

# The electoral college an outdated system politics essay



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Every fourth calendar year the citizens of the United States participate in one of the greatest displays of Democracy in human history, the election of the President and Vice-President of the United States. However, it is not truly democracy. Instead, the democratic election of the President of the United States is tainted by the current use of the Electoral College. The Electoral College system of electing the President and Vice-President of the United States is an outdated system that needs to be replaced with a method that better represents the will of the American people.

In the budding days of the United States of America, the Founding Fathers faced a difficult problem, the election process for the President of the United States. There were numerous factors that needed to be taken into account by the Founding Fathers as they debated the optimal election process. The largest factor taken into account by the Founding Fathers was that the nation was comprised of thirteen states which had only recently joined together to create a singular government and were jealously guarding their individual rights and powers, making them apprehensive to any centralized government ideas. The United States also contained four million citizens whom were separated by thousands of miles of land which was scarcely connected by either transportation or communication. Furthermore, the founders believed that political parties were destructive and counter-productive, an idea borrowed from the British (Kimberling 1).

After considering these issues and proposing several options, the Founding Fathers developed the Electoral College which can trace its roots to the Catholic Church's College of Cardinals and the Roman Republic's Centurial Assembly (Kimberling 2). The Electoral College as defined by Article Two, <https://assignbuster.com/the-electoral-college-an-outdated-system-politics-essay/>

Section One of the Constitution, comprises of six points. First, each state is allotted Electors equal to the number of its U. S senators plus the number of its U. S Representatives. Second, the individual State legislatures are allowed discretion in choosing their electors with the constraint that members of Congress and other Federal Servants are prohibited from serving as Electors. Third, State's Electors must meet in their States rather than in a national meeting. Fourth, Electors are required to cast two votes for president, one of which had to be from a different state than the Elector. Fifth, the Candidate who obtains an absolute majority of the electoral votes becomes president with the runner-up becoming Vice-President. Finally, if no Candidate obtains an absolute majority than the U. S. House of Representatives would choose the president from among the top five. In this case, each state would be allotted only one vote. If a tie was reached in the House than the top two would be voted on by the Senate (Kimberling 3).

The Electoral College was both elaborate and appropriate at the time that it was created. However, after two hundred years and an amendment, the 12th (1804), the Electoral College has greatly changed. Currently, the election of the President of the United States and the Electoral College functions as follows. The number of each State's allotted Electors is equal to the number of State's Senators plus the number of the State's Representatives. At the beginning of an election, political parties in each State submit a list of individuals whom will act as the State's Electors if their candidate wins. Political parties then meet to nominate their presidential and vice presidential candidates, whom are then added to the ballot. On the Tuesday following the first Monday of November, the general populace of each State

then votes for the electors representing their presidential and vice-presidential choice. It is a Winner-Take-All System in nearly all States. In a Winner-Take-All System, whichever candidate gets the most votes gets all the Electors. The exceptions to the Winner-Take-All System are Kansas and Maine which allot two Electors based on popular vote and the rest to individual Congressional districts. The winning set of electors then goes on to represent the State in the Electoral College. On the Monday following the second Wednesday of December the State's Electors meet in their individual capitals and cast their votes for both president and vice president. The Electors still must use at least one of their votes on a candidate from outside their home State. All of the Electoral Votes are then opened by the President of the Senate on January 6th before the houses of Congress. Whichever candidate gains an absolute majority in the Electoral College is declared president. The same is true for the vice-president. If no candidate gets absolute majority for president the top three contenders are voted on in the House of Representatives which each State getting one vote. Similarly, if no vice-presidential candidate gets an absolute majority, the Senate chooses between the top two contenders. Finally, at noon on January 20th, the elected president and vice-president are sworn into office.

The Electoral College system is neither fair nor balanced. However, there are many proponents of the Electoral College. They claim that the Electoral College is the only feasible system for fairly electing the president of a nation as large and diverse as the United States. That is not a true statement. Instead, there are is a multitude of alternative ways that the election of the president and vice-president of the United States can occur.

The most commonly referred to alternative to the Electoral College is a simple direct majority election in which whoever gained absolute majority in the United States would become president. A simple direct majority vote is greatly beneficial because it better represents the will of the United States as a whole than The Electoral College. Under the Electoral College, the presidency has gone to the candidate with fewer popular votes in one out of every sixteen elections (National Popular Vote). The most noticeable of these cases occurred in the 1824 election between Andrew Jackson and John Q. Adams. Andrew Jackson obtained 60% of the popular vote and yet lost to John Q. Adams whom had gained the necessary electoral votes. Similarly, under the Electoral College, not everyone's vote is equal. National Popular Vote gives a fantastic example of this: "... Gore won five electoral votes by carrying New Mexico by 365 popular votes in the 2000 presidential election, whereas Bush won five electoral votes by carrying Utah by 312, 043 popular votes-an 855-to-1 disparity in the importance of a vote"(National Popular Vote). It is clear that a simple direct majority vote is a far better representation of the will of the American people than the currently implemented Electoral College.

There are a multitude of problems with implementing a simple direct majority election. Perhaps the greatest of these problems is the increased likelihood and affiliated problems of a candidate not being able to gain the majority vote (over 50%) that would be associated with a direct majority election. There are however many solutions to this potential problem. The most promising of these solutions is Direct Election with Instant Runoff Voting which is presented by Fair Vote. Under an Instant Runoff Voting

system, each voter would rank their presidential preferences versus the standard choosing of only one candidate.

National Popular Vote is a bill that suggests each State simply