

INTRODUCTION TO THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH

Objectives/Goals for Students: Students will be able to understand and appreciate the basics of the executive branch as well as the electoral college. The activities will allow the students to obtain a better understanding of the electoral college and the process of electing a president. The students will compare the different methods the framers chose to elect the president.

Course and Grade Level: Civics and Economics (can also be modified for grades 8 and 5 social studies and other courses)

NCSCOS Standard(s) Covered:

CE.C&G.2.1 Analyze the structures of national, state and local governments in terms of ways they are organized to maintain order, security, welfare of the public and the protection of citizens

8.C&G.1.1 Summarize democratic ideals expressed in local, state, and national government (e.g. limited government, popular sovereignty, separation of powers, republicanism, federalism and individual rights). 8.C&G.1.3 Analyze differing viewpoints on the scope and power of state and national governments (e.g. Federalists and anti- Federalists, education, immigration and healthcare).

5.C&G.1.2 Summarize the organizational structures and powers of the United States government (legislative, judicial and executive branches of government).

NCSS Standard(s) Covered: Institutions and Power

Teacher Name: Thomas Bogucki

Duration of Course: 90 minutes

Resources Used (Attached):

Three color coated sheets of paper

Presidential election of 2000, electoral and popular vote summary

Comparing the framers method of election worksheet

Electoral college article

Electoral college resources <http://www.generationnation.org/index.php/learn/entry/electoral-college>

President resources <http://www.generationnation.org/index.php/learn/tag/president> and <http://generationnation.org/index.php/learn/entry/resource-toolkit>

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INSTRUCTIONS

Anticipatory Set: When the students enter the classroom they will be given different colored pieces of paper. On a separate sheet of paper the students will answer the question, “how is the president elected?” I will take these up when the students have completed the question. (5 minutes)

After five minutes I will ask the students what they know about the election of the president. They can share freely or I will call on them individually. We will discuss their responses and I will address any questions or misconceptions the students have about the election process. Once we have finished I will take up their sheets and I will review them, by doing this I may be alerted to some misconceptions that students who were unwilling to share may have. (10 minutes)

Procedures:

1. After the students have completed the bell ringer, I will ask the students what they think is the coolest animal. They will have three choices for the animal will be a lion, a tiger, and a panther.
 - ★ The students will then be separated into groups based on the colored paper they received at the beginning of class. I will then select a representative from each group to become the elector of the group.
 - ★ The groups will be given only two minutes to vote on their favorite animal, the representative can only listen and not participate.
 - ★ The elector will then represent the group and tell the class what their group vote for, but the representative will then get to choose as well. This may or may not go along with the choice of the group.
 - ★ We will then come together as a class and discuss why some were the same and why some were different. I will then inform the class that this is the most realistic way the president is elected. (15 minutes)
2. The students will then go back to their original seats. I will give the students the presidential election of 2000, electoral and popular vote summary.
 - ★ The students will have two minutes to look over the charts. Then, I will explain to the students that the president is chosen by a group of 538 electors acting on behalf of the states and not the citizens. There are two columns one says electoral votes the other says popular votes.
 - ★ Through this worksheet I will explain what the electoral college is and how we actually elect the president of the United States. I will also explain to the students how someone becomes an elector to help choose the president. (10 minutes)

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3. After the students have finished the electoral college summary, I will ask the students why does America have an electoral college? The students will be informed that the framers of the constitution also had problems with this same question.
 - ★ I will give the students the Comparing the framers methods of elections and article about the electoral college.
 - ★ The students will get into pairs and complete the graphic organizer and questions based on the article. I will walk around and make sure each pair is on task completing the worksheet and answer any questions the students may have about the assignment.
 - ★ After the students have completed their worksheets we shall discuss the possible advantages and disadvantages of each choice as well as the questions the students had to complete as a class. (35 minutes)

4. The students will move into the seats and act as the senate. I will assign each group on of the methods the framers discussed about electing a president.
 - ★ I will create four different groups and each group will get a different method to debate.
 - ★ Each group will use their articles and graphic organizers to construct supporting arguments for their position on these methods. The groups will then vote on the best method based on the group with the most persuasive argument. (20 minutes)

Closure: After the students have finished their arguments for the different methods, I will ask the students to write what method they would choose personally to elect the president. The students can use the methods mentioned in the worksheet or create a completely new method not listed on the worksheet if they are not satisfied with the latter. The students will write this on a separate sheet of paper and I will collect these at the end of class. (10 minutes)

Assessment: The assessments for this lesson will be informal. The activity will allow me to assess whether the students are participating in the class work. The discussions and the debates will assess the knowledge the students gained from the worksheets used in class. The closing activity will allow the students to express their own opinion and allow me to assess if they obtained an understanding of the material presented.

