

Electors make it official: Obama is 44th president

By Sean Yoes

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 WASHINGTON (NNPA) — Members of the Electoral College cast their ballots on Monday, Dec. 15, officially certifying Barack Obama as the 44th president of the United States and Joe Biden as vice president.

Without any unforeseen legal snafus, the certification by members of the Electoral College took place after the U.S. Supreme Court on Dec. 8 rejected a challenge to the president-elect's eligibility.

Although the election was determined more than a month ago, the results became official only when the nation's 538 members of the Electoral College voted in state capitals across the nation.

The 538 electors represent the number of a state's senators and representatives in the U.S. Congress, and include the District of Columbia which is given electors as if it were a state. U.S. territories are not represented in the Electoral College.

Electors are people who often are selected in recognition of their service and loyalty to their party, or they may have a personal or political tie to the presidential candidate. Many are highly politically active and may include community activists and party leaders.

According to the U.S. Electoral College website, on the Monday following the second Wednesday in December, the electors of each state meet in their respective state capitals to officially cast their votes for president and vice president. These votes are then sealed and sent to the president of the Senate, who on Jan. 6 opens and reads the votes in the presence of both houses of Congress. The winner is sworn into office at noon Jan. 20.

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— Ruby Duncan



Most of the time, electors cast their votes for the candidate who has received the most votes in that particular state.

However, there have been times when electors have voted contrary to the people's decision, which is entirely legal.

The final nationwide totals from the Nov. 4 election gave Obama 365 electoral votes, nearly 200 votes more than the 270 votes he needed to become the 44th president of the United States. Sen. John McCain finished with only 173 electoral votes.

The last state to announce its election results was Missouri, which didn't declare McCain the winner of the state's 11 electoral votes until Nov. 19, more than two weeks after Obama was declared president-elect. In Missouri, McCain grabbed a razor-thin victory of 49.5 percent to Obama's 49.3 percent, a margin of just two-tenths of one percent.

Unlike Missouri, however, the vast majority of states delivered a definitive victory for Obama as the polls closed. Maryland, for example, delivered an emphatic win for Obama and 10 electoral votes — 62 percent for Obama to 37 percent for McCain.

In Washington, D.C., Obama collected the electoral votes by crushing McCain nearly unanimously by a vote of 93 percent to 7

percent for the Arizona senator.

And in the pivotal state of Virginia, the speculation that

Obama would flip the former seat of the Confederacy — formally a dyed-in-the-wool red state — from Republican to Democrat came to fruition on Nov. 4, with Obama snagging the state's 13 electoral votes with 53 percent to 46 percent of the vote.

Like Virginia, the state of Nevada also delivered a political turnaround for the Democrats, turning another heretofore red state — which voted Republican in the 2000 and 2004 presidential elections — blue. Nevada's five Electoral College members

cast their votes in Carson City for Obama who won the state 55 to 43 percent.

Monday's vote was to be especially gratifying for Nevada elector Ruby Duncan, who led a group of Black welfare mothers in the early '70s who were fighting on behalf of poor women and children.

"It's just wonderful. I never thought I would live to see a day like this," Duncan, 76, told the Associated Press. She grew up in the segregated South and moved to Las Vegas in 1952.

"I never thought I'd live to see a day like this. All my life, I never had the joy of knowing that I could help work and vote for a Black president."

"What I love about Obama is that he wants to be a president for all the people," Duncan added.

"But for Black people throughout this country, we never thought that something like this would ever happen in our lifetime. Not people my age."

Sean Yoes write for the Afro-American Newspapers.

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Bond reverses self, will seek NAACP chair

Special to Sentinel-Voice

BALTIMORE (NNPA) — Julian Bond, longtime chairman of the nation's oldest civil rights group, last week retracted his decision to bow out of the 2009 bid for chairmanship of the National Board of the NAACP.

In a Dec. 8 letter to NAACP Board members and trustees, Bond said an outpouring of support persuaded him to change his mind. He also agreed that the continuity his presence provides would only enhance the organization's centennial celebrations. "I will be a candidate for chairman when the board convenes in February," he wrote. "This decision was made by the flood of written, telephoned, mailed and e-mailed appeals I received asking me to reconsider. "I am eternally grateful to all those who contacted me."

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