

WHO ELECTS THE PRESIDENT? UNDERSTANDING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

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Introduction:

The election of 2000 marked the third time since the Civil War that the presidential candidate who won the popular vote did not win the electoral vote and therefore did not become President. Despite the discussion prompted by this controversial election, many citizens still do not fully understand how the electoral college functions. This three-part lesson helps students understand how the electoral college works and why the Founders included this structure in the Constitution, involves them in analyzing data from the past four Presidential elections, and engages them in a simulated commission considering reforms of the electoral college.

Objectives: At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain how the electoral college functions.
- List reasons why the Founders created the electoral college.
- Analyze recent data on popular and electoral votes.
- Describe potential problems with the electoral college and reforms designed to address those problems.
- Take and defend a position on the future of the electoral college.

Materials:

You will need enough copies of the “**Electoral College Background**” handouts and the “**Election Data**” handouts for one-fourth of the students to have each version (A-D of each set of handouts). You will also need copies of the “**Analyzing Election Data**” and “**Should We Replace the Electoral College?**” handouts for all students. Students will need red, blue, and black markers, pencils, or pens; they may find calculators useful as well. If your students are not able to identify all of the states on a map, make sure a large, well-labeled map is displayed in the room for their reference in Part II of the lesson.

Procedure:

Part I: Background on the Electoral College: A Jigsaw

1. Open the lesson with a K-W-L activity on the electoral college, the group that actually elects the president. Ask students: What do you **K**now about the electoral college? Write their answers on the board or a piece of posting paper. Tell them

they will have a chance to check the accuracy of the posted items in this lesson. Next, ask:

What do you want to know about the electoral college? That is, what questions do you have about the electoral college? Again, record their answers where they can be saved throughout the lesson. Tell students that they should look for answers to these questions as they proceed through the lesson. As they learn about the electoral college, they should record the information on a third piece of paper or section of the board, which you should label “What We Learned.”

2. Divide the class into four groups. Give each group one version of the “**Electoral College Background**” handout. Each group is to read their handout and, as a group, identify three important pieces of information that they will teach to classmates.
3. Jigsaw the class into groups of four, with each group containing one representative from each of the four groups in Step 2 above. The task in the new groups is for each student to teach their group members the important pieces of information from their reading.
4. Conduct a class discussion of what the students learned in the jigsaw activity. Such questions as the following can be used to guide discussion:
 - What reasons did the Founders have for creating the electoral college? Do you think those reasons apply today?
 - How are electors selected? Do you think this is a good way to select electors? Why or why not?
 - What laws must electors follow? Would you try to place greater restrictions on electors? If so, what would they be?
 - How are the electoral votes for most states awarded? Who decides how the votes are awarded?

Part II: Analyzing Election Data

1. Tell students that they are going to have a chance to analyze some voting data. When they first look at the table you will be giving them, it may look intimidating because it is so full of numbers. They should remember that every number represents people, people who are voting for the candidate they support, the person they believe will do the best job as President. So students should try to have fun with the numbers and see what they can learn.
2. Give each of the four groups from Part I of the lesson one version of the “Election Data” handout. Each version provides state-by-state data for one recent presidential election—1992, 1996, 2000, and 2004. Go over the layout of the tables so students will understand the information shown. The numbers in the columns headed with a candidate’s name represent the popular votes in a state; the percentage of the popular vote in that state is indicated in parentheses. If the popular vote is in bold (darker) type, that means the candidate won that state and received the electoral votes shown in the column to the far right.

3. The groups will specialize in the election for which they have data, but rather than working as an entire group, students should work on the first part of the activity in pairs. Distribute the “Analyzing Election Data” handout and tell students to use this handout as a framework for analyzing the data. Allow time for students to work on questions 1-7.
4. Next, create groups of eight, comprised of one pair representing each election year. In these larger groups, students should compare the data, focusing particularly on the maps they created. Questions 8-10 provide a framework for the comparison.
5. Conduct a class discussion of what students learned by analyzing the data. Through the discussion, help students understand the following ideas:
 - Thinking about blue and red states (the winner-take-all electoral college system) may mask the closeness of an election and cause us not to think about the people in a state who do not vote with the majority. It may also cause candidates to ignore some states as they are campaigning.
 - As seen in the 2000 election, the electoral college system does give small states a voice (or, from the opposite perspective, gives them more power relative to their population than large states). This does not mean that the large states are not important—the winners in all four of these elections carried at least some of the large states—they just do not have the proportionate influence their population might suggest they should have.
 - A number of states have tended to vote consistently for one party or the other over the past four elections. Candidates are less likely to pay attention to these states because they are counting them as already won or lost; additional votes don’t matter with the electoral college. The swing states are the focus of the most campaign attention (which may be an advantage or disadvantage to those states, depending on your view).
 - While the winners in all four of these elections had support from all four of the quadrants used as rough regions in this lesson, someone could win either the popular vote or electoral vote with support in only two (if one of those regions is the northeast quadrant) or three regions. Because population is not distributed equally, neither method would appear to ensure that all regions will be attended to.

Part III: Simulated Commission: Should We Replace the Electoral College?

1. Have the students remain in or return to their groups. Explain that the students are going to be acting as a presidential commission. A commission is a group appointed to study an issue and make recommendations about it. Their commission is going to be making recommendations about the electoral college.
2. Distribute the “**Should We Replace the Electoral College?**” handout and go over the directions with students. Groups are to complete three steps: (a) read about and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the electoral college, (b)

read about and discuss options they might recommend to the President, and (c) choose one option and prepare to give the reasons for their choice. Remind students to use what they have learned in the first two parts of this lesson in their discussions and decision-making.

