

Example of essay on how democratic is the united states presidential election sys...

[Politics](#), [President](#)



For more than 225 years, the American people have been governed by a federal democracy that has inspired many nations around the world to emulate this form of government with varying degrees of success. One of the reasons attributed to the stability of the American government is the way political power has been fragmented to be shared between the states and the federal government. Nevertheless, as successful as American democracy has been for the past two centuries, it is not without its problems. An aspect of major criticism has been the way the president of the United States is elected: instead of electing the president directly by popular vote as it is done in many democratic nations, on the evening of the presidential election, when voters cast their votes they are not voting directly for the presidential candidate of their choice, but for members of the Electoral College, a slate of electors in each state who have pledged their vote to the candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes. The Electoral College has always been under sharp criticism to the point that some Americans have questioned whether the system adequately serves democratic ideals.

Before passing judgment on the merits of the Electoral College, it is important to remember the context within which it was created. The Founding Fathers established the Electoral College because during the early years of the nation, citizens lacked adequate information about the presidential candidates and their views because it was difficult for candidates to convey their political platforms in national campaigns because transportation and communication between states were limited. These were some of the reasons why the Founding Fathers thought voters

would not be able to make informed choices, and that a small number of electors who could spare the time to become better informed about the national problems, would make a wiser choice of president on behalf of all Americans. 1

Critics of the Electoral College point out that today circumstances are entirely different, as candidates, assisted by modern means of transportation and organizational logistics can campaign in several states in a single day. Citizens have a vast array of mass media sources to keep them abreast of the issues presented by each presidential candidate, decreasing the need for the Electoral College. Ironically, it should also be pointed out that with all the information at their fingertips, many citizens may not be interested in accessing this information, let alone attempting to assess its significance, remaining just as uninformed as the voters of the nation's early years. Perhaps one way in which voters today are different from those of the early years is in their perception of the candidates. Today presidential candidates, as well as other government officials have become truly household personalities, arousing likes and dislikes among voters thanks to mass media communications. Consequently, voters want to feel that their individual votes truly count when it comes to electing their president. Herein lies one important reason why the Electoral College in the eyes of many Americans, fails to reflect the popular will in a number of important ways: 2 first, it may prevent the winner of the popular vote from winning the presidency because it unfairly favors states with smaller populations by assigning popular electoral votes reflecting a state's representation in Congress. This arrangement tends to over-represent voters from small states.

Consequently, candidates can win the presidency by scoring victories in many small states without earning the greatest number of votes. This mechanism nullifies many popular votes, and in the eyes of many citizens, this situation undermines a major tenet of democracy: the notion that every citizen's vote has equal value in the presidential election.

Perhaps the feature of the Electoral College most severely criticized is the winner-take-all mechanism by which a candidate who receives the greatest number of popular votes in a particular state receives all of the state's electoral votes instead of an amount based on a proportion of actual votes received. Critics of the Electoral College contend that under this system it is possible for a presidential candidate to win the popular vote across the country, but still lose the election as it happened in the 2000 election. One resulting consequence of the Electoral College mechanism is that it encourages presidential candidates to ignore certain states. This happens because all but two states assign all of the electors to the winner of the statewide vote. Therefore, candidates concentrate most of their efforts in the swing states, where the presidential election is expected to be close, ignoring those states that are clearly Democratic or Republican, and discouraging voter turnout as voters tend to perceive their vote as worthless in influencing the final election results.

There have been many proposals to abolish the Electoral College entirely or making some structural reforms to make it more democratic, regarding the popular vote in presidential elections. One possible reform is modifying the "winner-take-all" rule for awarding state electoral votes in US presidential elections: distributing each state's presidential votes by county so that if a

county votes for one candidate, the electorates representing that county should vote for that presidential candidate. Such modification would make presidential elections more democratic because it has the potential to turn a state that is currently Democratic or Republican safe ground into a battleground on an equal footing with swing states. Presidential candidates would find it in their own interest to visit such counties resulting in greater voter turnout which will be a better reflection of the popular will within each state.

For more than two hundred years the Electoral College has been remarkably successful in electing American presidents. While abolishing this institution would require a constitutional amendment and tremendous amount of work, perhaps a modification such as distributing electoral votes by county would strengthen the voting power of the people while mitigating some of the dissatisfaction with the current system.

Notes

1“ The Electoral College—Pros and Cons,” State University. com (2014).

Web, Thursday, 2 October, 2014. [http://www. stateuniversity.](http://www.stateuniversity.com/blog/permalink/The-Electoral-College-Pros-and-Cons.html)

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2William C. Kimberling, “ The Pro’s and Con’s of the Electoral College System, (2008), David Leip, Thursday, 2 October, 2014.

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