

TAFT INSTITUTE FOR GOVERNMENT AND CIVIC EDUCATION

ELECTORAL COLLEGE LESSON PLAN 2024



EXPANDING AND IMPROVING POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN THE U.S. SINCE 1961

Unit: Community and Civic Participation

Topic: The Electoral College in a Modern Context

Skill: Point of View

Essential Question: To what extent are the people involved in their democratic election system? To what extent has the Winner-Take-All system of the Electoral College helped and to what extent hurt the faith in the American democratic election process?

Note to Teacher / Practical Directions:

In this lesson, student participants will undertake to use sources in various media to investigate the historical roots and purposes of the Electoral College, as well as to cultivate an understanding as to its functions, effects, and potentially problematic outcomes.

Formative Assessment: daily exit slips may include, but are not limited to, a self-assessment as it relates to the lesson.

Assessment Goal 1: What can I learn from these resource materials? What questions can I ask about these themes?

Assessment Goal 2: Now that I know what questions I can ask, whom can I ask these questions? How would I go about finding a person or source to help me learn about this theme?

Alternatively, Teacher can offer students an Electoral College Pre and Post Questionnaire, to replace the Warm-Up and the Exit Ticket.

Summative Assessment: While no summative assessment is truly necessary for the first lessons, collaborative work may be exhibited through a collaborative Padlet or poster, which will reveal student understandings about the themes discussed in the unit.

Alternatively, Teacher may make use of the Additional/Optional Writing Scenario to have students produce a journalistic work where student journalists conduct hypothetical interviews with politicians.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy Standards – History/Social Studies:

RH.6-8.1 – Cite evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.

RH.6-8.2 – Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.

RH.6-8.6 – Identify aspects of a text that reveal an author's point of view or purpose.

RH.6-8.8 – Distinguish among fact, opinion, and reasoned judgment in a text.

Depth Of Knowledge Levels: 2 Skill/Concept; 3 Strategic Thinking; 4 Extended Thinking.

National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and International Reading Association (IRA) standards:

7. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

Social Studies Practices: A - Gathering, Using, and Interpreting Evidence:

1. Define and frame questions about events and the world in which we live, form hypotheses as potential answers to these questions, use evidence to answer these questions, and consider and analyze counterhypotheses.
2. Identify, describe, and evaluate evidence about events from diverse sources (including written documents, works of art, photographs, charts and graphs, artifacts, oral traditions, and other primary and secondary sources).

NYS Standards:

NYS SS1: History of the United States and New York: use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of major ideas, eras, themes, developments, and turning points in the history of the United States and New York.

NYS SS5: Civics, Citizenship, and Government - use a variety of intellectual skills to demonstrate their understanding of the necessity for establishing governments; the governmental system of the U.S. and other nations; the U.S. Constitution; the basic civic values of American constitutional democracy; and the roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship, including avenues of participation.

NCTE / IRA Standards for the English Language Arts:

1. Students read a wide range of print and non-print texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States and the world; to acquire new information; to respond to the needs and demands of society and the workplace; and for personal fulfillment. Among these texts are fiction and nonfiction, classic and contemporary works.
2. Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.
7. Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.
11. Students participate as knowledgeable, reflective, creative, and critical members of a variety of literacy communities.
12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes (e.g., for learning, enjoyment, persuasion, and the exchange of information).

EngageNY Scope and Sequence:

10.8 Tensions Between Traditional Cultures and Modernization: Tensions exist between traditional cultures and agents of modernization. Reactions for and against modernization depend on perspective and context.

10.9 Globalization and A Changing Global Environment (1990–Present): Technological changes have resulted in a more interconnected world, affecting economic and political relations and in some cases leading to conflict and in others to efforts to cooperate. Globalization and population pressures have led to strains on the environment.

Focus Question: How do the functions of the Electoral College affect the institutions of governments and individuals residing in various communities in the United States, and how can we analyze the outcome of its effects on communities and individual participation in government?

Time Allotted: 2 class periods.

Academic Vocabulary in Context:

- Ballot
- Candidate

- Constitutional compromise
- Elector
- Electoral College
- Indirect election
- Popular vote
- Winner Take All system.

Higher Order Thinking Question: What would make a person residing in a community feel a sense of civic participation in their local government, and with the national government as a whole? What would make a person feel that their participation is irrelevant, undercounted, or disproportional?

Materials and Resources: students can use a Warm-up graph, student graphic organizer, a video introduction to the topic, as well as resources and websites to help create a deeper understanding of the workings and effects of the Electoral College, and of the ways it has affected both communities and individuals.

Resources:

- Richard A. Posner, In Defense of the Electoral College, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2012/11/defending-the-electoral-college.html>
- Andrew Prokop, Why the Electoral College Is the Absolute Worst, Explained, <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2016/11/7/12315574/electoral-college-explained-presidential-elections-2016>
- www.270towin.com
- Darrell M. West, It's Time to Abolish the Electoral College, Brookings, 10/15/2029, <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/its-time-to-abolish-the-electoral-college/>
- Video: Why the Electoral College Exists, Nat Geo Explores: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1zmbVcMiEM>
- Ask History: Electoral College: <https://youtu.be/xYzxQhopCCE>
- Two Elections, the other is called Electoral College Maps. <https://www.heritage.org/the-essential-electoral-college/origins-the-electoral-college>
- <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/state/ny>
- <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>
- 2000 Election results: data and map
- 2016 Election results: data and map
- Graph of Electoral Votes per 100,000: <https://www.researchgate.net/>
- Electoral College Pre and Post Questionnaire
- Alternative videos may include: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468> and <https://youtu.be/ajavsMbCapY?si=ngZVjlaLGg1RcV4r>

Lesson Objectives:

Task 1: Recall: Understand the origins and functions of the Electoral College.

Task 2: Recall: Identify the reasons why the Electoral College was created.

Task 3: Describe: Explain the process of electing the President of the United States through the Electoral College.

Task 4: Collaborate: Discuss the changes and amendments made to the Electoral College system over time.

Task 5: Analyze: Analyze the impact of the winner-take-all system on presidential elections.

Task 6: Engage: Students will use textual collaborative work to capture key details.

Task 7: Synthesize: Collaborate to inform each other about uncovered information.

Task 8: Apply: Cultivate an understanding about why some underrepresented portions of our communities have a basis for opposition to the Electoral College.

Language Objective:

- Students will repeat precise vocabulary related to the Electoral College.

- Students will verbally describe the main ideas behind the effects of the Electoral College on individuals and communities, and the relevant points of view.
- Students will examine the initial reasoning for the creation of the Electoral College, and of the ways in which its effects have changed over time.
- Students will be encouraged to use causal words (because of, due to, leading to) and descriptive language.

Content Goal: Student participants will undertake to use sources in various media to investigate the historical roots and purposes of the Electoral College, as well as to cultivate an understanding as to its functions, effects, and potentially problematic outcomes. Students will be guided to look at this the phenomenon of disparate Electoral College results as compared to the popular vote results. Students will comprehend that for some members of this nation’s communities, the Electoral College may actually represent disenfranchisement.

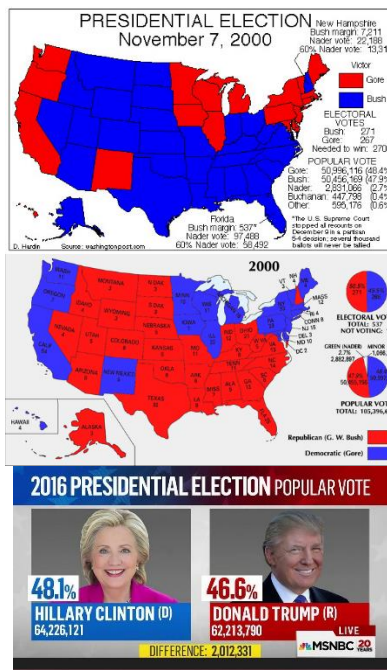
Historicity Skills Goal: Apply historical thinking (complexity, causality, continuity and change over time, contingency, context).

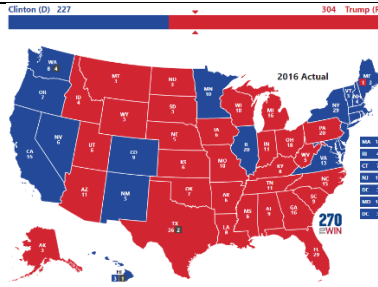
Connection: Individual teacher entry

- **In past lessons we learned about**
- **We learned that**
- **We also learned that**
- **Today, we will learn about** some historical roots of the Electoral College system.
- **This is important to know, because** some people believe the Electoral College preserves the principles of federalism that are essential to our constitutional republic, while others hold the view that the process itself is designed to be anti-democratic, and contrary to American values.

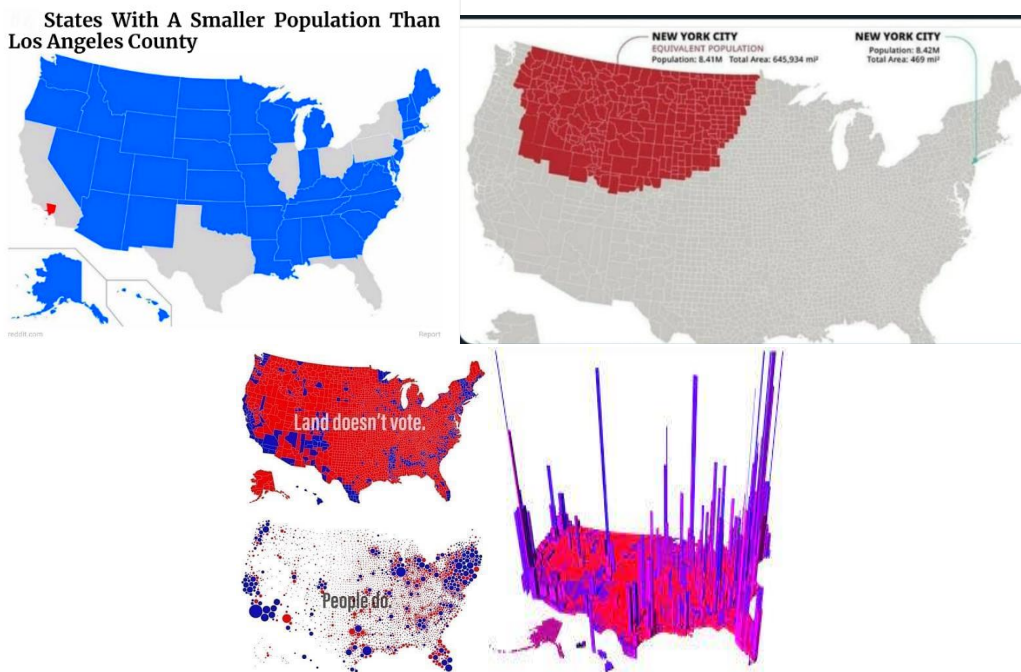
Mini-Lesson: How can young historians determine a subject’s point of view, in order to evaluate their argument for and against the Electoral College system?

Warm Up / Introduction: Students are directed to individually and in groups, study maps that illustrate the disparity between the popular vote and the electoral college. They are then asked preliminary questions. One version is called Two Elections, the other is called Electoral College Maps.





Alternatively, students are given different visual representations highlighting the problem:



Think-Pair-Share:

1. What are some areas that have large populations, according to these maps?
2. What are some areas that have small populations, according to these maps?
3. If the current system of the Electoral College gives disproportionate voting power to states, which states would have an unfair advantage?

Alternatively, Teacher can offer students an Electoral College Pre and Post Questionnaire, to replace the Warm-Up and the Exit Ticket.