Note: If your students have a good understanding of the electoral college, you may want to assign each group to represent a particular interest—large states, small states, the two major political parties, and third parties, for example. Alternatively, students could be assigned to represent specific states. Two final votes might be taken—one in which each commission member gets one vote and one in which they get the number of electoral votes held by their assigned states.

3. After groups have completed the assigned tasks, ask which groups favored Option 1. Ask them for their reasons. Ask others who rejected this option why they did. Repeat this process for each option.
4. Conclude by holding a class vote on the options.

Extension:

1. Have students return to the information and questions posted during the K-W-L activity. What items have they been able to confirm or disprove in this lesson? What questions have they answered? Are there any questions that they have not answered? Encourage students to research the answers to any unanswered questions.
2. Students could collect articles, editorials, maps, charts, political cartoons, and other materials related to the electoral college. How do these materials expand their understanding of the electoral college? Can the students find any misinformation in the press?

Resource Person:

If you are able to locate someone who has served as an elector, you could invite that person to class to discuss what serving as an elector involved. Officials from the two major political parties might also be invited to class to discuss their views on the electoral college.

Electoral College Background (Version A)

Why Did the Founders Create the Electoral College?

One of the major reasons for creating the electoral college process was lack of confidence in the voters. The Founders did not think voters across the country (even though the country was much smaller at the time) would have enough information to vote intelligently in a national election.

The electoral college was also seen as reflecting the system of federalism. It gave an important role to the states. Some scholars argue that the electoral college was created to give small states a voice in the election. Others say the electoral college actually helped slave states. Since each slave was counted as three-fifths of a person in establishing a state's population, white male voters in the slave states had a "louder" voice than voters in free states.

Has the Electoral College Been Changed During U.S. History?

A constitutional amendment (Amendment XII) was passed after the troubled election of 1800. The Founders did not provide for the development of political parties. Thus, the Constitution called for each elector to vote for two candidates. The candidate receiving a majority of the electoral votes would become President. The candidate receiving the second highest number of electoral votes would become Vice President. Political parties developed very rapidly, however, and candidates ran as party slates for President and Vice President.

In 1800, Thomas Jefferson was the Democratic-Republican party's nominee for president. Aaron Burr was its nominee for Vice-President. Democratic-Republican electors voted for the two candidates—and they ended up tied. The election was thrown into the House of Representatives. There, it took 36 ballots to resolve the issue and elect Jefferson President. Amendment XII provided that electors would cast separate votes for President and Vice President, preventing the problem of 1800 from happening again.

How Could the Electoral College Be Changed?

Abolishing the electoral college or making a change that would apply to all states would require a constitutional amendment. Article V of the Constitution describes how the Constitution can be amended. There are two ways for amendments to be proposed. Congress can propose an amendment by a two-thirds vote of both houses. Two-thirds of the state legislatures can call for a convention to propose amendments. There are also two ways for amendments to be adopted. One is by a vote of three-fourths of the state legislatures. The other is by conventions in three-fourths of the states. It is not easy to pass a constitutional amendment!

Some other reforms could be made at the state level. That would not be easy, either. All the states would need to act for a reform to be adopted nationally.

Electoral College Background (Version B)

What Does an Elector Actually Do?

In each state, the electors for the candidate who won the popular vote meet on the Monday following the second Wednesday of December. They meet in their state capital and cast their electoral votes. One vote is cast for President and one for Vice-President. At least one of their votes must be for someone from outside their state. This provision was designed to keep electors from voting for “favorite sons”—candidates from their home states.

Must Electors Vote for the Candidate Who Won Their State’s Popular Vote?

The Constitution does not say that electors must vote according to the results of the popular vote. However, 26 states and the District of Columbia have laws “binding” electors to vote for the candidate who won the state’s popular vote. Some state political parties also have rules requiring electors to pledge to support the party’s nominee. The Supreme Court has held that a party can require such a pledge. The Court has not ruled on state laws binding electors to vote according to the state’s election results.

Most electors do vote for their state’s winner—more than 99 percent over the course of U.S. history. However, so-called “faithless” electors do pop up from time to time. In 2000, an elector for the District of Columbia cast a blank ballot, for example. In 1988, a West Virginia elector voted for the vice-presidential candidate, Lloyd Bentsen, for President.

What Happens After the Electors Cast Their Votes?

The electoral votes are sealed and sent to the President of the Senate. On January 6, he opens and reads them before both houses of Congress. A candidate must receive a majority (one over half) to be declared President. If no one obtains a majority, the U.S. House of Representatives selects the President from the top three contenders. Each state gets one vote. A majority is required to elect. The elections of 1800 and 1824 were decided in the House of Representatives.

If no one receives a majority of electoral votes for Vice-President, the Senate makes the choice from among the top two contenders for that office.

At noon on January 20, the President and Vice-President are sworn in.

Electoral College Background (Version C)

Where in the Constitution Is the Electoral College Described?

The term *electoral college* is not used in the Constitution. That term seems to have come into use in the early 1800s.

Article II, Section 1 of the Constitution does refer to electors. It describes their role and the process by which they vote and the votes are counted. Amendment XII, ratified on June 15, 1804, makes changes to the Constitution's original provisions regarding the electors.

Who Selects the Electors?

The Constitution says it is up to the state legislatures to decide how electors will be chosen. The process for selecting electors therefore varies somewhat from state to state. However, the political parties usually pick the electors. They may be selected at a state convention, or the party leaders may pick them. Being picked as an elector is often a "thank you" for working hard for the party. Third-party or independent candidates usually select their electors themselves.

In the nation's early years, state legislatures picked the electors themselves. In some states, they picked electors without having a popular vote for president. South Carolina was the last state to do this. No state has done it since the Civil War.

