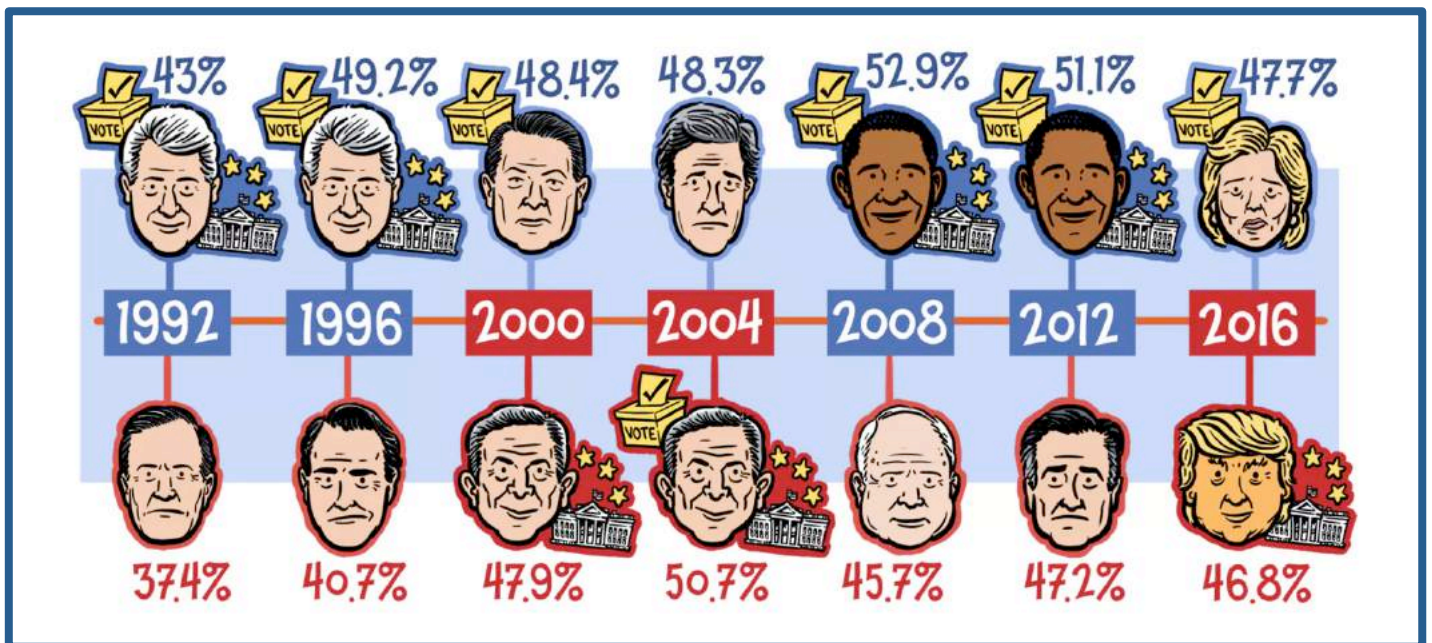


Is the Electoral College Democratic?



Andy Warner (2016), "The Electoral College Isn't Working. Here's How It May Die," *The Nib*, [Accessed here](#).

Supporting Questions

1. What is the Electoral College?
2. Why do we have an Electoral College?
3. When has the Electoral College superseded the popular vote?
4. What are the competing positions on the Electoral College today?

TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK

9th Grade Government Inquiry

Is the Electoral College Democratic?

KASS Standard	HSS.2.15: Students understand the Government of the United States, established by the Constitution, embodies the purposes, values and principles (e.g., liberty, justice, individual human dignity, the rules of law) of American representative democracy.
Staging the Compelling Question	Watch the PBS video “How the 2016 Election Put Pressure on the Electoral College.” Write a brief claim about whether or not you support the Electoral College and why.

