

Problem with the electoral college



The Electoral College was founded as one of the four major compromises within the United States Constitution, founded in 1787. The founding fathers were at an impasse on the decision of who ultimately obtained the power of choosing the president- the citizens or the leaders in Congress? At the time, the creators of the Constitution heavily feared a dictatorship rule, having just obtained freedom from their former colony ruler and motherland, Great Britain, so they did not want a system that could potentially overpower the government with the slightest majority. To minimize this risk, they established a separation of powers with the various branches of government in another constitutional compromise to balance out how the government would function and delegate powers accordingly.

To avoid the possible blow of majority-swayed elections, they created the Electoral College as a compromise between an election of the president by a popular vote of competent citizens and an election of the president through a congressional vote.

There are five hundred and thirty-eight total members that make up the Electoral College. Chosen from the loyal supporters in either of the two respected parties, potential members are hand-picked by the party of every candidate. The number of electors has evolved over time to meet the number of members of Congress, with the addition of three electors for the District of Columbia, who is treated as a state in this instance for representative purposes. These electors are split up between the fifty states. The number of electors allocated to a state is dependent the number of members in its Congressional delegation: one for each member in the House of Representatives plus two for every stater's two senators. With the U. S

census renewed every ten years, if a state gains or loses enough population, it can also gain or lose congressional seats, therefore gaining or losing electoral votes.

As stated in the Constitution, a qualified elector must not hold any office under the United States government. State laws can vary on the specifics of how potential electors are chosen, but the political parties of the presidential candidates for each state either nominate or vote on their slate of electors for said candidate. Commonly, chosen electors are long-standing, loyal party members who they believe will vote true to their party affiliate. This is because they want to reduce the possibility of a faithless elector, if they can help it. In short, every presidential candidate has their own group of potential electors chosen by their political party that will ideally stay true to their word and vote for that candidate if they win the vote in November.

While almost all electors vote in accordance to the majority vote of their state, they are not always inclined to do so. There have been 157 electors in American history that did not vote in accordance with the stater's vote- but this is not necessarily illegal. In fact, twenty-one states dont require electors to support candidates chosen by the state they represent, thus allowing them to vote whichever way they choose- and while twenty-six states technically have the legislation in place to fine those electors who choose to go against their promised candidate, the precedent of this punishment has never been sought after in the 157 faithless electors in this countryr's presidential election history. None of these electors have ever swung an election one way or the other, but the lack of accountability leaves room for dishonest foul-play if a close election came about.

The United States has struggled with low voter turnout rates in recent history in the past century. When compared to other developed countries of the global north, the United States is quite sheepishly low on the graph with around 55% of eligible voters participating in the most recent 2016 election (DeSilver, 2018). Australia embraces a compulsory voting system, which stimulates around 90% of the total eligible voter population to go to the polls every election. (DeSilver, 2018). The Winner-take-all system of the Electoral College severely degrades the political efficacy in our citizens due to the fact that the system does not actually value every citizen's vote equally. When you look at the number of electoral votes given to each state, states hold different amounts of power in their residents' votes. Less populated states like Wyoming, Vermont, and North Dakota get more representation per capita in the Electoral College due to their lower voter population to electoral vote ratio. All states are guaranteed three votes from two senators and at least one congressman or woman, which skews the weight of votes in the larger states (Petrocelli, 2017). More densely populated states like Florida, California, and Texas do get more electoral votes, but when comparing their votes to their population, their ratios show that they are in fact holding less power-per-vote than smaller populated states (Petrocelli, 2017).

As previously established, the weight of each ballot varies on a state-to-state basis; depending on the ratio of voter turnout populations and electoral votes, the disparity between the weight of votes can be graphed and calculated to play to a candidate's advantages. It is no secret that the candidates know and use this information to their advantage when

campaigning. According to FairVoter's data analysis through their online Microsoft Excel spreadsheet, two-thirds of the 2016 presidential campaign took place in only six states (National Popular Vote, 2018) From FairVoter's data spreadsheet it is also conclusive that a staggering 94% of all campaign events for this election happened in just twelve states. When you calculate the numbers for each candidate's campaign specifically, 96% of all Clinton campaign events took place in swing states, compared to a close 88% of all Trump campaign events that took place in swing states (FairVote, 2016). While critics of the Electoral College reform movement argue that the push for a national popular voting system would isolate much of Americans living outside of urban cities, the data clearly shows that an overwhelming bias is already taking place in our current system- and isolating almost all campaign events to these select battleground states. The Electoral College creates uneven values in American votes, and does not.

