General Information

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Description

After the infamous Florida mistake in 2000, media organizations were called to congressional hearings and spent millions of dollars to revamp Voter News Service, or VNS, the consortium that provides exit poll analysis to the major media. But even with the changes, there is plenty of chaos tracking results during the 2002 midterm elections.

Keywords

Transcript

2000 Presidential Election Still Haunts the Media in 2002

TOM BROKAW, anchor (Washington, DC):

NBC News IN DEPTH tonight. Remember Election Night 2000? We certainly do. The memory still haunts. The lingering image, the chaos of getting it wrong twice with lots of help. Lots of changes have been made between then and now to ensure the accuracy of election predictions, but late today a stunning announcement that threatened to turn everything upside down again. Here is NBC's Brian Williams with the latest for us. Brian, what's going on there?

BRIAN WILLIAMS, reporting:

Well, Tom, here we are at NBC News polling headquarters. And remember how you and I were going to be talking about exit polling tonight? Well, not so fast. We knew tonight was going to be different, because of what happened last time around. We did not know it was going to be this different. But tonight, because of an abundance of caution and some computing problems, we now know this is going to be a very late night.

No one who watched it or participated in it will ever forget Election Night 2000.

(From Tape) We are projecting that when the votes are counted, the state of Florida will go tonight to the vice president, Mr. Gore. So we have a change in our call. Florida is now too close to call.

BROKAW: (From Tape) We just don't have egg on our face. We've got omelet all over our suits.

WILLIAMS: On a night when accuracy is crucial, the news media got it wrong. And as a result, Decision 2002 was going to be done differently from top to bottom. There were hearings in Congress on what went wrong on election night. News executives were called to testify. Twelve million dollars was spent to revamp the consortium of news organizations called VNS, the folks who combine the raw numbers with
exit polling to come out with Election night projections. Then tonight came a statement from VNS saying that it is "not satisfied with the accuracy of today's exit poll analysis." That means those watching tonight will instead be hearing actual returns. The raw vote. NBC News will also use a poll of likely voters conducted right up until Election Day as a way of looking at why people are voting the way they are voting tonight.

And so aside from what we learned from the Voter News Service, what will we have tonight? Well, we will know voter attitudes. Again, we know that by telephone surveys taken right up until the vote, we will have, of course, the raw vote, and you will see projections on our network tonight. They will be in what one analyst called the solid, slam-dunk elections where the numeric vote is comfortable.

I asked our polling director earlier, `Does this mean we've gone back to 1952 this evening?' He paused and said, `No, it's more like we're using mid-1960s technology tonight. And so to sum up, if you liked Johnson-Goldwater, you'll love this evening. The advantage is NBC News plans to televise in color tonight. Tom:

BROKAW: Thanks very much, NBC's Brian Williams, an old-fashioned ni--night tonight brought up to the year 2002.