Adaptations for Exceptional Students: The handouts that I provide of the notes will give students who are ELL, slower readers, and slower learners a tool to help them focus on what I am saying as opposed to them just taking full notes. I will divide the groups so that people that are fast workers will work with those who are slower workers. Also, ELL students will work with other students who can help translate what I am saying and help them to follow the directions that I will hand out.

Presidential Election of 2000, Electoral and Popular Vote Summary

	George W. Bush		Albert A. Gore, Jr.		Ralph Nader		Electoral votes		
	Popular vote	%	Popular vote	%	Popular vote	%	R	D	G
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	561,094	38	816,015	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 ¹	
Florida	2,912,790	49	2,912,253	49	97,488	2	25		
Georgia	1,419,720	55	1,116,230	43	13,432 ²	1	13		
Hawaii	137,845	37	205,286	56	21,623	6		4	
Idaho	336,937	67	138,637	28	12,292 ²	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 ²	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	872,492	57	638,898	41	23,192	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	813,797	40	1,145,782	56	53,768	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	433,862	62	231,780	33	24,540	4	5		
Nevada	301,575	50	279,978	46	15,008	2	4		
New Hampshire	273,559	48	266,348	47	22,198	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	2,351,209	50	2,186,190	46	117,857	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	785,937	57	565,561	41	20,200	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	336,475	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	2	3		
Total	50,456,002	47.87%	50,999,897	48.38%	2,882,955	2.74%	271	266	

NOTE: Total electoral votes = 538. Total electoral votes needed to win = 270. Dash (—) indicates not on ballot.

Percentages may not add up to 100% due to rounding and other candidates.

1. The District of Columbia has 3 votes. There was 1 abstention.

2. Write-in votes.

(source: <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0876793.html>)

Name: _____

Comparing the Framers' Methods of Election

Directions: Using the articles provided, complete following graphic organizer and reading comprehension questions.

Possible Methods of Electing a President	Advantages	Disadvantages
1) Congress chooses the President		
2) State Legislatures choose the President		
3) President is elected by direct/popular vote		
4) Electoral College		

Answer:

- 1. How many electors are there and how are they chosen?**
- 2. Explain the “winner-take-all” system.**
- 3. What is a “faithless elector?” What is the potential problem with this type of elector?**
- 4. Based on what you have learned, do you think the Electoral College is the best way to determine elections, or would another system work better? Explain.**

Comparing the Framers' Methods of Election (Teacher's Guide)

Possible Methods of Electing a President	Possible Advantages	Possible Disadvantages
1) Congress chooses the President	-ensures that "reasonably informed" people are voting -Congress is supposed to represent the people -less chance of miscounting/easier to coordinate -ensures states are adequately represented by population	-suspicion of possible corruption, i.e. bribes -fears of dividing the Congress -fear of upsetting balance of power
2) State Legislatures choose the President	-gives equal representation to people -less chance of miscounting/easier to coordinate	-fear that Federal authority would be compromised in exchange for votes (might weaken executive branch)
3) President is elected by direct/popular vote	-representatives don't always "represent" accurately -avenue for majority rule -ensures that vote is actually for intended candidate	-impractical; difficult to get everyone's vote -way too much room for error and/or corruption (think Florida, 2000)
4) Electoral College	(see pros in Article #1)	(see cons in article #1)

1. There are 538 total. Each state is allocated a number of Electors equal to the number of its U.S. Representatives (which is based on population) plus its two senators (in NC the total electoral votes is 15). The political parties of each state submit a list of individuals pledged to their candidates for president that is equal in number to the number of electoral votes for the state to the State's chief election official. Each party determines its own way of choosing its electors.
2. A method of counting votes where the candidate who wins the most votes wins the entire allotment of Electoral College votes for that state
3. An Elector who goes against the popular vote in a state.

The Mysterious Workings of the Electoral College -- Printout -- TIME

TIME

Wednesday, Sep. 20, 2000

What It All Means: The Mysterious Workings of the Electoral College

By Jessica Reaves

Every time there is a close presidential election, there's a great rumbling across America. What is the electoral college and why don't we just cast our own darn votes directly? The question has been asked again and again — only to be forgotten by the time the next election cycle rolls around.