In every state, there is a slate of electors for each candidate appearing on the ballot. When citizens vote, they are actually choosing which electors will get to cast their votes in the electoral college. In the past, the electors' names appeared on the ballot below the names of the candidates. In most states today, a short ballot is used. On the short ballot, the electors' names do not appear at all. In some states, the ballot may say "Electors for" near the names of the presidential candidates. In other states, the electors are not mentioned.

Who Can Be an Elector?

Article II, Section 1, Clause 2 of the Constitution says that the following people cannot serve as electors: U.S. Senators, U.S. Representatives, or any "person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States." The Fourteenth Amendment says that State officials who have engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the United States or given aid and comfort to its enemies cannot serve as electors. This provision was designed to keep Confederate officials from serving as electors after the Civil War.

Electoral College Background (Version D)

How Many Electoral Votes Does Each State Have?

Each state and the District of Columbia gets one electoral vote for each of its U.S. Senators and Representatives. For example, Illinois has 21 electoral votes (19 representatives + 2 Senators). Since every state has 2 Senators no matter how many people it has, the smaller states have more electoral votes per person in the state than the larger states do. For example, California, the largest state in terms of population, has 54 electors, each of whom represents 615,848 people. Wyoming, which is the smallest state in terms of population, has 3 electors, each of whom represents only 164,594 people.

The number of electoral votes can change after the census, or count of people, which is taken in years ending with 0. After the census, the 435 members of the House of Representatives are reapportioned among the states. If a state has gained population, it may gain representatives. If a state has lost population, it may lose representatives. As a state loses or gains representatives, it loses or gains electoral votes. For example, Illinois lost two representatives following the 1990 census and lost another after the 2000 census.

How Are the Electoral Votes for a State Awarded?

In 48 states and the District of Columbia, electoral votes are awarded on a winner-take-all basis. The person who gets the most votes in the state wins all of the state's electoral votes.

Maine and Nebraska award their votes differently. The candidate who gets the most votes in each U.S. House of Representatives district wins the electoral vote for that district. The remaining two electoral votes go to the overall state winner. In practice, the electoral votes of these states have not been split—the candidate who won the state won in every district.

How Can a Candidate Lose the Popular Vote but Win the Electoral Vote?

Because almost all states award their electoral votes using a winner-take-all method, a candidate can lose the popular vote but win the electoral vote. This happened in 1876, 1888, and 2000. To understand how this happened, let's look more closely at the 2000 election results. Al Gore, the Democratic candidate, won only 20 states, but had large margins of victory in some of these states. However, those "extra" popular votes did Gore no good in terms of the electoral college. George Bush won 30 states, including many smaller states, which have more electoral votes per person than larger states. In the end, those small-state electoral votes—along with such large states as Texas and Florida—put Bush over the "top."

If this is confusing, think about it in these simplified terms. Imagine Gore won 20 states by an average margin of 200 votes each. Bush won 30 states by an average margin of 100 votes each. In the popular vote, Gore would be ahead by 1000 votes—but Bush would still win with the electoral votes of the 30 states he carried.

Election Data (Version A)
1992

Major Presidential Candidates: William Jefferson Clinton, George Herbert Walker Bush, and vs. H. Ross Perot

