

20 ELECTION 20 EXPERIENCE

DISCUSSION SERIES

WEEK 1 – SEPTEMBER 9, 2020

THEELECTORAL COLLEGEINITHE 21ST CENTURY

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The Electoral College: The pathway to the presidency



"Electoral College?"

- Not an educational institution.
- Not the "electrical" college, per Homer Simpson.
- "Electors" appointed by their state governments to represent the voting outcomes in their home states.
- State electors gather in December to vote; Congress then certifies election in early January.



Origins of the Electoral College



- U.S. Constitution
- Article II, section 1:

"Each state shall appoint, in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole number of Senators and Representatives, to which the state may be entitled to in Congress."

The Arithmetic of the Electoral College



538 electors/270 votes needed to win the presidency

How do we get to 538 electors

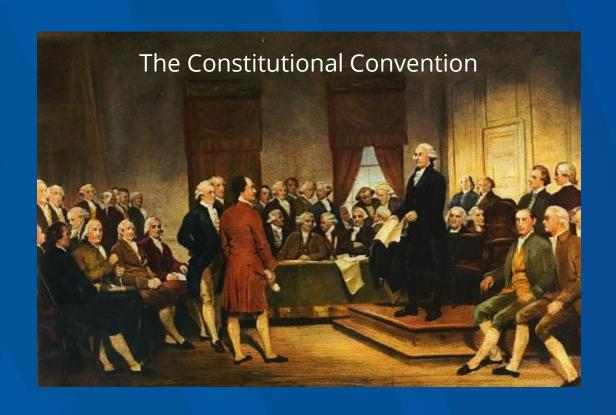
100 Senators across the 50 states

- + 435 voting members of the House of Representatives
 - + 3 electoral votes for the District of Columbia, but not for other territories. (per 23rd amendment to the Constitution)

538 electors

The majority of states are "winner take all," except Nebraska and Maine

Why was the Electoral College created?



- "We the People"

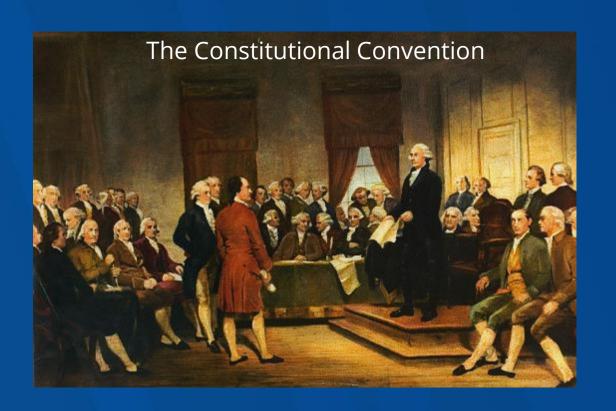
 U.S.
 government derives its
 authority from its citizens.
- Who are qualified to be "the people"?
- Republics are rare and risky in the age of monarchy.
- Fear of mob rule.
 Democracy akin to anarchy.

Electoral College: Added Safeguard

 No precedence for electing a national leader.

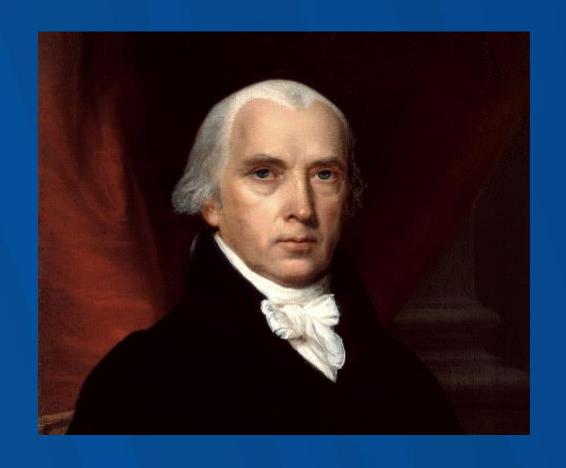
 Voters in the states will choose local "favorite sons."