Supporting Question 1	Supporting Question 2	Supporting Question 3	Supporting Question 4
What is the Electoral College?	Why do we have an Electoral College?	When has the Electoral College superseded the popular vote?	What are contemporary competing positions on the Electoral College today?
Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task	Formative Performance Task
Create a definition for the Electoral College. Include a symbol or graphic to accompany the definition.	Make a bulleted list of the reasons America has an Electoral College.	Write a paragraph detailing one example of when the Electoral College superseded the popular vote.	Create an evidentiary T-Chart outlining competing positions of the electoral college, cite evidence for each position.
Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources	Featured Sources
Source A: TedEd, “Does Your Vote Count?”	Source A: Excerpt from article, “Why the Electoral College” Source B: “Founding Fathers Debate Electoral College” Source C: “How the Electoral College Works: Constitutional Origins”	Source A: “The Electoral College Isn’t Working” Source B: “Presidents Winning Without Popular Vote” Source C: “Voter Map Website: Year 2000” Source D: 2016 Electoral College Voter Results	<i>Previous tasks’ sources</i> Source A: “Faithless Electors” Source B: Political Cartoon Bank Source C: “The United States Needs the Electoral College More Than Ever Before” Source E: “Time to End the Electoral College”

Summative Performance Task	ARGUMENT: Is the Electoral College democratic? Construct an argument (e.g., detailed outline, poster, essay) that addresses the compelling question using specific claims and relevant evidence from historical and contemporary sources, while acknowledging competing views.
Taking Informed Action	UNDERSTAND Research the differing opinions about the Electoral College in your state and determine where your representatives stand on keeping or abandoning the Electoral College. ASSESS Determine a position on whether the Electoral college should be kept or abandoned. ACT Write a letter to your representative agreeing or disagreeing with their position, providing evidence for your stance.

Overview

Inquiry Description

This inquiry leads students through an investigation of the Electoral College. By investigating the compelling question “Is the Electoral College democratic?” students evaluate their preexisting ideas surrounding democracy as well as explore the reality of how elections work in America. The formative performance tasks build on knowledge and skills through the course of the inquiry and help students understand the historical context of the Electoral College as well as the modern day implications of this system. Students create an evidence-based argument about whether or not they feel the Electoral College is a democratic process.

It is important to note that this inquiry requires prerequisite knowledge of historical events and ideas. Thus, students should have already studied the basic principles of democracy as well as the events leading up to the writing of the Constitution. They should also understand the historical context under which the Constitution was written.

Note: This inquiry is expected to take three 90-minute class periods. The inquiry time frame could expand if teachers think their students need additional instructional experiences (i.e., supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources). Teachers are encouraged to adapt the inquiries in order to meet the needs and interests of their particular students. Resources can also be modified as necessary to meet individualized education programs (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans for students with disabilities.

Structure of the Inquiry

In addressing the compelling question “Is the Electoral College democratic?” students work through a series of supporting questions, formative performance tasks, and featured sources in order to construct an argument supported by evidence while acknowledging competing perspectives.

Staging the Compelling Question

In staging the compelling question, “Is the Electoral College democratic?” teachers may prompt students with a short PBS clip outlining how the 2016 election brought pressure to the debate concerning the Electoral College. Students will be asked to write a brief claim about whether or not they feel the Electoral College is democratic based off of the information from the video. This activity will get the students thinking about their initial ideas and will allow them to consider how their opinion evolved through the course of the inquiry.

Supporting Question 1

The first supporting question—“What is the Electoral College?”—has students watch a short video in order to create a working definition of the Electoral College. The formative performance task asks students to create a definition for the Electoral College in their own words. The task also asks the students to include a symbol or graphic to accompany their definition. The featured sources for this question help provide background information to students about the Electoral



TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK

College and why America chose this system in the first place. Featured Source A is a *TedEd* video explaining the process of the Electoral College while also briefly touching on the historical contexts in which it enacted.

