 votes in Florida alone, Libertarians say.

According to a recent study on disenfranchisement laws, Gore would have won 15,914 more votes in Florida — and perhaps captured the presidency — if nonviolent drug offenders had been able to vote on November 7.

“Al Gore says every vote should be counted,” said Libertarian Party National Director Steve Dasbach. **“Yet if these 15,914 votes had been counted, Gore would be the next commander-in-chief, instead of the complainer-in-chief fighting an increasingly desperate legal battle.”**

An analysis by the Washington, DC-based Sentencing Project found that 138,000 black men in Florida were prohibited from voting — including 27,600 nonviolent drug offenders who have served their full sentences — by a state law that permanently disenfranchises people with felony convictions.

Assuming that those 27,600 would have turned out and voted for Gore in numbers similar to blacks in general, the vice president forfeited 15,914 votes in Florida — more than enough to defeat Gov. George W. Bush. Even if only half that number had voted, Gore still would have easily overcome Bush's razor-thin 591-vote lead.

“Like most politicians, the vice president is a vociferous supporter of the War on Drugs,” Dasbach said.

“Now the Drug War has boomeranged on Gore and apparently knocked him out of the White House — and he deserves it. The government has no business jailing people who have never harmed anyone else, much less stripping them of their civil rights after they're released.”

The demographics of the Drug War explain why the Florida law hurt Gore rather than Bush, Dasbach explained.

“African-Americans are five times more likely than whites to be sent to prison for drug violations,” he said. “Blacks are also far more likely to have voted for Gore; in fact 93 percent did so. So preventing drug offenders from voting siphoned far more prospective votes from Gore.

“Millions of Americans have seen their families, their lives, and their careers destroyed by a drug conviction. Now it looks as if Al Gore's lifelong career goal of becoming president will become the latest casualty of the War on Drugs — and it serves him right.”