



# 101: The US Electoral College

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## 101 Objectives:

- History and intent of the Electoral College
- Selection of Electors
- Impact of the Electoral College in the US presidential election process
- Criticisms of the Electoral College
- Proposals for reforming the Electoral College

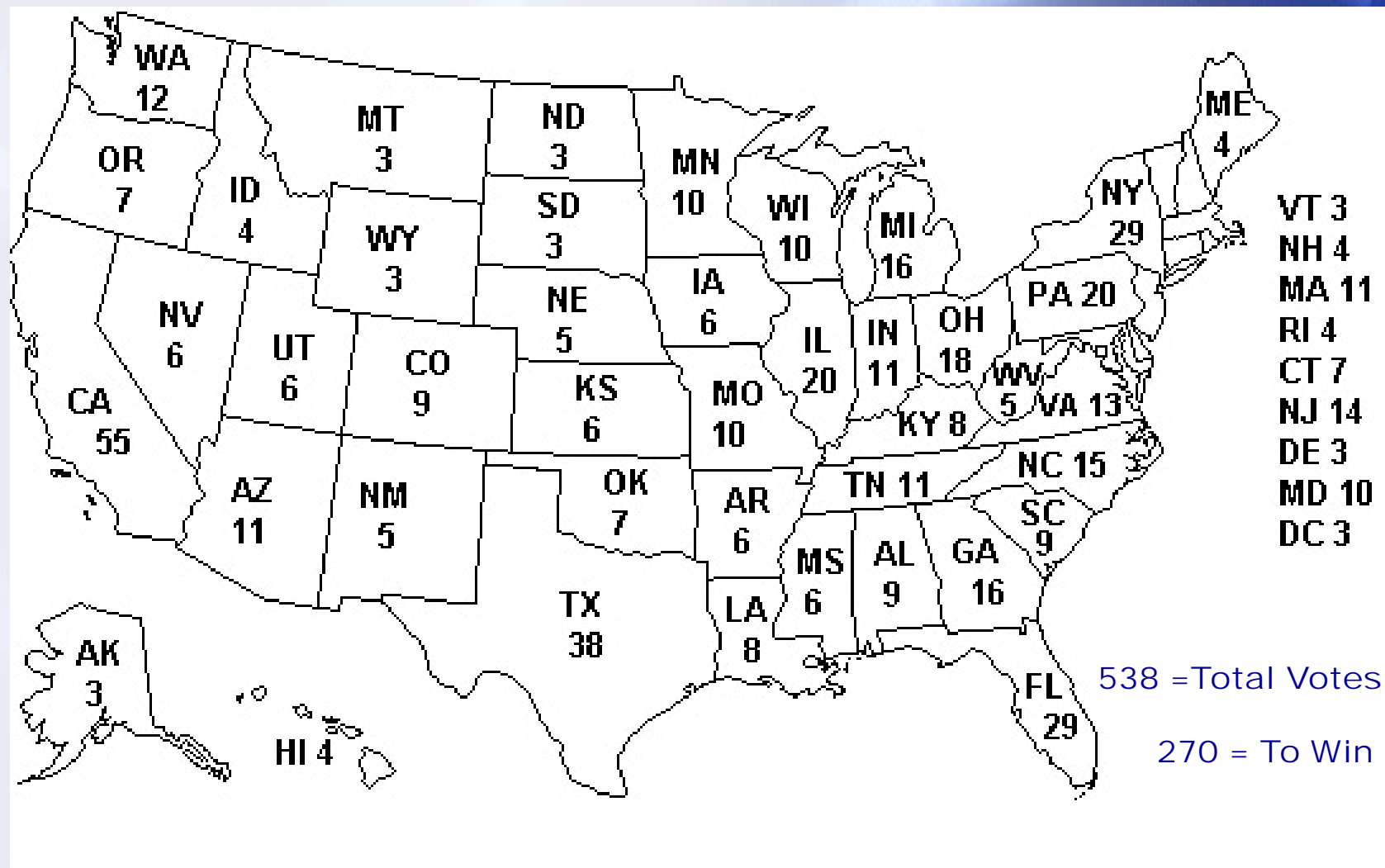
## History of the US Electoral College:

- Established by the founding fathers at the 1787 Constitutional Convention
- Compromise between congressional selection and direct popular vote
- Reflects federalist nature of the US Constitution

