

# The flawed electoral college system

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The Flawed Electoral College System The Electoral College undermines the notion that every vote counts in the United States. One candidate loses; the other becomes the leader of the free world. How do we know which candidate is the victor? The Electoral College determines this. Whoever receives the most votes in a particular state wins the electoral votes for that state. The only exceptions are Maine and Nebraska. The size of the population determines the number of electoral votes for that state and each is represented by a person who casts the votes for that state. This system works when our fore fathers draw up the Constitution, but not in contemporary society. Congress creates amendments to the Constitution relatively frequently, but a 236 year old document determines something as important as the Presidency of the United States. Consider what has changed in this country since its founding. Early era Americans live in one of thirteen colonies. Plantation owners utilize slaves for their work. People not only vote on the President, but the Vice-President as well. As a result, the loser of the race usually becomes Vice-President, which also means they will be from different political parties. Only white men who own land " are created equal, " so that leaves the majority of the country unable to vote. The Constitution, as well as the country as a whole, begins because rich white men decide they prefer not paying taxes to England. Benefitting these wealthy Englishmen tremendously, the Electoral College is born. The United States takes many years to become what our forefathers originally declare in the Constitution. Reflecting these changes means overhauling the voting process. People say to me all the time, " My vote does not matter, so why bother? " In some states this is all too true. A Republican in Massachusetts

never sees his candidate get the electoral votes. On the other hand, if you are a Democrat you might as well stay home because the majority of Massachusetts' voters will do the work for you. Use that same logic in Mississippi, which has a Republican majority and a Democratic minority. Only Maine and Nebraska can split their electoral votes according to the percentage of popular votes each candidate obtains. Consequently, barring a boycott of Democratic voters in Massachusetts, Barack Obama will acquire the electoral in Massachusetts. Barring a boycott by Republicans in Mississippi, Mitt Romney will get those electoral votes. Having a competitive third party in the United States is virtually impossible as a result of this. We have independent voters in this country, as well as members of other parties, but with a winner take all system, how could a third party possibly grasp a majority? The Electoral College contributes to creating a two party government. A popular vote system makes room for another party to have a chance in making their voices heard. Although progress would be slow, there may come at a time when a third party because candidates know they must be on one side or another to get electoral votes. At least in recent history, states like Ohio and Florida, so-called battleground states, ultimately decide the election. With a candidate needing a majority of 270 electoral votes to win, these states become very important. Notice how no one ever hears about politicians campaigning in Connecticut or Oklahoma. These states are predominantly one party or the other, so their electoral votes are all but given to them. The swing states get more attention because they are the only ones where the electoral votes are up in the air, so those votes carry more weight. In a popular vote system every vote in every state is

significant. The nostalgia of the Electoral College pales in comparison to every vote making a difference. In addition, these voters turn out in large numbers and are extremely well informed. In other states this system generates a level of apathy that grows worse every election. The travesty of the 2000 Presidential election always weighs heavily on me when I think about the Electoral College. Even after the recount in Florida, Al Gore still received more than half a million more votes than George W. Bush, but Bush carried more states, as a result he became President (A. Vikram, D. Vikram, LA Times). This transpired two other times between the Civil War and present-day. It is completely ridiculous that most of the country votes for one person but another wins. Furthermore, it is frightening when I think of what were to happen if it were a tie. The electors get pushed aside; “ if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President”(Constitution of United States Twelfth Amendment, Archives). Choosing the President, in this case, belongs not to the ordinary voter, but to Congress. The Representatives can select whomever they please, even if that is not who their constituents want. I truly believe the outrage of voters, if this occurs, will be unprecedented. It appears ludicrous that this could happen, but it has and it will. No matter voter turnout, the states still have the same number of electoral votes. It is frightening that the President can be elected by only carrying the top eleven states, starting with California with fifty-five and going down from there. Having twenty percent of the country select the President is not a comforting feeling (The Electoral College

