

Electoral College

The failsafe of the Republic

A Practical, Prudent and Elegant Solution

By

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The electoral college is the most enduring balancing act of any republic on earth. The electoral college ensures that our system works, forcing national parties to compete nationally, protecting the interests of different regions while simultaneously giving the individual a voice.

Without the electoral college the United States' may never have survived the political turmoil of the 1820s and '30s let alone the carnage of the Civil War, the heartbreak of the post war years, the trauma of two World Wars and the slow teetering malaise of the 21st century.

Today the electoral college, unique among the worlds democracies, is over two hundred years old. It is a foundation of our Republic and a bulwark of our democracy. As Americans we all owe it to ourselves and our country to understand the reasons why the electoral college exists and the protective role it still plays in our lives today.

The electoral college along with the Bill of Rights and the Census were the elegant, practical and —as history would prove— prudent answers to the problems of an expansive and evolving Republic. The electoral college gives a weighted vote by population to each state, ensuring that each state has a proportional voice in national affairs. Importantly it ensures that no national candidate can afford to throw away the electoral college votes of a low population state in favor of dominating the vote tally in a heavy population state.

The federal census ensures that as the population shifts over the decades the electoral vote count of each state reflects the proportional

population of the state.

In recent decades the sunbelt states have gained electoral votes as New England states have lost population.

Florida has thus gained population and electoral votes as New York has lost population and electoral votes. Presidential campaigns reflect these changes. The electoral college has succeeded in keeping presidential campaigns national. You cannot become president of the United States by simply winning a bare majority of the popular vote by winning 90% of the vote in a few dense urban areas. To become president of the United States you do not have to win the popular vote, but you must compete on a national level.

Keeping presidential elections national is one of the reasons we have succeeded in maintaining the Union. If, in the 1840s or '50s the office of the president had been elected by popular vote we may not have had a Lincoln or a Union today. The popular vote is too easily swayed by one region with one knee jerk issue. In the 1840s Virginia was the state that could have wagged the political dog. In 2020 California could be the state that wags the political dog. Neither result would reflect the nation as a whole.

In general the popular vote has reflected the electoral college vote. But they are not identical. Nor should they be. It ensures that a president must have campaigned on a national basis, it ensures that a president must have won the votes of a majority of voters in a majority of states.

More cynically, the electoral college reduces electoral fraud. Every political junkie in America knows there have always been a few districts where the voters are still voting twenty years after they have died. The electoral college helps ensure that that kind of old school ballot box stuffing remains a regional embarrassment rather than a nationwide result skewing disgrace.

For better or worse, on a Tuesday night in November the electoral college is not an oddity of the 18th century. Instead it is one of many fail safes of the Republic. A prudent, practical and elegant way to ensure a fair election in this great Republic.