 Need a body with a "national" perspective.



The Undemocratic Constitution, 1789

- No direct election of president.
- U.S. Senate, until 20th century, appointed by state legislatures.
- Courts, appointed by executive and approved by U.S. Senate.
- House of Representatives
 – the
 only part of the government
 directly elected.



Reasons for an Electoral College

- Protect and promote republican government.
- Limit the risk of the "popular" will or "mob rule."
- "Democracy" as a bad word.
- "Check" the popular presidential vote.



How does the Electoral College work?

- •Each state has 2 Senators, plus U.S. representatives based on population.
- •Each congressional district has 500,000 people.
- •Population is determined by the U.S. Census. (Get counted: My2020census.gov)



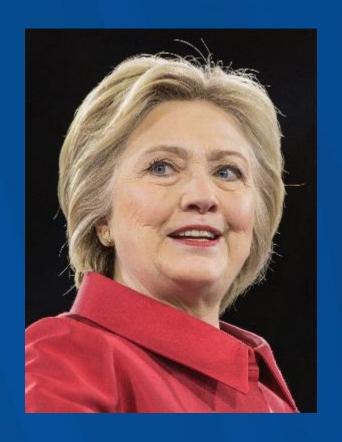
Electoral College Map, 2020

- •538 electors; 270 needed to win.
- •Not really a "national" election. Campaigns have to develop a stateby-state strategy.
- •Many large states and regions cancel each other out.
- •Election decided in "battleground states," i.e. Wisconsin, Florida, North Carolina, etc.



Problems with the Electoral College





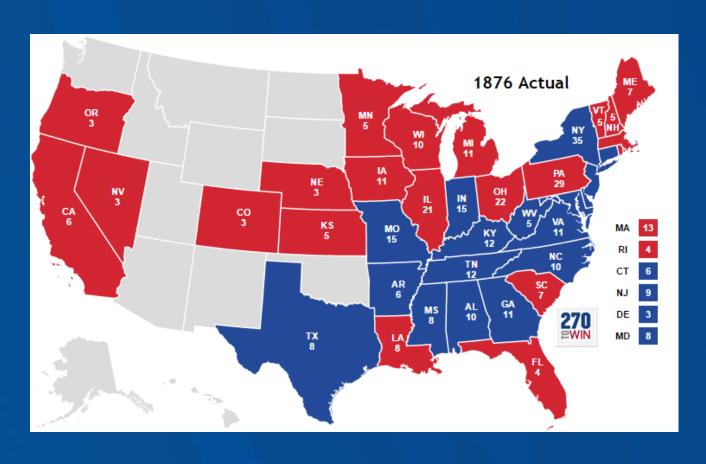
1876 Presidential Election: Hayes vs. Tilden

Rutherford B. Hayes (R)

4,036,298 popular votes 185 electoral votes

Samuel J. Tilden (D)

4,300,590 popular votes 184 electoral votes



2000 Presidential Election

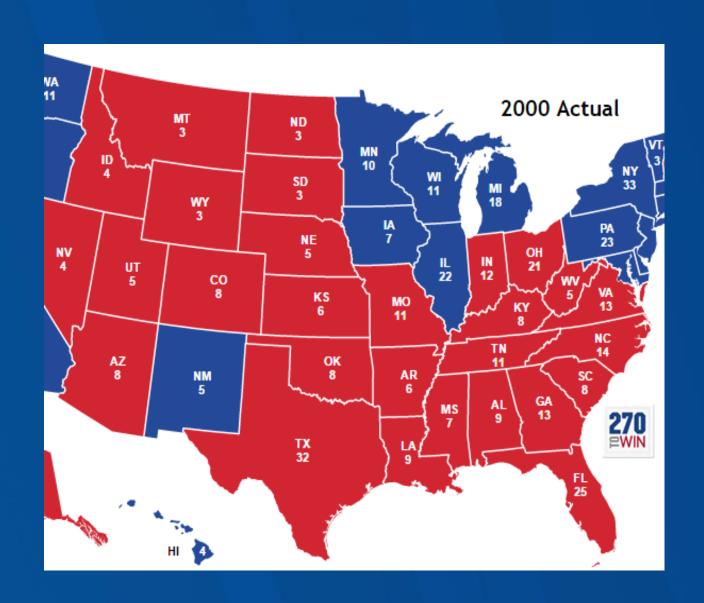
George W. Bush (R)