State	Clinton Popular Vote	Bush Popular Vote	Perot Popular Vote	Electoral Votes
Alabama	690,080 (40.9%)	804,283 (47.6%)	183,109 (10.8%)	9
Alaska	690,080 (40.9%)	804,283 (47.6%)	183,109 (10.8%)	3
Arizona	543,050 (36.5%)	572,086 (38.5%)	353,741 (23.8%)	8
Arkansas	505,823 (53.2%)	337,324 (35.5%)	99,132 (10.4%)	6
California	5,121,325 (46.0%)	3,630,574 (32.6%)	2,296,006 (20.6%)	54
Colorado	629,681 (40.1%)	562,850 (35.9%)	336,010 (23.3%)	8
Connecticut	682,318 (42.2%)	578,313 (35.8%)	348,771 (21.6%)	8
Delaware	126,054 (43.5%)	102,313 (35.3%)	59,213 (20.4%)	3
Dist. Of Columbia	192,619 (84.6%)	20,619 (9.1%)	9,681 (4.3%)	3
Florida	2,072,698 (39.0%)	2,173,310 (40.9%)	1,053,067 (19.8%)	25
Georgia	1,008,966 (43.5%)	995,252 (42.9%)	309,657 (13.3%)	13
Hawaii	179,310 (48.1%)	136,822 (36.7%)	53,003 (14.2%)	4
Idaho	137,013 (28.4%)	202,645 (42.0%)	130,395 (27.0%)	4
Illinois	2,453,350 (48.6%)	1,734,096 (34.3%)	840,515 (16.6%)	22
Indiana	848,420 (36.8%)	989,375 (42.9%)	455,934 (19.8%)	12
Iowa	586,353 (43.3%)	504,891 (37.3%)	253,468 (18.7%)	7
Kansas	390,434 (33.7%)	449,951 (38.9%)	312,358 (27.0%)	6
Kentucky	665,104 (44.6%)	617,178 (41.3%)	203,944 (13.7%)	8
Louisiana	815,971 (45.6%)	733,386 (41.0%)	211,478 (11.8%)	9
Maine	263,420 (38.8%)	206,504 (30.4%)	206,820 (30.4%)	4
Maryland	988,571 (49.8%)	707,094 (35.6%)	281,414 (14.2%)	10
Massachusetts	1,318,639 (47.5%)	805,039 (29.0%)	630,731 (22.7%)	12
Michigan	1,871,182 (43.8%)	1,554,940 (36.4%)	824,813 (19.3%)	18
Minnesota	1,020,997 (43.5%)	747,841 (31.9%)	562,506 (24.0%)	10
Mississippi	400,258 (40.8%)	487,793 (49.7%)	85,626 (8.7%)	7
Missouri	1,053,873 (44.1%)	811,159 (33.9%)	518,741 (21.7%)	11
Montana	154,507 (37.6%)	144,207 (35.1%)	107,225 (26.1%)	3
Nebraska	216,864 (29.4%)	343,678 (46.6%)	174,104 (23.6%)	5
Nevada	189,148 (37.4%)	175,828 (34.7%)	132,580 (26.2%)	4
New Hampshire	209,040 (38.9%)	202,484 (37.7%)	121,337 (22.6%)	4
New Jersey	1,436,206 (43.0%)	1,356,865 (40.6%)	521,829 (15.6%)	15
New Mexico	261,617 (45.9%)	212,824 (37.3%)	91,895 (16.1%)	5
New York	3,346,894 (47.3%)	2,041,690 (28.8%)	1,090,721 (15.4%)	33
N. Carolina	1,114,042 (42.7%)	1,134,664 (43.4%)	357,864 (13.7%)	14
N. Dakota	99,168 (32.2%)	136,244 (44.2%)	71,084 (23.1%)	3
Ohio	1,984,942 (40.2%)	1,894,310 (38.3%)	1,036,426 (21.0%)	21
Oklahoma	473,066 (34.0%)	592,929 (42.6%)	319,878 (23.0%)	8
Oregon	621,314 (42.5%)	475,757 (32.5%)	354,091 (24.2%)	7
Pennsylvania	2,239,164 (45.1%)	1,791,841 (36.1%)	902,667 (18.2%)	23
Rhode Island	213,299 (47.0%)	131,601 (29.0%)	105,045 (23.2%)	4
S. Carolina	525,514 (42.8%)	577,507 (47.0%)	119,257 (9.7%)	8
S. Dakota	124,888 (37.1%)	136,718 (40.7%)	73,295 (21.8%)	3
Tennessee	933,521 (47.1%)	841,300 (42.4%)	199,968 (10.1%)	11
Texas	2,281,815 (37.1%)	2,496,071 (40.6%)	1,354,781 (22.0%)	32
Utah	183,429 (24.7%)	322,632 (43.4%)	203,400 (27.3%)	5
Vermont	133,592 (46.1%)	88,122 (30.4%)	65,991 (22.8%)	3
Virginia	1,038,650 (40.6%)	1,150,517 (45.0%)	348,639 (13.6%)	13
Washington	993,037 (43.4%)	731,234 (32.0%)	541,780 (23.7%)	11
West Virginia	331,001 (48.4%)	241,974 (35.4%)	108,829 (15.9%)	5
Wisconsin	1,041,066 (41.1%)	930,855 (36.8%)	544,479 (21.5%)	11
Wyoming	68,160 (34.1%)	79,347 (39.7%)	51,263 (25.6%)	3
TOTALS	44,909,326 (43.0%)	39,103,882 (37.4%)	19,741,657 (18.9%)	
ELECTORAL VOTES	370	168	0	

Other candidates received .6 percent of the vote and no electoral votes.

Election Data (Version B) 1996

**Major Presidential Candidates:
William Jefferson Clinton, Robert Dole, and H. Ross Perot**

State	Clinton Popular Vote	Dole Popular Vote	Perot Popular Vote	Electoral Votes
Alabama	662,165 (43%)	769,044 (50%)	92,149 (6%)	9
Alaska	80,380 (33%)	122,746 (51%)	26,333 (11%)	3
Arizona	653,288 (46%)	622,073 (44%)	112,072 (8%)	8
Arkansas	475,171 (54%)	325,416 (37%)	69,884 (8%)	6
California	5,119,835 (51%)	3,828,380 (38%)	697,847 (7%)	54
Colorado	671,152 (44%)	691,848 (46%)	99,629 (7%)	8
Connecticut	735,740 (52%)	483,109 (35%)	139,523 (10%)	8
Delaware	140,355 (52%)	99,062 (37%)	28,719 (11%)	3
D.C.	158,220 (86%)	17,339 (9%)	3,611 (2%)	3
Florida	2,546,870 (48%)	2,244,536 (42%)	483,870 (9%)	25
Georgia	1,053,849 (46%)	1,080,843 (47%)	146,337 (6%)	13
Hawaii	205,012 (57%)	113,943 (32%)	27,358 (7%)	4
Idaho	165,443 (34%)	256,595 (52%)	62,518 (13%)	4
Illinois	2,341,744 (54%)	1,587,021 (37%)	346,408 (8%)	22
Indiana	887,424 (42%)	1,006,693 (47%)	224,299 (10%)	12
Iowa	620,258 (50%)	492,644 (40%)	105,159 (8%)	7
Kansas	387,659 (36%)	583,245 (54%)	92,639 (9%)	6
Kentucky	636,614 (46%)	623,283 (45%)	120,396 (9%)	8
Louisiana	927,837 (52%)	712,586 (40%)	123,293 (7%)	9
Maine	312,788 (52%)	186,378 (31%)	85,970 (14%)	4
Maryland	966,207 (54%)	681,530 (38%)	115,812 (6%)	10
Massachusetts	1,571,763 (61%)	718,107 (28%)	227,217 (9%)	12
Michigan	1,989,653 (52%)	1,481,212 (38%)	336,670 (9%)	18
Minnesota	1,120,438 (51%)	766,476 (35%)	257,704 (12%)	10
Mississippi	394,022 (44%)	439,838 (49%)	52,222 (6%)	7
Missouri	1,025,935 (47%)	890,016 (41%)	217,188 (10%)	11
Montana	167,922 (41%)	179,652 (44%)	55,229 (13%)	3
Nebraska	236,761 (35%)	363,467 (54%)	71,278 (10%)	5
Nevada	203,974 (44%)	199,244 (43%)	43,986 (9%)	4
New Hampshire	246,214 (49%)	196,532 (39%)	48,390 (10%)	4
New Jersey	1,652,329 (54%)	1,103,078 (36%)	262,134 (8%)	15
New Mexico	273,495 (49%)	232,751 (42%)	32,257 (6%)	5
New York	3,756,177 (59%)	1,933,492 (31%)	503,458 (8%)	33
North Carolina	1,107,849 (44%)	1,225,938 (49%)	168,059 (7%)	14
North Dakota	106,905 (40%)	125,050 (47%)	32,515 (12%)	3
Ohio	2,148,222 (47%)	1,859,883 (40%)	483,207 (11%)	21
Oklahoma	488,105 (40%)	582,315 (48%)	130,788 (11%)	8
Oregon	649,641 (47%)	538,152 (39%)	121,221 (9%)	7
Pennsylvania	2,215,819 (49%)	1,801,169 (40%)	430,984 (10%)	23
Rhode Island	233,050 (60%)	104,683 (27%)	43,723 (11%)	4
South Carolina	506,283 (44%)	573,458 (50%)	64,386 (5%)	8
South Dakota	139,333 (43%)	150,543 (46%)	31,250 (10%)	3
Tennessee	909,146 (48%)	863,530 (46%)	105,918 (5%)	11
Texas	2,459,683 (44%)	2,736,167 (49%)	378,537	32
Utah	221,633 (33%)	361,911 (54%)	66,461 (10%)	5
Vermont	137,894 (53%)	80,352 (31%)	31,024 (12%)	3
Virginia	1,091,060 (45%)	1,138,350 (47%)	159,861 (7%)	13
Washington	1,123,323 (50%)	840,712 (37%)	201,003 (9%)	11
West Virginia	327,812 (51%)	233,946 (37%)	71,639 (11%)	5
Wisconsin	1,071,971 (49%)	845,029 (39%)	227,339 (10%)	11
Wyoming	77,934 (37%)	105,388 (50%)	25,928 (12%)	3
TOTALS	47,402,357 (49%)	39,198,755 (41%)	8,085,402 (8%)	
ELECTORAL VOTES	379	159	0	