Supporting Question 2

For the second supporting question—“Why do we have an Electoral College?”—students investigate the reasons America has an Electoral College. The formative performance task asks students to make a bulleted list of the reasons America has an Electoral College. In addition to the resources from the previous supporting question, the featured sources provide students with additional materials that allow them to investigate the different historical reasons for having an Electoral College. Featured Source A is an excerpt from the article, “Why the Electoral College?” explaining reasons grounded in the history of the time. Featured Source B is a political cartoon about the voting power of slave states. Featured Source C is an excerpt from the article, “How the Electoral College Works: Constitutional Origins” which explains more historical reasons for the Electoral College.

Supporting Question 3

The third supporting question—“When has the Electoral College superseded the popular vote?”—asks students to investigate incidences of the popular vote being overruled by the Electoral College. The formative performance task asks students to write a paragraph detailing one example of when the Electoral College superseded the popular vote. In addition to the previous featured sources, the sources for this task direct students to instances when the Electoral College ruled differently than the popular vote. Featured Source A is a political cartoon illustrating the last few presidential candidates as popular vote winners versus Electoral College winners. Featured Source B is an article pertaining to which presidents have won the election without the popular vote. Featured Source C is a voter map from the 2000 election. Featured Source D is the 2016 Electoral College voter results.

Supporting Question 4

The fourth supporting question—“What are the contemporary competing positions on the Electoral College today?”—asks students to look at both sides of the controversy surrounding the Electoral College. The formative performance task asks students to create an evidentiary T-chart outlining competing positions of the Electoral College and cite evidence for each position. In addition to the previous featured sources, the sources for this task go deeper on issues surrounding the Electoral College in the modern day. These sources are exclusively contemporary sources, versus the more historically based sources of previous performance tasks. Featured Source A is an excerpt from an article about faithless electors. Featured Source B is a bank of political cartoons surrounding the use of the Electoral College in the modern era. Featured Source C is an opinion piece listing the reasons America should keep the Electoral College in place. Featured source D is an opinion piece arguing that the Electoral College should be abandoned in favor of the popular vote. Featured Source F is all the featured sources from formative performance tasks 1, 2 and 3.

Summative Performance Task

At this point in the inquiry, students have examined the historical reasons for the Electoral College. They have also investigated both sides of the modern day debate over whether or not to keep the Electoral College in place.

Students should be expected to demonstrate the breadth of their understandings and their abilities to use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims. In this task, students construct an evidence-based argument using multiple sources to answer the compelling question “Is the Electoral College democratic?” It is important to note that students’ arguments could take a variety of forms, including a detailed outline, poster, or essay.

Students’ arguments will likely vary, but could include any of the following:

- The Electoral College is not democratic because most states have a winner take all system that ignores the votes of the minority.
- The Electoral College is not democratic because it was established in the Constitution by the founding fathers as a means of security for America’s elections and ensuring power to slaves states. However, that system is antiquated and not longer fits modern society.
- The Electoral College is not democratic because not every individual vote counts, thus the electoral vote does not always reflect the popular vote (e.g. 1824, 1876, 1888, 2000, 2016).
- The Electoral College is democratic because we elect the people who represent our vote and it also ensures small states’ votes are protected.

Students have the opportunity to Take Informed Action by drawing on their understandings of democracy and whether or not they feel the Electoral College properly represents their voice. To *understand*, students can research the differing opinions about the Electoral College in their state and determine where their representatives stand on keeping or abandoning the Electoral College. To *assess* the issue, students determine their position on the argument based on information from this inquiry and their individual research. To *act*, students should write a letter to their representative agreeing or disagreeing with their position and provide evidence for their stance.

Staging the Compelling Question

Featured Source

Source A: PBS, "How 2016 put pressure on the Electoral College". December 19, 2016. Run time: 3:58.

