

# **EQ # 17 *How is the President Elected?***

- **How does the Electoral College work and why do we have it?**

# How do we elect the President in the U.S.?

- Though voters cast ballots, the US President is NOT directly elected by the people.
- All other elected officials in US government are directly elected EXCEPT the President!
- The Constitution established the **Electoral College system** to elect our President.
- **Why?**

# What is the Electoral College?

- Why do we have an Electoral College system?
- What is it and how does it work?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of this election system?
- **Film Clip**- Watch brief explanation of the system (<https://www.commoncraft.com/video/electing-us-president>)
- **Electoral College FAQ Activity**- Complete the FAQ Activity

# What are the basics of the Electoral College system?

- Founders who wrote the Constitution didn't want a direct popular vote for President
- Created the Electoral College to choose.
- Under the system, the candidate with the most popular votes in each state, wins all the state's electoral votes.
- # of electoral votes is the number of members in Congress for each state.

# Electoral College FAQs

- **Complete the FAQ's of the Electoral College with a partner**
- Put answers into INB as C-Notes.
- **Take Quiz and write a reflection in INB as summary.**
  - Why do we have an Electoral College?
  - How does it work? (basically)
  - Should it be reformed? Explain. (Your opinion)

# **#1- Why do we have the Electoral College**

- **Distrust of direct democracy**
- **Desire to keep branches separate so didn't want Congress to choose**
- **Lack of ability to campaign / find out about candidates from afar made it a risk that that large states would always win the presidency since their candidates would be well-known in their state and they had more votes.**

## **#2- How many votes per state and how is this determined?**

- Each state gets the same number of electoral votes as they have seats in Congress (House + Senate)
- **Washington, D.C. gets 3**
- **538 = total**
- **270 = majority needed to win**
- **7 = Oregon's # of electoral votes**

## #3- Are all states equal?

- No; small states have an advantage in the electoral college system.
- Small states have LOW population and are still guaranteed THREE electoral votes.
- Small states have more influence because their electoral votes represent fewer Americans than the electoral votes of large states.



# #3 Are All States Equal?

- Most OVER represented State= **Wyoming**
- Most UNDER represented State= **California**



# #4- How does the Electoral College system work?

**48 States are ...**

- **WINNER-TAKE-ALL**- win the popular vote in the state, get ALL of its electoral votes
- **TWO states are DISTRICT SYSTEM (Maine & Nebraska)** – They split electoral votes by congressional district. Win the popular vote in one of the state's districts, get that district's electoral vote.
  - Overall winner of state's popular vote gets final two electoral votes.

# #5 Why are Swing States so Important?

- **Battleground / Swing States-** States that are toss-ups & often decide P elections.
- Voters in these states are fairly evenly split between Democrats and Republicans; the state doesn't vote consistently for one party.
- **Which swing states are most important?**- Ohio (18), Pennsylvania (20), Florida (29), Virginia (13), Michigan (16).

## #6-How is it possible to win Electoral College but lose popular vote?

1. **Small states are overrepresented;** Electoral votes represent fewer voters in small states than large; win more small states, get an advantage in the Electoral College.
  2. **The winner-take-all feature- disproportionately rewards narrow victories.** Narrow wins = ALL of the state's electoral votes; the loser gets NOTHING for a close loss.
- \*FACT-** Hillary Clinton had 2.8 million more votes than Donald Trump in 2016; Trump won FIVE swing states by less than 1% of popular vote in that state

# #7 Key Weaknesses

## Electoral College

### Key Weaknesses to the system

1. **Can go against popular vote-** Top vote winner can lose in the Electoral College; has happened in 2000 and 2016!
2. **Congress may choose-** If no candidate gets the majority (270), the House chooses the President
3. **Faithless Elector-** No laws compel the electors to vote as their state has mandated

# #7 Key Benefits of the Electoral College System

1. **Protects minority** (small states and rural areas) **interests**. Candidates can't ignore these voters.
2. **Reinforces our two-party system-** Only Ds or Rs can win; this increases political stability
3. **It directs more power to the states.** States can choose electors and each state matters to candidates.

# Friday

- Wrap-Up EQ #17- How does the P get elected through the Electoral College?
- Electoral College Reform Ideas / Proposals

# Warm-Up- Electoral College

1. Explain *winner-take-all* in the electoral college.
2. How many **electors** does each state get?
3. Describe ONE reason we have Electoral College rather than popular vote.
4. Explain these numbers: **538, 270, 7**.
5. What would it take to abolish the Electoral College? Why?



# Show EC Maps

- 270 to Win- show current maps and discuss
- Show 2016 map and discuss
- Show historic maps and discuss

# What are the key problems with the Electoral College?

- Read the handout

# Possible Reforms of Electoral College

- NY Times Electoral Dysfunction Film clip
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/electoral-college-101.html>

# Electoral College Reforms

- Form a team of three
- Research TWO reforms
- Share with your group
- Choose which if any you like

# Direct Popular Vote

- Abolishes Electoral College
- Candidate with most votes overall wins
- Only a plurality needed (NOT majority)
- Requires a constitutional amendment.

# Direct Popular Vote variations

- **Direct Popular Vote with Instant Runoff**
  - Voters in each state rank their choices for P
  - If no one candidate wins a majority, the lowest vote getter is eliminated and votes are counted again until a winner emerges with a majority
- **Interstate Compact-**
  - 15 states so far have agreed to cast ALL of their electoral votes for the overall popular vote winner in the US. So far, there are 196 electoral votes in these states. Need a minimum of 270 to have it be viable.

# The National Bonus Plan

- Keeps Electoral College & winner-take-all feature
- Would add 102 “bonus” electoral votes to the popular vote winner

# Proportional voting

- Would change winner-take-all feature
- States would split their electoral votes to match the state's popular vote.
- **Example-** in OR, 60% vote for X and 40% vote for Y. X=4 electoral votes and Y = 3
- Wouldn't need to amend Electoral College as states can choose how to allocate them



# Congressional District Method

- As Maine and Nebraska do it...
- Divides popular vote by congressional district; win the district, win that district's electoral vote.
- Overall vote winner in state gets remaining two electoral votes.

# Play Kahoot!

- Play Electoral College Kahoot

# How is the US President is Elected? Review

- Take the **Electoral College Quiz**
- <http://www.funtrivia.com/playquiz/quiz2050425c048.html>
- Record your score out of 10 in your INB

# Summary / Reflection

1. What is the **Electoral College**?
2. Why do we have it in the U.S.? Describe **ONE** reason.
3. Describe the **winner-take-all** feature.
4. Should the Electoral College be abolished and replaced with direct popular vote? Why/not?

# **Electoral College Exit Ticket**

Tell ONE reason why each is significant as it relates to the Electoral College.

**1. 270**

**2. 538**

**3. Winner-take-all**

**4. Faithless elector**

**5. Maine & Nebraska**