This year, of course, the clamoring has reached epic proportions. With the election centering around a few voters in one state, there is the distinct possibility that one candidate could win the popular vote and yet lose the election.

If you've been standing by and merely watching the fray because you don't feel you have enough of the facts to participate, your pacifist days are over. Here is the ammunition for the water cooler battles ahead:

What is the electoral college?

First of all, it's not really a college.

During presidential election years, each state party chooses a group of electors (usually party loyalists) who've pledged their votes to that party's presidential candidate. This may come as a surprise, but on the first Tuesday in November, when we all head off to the polls, we don't vote for directly for the presidential candidate. We vote for the slate of electors who go on to vote at the electoral college. So, for example, because Governor Bush's slate won the plurality of the vote in Texas, his group of electors will represent that state. And in December, the winning slates gather for state meetings, where the votes for president are officially cast.

Can the electors change their minds?

In some cases, yes. Only about half the states legally require their electors to vote for their assigned candidate; the others are, ostensibly, free to change their votes. In addition, the penalties for breaking the rules are so minimal as to be virtually meaningless. However, only about five electors — who are described as "faithless" — have ever done that, though most of those have occurred in the last 30 years.

Are there any exceptions?

Yes. Nebraska and Maine use a proportional vote system. Two of each state's electors are chosen by the statewide vote, while the remaining members are determined by the popular vote within each congressional district.

How did the electoral college come about?

It was devised by the founders as a means of resolving two concerns. First was to get away from the parliamentary model, where the elected representatives vote for the chief executive (as, for example, happens in Britain, where the majority party votes to select the prime minister). It was their belief that appointing electors to represent each state was more democratic than allowing Congress to elect the president. Second, at the time, communication and travel was much more difficult than today, and voting for delegates at a local level appeared easier and less open to corruption than counting every popular vote at a national level.

Does every state get the same number of electors?

No. Sorry, South Dakota. Each state has as many electors as it has U.S. senators (always two) and U.S. representatives (which depends on census population counts). Each state, therefore, has a minimum of three electors, with California leading the pack with 54. The District of Columbia has three electors, the same as the least populous states.

Can two candidates split one state's electoral votes?

Nope. Except in Maine and Nebraska, the electoral votes operate on a winner-take-all system. That's why the candidates spend so much time and money campaigning in electoral gold mines like California, Texas and New York — and relatively little time in Montana.

Doesn't this system mean a candidate could win the popular vote and still not become president?

It sure does. In fact, that's happened at least twice in American history before now. In 1876 and 1888 Rutherford B. Hayes and Benjamin Harrison, respectively, became president without winning the popular vote. The same thing could manifest itself this year if Al Gore loses the electoral vote but wins the popular vote.

What happens if the electoral votes are evenly split?

We head to Capitol Hill, where the U.S. House of Representatives would choose the President (each state delegation casting one vote) and the Senate would pick a vice president (each senator votes). Because the Republicans control the House, that would almost certainly result in a victory for Bush. The Senate situation is more tantalizing. If, as seems likely, the upper chamber is split 50-50 between the parties, the deciding vote is in the hands of the president of the Senate — who is none other than Vice President Al Gore.

So why don't we just cast our own darn votes?

Defenders of the current system argue that an individual vote would favor voter-rich urban centers and leach power from rural areas. Besides, many maintain, we've always done it this way, and nobody wants to change the Constitution if we don't absolutely have to.

Critics, on the other hand, argue the electoral college is at best an outdated relic, and at worst a looming political disaster. If more than a simple plurality of voters in Texas vote for Bush, every vote over the plurality is a "wasted vote," in political science terms. Why shouldn't those votes count for Bush in the general election?

What does our current presidential stalemate mean for the electoral college?

It means more people are aware of the college's existence and that more Americans understand the electoral process. It also likely to result in a groundswell of support for its abolition, as voters more clearly understand the potential for the winner of the popular vote to lose the electoral vote. In fact, polls in recent years have consistently shown that a majority of voters favor its demise.

Will the electoral college exist 20 years from now?

Before the current campaign, the answer would probably have been yes. Outside of academia and certain political circles, there has been no sense of urgency to change the system. However, if it turns out that the candidate with fewer popular votes wins the election, there will be considerable pressure to amend the Constitution.

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C-SPAN's 2016 Electoral College Map