## Electoral Votes:

- Each of the 50 states is entitled to as many electoral votes as the sum of its representation in the US House and Senate. For example,
  - Florida: 27 House Representatives plus 2 Senators = 29 electoral votes
  - Ohio: 16 House Representative plus 2 Senators = 18 electoral votes
  - Hawaii: 2 House Representatives plus 2 Senators = 4 electoral votes
- 435 House Representatives + 100 Senators + 3 District of Columbia electoral votes = **538 TOTAL ELECTORAL VOTES**
- To win, a candidate needs **270 electoral votes**

# 2016 Electoral Votes by State:



## Electoral Process:

*The electoral college process consists of the:*

- Selection of the Electors
- Meeting of the Electors to vote for President and Vice President
- Counting of the electoral votes by the US Congress
- Declaration of the elected President and Vice President by the President of the US Senate

## Selection of Electors:

*The selection of Electors is notable because:*

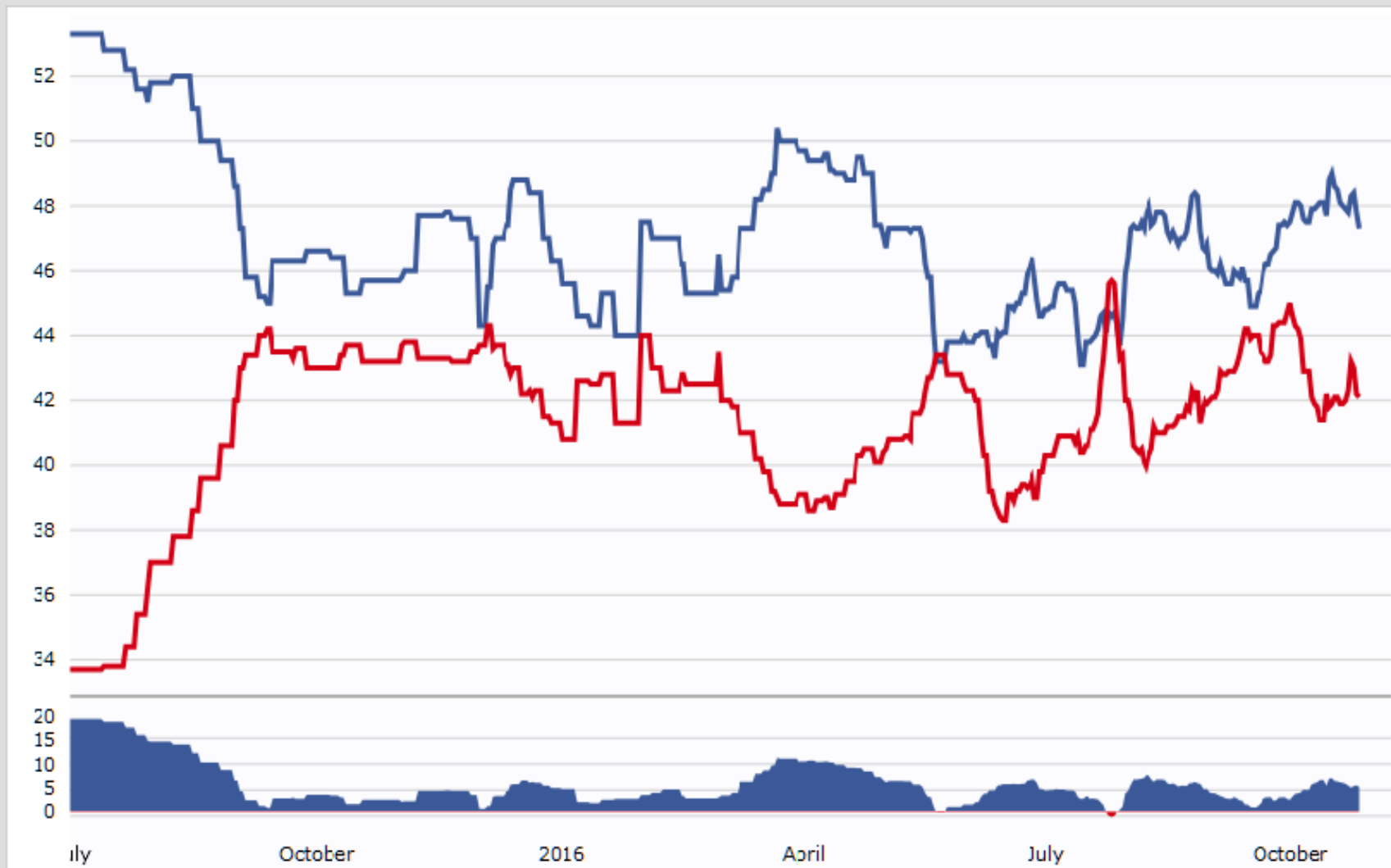
- The US Constitution contains few provisions relating to the qualifications of Electors
- Selection of a state's Electors is done at the state level and varies from one state to another
- Electors are typically political party insiders
- All but two States use a winner-take-all electoral system
  - exceptions are Maine and Nebraska



