

# THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

How does it really work?



# Think you know your Electoral College?

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1. Which state is most over-represented in the Electoral College?

California

Tennessee

Wyoming

Maryland

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## 1. Which state is most over-represented in the Electoral College?

- California
- Tennessee
- Wyoming
- Maryland

*Every state has Electoral Votes equal to the number of Senators plus the number of Representatives. (These Congressional totals are adjusted with each ten-year Census). Since every state has 2 Senators, and at least 1 Representative, the minimum number of Electoral votes any state can have is 3. What this also means is that states with lower population are over-represented in the Electoral College. As a result, Wyoming, the least populous state, with 563,626 people, is the most over-represented in the electoral college. In fact, Wyoming's population is slightly less than the average population per electoral vote (573,876), which would give it just one if the system was based purely on population.*

*Conversely, even though it has 55 Electoral Votes, California is the most under-represented state. With 12% of the U.S. now residing there, California would have about 65 Electoral votes if it was just based on population. The other two options, Tennessee and Maryland, are actually the states that are closest to having the "correct" number of Electoral Votes based on their population.*

## Think you know your Electoral College?

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2. Which state has the longest winning streak for voting for the candidate that ends up being elected President?

Arkansas

Missouri

Ohio

Tennessee

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Missouri

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*The last time Ohioans got it wrong was 1960, when they preferred Richard M. Nixon to John F. Kennedy. The other three states broke long streaks where they voted for the ultimate winner by preferring John McCain to Barack Obama in the 2008 election. (Those states also picked Mitt Romney over Obama in 2012). Missouri had the longest of these pre-2008 streaks, last getting it wrong in 1956. Arkansas last got it wrong when it voted for 3rd party candidate George Wallace in 1968. (By the way, that was the last election that a 3rd party candidate earned Electoral Votes by winning a state's popular vote.)*

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3. What state has had the greatest percentage of the total Electoral Votes in any one election?

California

Florida

New York

Virginia

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- California
  - Florida
  - New York
  - Virginia

*Home state to George Washington, Virginians in 1792 controlled 15.9% of the Electoral Votes in that election. There were only 15 states voting at the time. As the country grew, New York became the most populous state, with over 40 Electoral Votes for a large part of the 20th century.*

*New York surrendered the most Electoral votes to California in 1972, and with the 2004 election, that state now has over 10% of the total Electoral Votes. The last time a state had that great a proportion was in 1872, when New York had 35 of the 349 Electoral Votes cast.*

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4. Starting with 2012 and heading back in time, what location has voted for the same party in the most consecutive elections?
- Alaska
  - Idaho
  - Minnesota
  - Washington, DC



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Alaska

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Minnesota

Washington, DC

*Although not a state, Washington, DC was granted Electoral representation in the early 1960s by virtue of the 23rd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. The District participated in its first election in 1964, and voted Democratic. It has never voted any other way.*

*Of the 50 states, Alaska, Idaho, Kansas, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming have consistently voted Republican since the 1968 election. Nebraska is also technically on the preceding list, but in 2008 one of its Electoral Votes was won by Barack Obama. Indiana and Virginia were on this list, but flipped 'blue' in 2008.*

*Minnesota is the state with the longest Democratic voting streak. The last Republican they voted for was Richard Nixon in 1972.*

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5. Since 1900, what candidate has won the presidency while winning the fewest locations?
- Kennedy (1960)
  - Bush (2000)
  - Carter (1976)
  - Wilson (1916)

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5. Since 1900, what candidate has won the presidency while winning the fewest locations?

Kennedy (1960)

Bush (2000)

Carter (1976)

Wilson (1916)

*John F. Kennedy won the 1960 election, despite winning the popular vote (and thus the electoral votes) of only 23 of the 50 states. Jimmy Carter won 23 states in 1976, but he also won DC, which by then was participating with 3 electoral votes. George W. Bush won 30 states in 2000, despite the closeness of the electoral vote.*

*As an aside, all of the above results occurred partly because Republicans tend to win most of the smaller states, while Democrats do best in some of the larger, more industrialized states. However, it hasn't always been that way. Take a look at the 1916 map of Democrat Woodrow Wilson vs. Republican Charles E. Hughes. The results are almost a mirror image of how the voting went in 2000. Things do change over time.*

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6. Assuming each state (+DC) gives all its votes to the Republican or Democrat, how many possible ways could the U.S. map be colored red & blue?

51

2,250,000,000,000,000

534

1,068

## Think you know your Electoral College?

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6. Assuming each state (+DC) gives all its votes to the Republican or Democrat, how many possible ways could the U.S. map be colored red & blue?