Other candidates received 1.8 percent of the vote and no electoral votes.

Election Data (Version C) 2000

**Major Presidential Candidates:
George W. Bush, Albert Gore, and Ralph Nader**

State	Bush Popular Vote	Gore Popular Vote	Nader Popular Vote	Electoral Votes
Alabama	941,173 (56%)	692,611(42%)	18,323 (1%)	9
Alaska	167,398 (59%)	79,004 (28%)	28,747 (10%)	3
Arizona	781,652 (51%)	685,341 (45%)	45,645 (3%)	8
Arkansas	472,940 (51%)	422,768 (46%)	13,421 (1%)	6
California	4,567,429 (42%)	5,861,203 (53%)	418,707 (4%)	54
Colorado	883,748 (51%)	738,227 (42%)	91,434 (5%)	8
Connecticut	561,104 (38%)	816,659 (56%)	64,452 (4%)	8
Delaware	137,288 (42%)	180,068 (55%)	8,307 (3%)	3
DC	18,073 (9%)	171,923 (85%)	10,576 (5%)	2*
Florida	2,912,790 (49%)	2,912,253 (49%)	97,488 (2%)	25
Georgia	1,419,720 (55%)	1,116,230 (43%)	13,432 (1%)**	13
Hawaii	137,845 (37%)	205,286 (56%)	21,623 (6%)	4
Idaho	336,937 (67%)	138,637 (28%)	12,292 (2%)	4
Illinois	2,019,421 (43%)	2,589,026 (55%)	103,759 (2%)	22
Indiana	1,245,836 (57%)	901,980 (41%)	18,531 (1%)**	12
Iowa	634,373 (48%)	638,517 (49%)	29,374 (2%)	7
Kansas	622,332 (58%)	399,276 (37%)	36,086 (3%)	6
Kentucky	872,520 (57%)	638,923 (41%)	14,356 (2%)	8
Louisiana	927,871 (53%)	792,344 (45%)	20,473 (1%)	9
Maine	286,616 (44%)	319,951 (49%)	37,127 (6%)	4
Maryland	813,724 (40%)	1,143,888 (56%)	53,763 (3%)	10
Massachusetts	878,502 (33%)	1,616,487 (60%)	173,564 (6%)	12
Michigan	1,953,139 (46%)	2,170,418 (51%)	84,165 (2%)	18
Minnesota	1,109,659 (46%)	1,168,266 (48%)	126,696 (5%)	10
Mississippi	572,844 (58%)	404,614 (41%)	8,122 (1%)	7
Missouri	1,189,924 (50%)	1,111,138 (47%)	38,515 (2%)	11
Montana	240,178 (58%)	137,126 (33%)	24,437 (6%)	3
Nebraska	433,850 (62%)	231,776 (33%)	24,670 (4%)	5
Nevada	301,575 (50%)	279,978 (46%)	15,008 (2%)	4
New Hampshire	273,559 (48%)	266,348 (47%)	22,188 (4%)	4
New Jersey	1,284,173 (40%)	1,788,850 (56%)	94,554 (3%)	15
New Mexico	286,417 (48%)	286,783 (48%)	21,251 (4%)	5
New York	2,403,374 (35%)	4,107,697 (60%)	244,030 (4%)	33
North Carolina	1,631,163 (56%)	1,257,692 (43%)	—	14
North Dakota	174,852 (61%)	95,284 (33%)	9,486 (3%)	3
Ohio	2,350,363 (50%)	2,183,628 (46%)	117,799 (3%)	21
Oklahoma	744,337 (60%)	474,276 (38%)	—	8
Oregon	713,577 (47%)	720,342 (47%)	77,357 (5%)	7
Pennsylvania	2,281,127 (46%)	2,485,967 (51%)	103,392 (2%)	23
Rhode Island	130,555 (32%)	249,508 (61%)	25,052 (6%)	4
South Carolina	786,892 (57%)	566,037 (41%)	20,279 (1%)	8
South Dakota	190,700 (60%)	118,804 (38%)	—	3
Tennessee	1,061,949 (51%)	981,720 (47%)	19,781 (1%)	11
Texas	3,799,639 (59%)	2,433,746 (38%)	137,994 (2%)	32
Utah	515,096 (67%)	203,053 (26%)	35,850 (5%)	5
Vermont	119,775 (41%)	149,022 (51%)	20,374 (7%)	3
Virginia	1,437,490 (52%)	1,217,290 (44%)	59,398 (2%)	13
Washington	1,108,864 (45%)	1,247,652 (50%)	103,002 (4%)	11
West Virginia	336,473 (52%)	295,497 (46%)	10,680 (2%)	5
Wisconsin	1,237,279 (48%)	1,242,987 (48%)	94,070 (4%)	11
Wyoming	147,947 (68%)	60,481 (28%)	4,625 (2%)**	3
TOTAL	50,456,062 (47.9%)	50,999,897 (48.4%)	2,882,955 (2.7%)	
ELECTORAL VOTES	271	266	0	