Teacher Introduction / Background: Every four years, people head to the polls to vote for the next President of the United States. However, the popular vote doesn't directly elect any candidate. Instead, citizens are voting for a slate of electors, who have promised to cast their states' votes after the general election. Today, the Electoral College system is very controversial, leading many people to ask: why does it exist at all? That answer lies in the history of the Constitution and how its creators originally believed America's brand-new government should run and how its leader should be elected. As it turns out, the Electoral College was just as controversial in 1787 as it is today.

Teacher Lesson Development: Students view a video resource to scaffold informational understanding of topic - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q1zmbVcMiEM>

Quick-Check / Pause for Understanding: [at 0:25] What do you think the narrator means when they say that you are not actually voting for the candidate? Do you think the average citizen realizes this? How do you feel about this?

As students view digital source, they answer **Comprehension Questions:**

1. What is the Electoral College and how does it function in U.S. presidential elections?
 - a. Sample Answer: The Electoral College is a body of electors chosen by the states who formally elect the President and Vice President of the United States.
2. Why was the Electoral College created by the Framers of the Constitution?
 - a. Sample Answer: To balance the powers of the government, protect the rights of the people, and because of concerns about direct democracy and the logistics of a national campaign in the 18th century.
 - b. Sample Answer: the deliberately anti-majoritarian nature of the Electoral College reveals the Framers' distrust of simple majority rule.
3. What were some of the concerns about electing a president by popular vote?
 - a. Sample Answer: Concerns included the lack of informed knowledge about candidates from other states, the dominance of larger states, and the impracticality of national campaigning during that era.
4. How has the Electoral College changed since its creation?
 - a. Sample Answer: It has been amended, most notably by the 12th Amendment, and most states have adopted a winner-take-all system.
5. Who was James Wilson and what was his stance on electing the President?
 - a. Sample Answer: James Wilson was a delegate at the Constitutional Convention who proposed the idea of a single executive and supported the direct popular election of the President.

Alternatively, students may view a slightly shorter video introduction: Ask History: Electoral College: <https://youtu.be/xYzxQhopCCE>

Teacher Model: Teacher discusses the disparity between the population centers and the land apportionment models, as well as the disparate outcome of the Electorate College effect on large and small population areas.

Work Period: Students then read two articles, one making the case for the Electoral College system, one for the National Popular Vote system.

Early Finishers may be provided with an Extended Reading.

Differentiation, Scaffolding, and Workshop Model Seating: Group seating grouping and placement based upon Prosper pretest and post-test skills assessments, behavioral needs, linguistic needs, IEP goals, baseline assessment, and conferencing. An engaging and interactive introduction will be given. Introduction may include visual components to engage students who need visual stimuli. Visual components may include handouts or organizer.

ELL/IEP/FELL/SIFE students may receive Vocabulary in Context or imbedded definitions. Students may receive differentiated reading. ICT/SETTS teacher may instruct selected group. Varying academic levels: individual writing time to allow students to progress at their own ability level. Auditory learners: encourage small-group discussion to create notes for information.

Extension Activity for Early Finishers may include Extended Reading.

What is the Electoral College? Source: <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>

| | | | | | |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Scaffolding | Class 1 | Class 2 | Class 3 | Class 4 | Class 5 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Identified by pretest data, students not proficient in central idea may receive main idea scaffolded support. | | | | | |
| Identified by pretest data, students not proficient in determining the meaning of words /phrases may receive vocabulary in context. | | | | | |
| Un scaffolded | All other students | All other students | All other students | All other students | All other students |

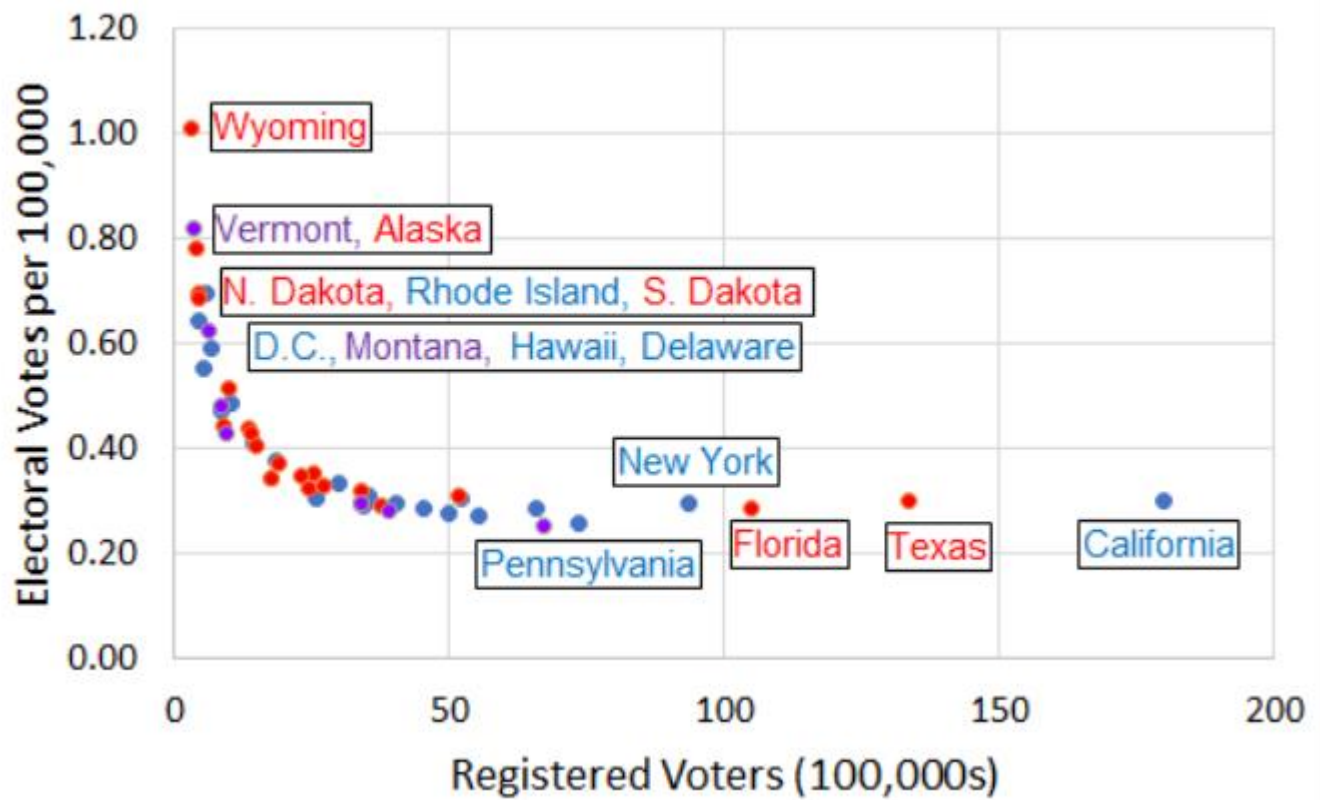
Share Out: Open-ended questions:

1. How might presidential campaigns be different if the U.S. used a direct popular vote instead of the Electoral College?
2. What are some potential benefits and drawbacks of the winner-take-all system in the Electoral College?
3. What would the result be if electors promised to cast their state’s electoral votes for a particular candidate?

Discussion Question: If you could design a system to elect the President, what features would you include to ensure fairness and representation?

Informed Action: What resources could you use to find out if other people across the United States shared this experience?

Exit Ticket: Students complete Exit Ticket as a Quick Capture of Understanding –



Directions: Using this graph, to what extent can we support the claim that the Founders' vision of equal representation is being served today through the use of the Electoral College system?

Alternatively, Teacher can offer students an Electoral College Pre and Post Questionnaire, to replace the Warm-Up and the Exit Ticket.

Homework: Individual teacher entry

Small Group/Individual Conferencing:

Class: _____ Student: _____ Reason: _____

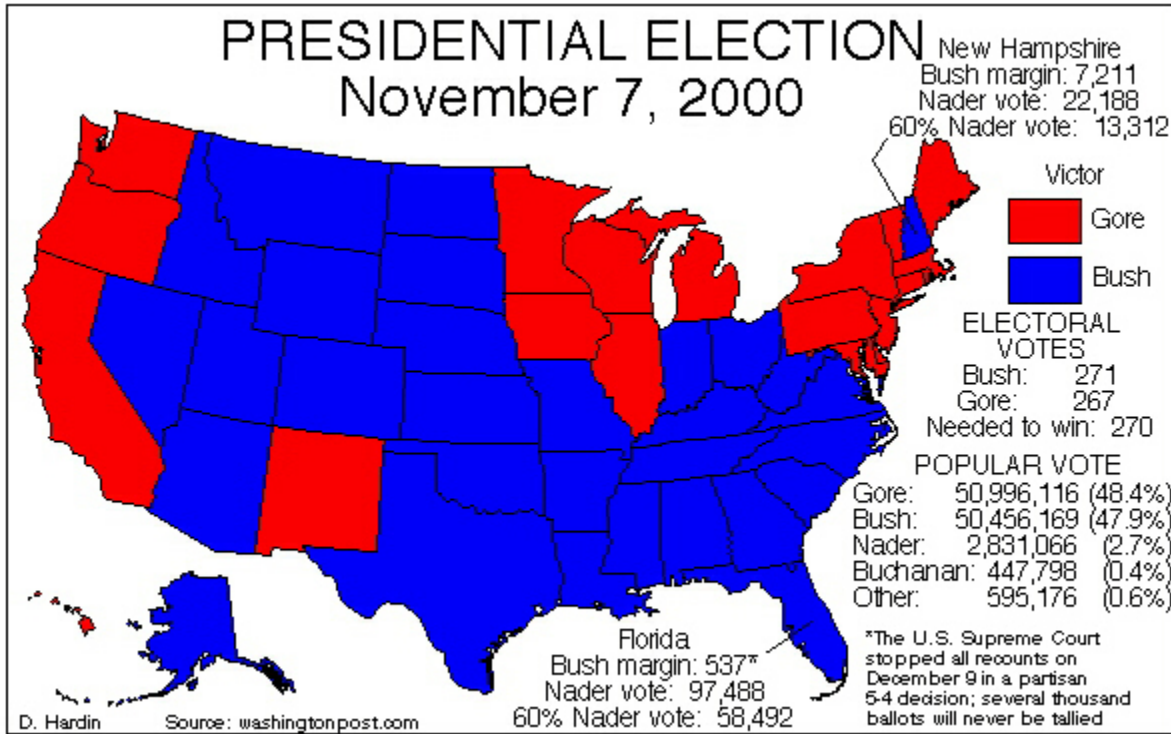
Individual teacher entry

Notes and Reflections:

Individual teacher entry

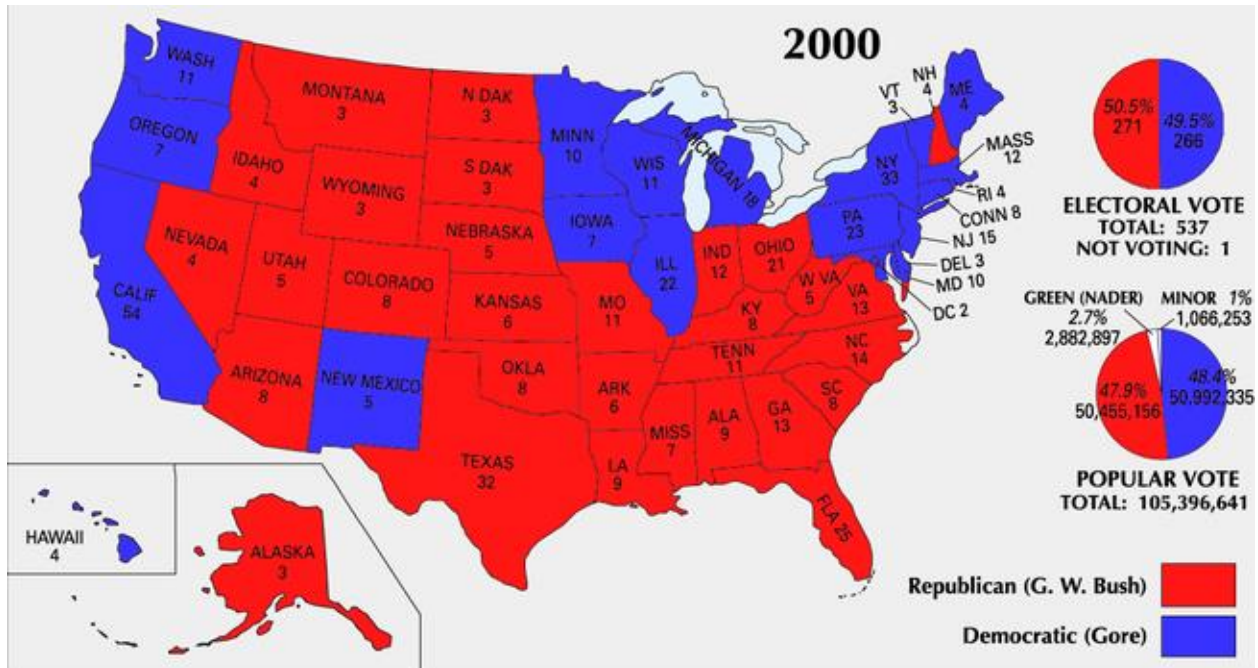
WARM UP: TWO ELECTIONS

Directions: Individually and in groups, study the maps and images below. Based on these maps, who do you think won the election? How did you come to this conclusion?