The Electoral College is what the two-party system was built on, and it is how the system continues to be upheld today. The Two-Party System is yet another binary that has been forcefully normalized into our political identity in the U. S. Throughout history, with exception to the short-lived era of good feelings where the government united under a single Republican party, America's government has been controlled by two parties at any given time. Since 1854, the two dominating parties have been the Democratic party and the Republican party. Red or blue, left-wing or right-wing, liberal or conservative- out of the vast array of political ideologies that exist in our day of modern politics, Americans have willingly boxed themselves in to a system where the only two parties of relevance not only offer a lack of

choice, but consequently separate, exclude, and polarize people from one another.

The complexities of our voting system are not only unnecessary and extremely outdated, but they are also a form of legal voter suppression, and is currently being upheld knowingly by our own government. When the Constitution was created, the Electoral College had its benefits for the time and size of our country. Today, with upwards of three-hundred and thirty million citizens, the nationally averaged out ratio of citizens to single electoral vote is approximately six-hundred eleven thousand people. A more direct method of voting is needed to adequately represent everyone who lives in the United States- therefore the proposal of an amendment to the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College and adopt a preferential popular vote system is in order for the United States. In every other elected office race in the United States, the winner is decided by who received the popular vote.

From our bicameral Congress and other federal government positions to the local city council races, the candidate who receives the popular vote wins the position. For the presidential election to differ from these election norms solely based on precedent and tradition is not fitting with the needs of America today. Rather, it is lazy of our government to choose to keep something that doesn't work over making the effort to take a course of action to make a positive change for the future of our system.

In a preferential popular voting system, voters would cast their ballots, numbering the candidates by their top to bottom preference in numerical

order. If none of the candidates receive a majority of the vote in the first round, the candidate pool would then be narrowed down, and the ballots would be recounted by numbered preference until eventually, a majority winner was found. This type of system would remedy the unequal voting values between states, as well as the lack of representation of many citizens, including the approximate four million citizens living in the U. S. Territories that don't get to vote at all with the Electoral College in place. A more direct method of voting upholds the expectations of equal representation mentioned in the Constitution; the only difference is that the system in which we represent our citizens would be better equipped to work for the population size we have grown to.

The Electoral College system was put in place at the time when the nation had just recently been founded, and its population was just shy of four million people. With a more direct system of voting in place, political participation will undoubtedly increase. When everyone's vote holds the same value no matter where you live, citizens will feel more empowered to use their voice and take political action. Voter turnout would predictably increase with this heightened sense of political efficacy. There would no longer be battleground states and safe states, which the names categorizing these states alone, in a subliminal way, tell residents to head to the polls or stay home. Conservatives living in historically blue states, and liberal-thinkers in traditionally red states would finally have a vote that holds weight. An even more astonishing realization would be that independents and third parties would now have a platform unlike ever before with the

abolishment of the two-party system; gaining support and spreading new political ideals would be easier than ever before.

The abolishment of this winner-take-all system would also unmute the votes of so many that have been silenced when even the slightest majority takes the lump sum of a state's electoral votes. No longer would states be considered swing states or safe states, because everyone's vote would count equally to one another. With that same notion, presidential campaigns would not be centered around certain areas or regions where more electoral votes were being held. Instead, installing a popular vote system would encourage all serious presidential candidates to spread their campaigns out across the country and U. S. territories, which would be reaching more of our population and connecting more of U. S. citizens to the election process. Too often in the presidential races of recent times, candidates campaigns are focused around where they can make the most impact: in these select swing states. This means that our presidential candidates purposely leave out areas of the country where there are dense concentrations of opposing political ideologies, which is blatant alienation of large populations of the country.

The United States of America was founded on the values of equality before the law and a representative government of the people, by the people, for the people. To keep up and progress in this ever-changing world, we must be open to adapting and reforming systems that don't work as well as originally thought. We must critique, question, and adjust when things no longer work as they once did. It is also crucial to note that our country was also founded on values our country does not uphold today, like slavery, and was phased

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out in the thirteenth amendment more than one-hundred and fifty years ago. The United States is not the same country today as it was during the founding of the Constitution, and suggesting that systems be kept in place because they have met bare-minimum standards that work for some members of society does not mean that is what is best for all of America. Change is the only guarantee in our world, so we must acknowledge the flaws in these imperfect systems, learn from these short-comings, and strive to create positive reform that will make our society better than before.