51

2,250,000,000,000,000

534

1,068

*Since there are two possible outcomes (blue or red) for each state and DC, this is the same as flipping a coin 51 times and recording, **in order**, the outcome of each. There are 2 to the 51st power or 2.25 quadrillion possibilities. There are 534 possible final scores (e.g, 286-252), or double that (1,068) if you include the party winner beside each score. Since there are no states with one or two electoral votes, a final total of 1, 2, 536 or 537 is not possible, assuming each state gives all its votes to the popular vote winner of that state.*

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7. What is the fewest number of states one can win and still be elected President?

11

23

25

26

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*Believe it or not, it is possible to amass exactly 270 Electoral Votes by winning just 11 states: California, Texas, New York, Florida, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Georgia, North Carolina and New Jersey. (Prior to the 2010 Census, these states had 271 Electoral Votes). However, nobody has been elected President since 1900 by winning fewer than 23 states.*

## Think you know your Electoral College?

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8. Excluding the original 13 states, what state had the most Electoral Votes the first time it participated in a presidential election?

Maine

Wyoming

Oklahoma

Nevada



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*Maine entered the Union for the 1820 election with 9 Electoral Votes. Wyoming, like roughly half the states, entered with 3 Electoral Votes. Oklahoma had the 2nd highest initial Electoral Votes --- 7 in 1908. In a bit of a historical oddity, the other choice, Nevada, only ended up with 2 Electoral Votes when it first voted in 1864.*

## Think you know your Electoral College?

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9. What state had the closest popular vote % difference in 2012?

North Carolina

Florida

Ohio

Virginia

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Virginia

*Despite a fairly competitive election overall, the four choices here were the only four states that were decided by 5% or less in 2012. Florida was the closest, with Barack Obama winning by a little under 1%. In the all-or-none Electoral College system, the importance of each individual vote is magnified in closely-contended states. That's why, as the election approaches, some states get far more attention from the candidates, both in terms of visits and local advertising dollars spent. If we had a popular vote election, the candidates would likely spend most of their time and energy in the most populous states, supplemented by national advertising. We'll leave it to others (and there is no shortage of opinions), to debate which system is best.*

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10. Since 1900, what state gained the most Electors as a result of a Census?

New York

Ohio

California

North Dakota

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*California added 9 Electoral Votes, going from 13 to 22 for the 1932 election. Article I of The Constitution mandates a Census every 10 years --- and one just took place in 2010. Census results have tremendous implications across government, including how Congressional Representatives are allocated across the states. Since each state has Electoral Votes equal to their Representatives (plus 2 for their Senators), the electoral map changed in 2012.*

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11. How many states have contributed electoral votes in all 57 presidential elections?

13

7

10

50

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13

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10

50

*Only 7 states: CT, DE, MA, MD, NH, NJ and PA have had electoral votes in all 57 presidential elections. Those were seven of the original 13 colonies. Three of the other six (GA, VA and SC), also participated from the first election in 1789, but did not participate in one or more elections during the Civil War period of secession. The remaining three colonies did not participate in 1789. NC and RI had not ratified the new Constitution and NY had an internal dispute.*

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12. How is the president selected if no candidate gets 270 electoral votes?

- Coin flip; incumbent calls heads or tails
- Another election is held
- Candidate with most Twitter followers wins
- Congress decides



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- Coin flip; incumbent calls heads or tails
- Another election is held
- Candidate with most Twitter followers wins
- Congress decides

*Congress decides. The House of Representatives picks the President, with each state delegation getting one vote. A similar activity takes place on the Senate side to pick the Vice-President.*

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13. What state has voted Republican in the most presidential elections?

Vermont

Georgia

Arkansas

Alaska

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13. What state has voted Republican in the most presidential elections?

Vermont

Georgia

Arkansas

Alaska

*Although it is a very blue state today, Vermont has voted Republican 33 times, more than any other state. From 1856 to 1960, Vermont voted Republican in 27 consecutive elections. After siding with Johnson in 1964, the state again voted Republican from 1968 through 1988. Georgia and Arkansas are actually the states that have voted most frequently for the Democrats, as most southern states voted that party from post-Civil War Reconstruction through the mid-1960s. Alaska has the distinction of the highest percentage of voting Republican, 13 out of 14 elections since it joined the Union in 1959.*

# Think you know your Electoral College?

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14. What person never elected president has received the most electoral votes in their lifetime?

- George Wallace
- William Jennings Bryan
- Ross Perot
- Thomas E. Dewey

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14. What person never elected president has received the most electoral votes in their lifetime?