Popular Vote

Gore: 50,996 (48.4%)
Bush: 50,456,169 (47.9%)



2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION POPULAR VOTE

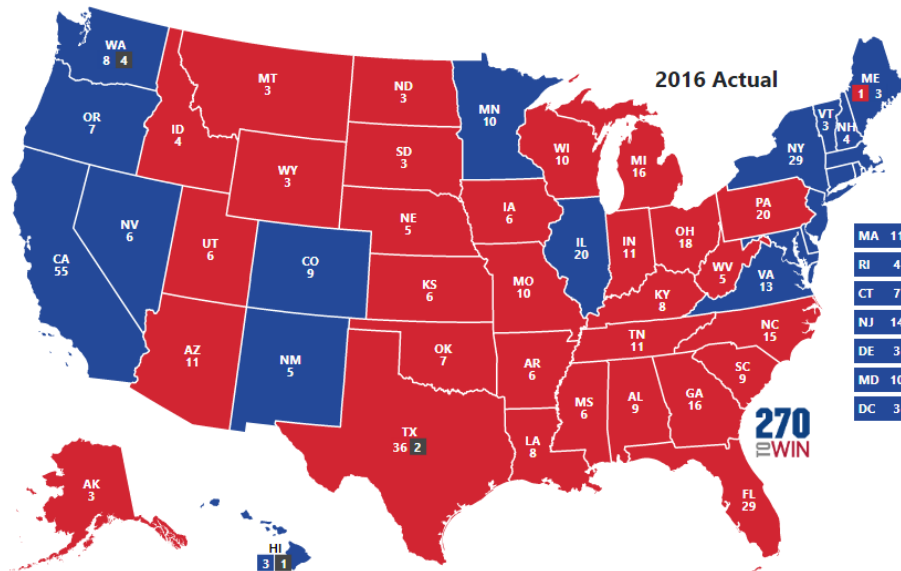


DIFFERENCE: 2,012,331

LIVE
MSNBC 20 YEARS

Clinton (D) 227

304 Trump (R)



Follow-Up Questions:

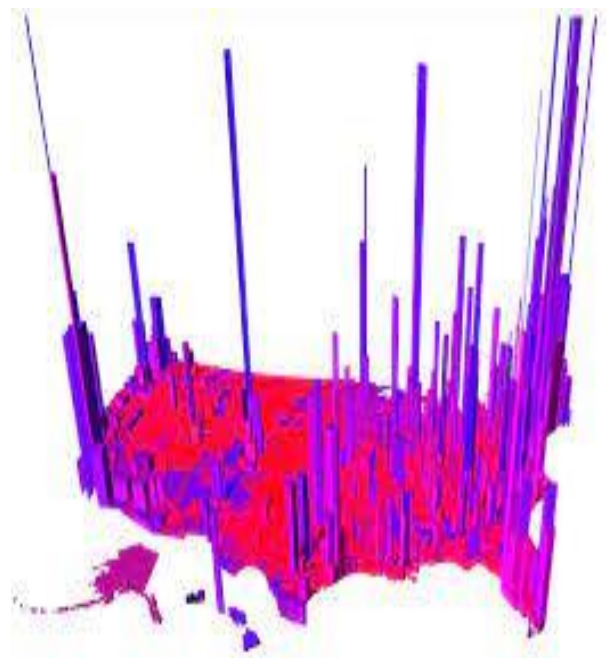
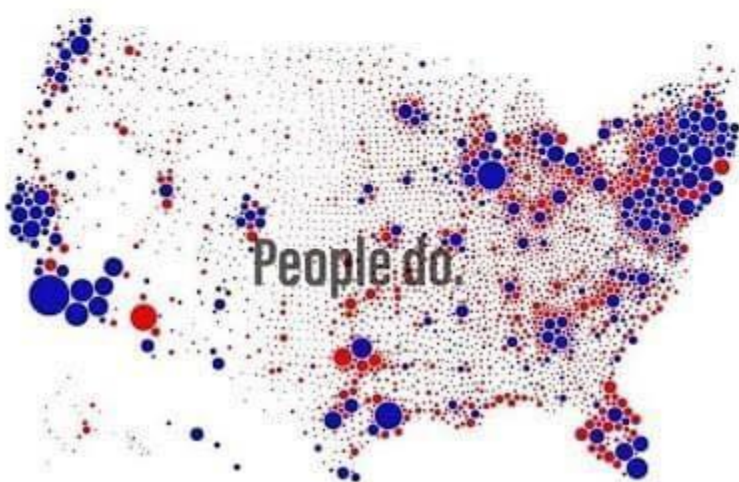
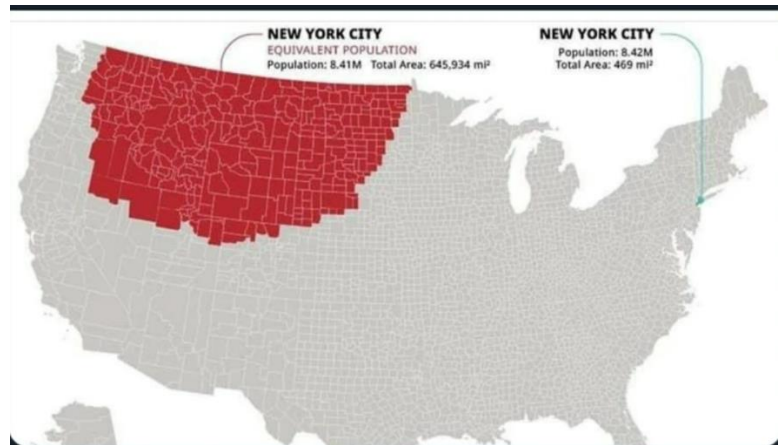
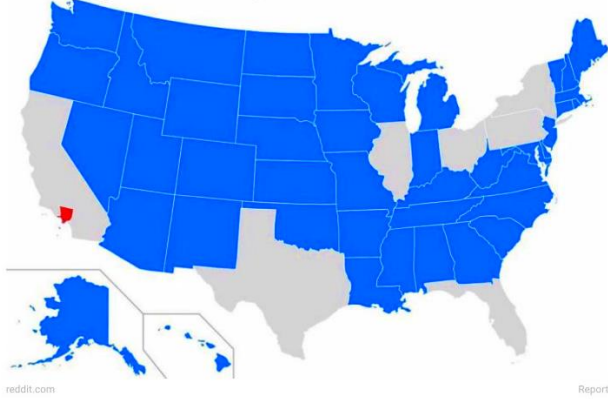
1. Who won 2000 election popular vote and electoral votes?
2. Who won 2016 popular votes and electoral votes?
3. What do you know about the Electoral College?

WARM UP: ELECTORAL COLLEGE MAPS

Directions: Individually and in groups, study the maps below.

Examine the maps to compare the population of certain areas, as compared to the amount of votes they will be able to exert in our national republican government. Then, answer the questions that follow.

States With A Smaller Population Than Los Angeles County



THINK-PAIR-SHARE:

1. What are some areas that have large populations, according to these maps?
2. What are some areas that have small populations, according to these maps?
3. If the current system of the Electoral College gives disproportionate voting power to states, which states would have an unfair advantage?

Now, turn your attention to the video introduction.

As you watch the video introduction, please answer the following Comprehension Questions:

4. What is the Electoral College and how does it function in U.S. presidential elections?

5. Why was the Electoral College created by the framers of the Constitution?

6. What were some of the concerns about electing a president by popular vote?

7. How has the Electoral College changed since its creation?

8. Who was James Wilson and what was his stance on electing the President?

FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT:

9. Individually and in groups, what are some flaws that you are noticing in the Electoral College?

10. Brainstorm some ideas, if you could, some ways in which the system could be fixed:





2000 ELECTION FACTS

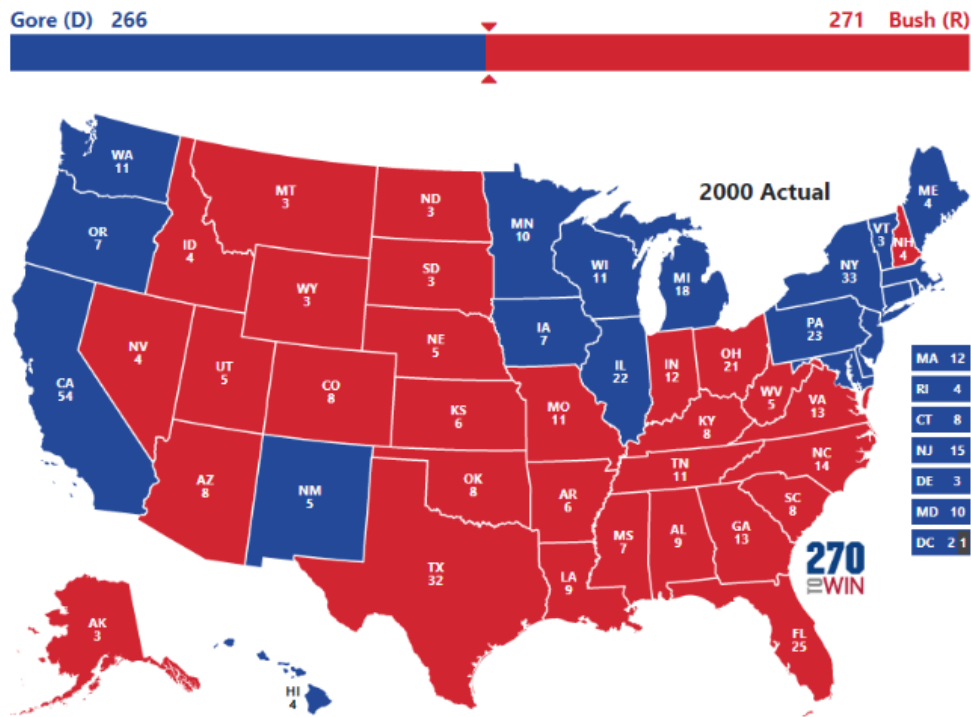
The United States presidential election of 2000 was a contest between Republican candidate George W. Bush, then-governor of Texas and son of former president George H. W. Bush (1989–1993), and Democratic candidate Al Gore, then-Vice President.