map, Archives). Alaska, Wyoming, and several other states receive only three electoral votes each. Why is someone's vote in California or Texas more important than someone's vote in Alaska and Wyoming? States with smaller populations become overlooked by candidates that are campaigning in larger states. Only three Presidents have been from states with relatively smaller amounts of electoral votes; Taylor, Pierce, and Clinton (A. Vikram, D. Vikram, LATimes). I understand when people believe that the system was put in place to give smaller states more say in selecting our government's highest office. Since that is what the drafter's of the Constitution stated. The notion is quaint, but the reality is much darker. At the time, the Constitution was written, the northern states' populations were larger than the south's giving them the advantage. So when it came to the Electoral College, the south added to their population by counting slaves as  $\frac{3}{5}$  of a white person. (A. Vikram, D. Vikram, LATimes) Since slavery is such a disgusting and painful part of our history, many advocates for the Electoral College tend to leave that out of their argument. In addition, it created no urgency to allow women to vote since they were already included in the population and would not add to the electoral votes for their state. When thought of in those terms, this traditional argument loses validity. This country was created with the idea that each state would have their own set of laws for their area but there would be a central government to oversee and enforce federal law. Representatives speak for each state and the President is the central figure to represent the country as a whole. Since the Civil War, the Federal Government's role has changed and so has the President's place within that government. The states become more united as time goes on and the

Federal Government plays much more of a role in the affairs of everyday citizens. Doesn't it make sense for every citizen to have a say in Federal Law and national elections, since the government has more of a role in their life? It is basic logic to me. The country becomes larger so the government grows and gains more power, for that reason; give the ordinary citizen a little more power in the voting booth. The outcome of the race gets announced before the eleven o'clock news sometimes. People love this, since most of the country is in a hurry for everything. So, yes, the vote counting would take longer, since they would have to count every person's vote. Every person's vote remains important though, and that is worth the wait. We can use standard voting equipment throughout all fifty states. We have amazing technology right now, so why not make the system fair for everyone. The major issue with a popular vote system appears to be; what do we do if no candidate receives a majority vote? As more political parties emerge, two likely scenarios seem clear. The first is simple, the candidate with the most votes wins. A childish notion, though it is, but also very effective. Since a standard majority appears extremely unlikely there is a second option. This second choice is a run-off election, appears more realistic. Anticipating the problem of people having to go back to the polls, adding a run-off section on the ballot solves this issue. Other countries, such as Australia, Ireland, and England use this type of voting system. When people finish voting for the President, they then choose between the two most popular candidates. In the case of no majority, the vote counters cut the field down to the two with the most votes, and then count the votes from the run-off section of the ballot to figure out the winner. This settles the dilemma of inconveniencing

citizens by making them go back to the polls to revote (Flunking, New York Times). Our leaders pride themselves on being elected by the people, but once the vote counters get to a majority they make the announcement and that state turns blue or red on the Electoral College map. Blue means that state's electoral votes go to the Democratic candidate, red means that state's electoral votes belong to the Republicans. Everyone watches intently to see what happens in Pennsylvania and New Hampshire and the other swing states, the only ones left to color in. Americans deserve more than two people to choose from for President. Yet another example of how the system is broken. If there is another election where a candidate wins the most popular votes but loses the election because the other candidate wins the Electoral College, people will begin to lose faith in our Democracy.

Democracy means everything in this country. From the staunch conservative in the Deep South to the bleeding-heart liberal in New York City, we all wear Democracy like a badge of honor. What happens when people begin to realize we do not really elect the highest ranked official in the country? The whole system begins to look a bit skewed. I vote in every election whether it be city, state, or federal. Who our leaders are and what they do is important to me. On the other hand, I know that when I go to vote on November sixth, I could stop skip right over voting for the President because Massachusetts is blue and that will not change. For example, in the 1972 election, Massachusetts was the only state to give its electoral votes to George McGovern rather than Richard Nixon. That is how far to the left we are as a state. My vote for senator, congressman, and the three questions matter more. I have been trained to vote by my parents at a very young age, and I

am taking my daughter out of school to come with me to vote. If I, as someone who follows politics and loves the political system, feel apathetic about voting for our nation's commander-in-chief, what chance do we have of changing someone's mind that has never voted or cared to vote in the past? Many people do not understand the archaic way in which we determine the President. Hearing the voice of someone in New York who votes for Mitt Romney, or someone in Alabama voting for Barack Obama, would make the difficulty of the transition to a one person one vote system, well worth it.