The image is a screenshot of a video player interface. On the left, there is a video thumbnail showing several people in suits sitting at a table, looking at and pointing to documents. The video player controls at the bottom show a play button, a progress bar at 00:00 / 03:58, and settings and full-screen icons. On the right side of the player, the title "How 2016 put pressure on the Electoral College" is displayed in large white text. Below the title, the date and time "Dec 19, 2016 7:40 PM EDT" are shown. At the top right of the player area, there are links for "Full Episodes", "Podcasts", and "Subscribe". The PBS News Hour logo is visible in the top left corner of the player area.

Video can be accessed through this link: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/2016-put-pressure-electoral-college>

Supporting Question 1

Featured Source

Source A: TedEd, Electoral College Video, "Does your vote count? The Electoral College explained by Christina Greer". November 1, 2012. Run time: 5:21.



Video can be accessed through this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W9H3gvnN468>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source A: Excerpt from History Central article, “Why the Electoral College?” by Marc Schulman, with quote from Federalist Paper 68 (Alexander Hamilton).

The Electoral College was created for two reasons. The first purpose was to create a buffer between population and the selection of a President. The second as part of the structure of the government that gave extra power to the smaller states.

The first reason that the founders created the Electoral College is hard to understand today. The founding fathers were afraid of direct election to the Presidency. They feared a tyrant could manipulate public opinion and come to power. Hamilton wrote in the Federalist Papers:

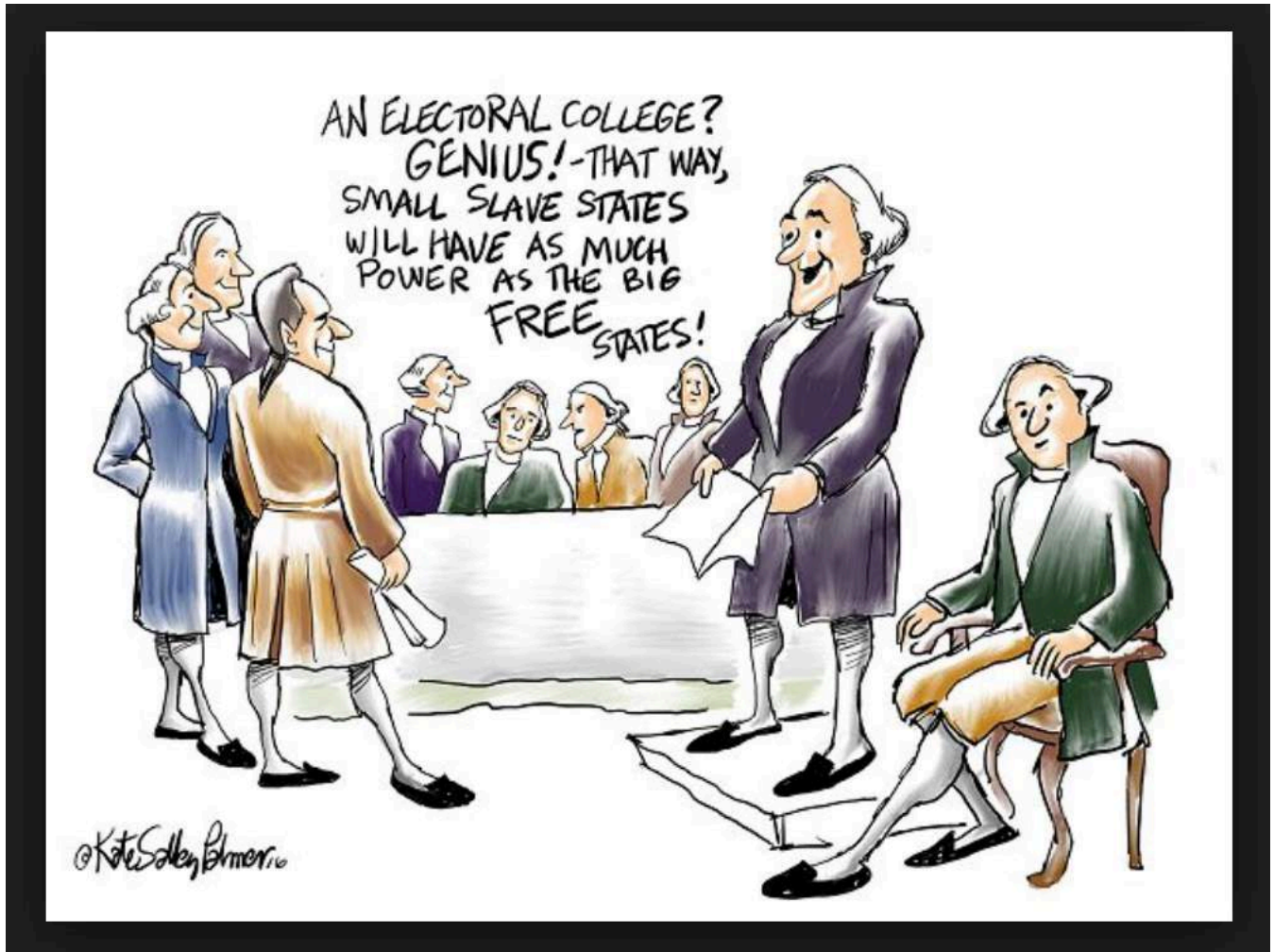
It was equally desirable, that the immediate election should be made by men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station, and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation, and to a judicious combination of all the reasons and inducements which were proper to govern their choice. A small number of persons, selected by their fellow-citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations. It was also peculiarly desirable to afford as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder. This evil was not least to be dreaded in the election of a magistrate, who was to have so important an agency in the administration of the government as the President of the United States. But the precautions which have been so happily concerted in the system under consideration, promise an effectual security against this mischief.