Bush narrowly won the November 7 election, with 271 electoral votes to Gore's 266 (with one elector abstaining in the official tally).

- Outcome of race unknown for several weeks due to dispute over close vote totals in Florida
- Green Party candidate Ralph Nader received 2,882,728 votes, but no Electoral Votes
- Gore won DC; however one elector did not cast a vote
- One of only 5 elections (1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, 2016) where the popular vote winner was defeated.

2000 Election Results

| | Candidate | Party | Electoral Votes | Popular Votes |
|---|---|------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ✓ |  George W. Bush | Republican | 271 | 50,456,062 |
| |  Albert Gore, Jr. | Democratic | 266 | 50,999,897 |
| |  Ralph Nader | Green | 0 | 2,882,955 |
| |  Other: See Election Facts Below | | 1 | |



NOTE: the small units in the right-hand map are counties.

2016 ELECTION FACTS

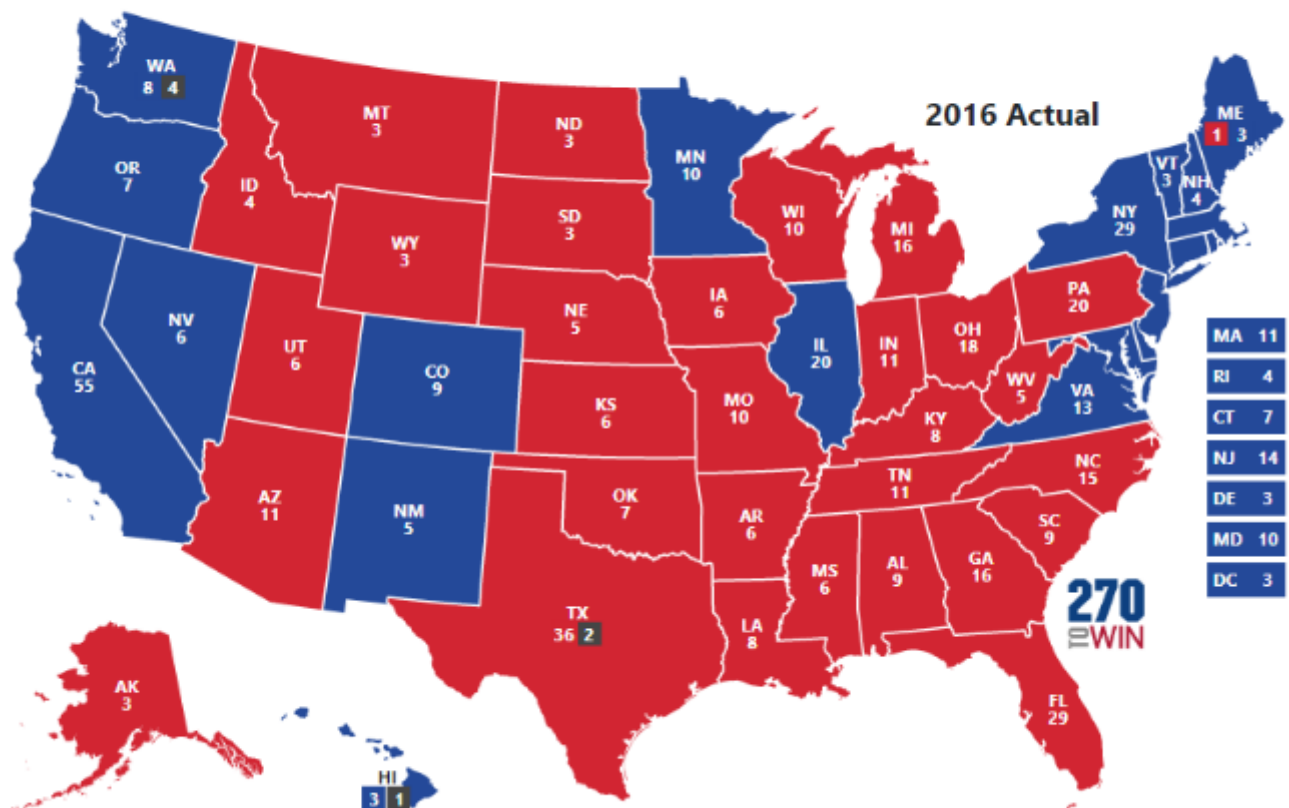
The United States presidential election of 2016 saw the Republican ticket of businessman Donald Trump and Indiana Governor Mike Pence defeated the Democratic ticket of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and U.S. Senator from Virginia Tim Kaine.

While Clinton received about 2.9 million more votes nationwide, a margin of 2.1% of the total cast, Trump won a victory in the Electoral College, winning 30 states with 306 pledged electors out of 538, and overturned the perennial swing states of Florida, Iowa and Ohio, as well as the "blue wall" of Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin, which had been Democratic strongholds in presidential elections since the 1990s. Leading up to the election, a Trump victory was projected unlikely by most media forecasts.

- Hillary Clinton first female presidential nominee of a major political party
- Clinton won Maine, but Trump earned an electoral vote by winning the popular vote in the 2nd Congressional District. This marked the first time that Maine has split its electoral vote since it moved away from the winner-take-all method in 1972.
- Independent Evan McMullin received 21.5% of the vote in Utah. Libertarian Gary Johnson received over 3% of the nationwide vote.
- There were seven faithless presidential electors. Three additional faithless votes, one each in Colorado, Maine and Minnesota, were disallowed.
- Clinton won Washington; however three electors cast votes for Colin Powell, one for Faith Spotted Eagle. Clinton won Hawaii; however one elector cast a vote for Bernie Sanders.
- Trump won Texas; however one elector cast a vote for Ron Paul, another for John Kasich.

2016 Election Results

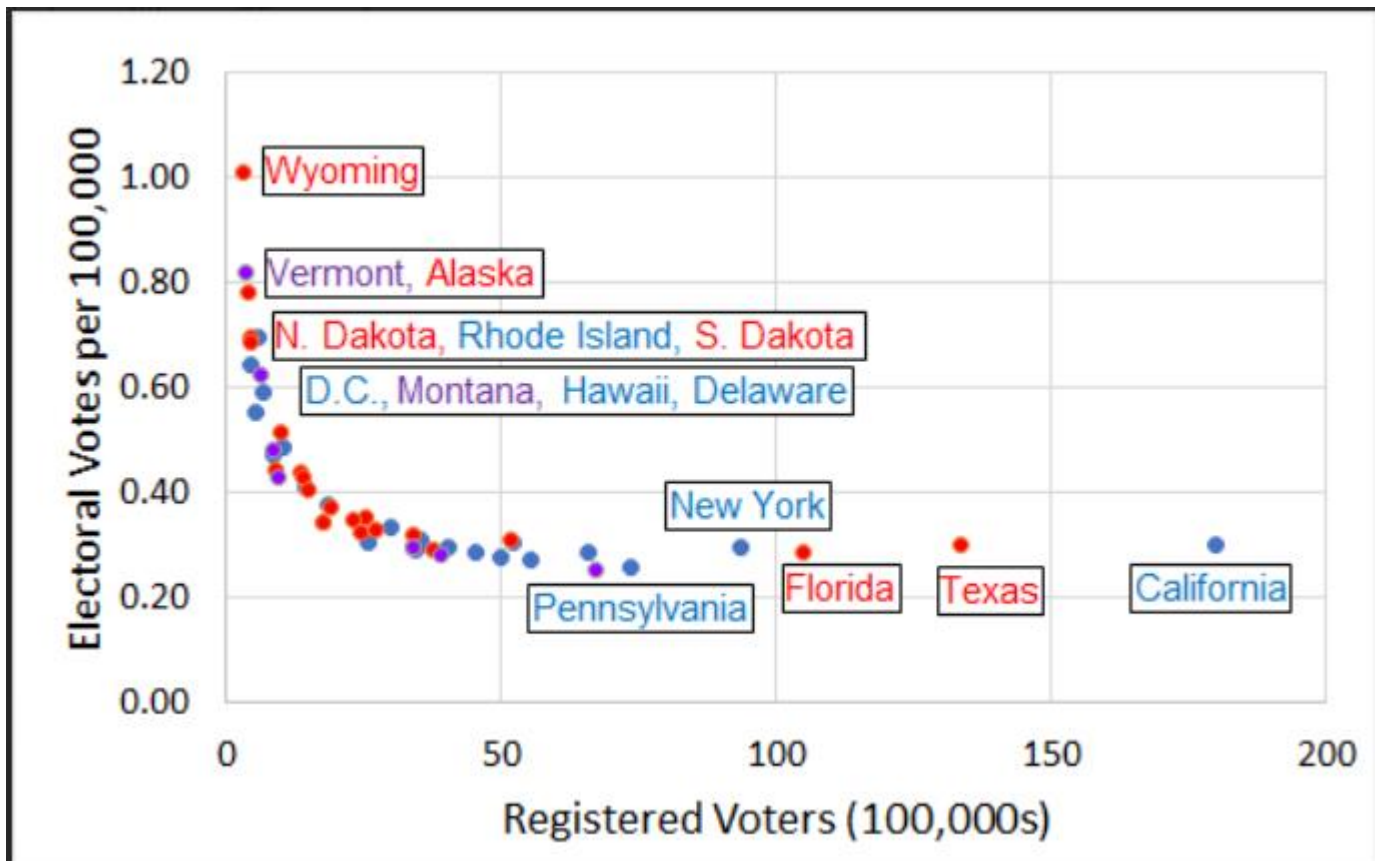
| | Candidate | Party | Electoral Votes | Popular Votes |
|---|---------------------------------|-------------|-----------------|---------------|
| ✓ | Donald J. Trump | Republican | 304 | 62,984,828 |
| | Hillary R. Clinton | Democratic | 227 | 65,853,514 |
| | Gary Johnson | Libertarian | 0 | 4,489,341 |
| | Jill Stein | Green | 0 | 1,457,218 |
| | Evan McMullin | Independent | 0 | 731,991 |
| | Other: See Election Facts Below | | 7 | |



NOTE: the small units in the right-hand map are counties.

EXIT TICKET:

Students complete Exit Ticket as a Quick Capture of Understanding / Formative Assessment –



Source: <https://www.researchgate.net/>

Directions: Using this graph, to what extent can we support the claim that the Founders' vision of equal representation is being served today through the use of the Electoral College system?

ELECTORAL COLLEGE PRE AND POST QUESTIONNAIRE

| Pre-Lesson True | Pre-Lesson False | Issue | Post-Lesson True | Post-Lesson False |
|--------------------|---------------------|---|---------------------|----------------------|
| | | The framers of the Constitution believed the people were capable of directly choosing the President | | |
| | | Millions and millions of people directly vote for the next President | | |
| | | The next President will officially be decided on November 3rd | | |
| | | Texas has the same amount of U.S. Senators as Wyoming | | |
| | | It is possible to have the most people vote for a person and they still lose the election | | |
| | | The next President takes office November 4th | | |
| | | A handful of states can decide the election | | |

While many people believe that the Founders created the Electoral College to make sure that large states did not dominate small ones in presidential elections, to make sure that power between Congress and state legislatures was balanced, and that there would be checks and balances in the constitutional system, there can also be problems. Although it must be said that the system itself has functioned well overall, it had a difficult birth.