*The District of Columbia has 3 electoral votes, but 1 vote was submitted blank.

**Write-in votes.

Other candidates received 1 percent of the vote and received no electoral votes.

**Election Data (Version D)
2004**

Major Presidential Candidates: George W. Bush and John Kerry

State	Bush Popular Vote	Kerry Popular Vote	Electoral Votes
Alabama	1,176,394 (62%)	693,933 (37%)	9
Alaska	190,889 (61%)	111,025 (36%)	3
Arizona	1,104,294 (55%)	893,524 (44%)	10
Arkansas	572,770 (54%)	468,631 (44%)	6
California	5,509,826 (44%)	6,745,485 (54%)	55
Colorado	1,101,255 (52%)	1,001,732 (47%)	9
Connecticut	693,766 (44%)	857,434 (54%)	7
Delaware	171,660 (46%)	200,152 (53%)	3
DC	21,256 (9%)	202,970 (89%)	3
Florida	3,964,522 (52%)	3,583,544 (47%)	27
Georgia	1,914,254 (58%)	1,366,149 (41%)	15
Hawaii	194,184 (45%)	231,691 (54%)	4
Idaho	409,235 (69%)	181,098 (30%)	4
Illinois	2,346,608 (44%)	2,891,989 (55%)	21
Indiana	1,479,438 (60%)	969,011 (39%)	11
Iowa	751,957 (50%)	741,898 (49%)	7
Kansas	736,456 (62%)	434,993 (37%)	6
Kentucky	1,069,439 (60%)	712,733 (40%)	8
Louisiana	1,102,169 (57%)	820,299 (42%)	9
Maine	330,201 (45%)	396,842 (54%)	4
Maryland	1,024,703 (43%)	1,334,493 (56%)	10
Massachusetts	1,071,109 (37%)	1,803,800 (62%)	12
Michigan	2,313,746 (48%)	2,479,178 (51%)	17
Minnesota	1,346,695 (48%)	1,445,014 (51%)	9*
Mississippi	684,981 (59%)	458,094 (40%)	6
Missouri	2,313,746 (48%)	2,479,178 (51%)	11
Montana	266,053 (59%)	173,710 (39%)	3
Nebraska	512,814 (66%)	254,328 (33%)	5
Nevada	418,690 (51%)	397,190 (48%)	5
New Hampshire	331,237 (49%)	340,511 (50%)	4
New Jersey	1,668,003 (46%)	1,911,430 (53%)	15
New Mexico	376,930 (50%)	370,942 (49%)	5
New York	2,952,567 (40%)	4,314,280 (58%)	31
North Carolina	1,961,166 (56%)	1,525,849 (44%)	15
North Dakota	196,651 (63%)	111,052 (35%)	3
Ohio	2,859,764 (51%)	2,741,165 (49%)	20
Oklahoma	959,792 (66%)	503,966 (34%)	7
Oregon	866,831 (47%)	943,163 (52%)	7
Pennsylvania	2,793,847 (48%)	2,938,095 (51%)	21
Rhode Island	169,046 (39%)	259,760 (59%)	4
South Carolina	937,974 (58%)	661,699 (41%)	8
South Dakota	232,584 (60%)	149,244 (38%)	3
Tennessee	1,384,375 (57%)	1,036,477 (43%)	11
Texas	4,526,917 (61%)	2,832,704 (38%)	34
Utah	663,742 (73%)	241,199 (26%)	5
Vermont	121,180 (39%)	184,067 (59%)	3
Virginia	1,716,959 (54%)	1,454,742 (46%)	13
Washington	1,304,894 (46%)	1,510,201 (53%)	11
West Virginia	423,778 (56%)	326,541 (43%)	5
Wisconsin	1,478,120 (49%)	1,489,504 (50%)	10
Wyoming	167,629 (69%)	70,776 (29%)	3
TOTAL	62,039,073 (50.7%)	59,027,478 (48.3%)	
ELECTORAL VOTES	286	251	

*Minnesota has 10 electoral votes, but one was cast for John Edwards, the Democratic vice-presidential candidate.
Other candidates, including Ralph Nader (Independent) and Michael Badnarik (Libertarian Party), received approximately 1 percent of the vote and no electoral votes.

