

# [***Conservatives compelled by Trump are pushing Nebraska to adopt a winner-take-all election system***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BS4-CP11-DYMD-64PD-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

OMAHA, Neb. — By the time conservative activist Charlie Kirk took the stage, there was no doubt that it was Donald Trump who had led him to travel to Nebraska and pressure state lawmakers to [*adopt a “winner-take-all”*](https://apnews.com/article/electoral-votes-nebraska-maine-3dc4b2f6cd59e3eb52ddc9ed15cf33e1) system of awarding Electoral College votes.

“You see what’s ahead of us,” Kirk said Tuesday night at a rally before a crowd of about 500. “Trump vs. Biden is bigger than just an election. It is a civilizational survival question.”

Kirk joined the Nebraska Republican Party, currently led by Trump loyalists, to hold the rally Tuesday in an evangelical Christian church located in a southwest Omaha shopping center. While about 500 people packed the room in which Kirk spoke, about 400 more were in overflow rooms set up elsewhere in the church, said spokesman Andrew Kolvet of Turning Point, the pro-Trump organization that Kirk helped establish.

Most of those attending roared approval every time Trump's name was mentioned.

Michael Tiedeman, the 38-year-old newly elected chairman of the Sarpy County GOP, said the same momentum that saw Trump loyalists [*take over the state party*](https://apnews.com/article/2022-midterm-elections-donald-trump-legislature-nebraska-105d86c5e6dda78b5e3aaa07a268b3a9) in 2022 will drive the effort to move Nebraska to a winner-take-all state before the general election.

“The Democrat Party is pouring huge funds into our 2nd Congressional District because they can get that one electoral vote,” he said.

Their target is the state’s atypical system of splitting its five presidential electoral votes. Two are statewide votes, but the other three are tied to the state's three congressional districts and go to whichever candidate wins the popular vote in that district. Maine is the only other state to split its electoral votes; the 48 other states award all of their electoral votes to whichever candidate wins statewide.

“It was probably well-intended, but this whole thing is just the goofiest thing I’ve ever seen,” Kirk said of Nebraska's split system.

Republican [*Trump*](https://apnews.com/hub/donald-trump) could need every electoral vote he can get to defeat [*President Joe Biden*](https://apnews.com/hub/joe-biden) in a rematch of the 2020 race.

Kirk said rally stemmed from a map that he and the team that produces his podcast saw last week showing that if Biden were to win the Rust Belt swing states of Wisconsin, Michigan and Pennsylvania, an electoral vote from Nebraska would give him the 270 electoral votes for reelection, even if Trump carries all the other swing states.

“One of our team members came out and said, 'Yeah, unless Nebraska just goes and fixes it,” Kirk recounted.

The issue gained national attention when Kirk urged his followers to call Republican Nebraska Gov. Jim Pillen’s office to urge the state to adopt a winner-take-all approach this year. Five hours later, Pillen issued a statement urging the Legislature to pass a bill, currently stalled in committee, that would change Nebraska to a winner-take-all state. Shortly after that, Trump posted on his social media platform, Truth Social, to praise Pillen and urge the switch.

Republicans, who have long dominated Nebraska ***politics***, have sought unsuccessfully to return the state to winner-take-all since it was adopted more than 30 years ago in 1991. The sticking point this year has been a focus on property tax reduction, school funding and a number of wedge issues. By the time Pillen issued his call last week to pass a winner-take-all bill, only a handful of days remained in the session — not enough time to pull the bill from committee and get it through three rounds of debate ahead of other priority bills.

Now, Kirk and Nebraska Republicans want the governor to call a special session after the current session's last day on April 18 to pass a winner-take-all measure.

“I had a very promising phone call with somebody in the governor’s office today, and they are committed to getting into a special session to get this to happen,” Kirk said.

While it's certainly within Pillen's purview to do so, it's not clear there are enough votes for a winner-take-all bill to pass in the unique one-chamber Nebraska Legislature made up of 49 lawmakers.

The body is officially nonpartisan, but lawmakers self-identify as Republican, Democrat or independent and tend to vote along party lines. Republicans currently hold 33 of the legislative body’s 49 seats, which is just enough to break a filibuster — as long as all 33 Republicans vote to end debate.

But Omaha Sen. Mike McDonnell, who switched parties last week from Democrat to Republican, told the Nebraska Examiner that he won't vote for a winner-take-all system.

Pillen did not attend the rally, nor did any state lawmaker, as the Legislature worked late Tuesday in the last days of this year's session.

Still, Kirk and others, like Nebraska GOP chairman Eric Underwood, urged the crowd attending the rally to call lawmakers daily until they agree to take up and pass the measure ahead of the November election.

“If Nov. 6 comes and we didn't do everything we can, we're going to lose this country,” Underwood told the crowd. “We're going to pass winner-take-all. We're going to find a way to get it done.”

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