The 1800 election was deadlocked because presidential candidate Thomas Jefferson received the same number of Electoral College votes as his vice-presidential candidate Aaron Burr. At that time, the ballot did not distinguish between Electoral College votes for president and vice president. Congress later passed the 12th Amendment to prevent that ballot confusion from happening again. When Republican Rutherford Hayes ran against Democrat Samuel Tilden in the 1876 presidential election, the race was so close that the electoral votes of just four states would determine the presidency. Instead of allowing the House to decide the presidential winner, as prescribed by the 12th Amendment, Congress created a bipartisan Electoral Commission. Hayes became president when this Electoral Commission ultimately gave the votes of the four contested states to him. The decision would have far-reaching consequences because in return for securing the votes of the Southern states, Hayes agreed to withdraw federal troops from the South, thereby paving the way for vigilante violence against African Americans and the denial of their civil rights.

In addition to these problems, the Electoral College suffers from another difficulty known as the “faithless elector” issue in which that body’s electors cast their ballot in opposition to the dictates of their state’s popular vote. Throughout American history, 157 electors have voted contrary to their state’s chosen winner, they preferred the losing party’s candidate. The precedent set by these people creates uncertainty about how future Electoral College votes could proceed. In the 2016 election, seven electors defected from their state’s popular vote - the highest number in any modern election.

These problems show the serious issues facing the Electoral College. Having a president who loses the popular vote undermines electoral legitimacy. Putting an election into the House of Representatives where each state delegation has one vote increases the odds of insider dealings and corrupt decisions. But the biggest risk is that the Electoral College will systematically overrepresent the views of relatively small numbers of people due to its structure of the Electoral College - each state has two EC votes, regardless of population size, plus additional votes to match its number of House members. That format overrepresents small- and medium-sized states at the expense of large states. Some people would see this as being anti-democratic.

STUDENT READING #1

In Defense Of The Electoral College: Five Reasons To Keep Our Despised Method Of Choosing The President, Richard A. Posner, NOV 12, 2012, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2012/11/defending-the-electoral-college.html>

The Electoral College is widely regarded as an anachronism, a nondemocratic method of selecting a president that ought to be superseded by declaring the candidate who receives the most popular votes the winner. The advocates of this position are correct in arguing that the Electoral College method is not democratic in a modern sense. The Constitution provides that “Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress.” And it is the electors who elect the president, not the people. When you vote for a presidential candidate you’re actually voting for a slate of electors.

But each party selects a slate of electors trusted to vote for the party’s nominee (and that trust is rarely betrayed). Because virtually all states award all their electoral votes to the winner of the popular vote in the state, and because the Electoral College weights the less populous states more heavily along the lines of the Senate (two Senators and two Electoral College votes for every state, and then more electoral votes added for each state based on population), it is entirely possible that the winner of the electoral vote will not win the national popular vote. Yet that has happened very rarely. It happened in 2000, when Gore had more popular votes than Bush yet fewer electoral votes, but that was the first time since 1888.

There are five reasons for retaining the Electoral College despite its lack of democratic pedigree; all are practical reasons, not liberal or conservative reasons.

1) Certainty of Outcome

A dispute over the outcome of an Electoral College vote is possible—it happened in 2000—but it’s less likely than a dispute over the popular vote. The reason is that the winning candidate’s share of the Electoral College invariably exceeds his share of the popular vote. In last week’s election, for example, Obama received 61.7 percent of the electoral vote compared to only 51.3 percent of the popular votes cast for him and Romney. (I ignore the scattering of votes not counted for either candidate.) Because almost all states award electoral votes on a winner-take-all basis, even a very slight plurality in a state creates a landslide electoral-vote victory in that state. A tie in the nationwide electoral vote is possible because the total number of votes—538—is an even number, but it is highly unlikely.

Of course a tie in the number of popular votes in a national election in which tens of millions of votes are cast is even more unlikely. But if the difference in the popular vote is small, then if the winner of the popular vote were deemed the winner of the presidential election, candidates would have an incentive to seek a recount in any state (plus the District of Columbia) in which they thought the recount would give them more additional votes than their opponent. The lawyers would go to work in state after state to have the votes recounted, and the result would be debilitating uncertainty, delay, and conflict—look at the turmoil that a dispute limited to one state, Florida, engendered in 2000.*

2) Everyone's President

The Electoral College requires a presidential candidate to have transregional appeal. No region (South, Northeast, etc.) has enough electoral votes to elect a president. So a solid regional favorite, such as Romney was in the South, has no incentive to campaign heavily in those states, for he gains no electoral votes by increasing his plurality in states that he knows he will win. This is a desirable result because a candidate with only regional appeal is unlikely to be a successful president. The residents of the other regions are likely to feel disfranchised—to feel that their votes do not count, that the new president will have no regard for their interests, that he really isn't their president.

3) Swing States

The winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes induces the candidates—as we saw in last week's election—to focus their campaign efforts on the toss-up states; that follows directly from the candidates' lack of inducement to campaign in states they are sure to win. Voters in toss-up states are more likely to pay close attention to the campaign—to really *listen* to the competing candidates—knowing that they are going to decide the election. They are likely to be the most thoughtful voters, on average (and for the further reason that they will have received the most information and attention from the candidates), and the most thoughtful voters should be the ones to decide the election.

4) Big States

The Electoral College restores some of the weight in the political balance that large states (by population) lose by virtue of the mal-apportionment of the Senate decreed in the Constitution. This may seem paradoxical, given that electoral votes are weighted in favor of less populous states. Wyoming, the least populous state, contains only about one-sixth of 1 percent of the U.S. population, but its three electors (of whom two are awarded only because Wyoming has two senators like every other state) give it slightly more than one-half of 1 percent of total electoral votes. But winner-take-all makes a slight increase in the popular vote have a much bigger electoral-vote payoff in a large state than in a small one. The popular vote was very close in Florida; nevertheless Obama, who won that vote, got 29 electoral votes. A victory by the same margin in Wyoming would net the winner only 3 electoral votes. So, other things being equal, a large state gets more attention from presidential candidates in a campaign

than a small states does. And since presidents and senators are often presidential candidates, large states are likely to get additional consideration in appropriations and appointments from presidents and senators before as well as during campaigns, offsetting to some extent the effects of the malapportioned Senate on the political influence of less populous states.

5) Avoid Run-Off Elections

The Electoral College avoids the problem of elections in which no candidate receives a majority of the votes cast. For example, Nixon in 1968 and Clinton in 1992 both had only a 43 percent plurality of the popular votes, while winning a majority in the Electoral College (301 and 370 electoral votes, respectively). There is pressure for run-off elections when no candidate wins a majority of the votes cast; that pressure, which would greatly complicate the presidential election process, is reduced by the Electoral College, which invariably produces a clear winner.

Against these reasons to retain the Electoral College the argument that it is undemocratic falls flat. No form of representative democracy, as distinct from direct democracy, is or aspires to be perfectly democratic. Certainly not our federal government. In the entire executive and judicial branches, only two officials are elected—the president and vice president. All the rest are appointed—federal Article III judges for life.

It can be argued that the Electoral College method of selecting the president may turn off potential voters for a candidate who has no hope of carrying their state—Democrats in Texas, for example, or Republicans in California. Knowing their vote will have no effect, they have less incentive to pay attention to the campaign than they would have if the president were picked by popular vote, for then the state of a voter's residence would be irrelevant to the weight of his vote. But of course no voter's vote swings a national election, and in spite of that, about one-half the eligible American population did vote in last week's election. Voters in presidential elections are people who want to express a political preference rather than people who think that a single vote may decide an election. Even in one-sided states, there are plenty of votes in favor of the candidate who is sure not to carry the state. So I doubt that the Electoral College has much of a turn-off effect. And if it does, that is outweighed by the reasons for retaining this seemingly archaic institution.

Questions:

1. Based on the article how does the Author Justify the purpose of the Electoral College? List the 5 arguments the author makes?
2. How valid are his points? Explain

Answers:

1. *Certainty of candidate. Electoral Votes can determine the next president. This will most likely not be challenged as opposed to a President decided by popular vote.*
2. *Clear outcome. One candidate will be elected. Not likely for a run-off.*
3. *Everyone's president. One region will not decide. The Electoral College allows for more widespread focus on its voters and their needs. More voices will be heard through this process.*
4. *Swing States: The most thoughtful voters should be the ones to elect the president.*
5. *Large states will get the attention and recognition that is offset by Senates political influence.*

STUDENT READING #2

Why The Electoral College Is the Absolute Worst, Explained, Andrew Prokop, andrew@vox.com, Updated Dec 19, 2016, 10:15am EST.

Andrew Prokop is a senior politics correspondent at Vox, covering the White House, elections, and political scandals and investigations. He's worked at Vox since the site's launch in 2014, and before that, he worked as a research assistant at the New Yorker's Washington, DC, bureau.

Hillary Clinton won more votes than Donald Trump in last month's presidential election. But due to the magic of the Electoral College, Donald Trump will be the next president of the United States.

Yes, the November 8 "presidential election" was in actuality the venerable ritual in which the residents of Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and a few other states got the privilege of choosing the president of the United States of America.

Or, to be more precise, it was the venerable ritual in which all the states chose their representatives in the *Electoral College*. It's those people who are going to technically pick the president this Monday.

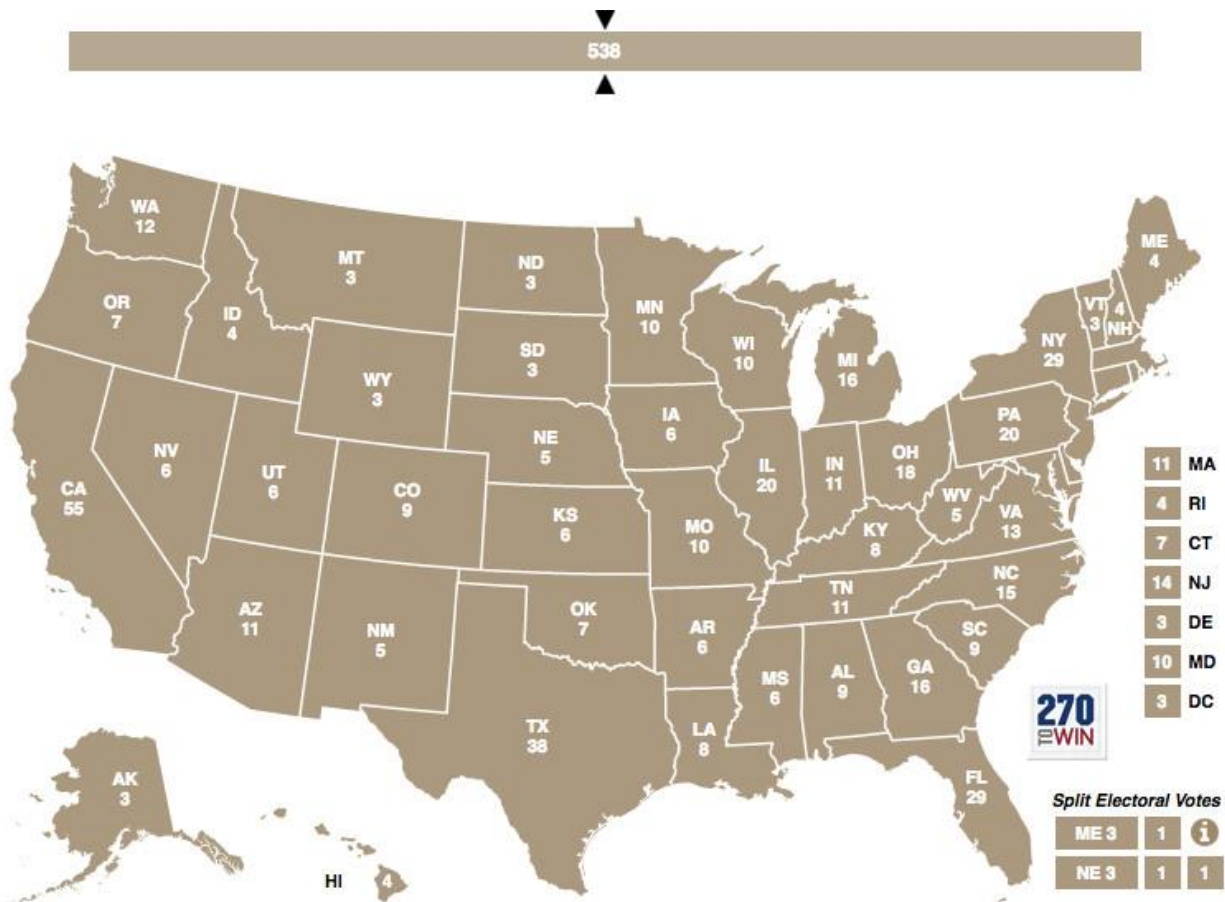
It's a patchwork Frankenstein's monster of a system, which in the best of times merely ensures millions of Americans' votes are irrelevant to the outcome because they don't live in competitive states, and in the worst of times could be vulnerable to a major crisis.

