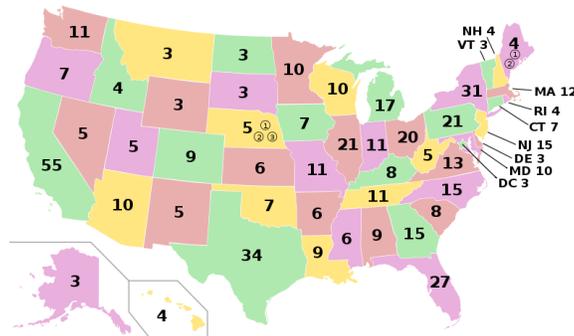


The Electoral College

After the 2016 election, many brought into question the purposes of the electoral college after Hilary Clinton won the popular vote but lost the election to President Donald Trump. This is the 5th time in United States' history, twice this century, that a presidential candidate won the presidency without winning the popular vote. This article takes a look at how the electoral college works and the pros and cons of the system our forefathers have put in place.

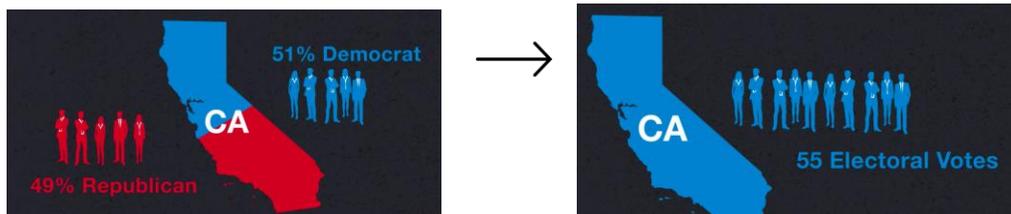


US Electoral College Map

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When you cast your vote for president on Tuesday, November 3rd, 2020, you aren't directly voting for the president. This is because the United States follows a **representative democracy** where citizens vote on representatives to create laws and policies on behalf of them. This means you're actually voting for electors for your candidate.

Electors are individuals part of the electoral college that vote for president. Electors are pledged to vote for whichever candidate their state supports. The number of electoral votes each state gets depends on the number of congressmen and congresswomen each state has. For example, California has the largest population which means they get the most representation in Congress (2 senators and 53 representatives). This in hand turns into 55 votes in the electoral college. All states receive a minimum of 3 votes in the electoral college. The electoral college is a winner-take-all system, meaning that if a Democratic candidate receives 51% of the vote and a Republican candidate receives 49% of the vote, all the electoral votes go to the Democratic candidate no matter how close it was. This is how electoral votes are determined for all states except Nebraska and Maine.



Below are the pros and cons of the electoral college and a national popular vote for president.

Electoral College

PROS	CONS
It (except once) yields a decisive outcome	When it doesn't, the EC is incredibly undemocratic
It favors the two party system	It disfavors minor parties and independents
The outcome is generally known the next day	The "wasted vote" problem
Voters are used to it	Small states are advantaged
Current voting machines handle it easily	It can fail to select the NPV winner
	Faithless elector problem
	Depresses turnout in non-battleground states
	Public opinion favors a change

In the Public Interest: Pros and Cons of the Electoral College, Lisa Barry (2019)

National Popular Vote

PROS	CONS
It is a form of direct elections	It would really be a national election
By definition, it selects the NPV winner	The NPV winner would often receive <50% of the vote
Candidates would target a broader range of states than the battleground states	It would take several days to learn the outcome
It would encourage minor parties and independent candidates	It would require re-working/replacing voting machines
It would encourage turnout, particularly in non-battleground states	States could drop out of the compact during the election season, causing reversion to "old" EC
	With three or more candidates it could select a winner who would lose to another candidate in a head to head comparison

In the Public Interest: Pros and Cons of the Electoral College, Lisa Barry (2019)

Below is a video further explaining the history of the electoral college and more in-depth of the positives and negatives to it. Acknowledging how the electoral college works helps us understand how much our vote matters and where it counts this upcoming presidential election.

The Electoral College: Why Such A Big Debate?:

<https://www.kqed.org/education/532852/is-the-electoral-college-good-or-bad-for-democracy>

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