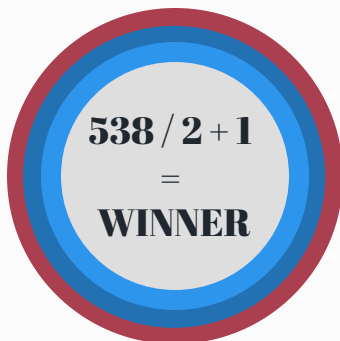




# CIVICS IN REAL LIFE

# The Electoral College

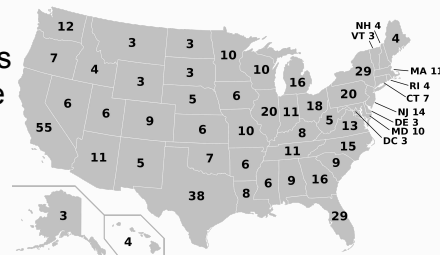
**Civics is all around us. There is a lot to know about the government and how "We the People" interact with the government and each other. Let's help each other expand our civic literacy.**



Voting is a key responsibility for all citizens, and the opportunity to vote for the president of the United States is one which we eagerly look forward to when we turn 18. But did you know that when you vote for president, you are not actually voting for president? You are voting for electors, OTHER people who will vote for president on your behalf! It all comes down to the Electoral College.

The Electoral College, established by Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, is the formal body that elects the president and vice president of the United States. It includes 538 total electors. Where does this number come from? The number of "electors"

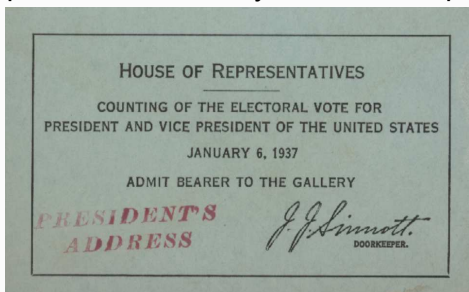
each state is allocated in the Electoral College is based on its number of U.S. representatives and U.S. senators. For example, Florida has 27 U.S. representatives and 2 U.S. senators, so Florida is allocated 29 electors. The 23rd Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified in 1961, allocates three electoral votes to Washington, D.C. A constitutional amendment was required to allocate electoral votes to Washington, D.C. because electoral votes are allocated to states only, and Washington, D.C. is not a state.



When voting in presidential elections, voters are actually instructing their state's electors how they should vote. To win the presidency, a candidate must earn a majority of Electoral College votes, or 270 of those 538 votes. Electors meet several weeks after the national election day, in mid-December. Electoral votes are then read by the sitting vice-president in a joint session of Congress during the first week of January.

It is important to note that the popular vote for president (the number of votes cast by voters on election day) is **NOT the same** as the number of electoral votes that candidates may receive. A candidate may lose the popular vote and still become president! This has happened **five times** in U.S. history, most recently in 2016 when Republican Donald Trump lost the popular vote to Democrat Hillary Clinton but won the Electoral College vote.

When neither candidate receives a majority of the Electoral College vote, the House of Representatives chooses the winner. This happened in 1800, when the House chose Thomas Jefferson over Aaron Burr, and in 1824, when it picked John Quincy Adams over popular vote winner, Andrew Jackson.



Originally, electors would cast two electoral votes, but no distinction was made between a vote for president and a vote for vice-president. The one who got the most electoral votes would become president, and the second place winner would become vice-president. In the election of 1800, Jefferson beat his main opponent John Adams, but in the Electoral College, he and his vice-presidential running mate Burr tied at 73 electoral votes each, so the House had to pick the winner. To prevent this from happening again, the **12th Amendment** was ratified, which required separate votes for president and vice-president.

**To Think and To Do:** Presidential campaigns generally want to spend their money wisely. How might the Electoral College map (provided in the reading) impact campaign spending?

**Learn MORE** about the Electoral College. Free registration may be required.

- [2020 Presidential Election Interactive Map](#), from 270towin.com
- [The Electoral College: It's a Process, Not a Place](#), from the National Archives
- [Getting the Votes and Getting Election](#), from Our White House



**Take Part in the 2020 Mock Election!**

If you are in **Florida**, join us with [KidsVotingFlorida!](#)

Somewhere else?

Check out [DoubleClick Democracy](#)



**Lou Frey Institute**