Amazingly enough, though, nothing in the Constitution gives American voters the right to choose their president. That power is reserved for those 538 *actual people* who will meet in their respective states this Monday — the electors. It's up to the states to decide how to appoint them.

Despite the oddness and unfairness of this system, its defenders argue that it ordinarily "works" just fine. States award electors based on the outcome of the popular vote in the state. Those electors almost always end up voting the way they're expected to. And the winner of the national popular vote is usually also the winner in the Electoral College.

But "usually" will be cold comfort to Democrats, who have now won the popular vote and lost the Electoral College in two of the past five elections.

1) What is the Electoral College, and how does it work?



Source: 270towin.com

The presidential election is generally portrayed as a battle to win states and their accompanying electoral votes. Hillary Clinton won Vermont, so she got its three electoral votes. Donald Trump won Alaska, so he got its three electoral votes. Whoever gets to 270 or more electoral votes first — a majority of the 538 total — wins the election.

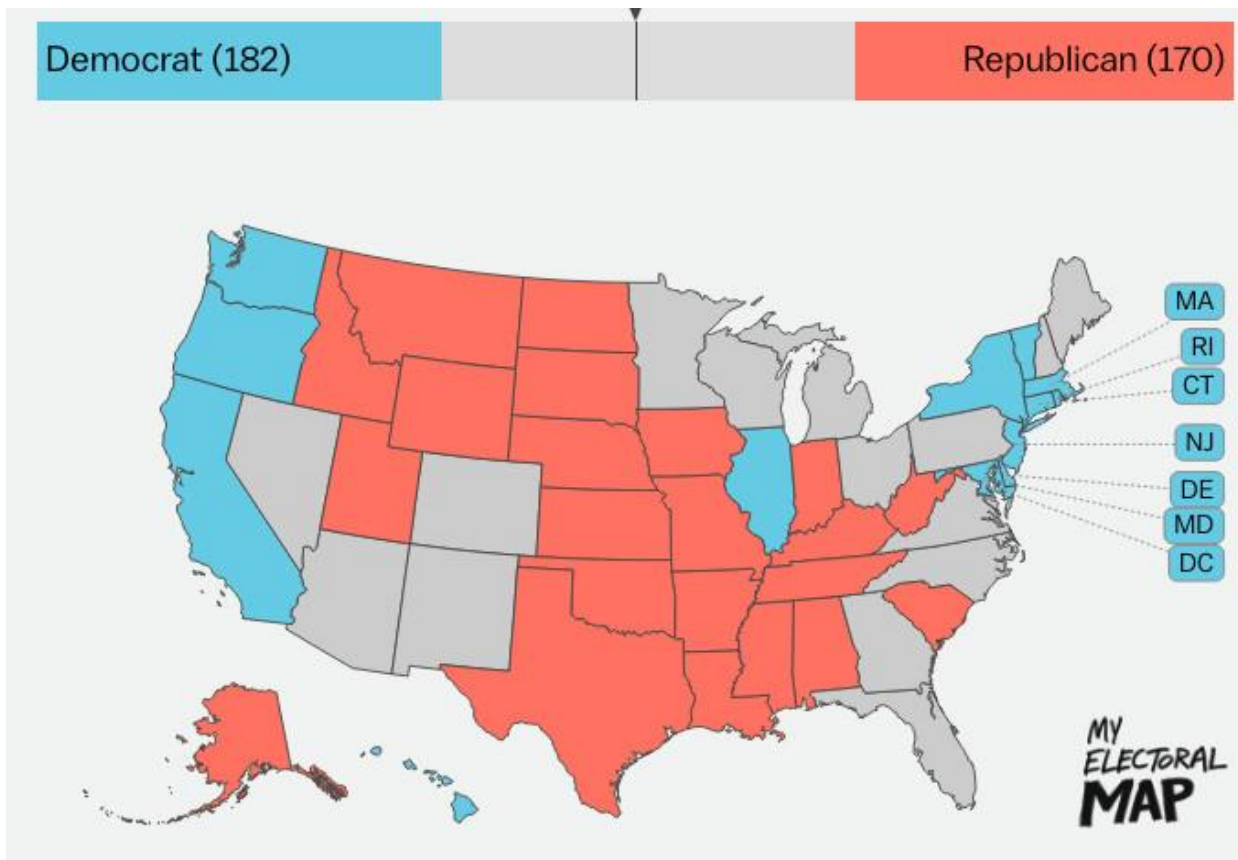
So rather than simply trying to win the most *actual votes* in the country, a presidential campaign must try to put together a map of *state victories* that will amass more than 270 electoral votes. That's the simplified version.

What's happening under the hood, though, is more complicated. When people go to the polls to vote for a presidential candidate, what they are actually doing is voting for each party's nominated slate of *electors* in their respective states (or, in the case of Maine and Nebraska, in congressional districts too).

So when Donald Trump won the state of Alaska, the practical effect was that the Republican Party's nominated elector slate there — former Gov. Sean Parnell, Jacqueline Tupou, and Carolyn Leman — officially became Alaska's three electors.

This process repeated itself across the country, resulting in the selection of the Electoral College — the 538 electors who will cast their votes for president in their respective states this Monday. (In the modern era, this ceremonial occasion has been a formality that reiterates an outcome known well in advance.)

2) But the outcome of the presidential election is really just settled in a few swing states, right?



Source: Vox.com

The Democratic and Republican parties have each developed solid bases in a series of states that are all but certain to vote for them in a presidential year. But the Electoral College winner will be determined by those few swing states that are more divided politically and look like they could go either way. This year, only the states in gray above were decided by a margin of less than 9 percentage points, as of Wednesday afternoon.

The swing states' dominance is a consequence of the fact that almost every state chooses to allot all its electoral votes to whoever comes in first place statewide, regardless of his or her margin of victory.

That is, it doesn't matter whether Clinton wins New York by a 30 percent margin or a 10 percent margin, since she'll get the same amount of electoral votes either way. But the difference between winning Florida by 0.1 percent and losing it by 0.1 percent is crucial, since 29 electoral votes could flip.

Naturally, then, when the general election comes around, candidates ignore every noncompetitive state — meaning the vast majority of the country — and pour their resources into the few that tend to swing back and forth between Republicans and Democrats. That's the best strategy for reaching that magic number, 270.

3) That seems unfair.

Well, there's a lot that's unfair — or at the very least undemocratic — about the Electoral College.

For one, the winner of the nationwide popular vote can lose the presidency. In 2000, Al Gore won half a million more votes than George W. Bush nationwide, but Bush won the presidency after he was declared the winner in Florida by a mere 537 votes. And that wasn't the first time — electoral college/popular vote splits happened in 1876 and 1888 too, and occurred in 2016 too.

Second, there's swing state privilege. Millions of votes in safe states end up being "wasted," at least in terms of the presidential race, because it makes no difference whether Clinton wins California by 4 million votes, 400,000 votes, or 40 votes — in any scenario, she gets its 55 electors. Meanwhile, states like Florida and Ohio get the power to tip the outcome just because they happen to be closely divided politically.

Third, a small state bias is also built in, since every state is guaranteed at least three electors (the combination of their representation in the House and Senate). The way this shakes out in the math, the 4 percent of the country's population in the smallest states end up being allotted 8 percent of Electoral College votes.

And fourth, there's the possibility for those electors themselves to hijack the outcome.

4) Wait, the electors can hijack the outcome of the presidential election? What?

For decades, it's been assumed that the 538 electors will essentially rubber-stamp the outcome in their respective states, and they mostly have. But there's scarily little *assurance* that they'll actually do so.

According to the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#), about 30 of the 50 states have passed laws "binding" their electors to vote in accordance with the presidential popular vote in their state. But in most, the penalty for not doing so is only a fine, and it's unclear whether stiffer penalties would hold up in court — it's never been tested, and the Constitution does appear to give the electors the right to make the final call. Furthermore, there are still 20 or so states that haven't even tried to bind their electors.

This hasn't mattered much in the past because, almost always, the parties do a good enough job of vetting their respective electoral slates to ensure that they will indeed loyally back their party's presidential nominee.

But there have been a few rogue, faithless, or just plain incompetent electors over the years — and their votes have all been counted as cast.

- In 1837, rogue electors from Virginia briefly blocked the seating of the vice president-elect because they were offended that he had a mixed-race common-law wife. (The Senate overrode them.)
- A Democratic elector from Tennessee cast his ballot for segregationist third-party candidate Strom Thurmond in 1948, and a Republican elector from North Carolina voted for segregationist third-party candidate George Wallace in 1968.
- In 2000, an elector from Washington, DC, withheld an electoral vote from Al Gore, because she wanted to protest the fact that DC didn't have representation in Congress.
- Perhaps most bizarrely of all, in 2004, an elector from Minnesota who was supposed to vote for John Kerry for president instead voted for *John Edwards*. (It's believed that this was an accident, but since the votes were cast anonymously, we don't really know for sure. Great system!)
- And this year, one Democratic elector candidate from Washington state has repeatedly said that he will "absolutely not" cast his ballot for Hillary Clinton if she wins his state. We'll see whether he follows through.

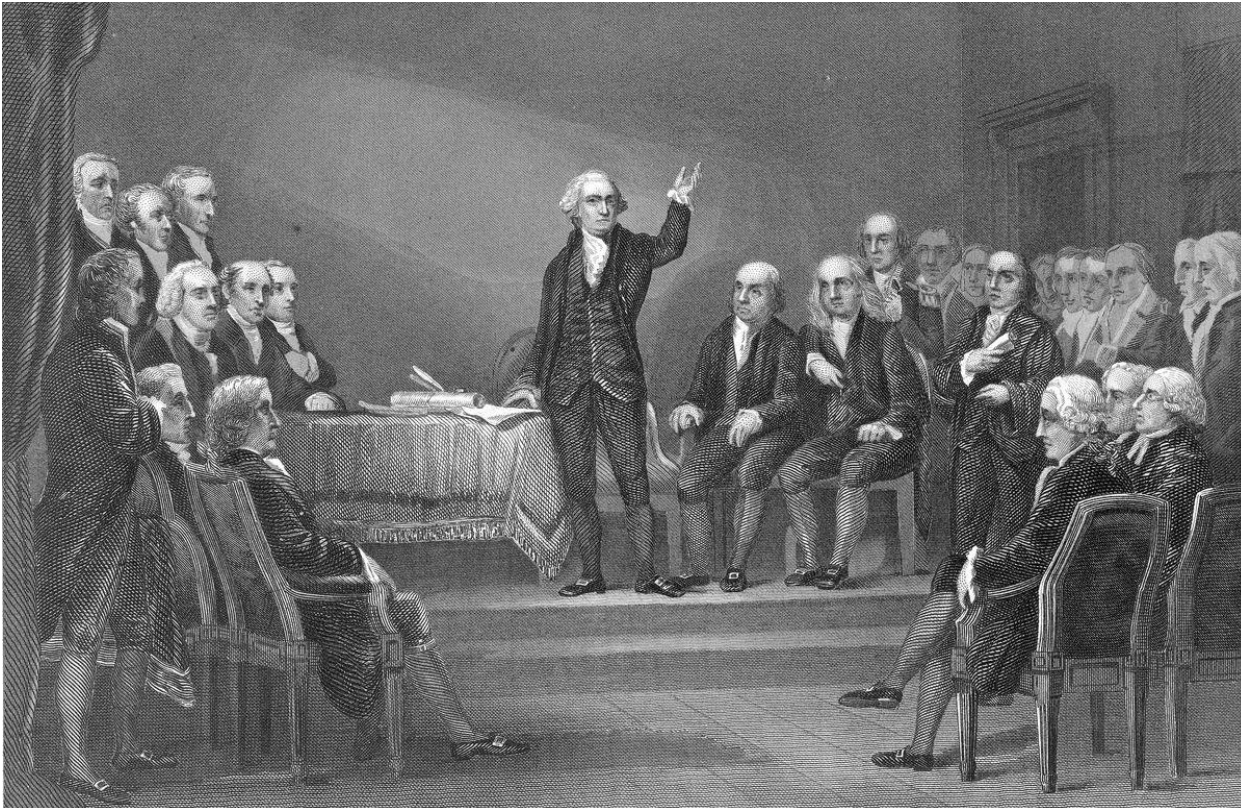
Rogue electors have never been numerous enough to actually affect the outcome of a presidential race. But it really doesn't look like there's much stopping them should they choose to do so.

