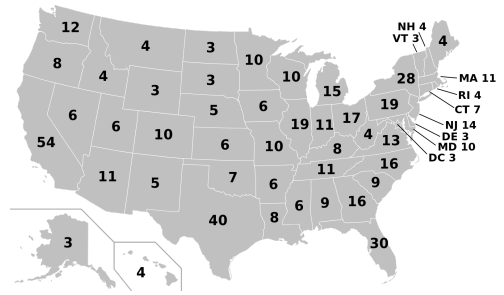


Spot the Difference: Electing the President of the United States

The power given to the states to make decisions regarding election processes and procedures in Article IV, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution continues to apply when it comes to many aspects of presidential elections. That means that for a candidate seeking election to the office of president, they have to follow the guidelines set forth by each individual state. This requires a large national team and substantial funding!



Candidate Registration

To register as a presidential candidate and appear on the ballot in Florida, an individual would follow the same paperwork and fee requirements as outlined in Florida State Statute. For a potential president however, they would have to repeat the registration process outlined by the other 49 states.

Primaries/Caucus

A presidential candidate must next also go through a nomination process in the form of primary elections and/or caucus. There are various types of primaries (open, closed, semi-closed, other), with each party in each state having the ability to choose how they will nominate their candidate. In Florida, a presidential primary election does not change the fact that our state uses the closed primary format.

Throughout the primary process, each presidential candidate is attempting to win delegates from the results of the primary contests occurring throughout each state. These delegates are then sent to the party's national convention, who will officially nominate the candidate to represent the party in the general election.

Campaigning for Office

The campaign trail and debates play an important role for presidential candidates as they do for all individuals seeking an elected office. Tactics, strategies, and methods don't typically differ, presidential campaigns just have to occur in all 50 states! For presidential candidate debates, there are often qualifying criteria set by political parties in order to be invited to participate.



General Election Day

On general election day, the ballot style that each voter uses is still determined by states. Some will cast their vote for president through electronic voting, others punch cards, and some fill-in ballots. Florida voters will see fill-in ballots.

Deciding the Election Winner

The most unique part of presidential elections comes in the way in which the election is decided. Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution, as clarified by the 12th Amendment, establishes the Electoral College as the method for deciding presidential elections. When a state holds a popular vote in November of a presidential election year; that election is actually to elect the electors, who will then go on to cast a vote for the president in December. As prescribed by the Constitution, the state legislatures decided how the electors will be selected. These electors gather in their state capitals to formally cast their vote for president and vice president. With the exception of Maine and Nebraska (who divide their electors using proportional representation), the electors of the states cast their vote for the candidate that wins the state's popular vote for president of the United States. In general, this process has four steps:

- Selecting the electors at the state level (people appointed by each political party in a presidential election as members of the electoral college)
- Meeting of those electors
- Voting of those electors for president and vice president
- Counting of the electoral votes by Congress

There are 538 electors in the Electoral College. This number is based on the number of members in the U.S. House of Representatives, the U.S. Senate, and the District of Columbia. Each state's electoral votes are based on the number of members they have in the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. For example:

State	Senate Members (2 per state)	House Members (depends on the population of the state)	Number of Electors
Florida	2	28	30
North Dakota	2	1	3
Colorado	2	8	10

When eligible voters cast their vote for a presidential candidate, they will see the candidate's name on the ballot. However, what they are voting for is their candidate's party slate of electors. Under Florida law, whichever presidential candidate wins Florida's popular vote, wins Florida's electoral votes.

In January of the year following a presidential election, a state's electoral votes are publicly certified and counted before a joint session of Congress. The Vice President of the United States presides over the count in their capacity as President of the Senate and certifies the election results.