George Wallace

William Jennings Bryan

Ross Perot

Thomas E. Dewey

*Populist Democrat William Jennings Bryan amassed 493 electoral votes across 3 elections (1896, 1900, 1908) but never enough in any one election to win the presidency. Coming in 2nd was Thomas E. Dewey with 288. In 1968, George Wallace earned 46 electoral votes. This is well down in the rankings, but Wallace has the distinction of being the last 3rd party candidate to receive any electoral votes. In 1992, Ross Perot received almost 20 million votes, most ever for a 3rd party candidate, but won no electoral votes.*

It's not a place....

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It's a....

***PROCESS***



# Why do we have the Electoral College?

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- In the US Constitution
  - A compromise between
    - the election of the President by a popular vote of qualified citizens, and
    - The election of the President by a vote in Congress

# What is the Electoral College all about?

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- 538 electors
- A majority of 270 electoral votes is required to elect the President.
- Each state's allotment of electors equals the number of members in its Congressional delegation (one for each member in the House of Representatives plus two for senators)
- WA = 12
- Washington, DC is allocated 3 electors (according to 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment) and treated like a state for the Electoral College





# Distribution of Electoral Votes

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Alabama	9	Idaho	4
Alaska	3	Illinois	20
Arizona	11	Indiana	11
Arkansas	6	Iowa	6
California	55	Kansas	6
Colorado	9	Kentucky	8
Connecticut	7	Louisiana	8
Delaware	3	Maine	4
District of Columbia	3	Maryland	10
Florida	29	Massachusetts	11
Georgia	16	Michigan	16
Hawaii	4	Minnesota	10

# Distribution of Electoral Votes

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Mississippi	6	Oklahoma	7
Missouri	3	Oregon	7
Montana	3	Pennsylvania	20
Nebraska	5	Rhode Island	4
Nevada	6	South Carolina	9
New Hampshire	4	South Dakota	3
New Jersey	14	Tennessee	11
New Mexico	5	Texas	38
New York	29	Utah	6
North Carolina	15	Vermont	3
North Dakota	3	Washington	12
Ohio	18	West Virginia	5



# Who are the Electors?

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- Article II, section 1, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution provides that no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.
- In addition, the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment provides that State officials who have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States or given aid and comfort to its enemies are disqualified from serving as Electors (relates to the post-Civil War era).
- The process for selecting Electors varies by state. Generally, the political parties nominate Electors at their State party conventions or by a vote of the party's central committee in each state.

# How are Electors selected?

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- On Election Day (November 8, 2016) the voters in each state choose the Electors by casting votes for the presidential candidate of their choice.
- The winning candidate in each state (except in Nebraska and Maine) is awarded all of the state's Electors.

# Are there restrictions on who Electors can vote for?

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- There is no Constitution provision or Federal law that requires Electors to vote according to the results of the popular vote in their states.
- Some states require Electors to cast their votes according to the popular vote.
  - Two types of pledges:
    1. Electors bound by state law
    2. Electors bound to political parties
- In WA – Party pledge/State law *RCW 29.71.020, RCW 29.71.040, Supp. (\$1,000 fine)*
- It is rare for Electors to disregard the popular vote by casting their electoral vote for someone other than their party's candidate.
  - Throughout our history as a nation, more than 99 percent of Electors have voted as pledged.

# When does the Electoral College vote?

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- On the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday after the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday in December (December 19, 2016) the electors meet to cast their votes for President and Vice President.
- Key dates for the 2016 Presidential Election
  - November 8, 2016 – Election Day
  - December 19, 2016 – Meeting of Electors
  - December 28, 2016 – Deadline for Receipt of Electoral Votes
  - January 6, 2017 – Counting Electoral Votes in Congress

# When does the Electoral College vote?

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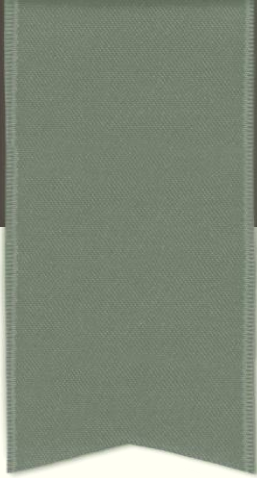
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# Can the Electoral College system be changed?

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- Changing or abolishing the Electoral College would require a Constitutional amendment -- proposed by a two-thirds majority in both houses of Congress and ratified by three fourths of the states.
- Over the past 200 years more than 700 proposals have been introduced in Congress to reform or eliminate the Electoral College – more proposals for Constitutional amendments than on any other system.



[www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/about.html](http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/about.html)  
[www.taraross.com](http://www.taraross.com)