

## Electoral College

If you want to understand the electoral college, listen up  
Did you know your vote for President is not directly (1) counted up?  
A slate of state electors (2) counts over the popular vote

California 55, Hawaii has just 4, NY has 29  
Population in each state (3) determines how to divvy up the electoral college

The number to win the Presidency  
270 electoral votes (4)

Winner take all (5) also means  
some people's votes are screened by electoral college  
Vote winners inside each state  
get the entire state electoral college

Procedures in the Constitution  
determine who will become President

Several times the President was chosen not by the people but electoral college  
You can get more votes and lose the race  
Winner takes all electoral college

Like Rutherford Hayes , Benjamin Harrison, John Quincy Adams, and George W. Bush  
(6)

So you see Democrat GOP, happy to be in electoral college  
How can small parties compete (7) Call this anomaly electoral college

The framers made a compromise (8) with small states so all would ratify

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## NOTES

1) **directly**: The US Constitution (Article 2, Section 1, Clause 2) requires a two stage process for Presidential/Vice-Presidential elections--citizens vote for electors, then electors vote for President. First comes the popular election. In November, people who vote for a candidate are actually voting for an elector (usually unnamed on the ballot) who has pledged to vote for the selected candidate when all electors meet for the formal Presidential election, after the popular vote in November and before Inauguration Day in January. Through the electoral college, "the people" elect voting representatives who in turn vote for the President and Vice-President.

2) **state electors**: State electors are usually state, county or local politicians, often active members of one of the two main political parties. Electors pledge to vote for a particular candidate. First they get votes from the citizens, the chosen electors have pledged their votes in a second, "official" election. Electors are not legally bound to honor their pledge, and in rare historical instances, the pledge has been broken.

3) **population in each state**: State population is based on the Census tally which is renewed every ten years as required by the Constitution. The total number of electors has been set since 1964 at 538. As population shifts, the number of electoral votes is redistributed among the states.

4) **number of electors by state**: The 2016 electoral count from the National Archives:

<https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/allocation.html>

5) **winner take all**: According to the procedures for Presidential and Vice-Presidential elections set forth in the Constitution, a candidate who wins the popular vote within a state wins the entire electoral slate of that state. In other words, if a state has 10 electoral votes and two candidates nearly split the popular vote, with one of them eking out a small victory, the victorious candidate wins the entire slate of all 10 electors.

6) **Rutherford B. Hayes**: *Election of 1876*: Popular Vote--Rutherford B. Hayes: 4,036,572. Samuel J. Tilden 4,284,020; Electoral Count--Hayes, 185~Tilden, 184

**Benjamin Harrison**: *Election of 1888*: Popular vote--Benjamin Harrison: 5,443,892. Grover Cleveland: 5,534,488; Electoral Count--Harrison,233~Cleveland,168

**John Quincy Adams:** The *Election of 1824* was a four candidate race. All contenders were members of the Democratic-Republican party. Because no candidate received a majority of the popular vote, in accordance with the Constitution, the election was "thrown into the House" of Representatives. There, Adams was selected over Andrew Jackson, Henry Clay and William Crawford. In the popular election Adams received 113,000 votes vs. 151,000 for Jackson as well as an Electoral Count victory, 99 to 84. The vote in the House was:  
Adams, 87~Jackson, 71~Crawford, 54

**George W. Bush:** *Election of 2000:* Popular Vote--George W. Bush: 50,456,002. Al Gore: 50,999,897; Electoral Count--Bush, 271~Gore, 266. The validity of the election process was contested before the Supreme Court and decided in favor of Bush.

7) **small parties:** Small parties who receive a minority percentage of the popular vote do not get a proportional share of the state's electoral count due to the winner take all provision. A candidate who received 49% of the vote might get zero electoral votes.

8) **compromise:** The electoral college increases the electoral weight of small states by establishing a minimum state electoral weight of 3, two for the Senators and one for the Representative of each state. Even states with the smallest populations have 3 electoral votes, over-representing small states in relation to their population in the nation as a whole. In addition, the electoral college favors "swing states", where an entire state electoral slate is "up for grabs." The conflicts and compromises between large and small states at the Constitutional Convention influenced many key decisions during the period of draft and ratification. The electoral college was, in large part, a concession to small states within a larger negotiated framework for sharing power in federation at the state and national level.

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