

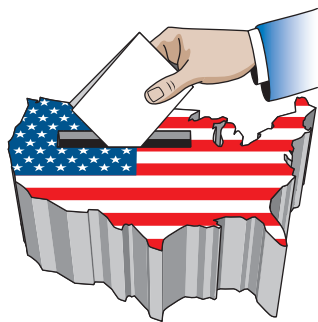
Vote Missouri!

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE



Who Really Elects the President?

Thank the Framers of the Constitution for a complicated answer to this question. At the Constitutional Convention of 1787, much debate swirled around who was best suited to elect the president. The Framers considered several options, including letting the state legislatures or the U.S. Congress elect the president. The least popular idea was direct election by the people because



they felt that the people were not educated enough to make such an important decision. The compromise solution for choosing the president was a mixture of direct election by the people *and* by an elected body—the Electoral College.

The Electoral College is not a school. It is a group of people, called electors, who vote for the president and vice president of the United States. Article II, Section 1 of the United States Constitution says that the number of electors a state may have equals the number of representatives and senators a state has in the U.S. Congress. For example, Missouri has eight representatives and two senators; so Missouri has 10 electors. Since the number of representatives a state has is based on population, the states with the most people have the most electoral votes—California (55), Texas (38), Florida (29) and New York (29). On the other hand, states with fewer people like Wyoming, Montana, Alaska, North and South Dakota only have three votes.

Each state gets to decide how to choose its electors. Missouri law (Section 115.399) says that at least 10 weeks before the presidential election, each party that has candidates for president and vice president on the ballot will choose 10 electors. Missouri is a winner-take-all state, so whichever party's candidate has the most popular votes in Missouri will be the party whose electors will cast their votes in the Electoral College. Then Congress will choose a date in December for all of the states' electors to gather in their own state capital cities and cast their votes for president and vice president. In Missouri, the secretary of state will seal the votes and send them to Congress to be counted.

MISSOURI POLITICAL PARTIES:

Missouri Constitution Party—www.constitutionpartymo.org
Missouri Democratic Party—www.missouridems.org
Missouri Republican Party—www.mogop.org
Missouri Libertarian Party—www.lpmo.org

Interesting Facts:

1. A candidate needs 270 of the 538 electoral votes to be elected president. If there is a tie or if no candidate gets 270 votes, the U.S. House of Representatives chooses the president. (This was how John Quincy Adams was elected in 1824.)
2. Three times in our history the president who won the electoral vote did NOT win the popular vote: 1876 – Rutherford B. Hayes; 1888 – Benjamin Harrison; 2000 – George W. Bush.
3. Missouri is one of 23 states that does not require its electors to swear they will vote for the presidential candidate that won the state's popular vote.

LEARNING EXTENSIONS

1. For all grade levels, go to <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/index.html> for links to lesson plans on the Electoral College.
2. Grades 5-8: ACTIVITY #1—Redraw the map of the United States as it would look if physical size equaled Electoral College votes. (Rhode Island will be larger than Alaska!) Go to www.270towin.com for a map showing all of the states with the number of electoral votes they have.

ACTIVITY #2—Assume the role of a delegate to a 2012 constitutional convention. Would you keep the Electoral College? Why or why not? Consider if today's voter is more informed than someone in 1787.

3. Grades 9-12: ACTIVITY #1—Compare the 2008 Electoral College Map with the 2012 one and note what states have gained and what states have lost electoral votes. How do you think this will affect the 2012 presidential campaign?

ACTIVITY #2—Discuss the pros and cons of amending the Constitution to allow for the direct election of the president. Consider how such an amendment would impact less populated states.

ACTIVITY #3—Discuss how the Electoral College impacts where the candidates campaign.

ACTIVITY #4—Discuss how multiple candidates could impact the Electoral College votes.

ACTIVITY #5—Discuss how the Electoral College is consistent with the concept of federalism. Research how other states choose electors and allot their electoral votes. (Not all states are winner-take-all.)

MISSOURI STANDARDS ALIGNMENT:

GLE—SS3-A1, C, CA2, 3, 1.6 (for grades K-8)
CLE—SS2C, CA 2, 3, 1.6 (for grades 9-12)