50,456,062 popular votes 271 electoral votes

Albert Gore (D)

50,996,582 popular votes 266 electoral votes.

(Florida's 25 votes awarded in *Bush vs. Gore*)



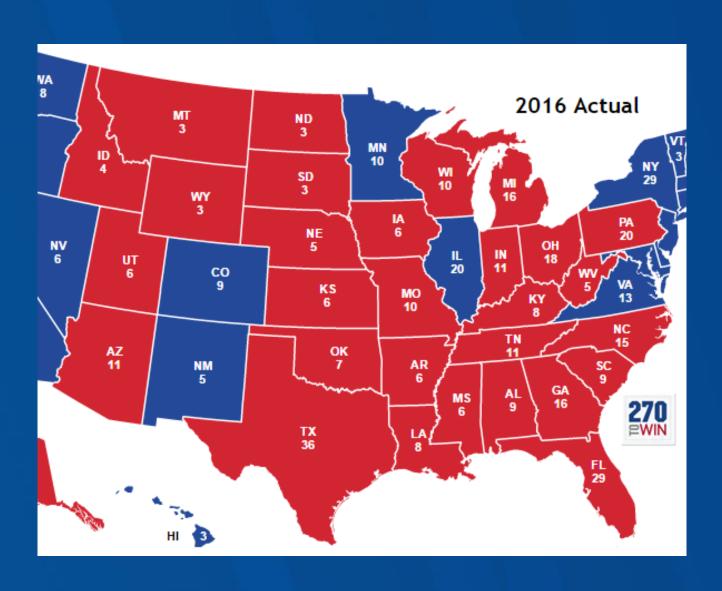
2016 Presidential Election

Donald Trump (R)

62,980,160 popular votes 304 electoral votes

Hillary Clinton (D)

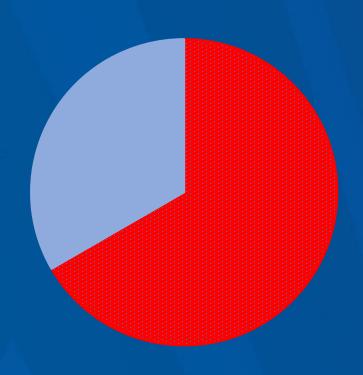
65,845,063 popular votes 227 electoral votes



Winning the presidency, and losing the electors: why?

- Each state gets 2 electoral votes, regardless of its population, because each has 2 U.S. Senators.
- Part of "Connecticut Compromise" to balance power between large and small states.
- Flattens popular vote, essentially giving small states an extra
 1 million people in voting clout.

Reforming the Electoral College?



- Not easy, but there have been proposals.
- Two-thirds of the states would need to pass a Constitutional amendment (i.e. 38 out of 50)
- Two-thirds of both House of Congress (i.e. 67 Senators and 291 representatives, would also have to support such an amendment)

Predicting the 2020 Electoral College Results

Interactive Maps all over the Internet:

- https://www.cnn.com/election/2020/electoral-collegeinteractive-maps
- https://cookpolitical.com/sites/default/files/2020-07/EC%20Ratings.072320.2.pdf?
- https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/elections/election-states-biden-trump.html?action=click&pgtype=Article&state=default&module=styln-elections-2020®ion=TOP_BANNER&context=storylines_menu

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS