

IMPORTANT/URGENT

**The US Electoral College:
Examining the Importance of
Protecting and Maintaining
the Electoral College**



BasicsProject is a grassroots non-partisan research and educational initiative, tasked with the advancement of Constitutional Literacy and the exposure of threats to the United States and the West from Progressivism and Islamofascism.

Prime Time Primaries: Decision Time

I'm enjoying the prime time primaries, carefully considering what each politician brings to the table as they all campaign to participate in what policy wonks might consider the political equivalent of the National League and American League playoffs in baseball...

It's exciting and compelling observing the players moves; assessing "statistics" comprised of voting records and accomplishments; and listening to analysts determine the catalyst behind voter reactions, compare and contrast the candidates' styles, analyze the spin, and comment on occasional heartfelt passion, as each contender competes to "go to the show," our nation's 2008 presidential election.

After the Democrats choose their candidate and the Republicans choose their candidate, each will compete to win the electoral votes in the 50 states. They do not win based on the popular vote; they win based on which states electoral votes they've earned. This is not unlike the World Series in baseball. The team that takes the series becomes the champion based on the best of seven games played, not on the number of runs cumulatively earned during the series.

Each contender canvasses the country, focusing on a variety of constituents who make up the voting blocks; single woman, black voters, Latino voters, compassionate conservatives, Hawks, Doves, religious right, etc. Each special interest group's combined influence can make the difference between taking or losing a state. In one sense, politicians seem to cater to these factions, yet in another sense they are forced to consider their interests and promise to represent these interests if elected in office. This is our system of checks and balances at work, making sure that each person, in each group, in each state is considered on their own merit and that the electors represent the majority in their state. It is in this way, our president will represent a United States.

[The number of electoral votes](#) of each state is the sum of its number of U.S. Senators (always two) and its U.S. Representatives; the District of Columbia has three electoral votes. I learned the importance of the Electoral College by playing a game called [Landslide](#) when I was just a kid. At the end of the game, the Vote cards are meaningless; the only thing that counts is how many states you've won through these vote cards. It is because of this game that I understood the worth of winning such states as New York, California, Illinois, Florida, and Texas. I also learned that while you can win a state early on, it can be taken right from under you if you are not careful. Finally, this game illustrated why we have two houses of Congress; the House of Representatives is balanced by the Senate, in which each state is represented equally no matter what the size.

As we watch the Candidates make their cases to the people, building a base of support for their election, while at the same time learning intimately what issues are most important to Americans, we need to take a moment and be grateful to the Founders for developing a peaceful process for changing office and for ensuring that this truly is a government by the people, of the people, and for the people. Simply look at what just took place in Pakistan with the assassination of its former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe murdering people to make sure he stays in office, and Russia's Vladimir Putin handpicking his successor in Russia. Conservative or Liberal, who ever wins office in the upcoming election is an American who will take an oath to protect our Constitution.

"I do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will to the best of my ability, preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States."

Take this opportunity to listen to the candidates and listen to how people across the United States are responding to their messages. No matter who wins, no matter what are differences, we are all Americans.

Direct Election v. Electoral College

The constitutional amendment process is a complicated and lengthy affair. This is because we cannot be certain what consequences might arise from a seemingly minor alteration of the Constitution. To be sure, exchanging the electoral-vote system for direct election would adversely impact the entire constitutional and political structure of the United States.

To begin, our Constitution is dedicated to securing everybody's rights. This requires that we be concerned not only with size, but with the character of the majorities voting our president to office. There are many ways in which our Constitution is configured to prevent simple majorities.

- The federal system prevents less populous States from being engulfed by more populous States.
- A bicameral legislature divides responsibilities between House and Senate on grounds other than those of population.
- Power is invested in a non-elective judiciary.
- Each State has a minimum of three electoral votes in the Electoral College.

One way the Electoral College creates moderately characterized numerical majorities includes assuring that each state's vote actually represents the state's interests in the selection and election of Presidents. By requiring a majority of

electoral votes to win the presidency, a political party must campaign in all or most of the States -expanding its base of support beyond a narrow geographical region.

Political parties must appeal to a wide range of interests in order to gain a majority electoral vote. This is an inducement to more moderate political platforms which are less likely to put off those on the fence and promotes compromise among minority factions who want their interests represented within the party, all of this taking place well in advance of elections. Compromise between minorities is what creates a majority.

But it is well to remember that a party's capacity to command the allegiance of its followers is constantly challenged. Coalitions vary and parties are elected in and out of office based on support for their platform and their adherence to the platform while in power. Parties are wise to continually seek new bases of support and not to alienate any interests.

If the Electoral College was replaced by direct election, size, not the distribution of votes, is all that would matter. State interests would no longer receive the same consideration, their power diminished under direct election. No longer compelled to moderate their views or compromise with other groups within their resident States, interest groups would radicalize the public opinion influencing our Presidential Candidates, who would no longer feel compelled to present a broadly based platform within each State, or even campaign in all the states. Minorities would find their political power greatly diminished. Our Constitution would no longer secure everyone's rights.

Nancy Salvato is the Director of Education and the Constitutional Literacy Program for BasicsProject. She is a graduate of the National Endowment for the Humanities' National Academy for Civics and Government. She is the author of Keeping a Republic: An Argument for Sovereignty, What It Means To Be a Constitutional Republic, Examining One of the Foundational Roots of the United States Constitution, Examining the Eligibility Question: Defining Article 2, Section 1 in Context, and How Judicial Activism Harms the American Form of Government.