Now, some defenders of the system, like Georgetown professor [Jason Brennan](#), take the comforting view that the power of electors to go rogue is a good thing, since they could conceivably save America from a popularly elected majoritarian candidate who could oppress the minority.

But it seems just as likely, if not more likely, that electors could *install* that candidate with dictatorial tendencies *against* that popular will. Perhaps some electors are wise sages with better judgment than the American people, but others are likely malign, corrupt, or driven by their own idiosyncratic beliefs. (You'll notice above that several of those historical rogue electors in history had racist motivations.)

In any case, if we had a process in which the electors were notable citizens who were chosen *because* they're supposed to exercise good judgment, maybe Brennan's defense would make sense. But in the system we have today, the electors are chosen to be rubber stamps. As a result, there's incredibly little attention paid to who those electors even are outside internal party machinations in each state. Any defection by an elector would, essentially, be a random act that could that could hold our system hostage.

5) Why do we use such a bizarre system anyway?



The Constitutional Convention of 1787. Hulton Archive/Getty

The electoral college is, essentially, a vestigial structure — a leftover from a bygone era in which the founding fathers specifically *did not* want a nationwide vote of the American people to choose their next president.

Instead, the framers gave a small, lucky group of people called the “electors” the power to make that choice. These would be some upstanding citizens chosen by the various states, who would make up their own minds on who should be the president (they'd have to vote on the same day in their respective home states, to make it tougher for them to coordinate with each other).

The Constitution remained silent on just how these elite electors would be chosen, saying only that each state legislature would decide how to appoint them. Initially, some state legislators picked the electors themselves, while other states had some form of statewide vote in which the electors themselves would be candidates.

But over the new nation's first few decades, two powerful trends in American politics brought attention to the Electoral College system's shortcomings — the rise of national political parties that would contest presidential

elections, and the growing consensus that all white men (not just the elite) should get the right to vote, including for president.

The parties and states responded to these trends by trying to jury-rig the existing system. Political parties began to nominate slates of electors in each state — electors they believed could be counted on to vote for the presidential nominee. Eventually, many states even passed laws *requiring* electors to vote for their party’s presidential nominee.

Meanwhile, by the 1830s, almost every state had changed its laws so that all electors were chosen winner-take-all through a statewide vote, according to Richard Berg-Andersson. The point of all this was to try to make the presidential election function like ordinary statewide elections for governor or senator, at least within each state.

6) Well, are there arguments *for* the Electoral College?

It’s tough to argue with a straight face that this bizarre system is *inherently* better than just a simple vote. After all, why doesn’t any state elect its governor with an “Electoral College” of various counties? Why does pretty much every other country that elects a president use a simple popular vote, or a vote accompanied with a runoff?

Now, you can argue that the Electoral College’s seeming distortions of the popular will aren’t as bad as they seem — for instance, by pointing out that swing states tend to swing along with the nation rather than overriding its will, or that the popular vote winner almost always wins. But of course, that’s not guaranteed to always be the case, and the biggest major exception (the 2000 election) was an incredibly consequential one.

Others try to fearmonger about the prospect of a contested nationwide recount — which, sure, would be ugly, but if you’ll recall, the Florida recount was also extremely ugly. And since there are so many more votes cast nationally, it’s much less likely that the national vote would end up a near tie than that a tipping point’s state vote would end up as a near tie.

Some argue that the Electoral College ensures regional balance, since it’s mathematically impossible for a candidate with overwhelming support from just one region to be elected. But realistically, the country is big and broad enough that this couldn’t happen under a popular vote system either — any regional candidate would need to get *some* support outside his or her region.

But when we get down to brass tacks, the most serious objections to reforming the Electoral College come from rural and small-state elites who fear that under a national popular vote system, they’d be ignored and elections would be decided by people who live in cities.

Gary Gregg of the University of Louisville wrote in 2012 that eliminating the Electoral College would lead to “dire consequences.” Specifically, he feared that elections would “strongly tilt” in favor of “candidates who can win huge electoral margins in the country’s major metropolitan areas.” He continued:

If the United States does away with the Electoral College, future presidential elections will go to candidates and parties willing to cater to urban voters and skew the nation’s policies toward big-city interests. Small-town issues and rural values will no longer be their concern.

And Pete du Pont, a former governor of Delaware (three electoral votes), has made a similar case, calling proposals for a national popular vote an “urban power grab.”

But a national popular vote system wouldn’t *devalue* the votes of people who live in rural states and small towns. It would *accurately* value them by treating them equal to people who live in cities, rather than giving them an extra weighting. Furthermore, small-state interests are built into the Senate’s math (where Delaware absurdly gets

as many senators as California), and many House districts are rural. So rural and small-state areas are hardly hurting for national political representation.

Sure, candidates might end up spending less time stumping in the rural areas that currently happen to be lucky enough to fall within the borders of swing states, and more time in urban centers. But is that really a convincing rebuttal to the pretty basic and obvious argument that in the most important electoral choice Americans make, their votes should be treated equally?

7) Is there any hope that the US will ditch the Electoral College someday?

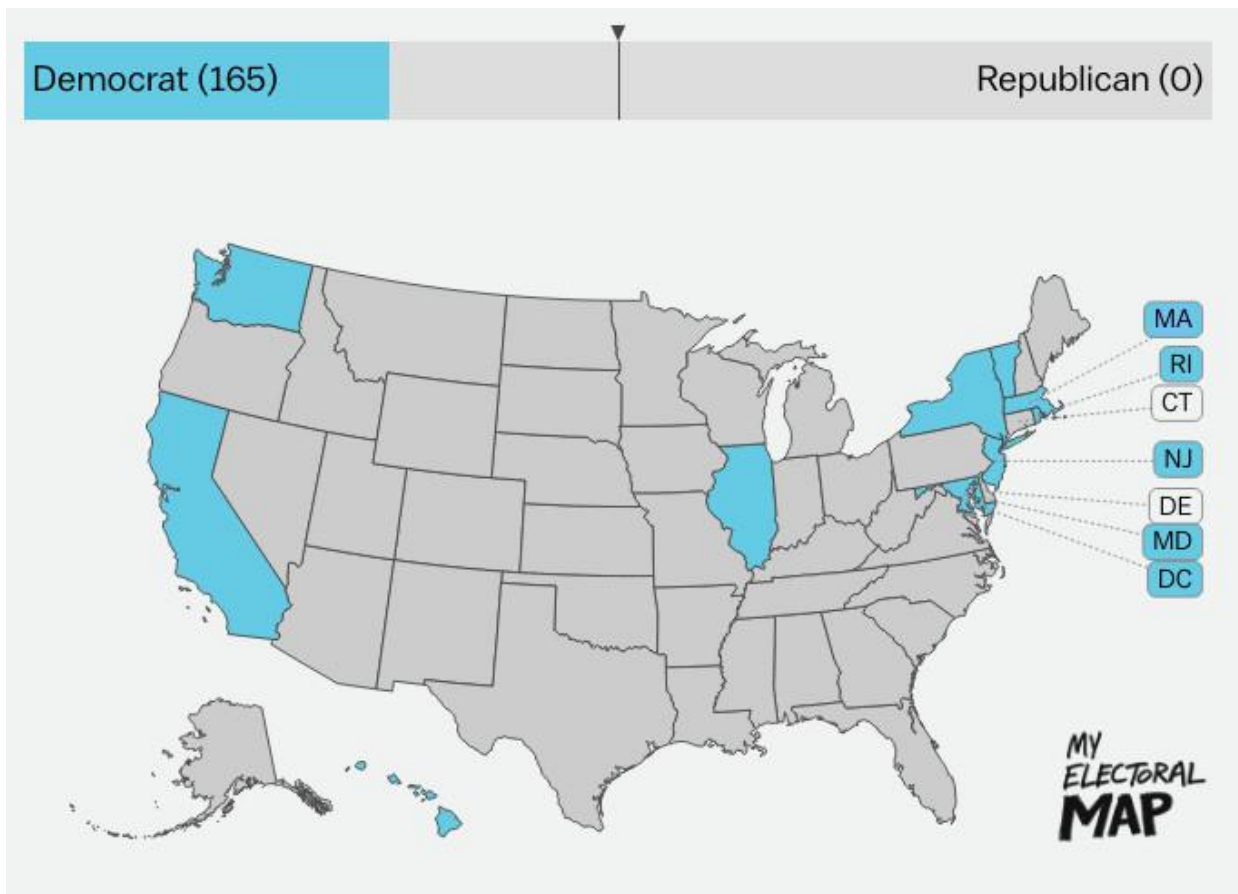
For decades, polls have shown that large majorities of Americans would prefer a popular vote system instead of the Electoral College. For instance, a 2013 Gallup poll showed 63 percent of adults wanted to do away with it, and a mere 29 percent wanted to keep it. (However, these margins have tightened since the 2016 election.)

But to ditch the Electoral College entirely, the US would have to pass a constitutional amendment (passed by two-thirds of the House and Senate and approved by 38 states) — or convene a constitutional convention (which has never been done, but would have to be called for by 34 states). Either method is vanishingly unlikely, because each would require many small states to approve a change that would reduce their influence on the presidential outcome.

There is one potential workaround, however: the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, a clever proposal that uses the Constitution's ambiguity on electors to its own ends.

A state signing on to the compact agrees that it will pledge all its electors not to its state winner but to the victor in the *national* popular vote — *but only if* states controlling 270 or more electoral votes have agreed to do the same. If they do, and everything works as planned, then whoever wins the popular vote will necessarily win the electoral vote too.

It's a fun proposal that's already been enacted into law by 10 states (including massive California and New York) and the District of Columbia, which together control 165 electoral votes. But there's one big obstacle: All of the states that have adopted it are solidly Democratic, with zero being Republican or swing states.



States that have signed on to the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. They're all blue. Source: [Vox](#)

So unless a bunch of swing states decide to reduce their own power, or Republican politicians conclude that a system bringing the power of small and rural states in line with that of big urban centers is a good idea, the compact isn't going to get the support it needs, as Nate Silver has written. (Furthermore, it wouldn't solve the rogue elector problem.)