RCP POLL AVERAGE

### General Election: Trump vs. Clinton

47.3 Clinton (D) +5.2  
42.1 Trump (R)





## Restrictions on Electoral Votes:

*There is no Constitutional or Federal law that requires Electors to vote according to the results of the popular vote in their states. Rather...*

- State law regulates how electoral college votes are cast
- Electors are committed to vote for a party candidate in advance
- Occurrences of “faithless Electors” are rare

## Popular vs. Electoral Vote:

**It is possible in the US electoral system to win a majority of the popular vote and NOT win a majority of the electoral votes.**

The background of the entire page is a stylized American flag, with the stars and stripes visible. The stars are white and arranged in a pattern, while the stripes are red and white. The colors are slightly faded and blended into each other, creating a soft, patriotic atmosphere.

Candidate	% Popular Vote	# Electoral Votes
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1824

Andrew Jackson	41.4%	99
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John Q. Adams	30.9%	84
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William Harris Crawford	11.2%	41
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Henry Clay	13.0%	37
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**Winner: Adams**

1876

Samuel J. Tilden	51%	184
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Rutherford B. Hayes	48%	185
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**Winner: Hayes**

1888

Grover Cleveland	48.5%	168
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Benjamin Harrison	47.8%	233
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**WINNER: Harrison**

2000

Albert Gore	48.4% (50,996,897)	266
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George W. Bush	47.9% (50,456,002)	271
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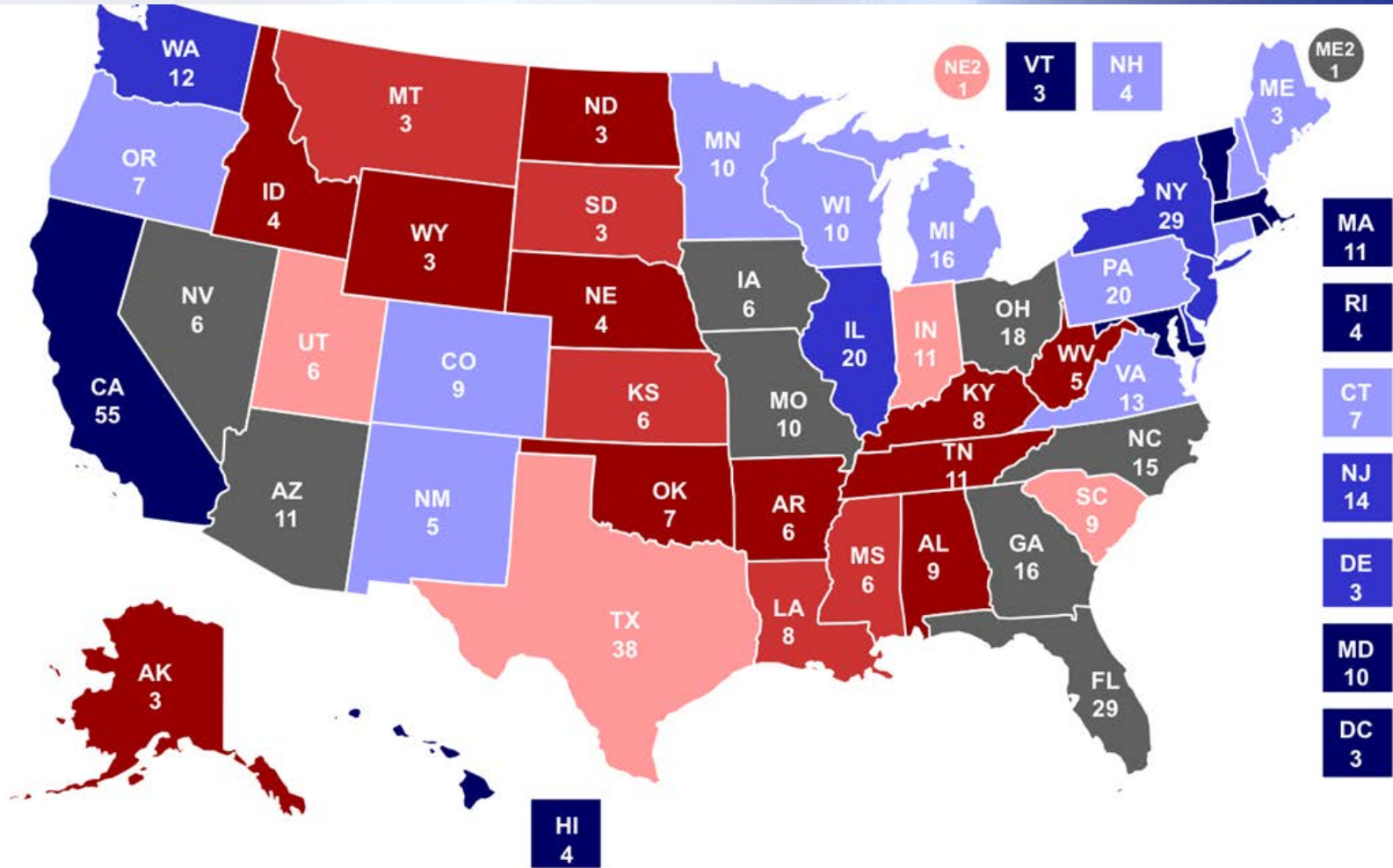
**WINNER: George W. Bush**