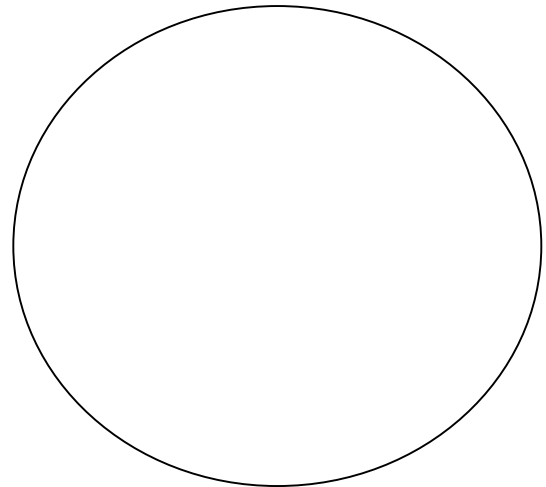
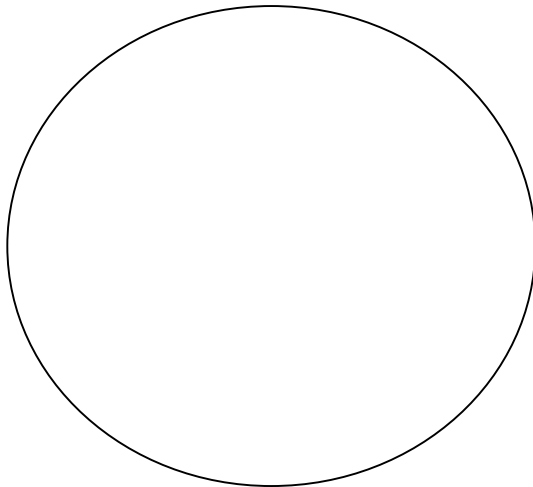
Name _____

Analyzing Election Data

Work with a partner in your group to complete steps 1-7.

1. You have probably heard politicians or journalists talking about red and blue states. This refers to the maps used on election night to show which candidate won each state. Using the map attached, create a map of red and blue states for your election. Use blue to show states won by the Democratic candidate. Use red to show states won by the Republican candidate. You may also want to mark the number of electoral votes won in each state on the map using a black marker.
2. Look at your completed map to get a general picture of the results of your election. Write a sentence that gives your general impression of the election. An example is: "Candidate X won the election of ____ by a landslide."
3. Next, find the percentage of the popular vote won by each candidate. In the circle on the left, use these percentages to create a pie chart of the popular vote.

Now create a pie chart showing the percentage of the electoral vote won by each candidate. Use the circle on the right for this chart.



4. Compare the two graphs and the map. Which do you think presents the most accurate picture of how close the election was? Why? How might thinking about red and blue states affect the way we think about elections? Who is left out when we represent the election results on a map? Are those people better represented in the pie charts?

5. One of the arguments for the electoral college is that it requires a candidate to have support from all across the country. Did the winning candidate in your election have support from across the country? Draw a line across the center of your map horizontally. Draw another line across the center of your map vertically. You have created four large regions of the United States. Could the candidate have won if he had no support in any one of these regions? Could a candidate win without support from all regions if the election was decided by the popular vote?

6. Look carefully at the numbers for some of the smaller states (remember that smaller means fewer people). Some examples of smaller states are Alaska, Delaware, District of Columbia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, and Wyoming. Look carefully at the numbers for some of the states with lots of people. Some examples of larger states are California, Texas, New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. Can you think of any way to use these numbers and your map to show the power of large or small states in the electoral college system?

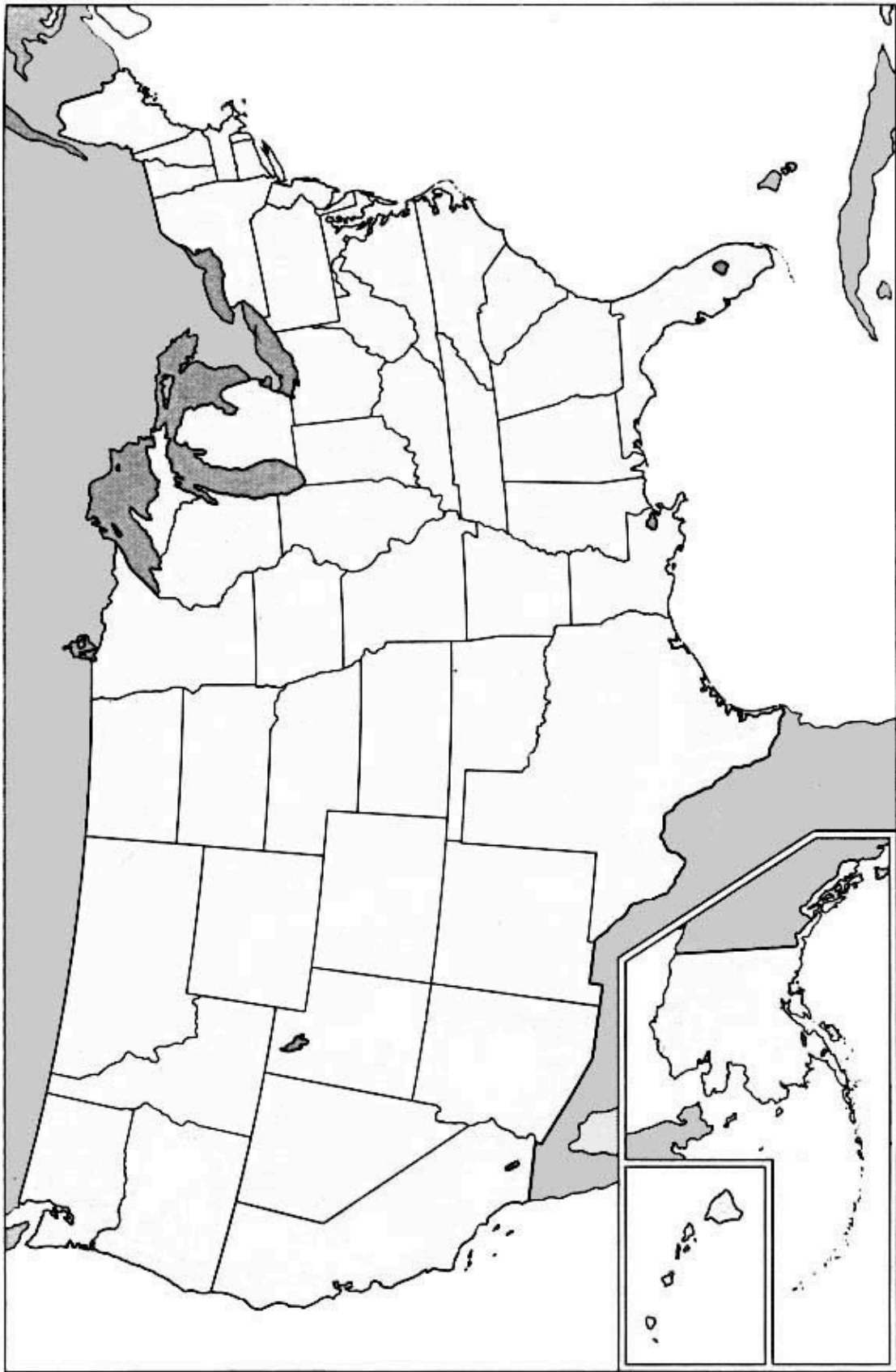
7. Is there anything that surprises you about the data for your election? Do you have questions about the data?