Article can be accessed through this link: <https://www.historycentral.com/elections/Electoralcollgwhy.html>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source B: *Founding Fathers Debate Electoral College*. Illustrated by Kate Salley Palmer for the *Greenville Journal*, 2016.



Cartoon can be accessed through this link: <http://editorialcartoonists.com/cartoon/display.cfm/155883/>

Supporting Question 2

Featured Source

Source C: “How the Electoral College Works: Constitutional Origins and Current Functions.” Published in *Congressional Digest*, January 2017.

CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGINS:

Constitutional Origins The Constitutional Convention of 1787 considered several methods of electing the President, including selection by Congress, by the governors of the States, by the State legislatures, by a special group of Members of Congress chosen by lot, and by direct popular election. None of these alternatives, however, proved satisfactory to the convention delegates.

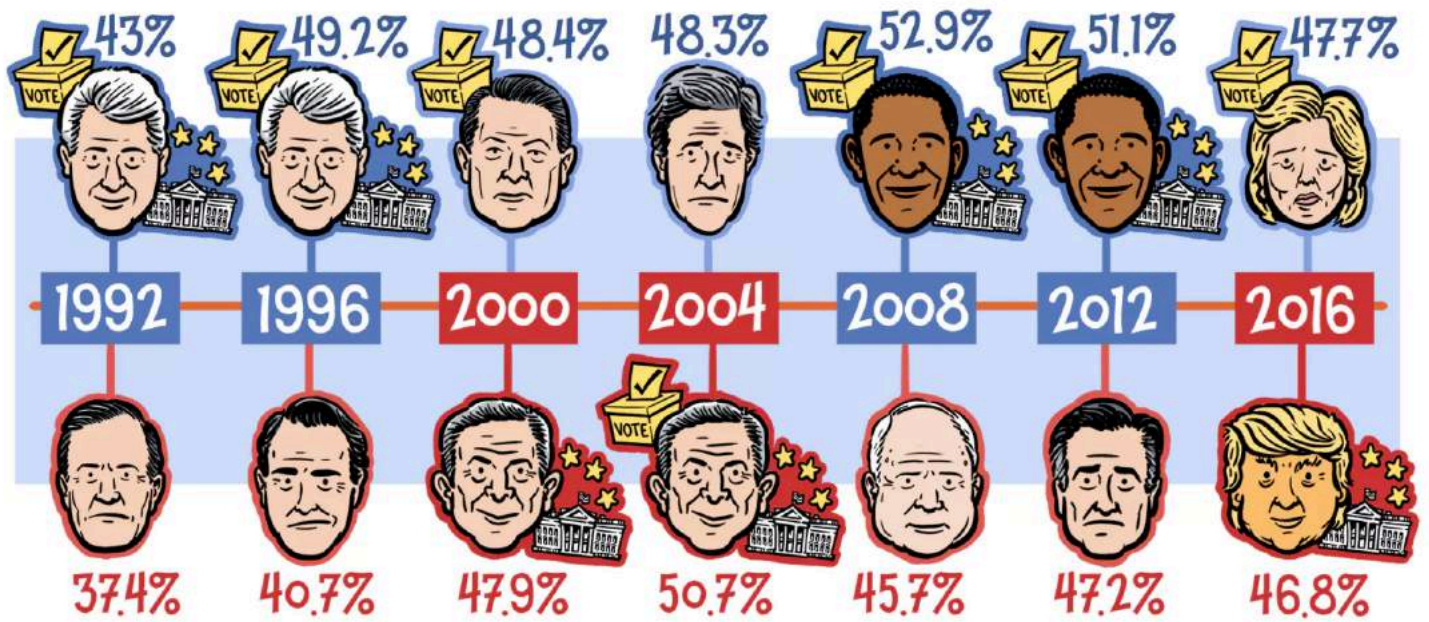
Late in the convention, the matter was referred to the Committee of Eleven on Postponed Matters, which devised the Electoral College system in its original form. This plan, which met with widespread approval by the delegates, was incorporated into the final document with only minor changes. As devised by the committee, the Electoral College met several standards. It sought to:

- reconcile and balance differing State and Federal interests;
- give the State legislatures the authority to provide their preferred means of choosing the electors, including by popular vote, selection by the legislature itself, or any other method; From the Library of Congress, Congressional Research Service report *The Electoral College: How It Works in Contemporary Presidential Elections*, April 13, 2016. See <https://lfas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RL32611.pdf>
- by providing the “constant two” “senatorial” or at-large electors, afford the “smaller” States some additional leverage, so the election process would not be totally dominated by the more populous states;
