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THE NATION WAITS

Florida recount will decide the presidency

Television networks, some papers mistakenly call Bush the winner

By BILL LAMBRECHT

POST-DISPATCH WASHINGTON BUREAU

WASHINGTON—After an extraordinary night of drama and shifting political fates, Florida election officials began recounting votes today in a tally expected to decide whether Texas Gov. George W. Bush or Vice President Al Gore becomes the 43rd president of the United States.

Vote totals this morning showed Bush and Gore each with roughly 49 percent of the vote. Gore led Bush in electoral votes 255-246; Gore was also winning the popular vote, with 48,591,357 votes to Bush's 48,421,815. Green Party candidate Ralph Nader, who emerged as a spoiler, had 2 percent.

The eyes of the world were trained today on the 25 electoral votes in Florida, where Bush led Gore by fewer than 1,700 votes out of 6 million cast. With the difference less than 0.5 percent, an automatic recount was required under state law.

"There's never been a night like this one," Gore campaign chairman William Daley exclaimed at Gore headquarters in Nashville.

The vice president's office dispatched a team of lawyers to Tallahassee. Former Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who directed Gore's search for a running mate, was tabbed to lead Gore's team.

See President, Page 4



LUKE FRAZZA / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

Supporters of Vice President Al Gore watch a television report describing the extremely close Florida vote results during a rally this morning in Nashville, Tenn.

To our readers

Headline: "THE NATION WAITS"

That's why we are bringing you this Post-Dispatch "Extra" -- to update this incredible race between George W. Bush and Al Gore as it extends into Day 2 and perhaps beyond.

This morning's headlines on Page 1 shouted "Down to the wire" in some editions and "BUSH WINS A THRILLER" in most.

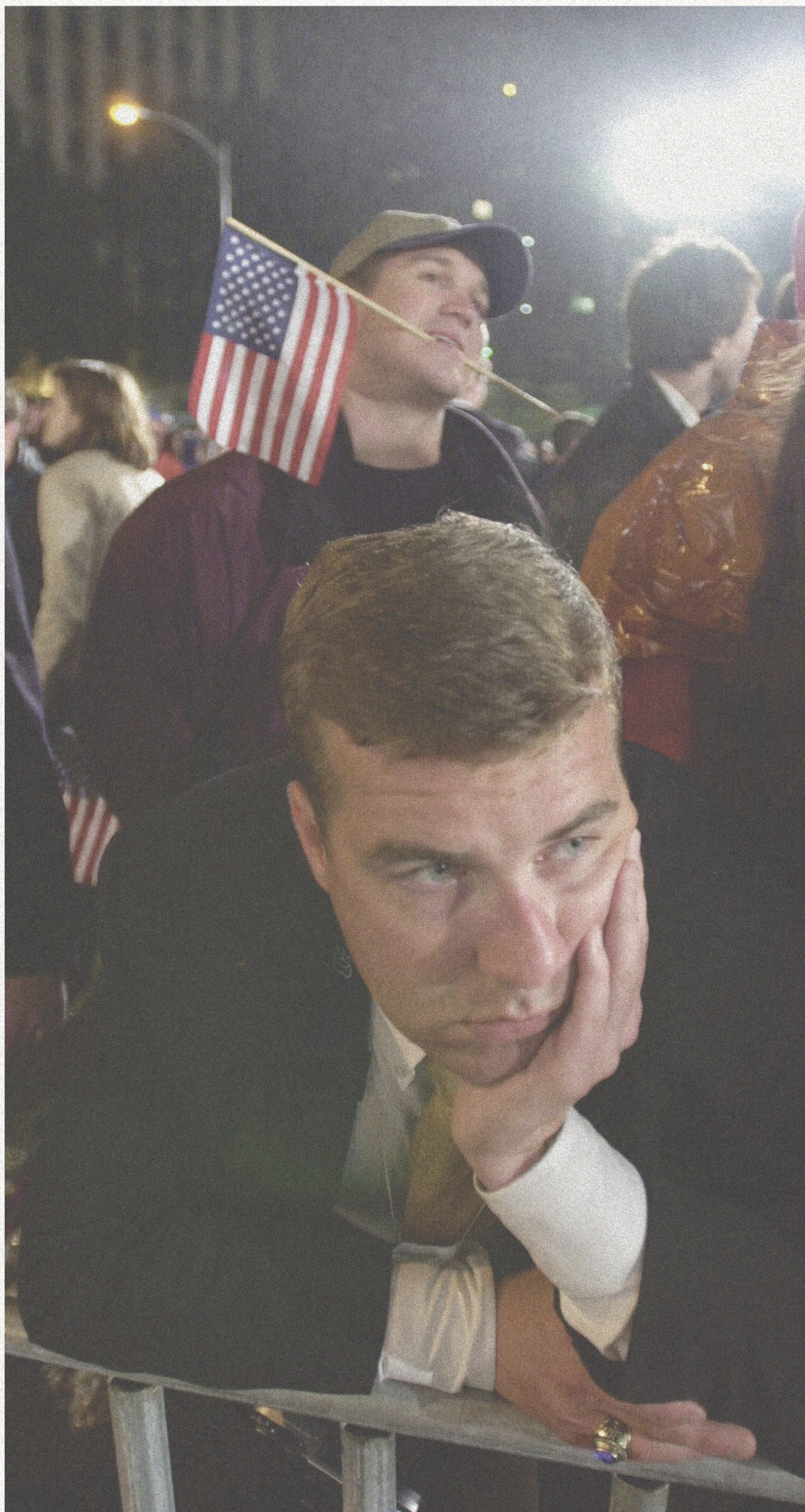
We wish we could have that second one back. We got caught in a time warp that feels part dreamlike and part nightmare: Looks like Gore. Looks like Bush. Too close to call. It's Bush. No, wait. Florida's still up for grabs.