# Electoral College & Campaign Strategy:

Given that the contest for presidential Electors is won or lost on a winner-take-all statewide basis, campaign strategy targets **WINNING STATES**. In the 2016 election, the “swing or battleground states” that both the Clinton and Trump campaigns are targeting include:

<u>Swing States</u>	<u># of Electoral votes</u>
Florida	29
Georgia	16
Ohio	18
North Carolina	15
Missouri	10
Arizona	11
Nevada	6
Iowa	6
Maine (one district)	1
<b>TOTAL =</b>	<b>112</b>

# 2016 Electoral College Map



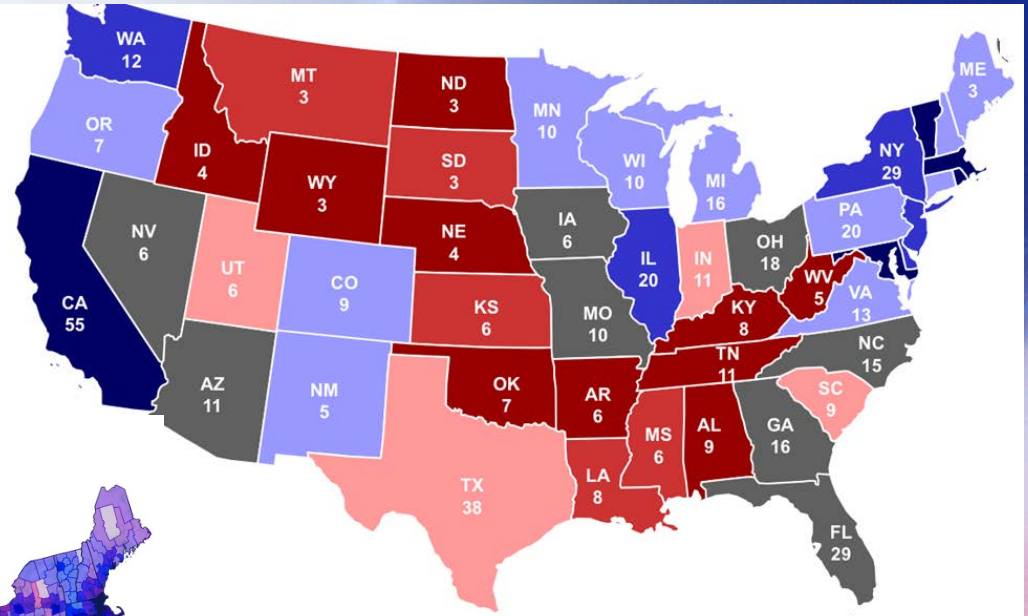
CLINTON/KAINE		TRUMP/PENCE	
<span style="color: darkblue;">■</span> Solid	<span style="color: blue;">■</span> Likely	<span style="color: darkred;">■</span> Solid	<span style="color: red;">■</span> Likely