For the next part of the analysis, work with students who specialized in the other election years. Display the maps for the four election years in a row, from 1992 to 2004.

8. Compare the four maps. What differences do you notice? What similarities do you notice?

9. Are there any states that voted for the same party's candidate in all four elections? Do you think the candidates in future elections will pay much attention to these states? Why or why not?

10. Is your state solidly in one party's camp, or is it a swing state, one that votes Republican in some elections and Democratic in others? Do you think your state has more power with the electoral college system than it would if the president were elected by popular vote? Why or why not?



Should We Replace the Electoral College?

Imagine that you have been appointed to a presidential commission. The commission is to make recommendations on the future of the electoral college. Should we keep the electoral college, get rid of it entirely, or change it in some way?

* * * *

In your group, read and discuss these arguments for and against the electoral college.

Arguments Against the Electoral College: The electoral college allows a president to be elected who does not win the popular vote. This has happened three times since the Civil War—1876, 1888, and 2000. Second, deadlocks can happen. A third-party candidate or a close election could prevent any candidate from getting a majority of the votes in the electoral college. The House of Representatives then decides who will be president. This happened in 1800 and 1824. One study has shown that it has almost happened 22 times!

Third, because each state gets at least three electoral votes no matter how few people live there, voters in small states have more power than those in large states. This is a violation of the “one person, one vote” principle. Fourth, states get their assigned electoral votes no matter how many people vote. States with the same number of electoral votes may have very different turnouts on election day. Fifth, the electoral college may hold down voter turnout. If opinion polls show one candidate far ahead in a state, voters in that state may decide not to vote. In fact, candidates often don’t campaign in states where they are leading or trailing by a lot.

Arguments for the Electoral College: First, the electoral college represents our federal system, with its emphasis on the states and their representatives. Second, the electoral college is not archaic and undemocratic. We have two senators from every state regardless of the state’s population. We don’t consider that archaic or undemocratic. Third, the electoral college allows every state to have a voice, including the small states. These states might be overlooked if the election was decided by the results of the popular vote.

Fourth, the electoral college prevents sectionalism by requiring a winning candidate to have support from throughout the country. Fifth, it has contributed to political stability by promoting the two-party system. That system encourages the major parties to represent a wide range of interests. Finally, the electoral college may strengthen the power of organized interest groups, such as women voters or minority voters. These groups can play a powerful role in deciding the outcome of close elections.

* * * *

Next, read and discuss the options listed below. Most of these options will require a constitutional amendment. Some could be achieved through state action.

Option 1: Keep the Electoral College. Keeping the electoral college means retaining the winner-take-all format used in most states. This option would require no action.

Option 2: Popular Vote. This option would involve abolishing the electoral college. The election would be decided by who received the most votes of the people. Variations of this option would require a candidate to receive 40 percent of the vote to win or a majority (one more than half) of the popular vote. If no one met the established standard, there would be a run-off election between the top two candidates. To be fully implemented, this option would require a constitutional amendment. However, some states are considering new laws committing their state's electors to whichever candidate won the popular vote at the national level. If enough states passed such laws, it would in effect mean whoever won the popular vote would win the election.

Option 3: Majority Popular Vote with Instant Run-off. This option is a variation of the majority popular vote that would provide quick results and not require a second election. When people vote, they would rank order the candidates instead of voting for just one. If no one received a majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes would be eliminated. The votes of people who chose that candidate would be recast for their second-ranked candidate. The process would be repeated until a candidate reached a majority. This option would require a constitutional amendment.

Option 4: District Electoral Vote. Each state gets electoral votes based on its number of congressional representatives plus its two U.S. senators. In this option, if a candidate wins in a congressional district, the candidate wins the electoral vote for that district. The overall winner in the state gets two additional electoral votes (those representing the two Senate seats). This option can be adopted by the states. However, if all states were required to use it, a constitutional amendment would probably be needed.

Option 5: Proportional Electoral Vote. In this method, each state's electoral votes would be allotted according to the percentage of popular votes received. Thus, if candidate A receives 60 percent of the vote, he/she receives 60 percent of the state's electoral votes. Coloradans voted on this option in 2004 but rejected it. This option can be adopted by the states. However, if all states were required to use it, a constitutional amendment would probably be needed.

* * * *

As a group, choose one of the options described above. Be prepared to report on the reasons for your decision.