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Expected election gloom did not happen

By Ed Breen

Being in the gloom-and-doom business of news, I had been moping around for a couple of weeks cautioning friends and colleagues of the dire consequences of Election Night in America 2020. Nothing else has gone right this year, why should this?

Going to be terrible, I cautioned with the gravitas of a prophet just returned from the mountain. Guns, fires, shooting, hollering. Makes no difference who wins. If Trump wins, it'll be Portland all over the place. Antifa, whoever that might be, rides again. Biden wins, the Michigan militia rolls the black helicopters. Armageddon approacheth.

So we get to election night and nothing happens. Here in Marion, not even any votes, much less mayhem. Pretty much night-night time all around the nation. No one knew who won, who lost. Hold your fire and stand down. Then Wednesday. Then Thursday. Then Friday. People like Wolf Blitzer and John Roberts at CNN hadn't slept in days. Saturday it happened. Biden wins and there is

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A MOMENT
Ed Breen



joy in the streets of cities, bergs, hamlets across the land. Some of us were astounded. And then someone – and I don't recall who – pointed out that which I had been too dumb to see: We wanted, needed some cause for a little joy.

We were all exhausted, winners and losers. Losers hunkered down for a nap and winners, well . . . they took to the streets with party hats, noise makers, signs and banners like a bunch of Europeans celebrating a soccer win.

They do that in Europe and Third World places, mainly because their government and their politics are lot closer to

them. You've seen it; we all have on TV. The Social Democrat Plutocrat Christian Republicans win and everyone takes to the streets. They sing, they dance, they drink, they hug each other and commentators talk about how the young intellectuals and the peasants stood side-by-side to make this miracle happen.

We don't see things like this in America, at least not in 20th and 21st Century America. It used to happen back in the 1800s. Eighty-two percent of the voters came out in the titanic struggle between Mr. Hayes and Mr. Tilden back in 1876. And there are pictures of the crowds filling the streets almost nightly as the thing dragged on from November into the

dead of winter in January.

On Saturday, in Los Angeles people danced in streets where, in the past, rioters have died in the gutters as neighborhoods burned. Not this night. And it was much the same in New York and in Washington D.C., where the reporters said folks were celebrating in the street around the White House, but you really couldn't tell because the Trumpian fences have all but obscured seeing the White House from any street. More walls on Pennsylvania Avenue than there are on the Rio Grande.

In Wilmington, Del., in Biden country, they had a tailgate party right there in the heart of downtown. Looked more like post-

game partying than a political gathering.

But there are some numbers out of this monumental election that really are interesting, that tell us something that's maybe important about ourselves.

More people – more men and women over the age of 18 – registered their Presidential preference than have ever done so in the past. The total was above 174 million by the end of the weekend and numbers were still being tallied in places where the difference was so great as to not matter to either the jubilant Mr. Biden or the petulant Mr. Trump.

Sixty-six per cent of registered voters did just that: Voted. And more than 100 million of them

voted early in one way or another, early voting or absentee ballot. And no one quite knows why. Fear of COVID? Fear of intimidation? Eager to have their say for one or the other?

What we do know is that there were more than twice as many early voters this year as there were four years ago. Back in '16, only 47 million of us voted early.

And total voter turnout – that 66.3 percent number – was the highest since William Howard Taft thumped William Jennings Bryan in 1908.

Right here at home in Grant County, we fell right in line with the national profile, with 60.4 per cent turnout. That's 27,519 of us who had our say last Tuesday.

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