# Benefits of the Electoral College:

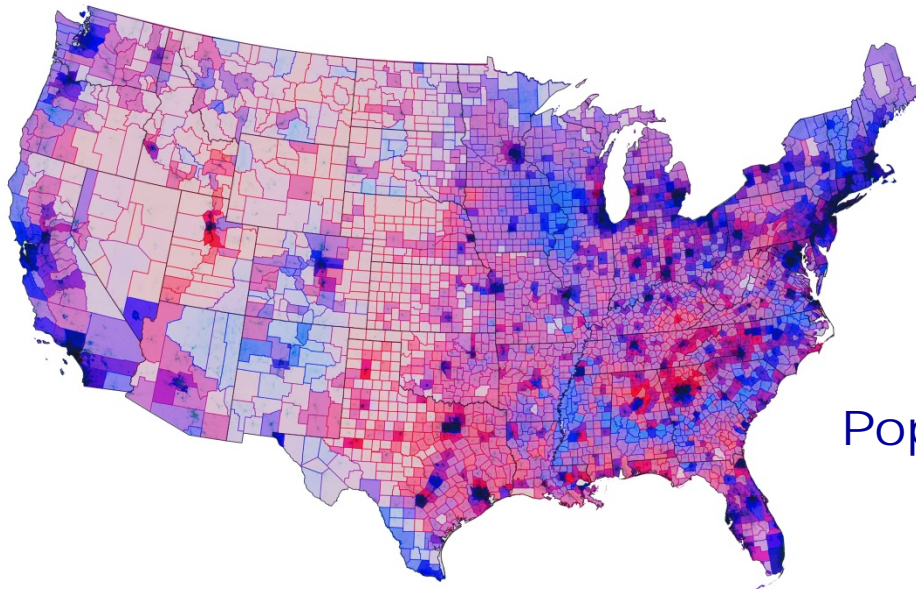
- *Proponents of the Electoral College argue that it conveys political legitimacy in closely fought presidential elections for several reasons:*
  - Certainty of outcome
  - Everyone's President
  - Importance of swing states
  - Avoids run-off elections
- Protects against the tyranny of the majority
- Reinforces the federalist nature of American democracy

# Benefits of the Electoral College:

Electoral College Map



Population Density Map



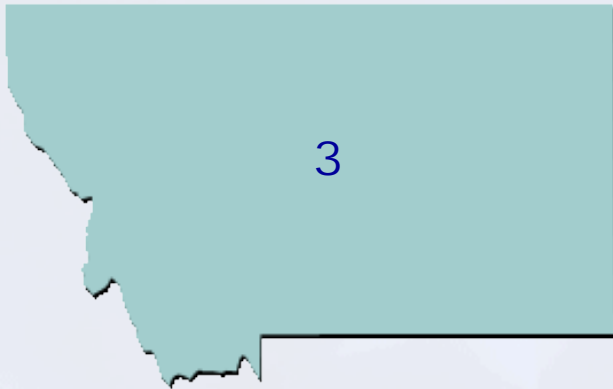
# Criticisms of the Electoral College:

*The Electoral College has long been criticized, for several reasons:*

- Candidate who wins a majority of the popular vote may not become President
- Non-competitive states are largely ignored by candidates, thus, encouraging low voter turnout
- Diminishes third party influence and results in tactical voting
- Over-represents voters from small states, which have a minimum of 3 electoral votes
- Electors may vote for persons other than their party's presidential candidate
- If there is no majority winner in the Electoral College, Congress selects the President and Vice President