At 1 this morning our lead headline said: Down to the wire. Our presses started at 1:30 a.m. for that edition, far later than usual.

At 1:45, in our final edition, our lead headline said: "BUSH WINS A THRILLER." That came about 20 minutes after CNN, NBC, CBS and ABC called the race for Bush, and Gore called Bush and conceded. At the time, we felt this was the right decision.

At about 2:15, we received a bulletin from the AP that Florida might still be up for grabs. The networks began reporting this news by about 2:30 a.m. By then, we were unable to stop the presses and still deliver the Post-Dispatch to you in a timely manner.

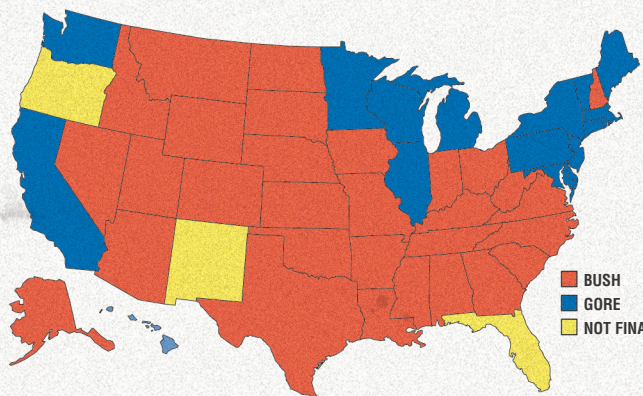
Arnie Robbins, Managing Editor



ERIC DRAPER / THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Supporters of Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush wait for more news early this morning at a rally in Austin, Texas. They had just heard that the vote totals in Florida were extremely close.

The vote for the presidency: Projected results across the nation



ELECTORAL VOTE
270 votes are needed to win presidency

GEORGE W. BUSH	AL GORE
246	255

% OF POPULAR VOTE
Percentage may not equal 100 due to rounding and other candidates.

GEORGE W. BUSH	AL GORE
48.5%	48.7%