



Why the Electoral College is Important

Every four years, the United States has an election to pick a new president. While people do vote in a general election, the president is picked by a group called the Electoral College. There are 538 people, called electors, in the Electoral College. That's one for every Representative and Senator in each state. A presidential candidate needs at least 270 electoral votes to win. When you vote for president, you are picking electors who will vote for your candidate later.

*In the video "Why the Electoral College is Important," you heard **three reasons** to support the Electoral College. These were:*

1. It protects smaller states: The Electoral College was created to give each state a voice in choosing who leads the federal government. This ensures that states with smaller populations are able to contribute to presidential elections. The political influence and rights of the people living in small states are therefore protected.

2. It fights tyranny: The Electoral College prevents tyranny over people who are in the minority. The majority of an electorate places its own interests above those in the minority. The Electoral College prevents the tyranny of the majority by ensuring that every state has a say in choosing the president.

3. It assures multi-party rule: This system benefits candidates who seek broad-based support. It increases consensus and reduces political turmoil. While imperfect, the Electoral College helps to assure that one-party rule does not occur in the US.

*The Electoral College is a controversial aspect of the US electoral system. Now, let's look at **three reasons** against using the Electoral College:*

1. May not represent the majority: The most common argument against the Electoral College is that it may not reflect the will of the American people. Under this system it is possible to elect a minority president – that is, one who does not receive the majority of votes from the public.

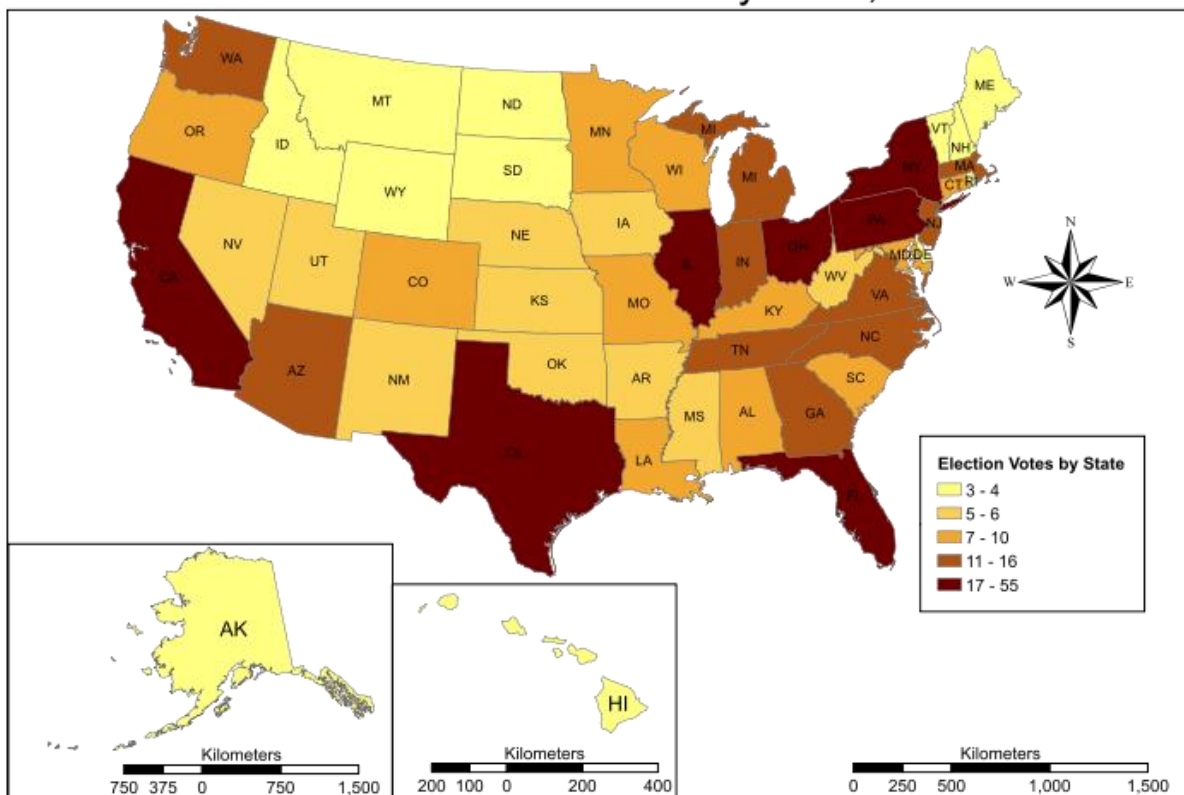


Some say a national popular vote would be a democratic method of deciding who wins the Oval Office. This would involve each individual vote counting toward the election, with the winner being the candidate who receives the most votes. It is argued that this process would better represent the true will of the American voters.

2. Limits choices: Most presidential candidates belong to either the Republican or Democratic Parties. Some voters may wish to support alternative parties like the Libertarians or the Greens, but these smaller parties are unlikely to win any Electoral College votes. This is because the most popular party in each state usually takes all the electoral votes for that state. In this way, the Electoral College system supports the two major parties and quashes other choices.

3. Discourages voter turnout: Some argue the Electoral College discourages people from voting because the state gets the same number of electoral votes, no matter how many individuals turn up at the polls.

Presidential Election Votes by State, 2012



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Projection: USA Contiguous Lambert Conformal Conic for Continental USA, Alaska Albers Equal Area Conic for Alaska, Hawaii Albers Equal Area Conic for Hawaii.
Standard Parallels: 33 N and 45 N for Continental USA, 55 N and 65 N for Alaska, 08 N and 18 N for Hawaii
Central Meridian: 96 W for Continental USA, 154 W for Alaska and 157 W for Hawaii.