# Small State Bias:



Montana  
Population: 1,032,949  
1 Electoral Vote = 248,238 people

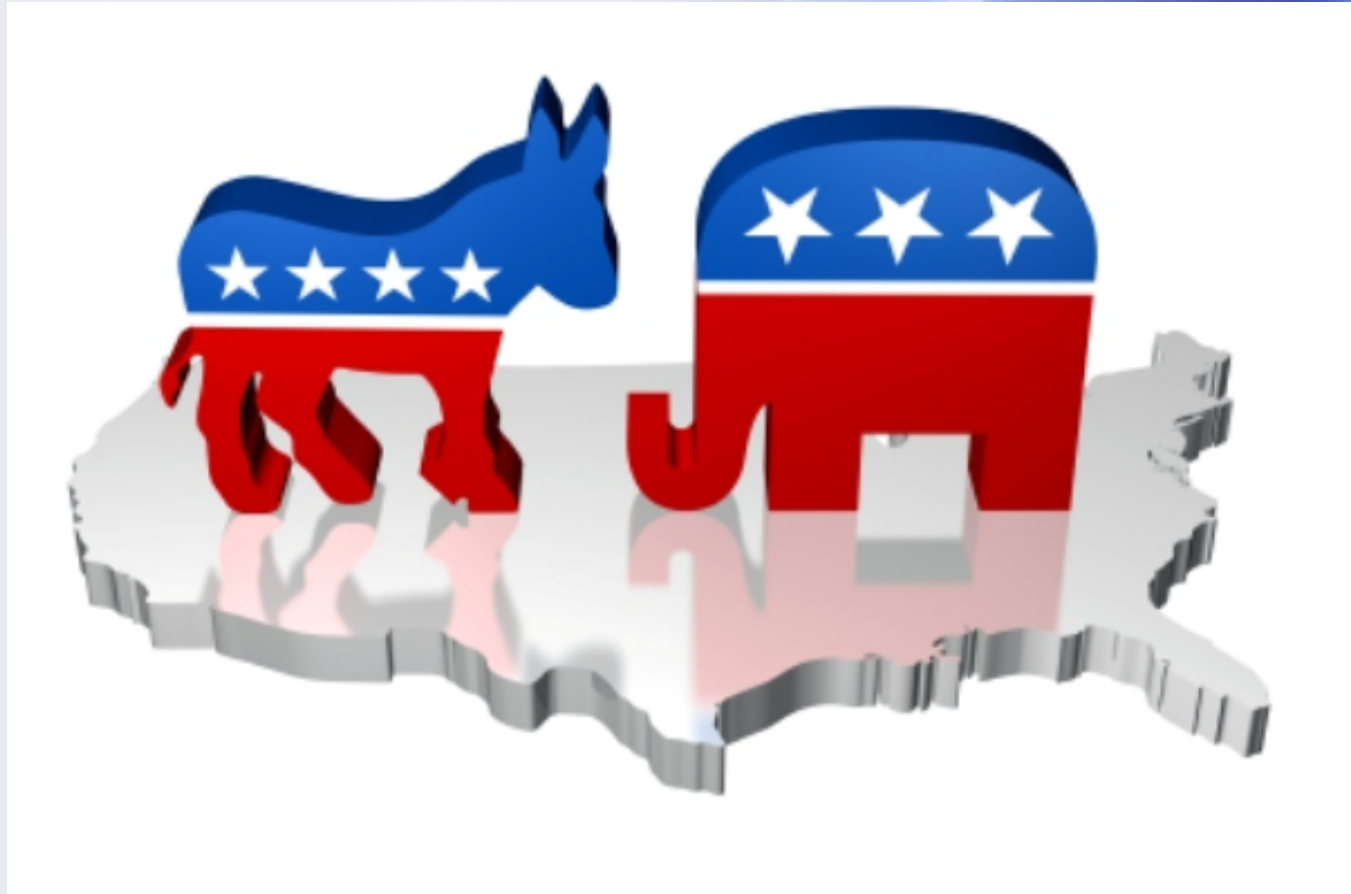


New York  
Population: 19,795,791  
1 Electoral Vote = 682,613 people

## Proposals for Reform:

*Many different proposals to alter the Presidential election process have been offered over the years, including:*

- Eliminate Electors but still count electoral votes
- Select Electors based on proportionality rather than a winner-take-all system
- Select Electors by congressional districts with two Electors chosen at large in each state
- Direct popular vote



Thank you!