As messed up as the Electoral College is, then, we're likely stuck with it for some time. Your safe state vote might be wasted, or it might even be subverted by rogue electors.

But at least you'll get to draw fun maps.

This article was originally published before the election. Minor updates have been made to reflect that the election has concluded.

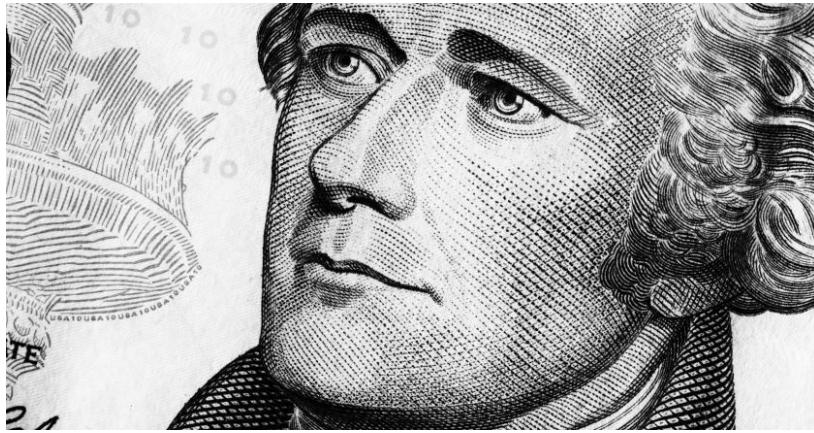
When responding to the questions below, please use evidence from the documents to support your ideas.

1. *How does this author feel about The Electoral College?*
2. *How valid are the Authors' arguments?*
3. *Based on both of these articles, who makes the stronger argument?*
4. *Do you think The Electoral College is still Necessary? Explain in detail.*

ALTERNATIVE STUDENT READING #1

ORIGINS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE – THE FOUNDERS' DESIGN

Source: <https://www.heritage.org/the-essential-electoral-college/origins-the-electoral-college>



The manner of electing the President was one of the most contentious issues at the Constitutional Convention held in 1787.

The Founders struggled to satisfy each state's demand for greater representation, while attempting to balance popular sovereignty against the risk posed to the minority from majoritarian rule. Smaller states, in particular, worried that a system that apportioned representatives based on population would underrepresent their interests in the federal structure. This concern, that either the big states, or the small states, would have too much influence over the choice of the President, was voiced by many of the delegates at the Convention. They understood the dangers that a direct democracy, with the potential for mob rule, brings to elections. James Madison warned that:

[In a direct democracy], [a] common passion or interest will, in almost every case, be felt by a majority of the whole; a communication and concert results from the form of government itself; and there is nothing to check the inducements to sacrifice the weaker party or an obnoxious individual. Hence it is that such democracies have ever been spectacles of turbulence and contention; have ever been found incompatible with personal security or the rights of property; and have in general been as short in their lives as they have been violent in their deaths.²

After long and serious debate, they arrived at an intentional design for electing the President that would incorporate the will of the people, but still safeguard against faction and tyranny. That system, the Electoral College, balances the competing interests of large states with those of smaller states. By allocating electors based on a state's cumulative representation in the House and Senate, the Electoral College system avoids purely population-based representation, while still giving larger states greater electoral weight. This design incorporates the “genius of a popular democracy organized on the federal principle,”³ and has been our electoral system that has operated successfully for over 200 years.

Debunking Myths and Misinformation

FALSE CLAIM #1: SWING STATES HOLD ALL THE POWER

Opponents of the Electoral College argue that swing states garner all of the attention of candidates and that would change with a popular vote system. But swing states can change from election to election, and many states that are today considered reliably “blue” or “red” in the presidential race were recently unpredictable or have otherwise

changed in their political makeup. Since 1968, 34 out of 50 states have been labeled as swing states at one time or another.⁶

However, with rare exceptions, established urban centers like Chicago, New York City, and Los Angeles will always have large populations that vote in a predictable fashion. By forcing candidates to travel outside of these urban centers and coalesce a majority of voters in their favor, the Electoral College assures that minority interests in a variety of geographic regions are protected. In stark contrast, a national popular vote system would help to protect only select urban interests. A majority of states would see their influence over the presidential election decrease.

FALSE CLAIM #2: THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WAS DESIGNED TO PROTECT SLAVERY

Some have made the false historical claim that the Electoral College was enacted to protect slavery. Critics charge that because three-fifths of the slave population was included in the representation tabulation, it supposedly gave Southern states a political advantage with more Electoral College votes. Significantly, though, when the proposal for the Electoral College was voted on during the Constitutional Convention, Northern states with a lower slave population, unanimously voted for the proposal; yet, with the exception of Virginia, the Southern states, with a higher population of slaves, voted against it.⁷

Moreover, when the Constitution was drafted, slavery was practiced in every state, and the number of slaves did not give the Southern states a particular advantage. According to the 1790 Census, New York and Virginia were the largest slave-holding states north and south of the Mason–Dixon Line.⁸ If you subtracted the entire slave populations present in each state, Virginia still had a larger population of free people (over 136,000 more) than New York and still would have had more representatives in Congress and a larger electoral vote.

In fact, the Electoral College “contributed to ending slavery, since Abraham Lincoln, having only earned 39.9% of the popular vote in 1860, nevertheless won a crushing victory in the Electoral College—leading many Southern slaveholders to stampede to secession in 1860 and 1861. They could run the numbers as well as anyone, and realized that the Electoral College would only produce more anti-slavery Northern presidents.”⁹ The Electoral College requires candidates to appeal to a broad cross-section of the American people, which in turn moderates and combats extremism and passions harmful to the country as a whole.

ALTERNATIVE STUDENT READING #2

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

Source: <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/state/ny>



On November 7, 2016, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo signed legislation making New York's approval of the National Popular Vote compact permanent. Governor Cuomo's press release said:

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo today signed legislation that secures New York's place on the list of states that have joined National Popular Vote compact. By signing this legislation, Governor Cuomo seeks to guarantee that every vote in every state will matter in every presidential election.

The bill (S.5478/A.6044) modifies legislation signed by Governor Cuomo in 2014 that added New York to an interstate agreement in which member states commit to award their electoral votes for president to the candidate that receives a majority of the national popular vote. The original legislation required that New York be removed from the compact at the end of 2018 if the agreement had not been adopted nationally. This new measure removed this expiration date and keeps New York on the list of states supporting the National Popular Vote indefinitely.

"This action will help ensure every vote is treated equally and places New York at the forefront of the battle for fairer elections and strengthen our democracy," Governor Cuomo said. "Making the national popular vote a binding one will enable all voices to be heard and encourage candidates to appeal to voters in all states."

By signing on to the National Popular Vote Compact, New York pledges to award its 29 electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote in ALL 50 States plus the District of Columbia, but only to take effect once enough other states have passed identical legislation to comprise a majority of the Electoral Colleges 538 votes. The compact currently contains 165 of the necessary 270 electoral votes (61 percent).

A federal constitutional amendment is not required to effect this change, as Article II, Section 1 of the United States Constitution provides states the plenary power to award electoral votes in any manner they choose. Currently, like 47 other states, New York uses the winner-take-all method in which the winner of the popular vote in New York State receives all of its electors. This method was used by only 3 states in 1789.

The National Popular Vote legislation adheres to the basic principles of fairness in elections. Under the current winner-take-all system, Presidential candidates are able to ignore reliably Republican and Democrat states, like New York, and focus all of their attention and resources on a select group of battleground states. Therefore, candidates have no reason to focus on the many issues that matter to millions of New Yorkers across the state. The current system artificially divides the country into red, blue, and swing states. New York is a victim of this system despite ranking 4th in the country with over 13 million eligible voters, New York ranked dead last in Presidential campaign spending.

Senator Joseph Griffo said, "As Election Day finally arrives, every New Yorker wants to know their vote for President will matter in deciding the future of our country. I am proud to have sponsored legislation that will allow New York State to join the National Popular Vote Compact, and the amendment signed by the Governor today will now give more states enough time to join this interstate agreement. A national popular vote compact will make New York relevant, so that we can't be ignored or taken for granted as the candidates instead fight over the few winner-take-all battleground states that historically have decided who is elected president. In the 21st Century, every vote really should count, and this legislation will help achieve that democratic ideal in a way that respects the Constitution."

Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz said, "Only in the world's greatest democracy, the person who receives the most votes for President is not necessarily the winner. National Popular Vote would change that, and it would mean that every American's vote in every state would count equally. Currently, New York is a bystander in Presidential elections, where candidates spend most of the time in battleground states. It's time that New York issues count – that New Yorkers count. I am proud to be the sponsor of National Popular Vote in New York and applaud Governor Cuomo for signing this legislation that will keep the National Popular Vote compact in place in New York."

The compact has now been enacted through legislation in 10 states: California, Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Washington, as well as Washington D.C.

EXTENDED READING FOR EARLY FINISHERS:

Source: <https://www.archives.gov/electoral-college/about>



What is the Electoral College?

The Electoral College is a process, not a place. The Founding Fathers established it in the Constitution, in part, as a compromise between the election of the President by a vote in Congress and election of the President by a popular vote of qualified citizens.

What is the process?

The Electoral College process consists of the selection of the electors, the meeting of the electors where they vote for President and Vice President, and the counting of the electoral votes by Congress.

How many electors are there? How are they distributed among the States?

The Electoral College consists of 538 electors. A majority of 270 electoral votes is required to elect the President. Your State has the same number of electors as it does Members in its Congressional delegation: one for each Member in the House of Representatives plus two Senators. Read more about the allocation of electoral votes. The District of Columbia is allocated 3 electors and treated like a State for purposes of the Electoral College under the 23rd Amendment of the Constitution. For this reason, in the following discussion, the word “State” also refers to the District of Columbia and “Executive” to the State Governors and the Mayor of the District of Columbia.

How are my electors chosen? What are their qualifications? How do they decide who to vote for?

Each candidate running for President in your State has their own group of electors (known as a slate). The slates are generally chosen by the candidate’s political party in your State, but State laws vary on how the electors are selected and what their responsibilities are. Read more about the qualifications of the electors and restrictions on who the electors may vote for.

What happens in the general election? Why should I vote?

The general election is held every four years on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. When you vote for a Presidential candidate you are actually voting for your candidate's preferred electors. Learn more about voting for the electors.

Most States have a “winner-take-all” system that awards all electors to the Presidential candidate who wins the State's popular vote. However, Maine and Nebraska each have a variation of “proportional representation.” Read more about the allocation of electors among the States.

What happens after the general election?

After the general election, your State's Executive prepares a Certificate of Ascertainment listing the names of all the individuals on the slates for each candidate. The Certificate of Ascertainment also lists the number of votes each individual received and shows which individuals were appointed as your State's electors. Your State's Certificate of Ascertainment is sent to NARA as part of the official records of the Presidential election.

The meeting of the electors takes place on the first Tuesday after the second Wednesday in December after the general election. The electors meet in their respective States, where they cast their votes for President and Vice President on separate ballots. Your state's electors' votes are recorded on a Certificate of Vote, which is prepared at the meeting by the electors. Your State's Certificate of Vote is sent to Congress, where the votes are counted, and to NARA, as part of the official records of the Presidential election.

Each State's electoral votes are counted in a joint session of Congress on the 6th of January in the year following the meeting of the electors. Members of the House and Senate meet in the House Chamber to conduct the official count of electoral votes. The Vice President of the United States, as President of the Senate, presides over the count in a strictly ministerial manner and announces the results of the vote. The President of the Senate then declares which persons, if any, have been elected President and Vice President of the United States.

The President-elect takes the oath of office and is sworn in as President of the United States on January 20th in the year following the general election.