- preserve the presidency as independent of Congress for election and reelection; and
- generally insulate the election process from political manipulation.

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source A: "The Electoral College Isn't Working," Illustrated by Andy Warner for the Nib.com, November 21, 2016.



Cartoon can be accessed through this link: <https://thenib.com/the-electoral-college-isn-t-working-here-s-how-it-might-die>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source B: "Presidents Winning Without the Popular Vote," D'Angelo Gore for *FactCheck.org*. December 23, 2016.

Q: How many times was a president elected who did not win the popular vote?

A: It has happened five times.

The 2016 election was the most recent when the candidate who received the greatest number of electoral votes, and thus won the presidency, didn't win the popular vote. But this scenario has played out in our nation's history before.

In 1824, John Quincy Adams was elected president despite not winning either the popular vote or the electoral vote. Andrew Jackson was the winner in both categories. Jackson received 38,000 more popular votes than Adams, and beat him in the electoral vote 99 to 84. Despite his victories, Jackson didn't reach the majority 131 votes needed in the Electoral College to be declared president. In fact, neither candidate did. The decision went to the House of Representatives, which voted Adams into the White House.

In 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes won the election (by a margin of one electoral vote), but he lost the popular vote by more than 250,000 ballots to Samuel J. Tilden.

In 1888, Benjamin Harrison received 233 electoral votes to Grover Cleveland's 168, winning the presidency. But Harrison lost the popular vote by more than 90,000 votes.

In 2000, George W. Bush was declared the winner of the general election and became the 43rd president, but he didn't win the popular vote either. Al Gore holds that distinction, garnering about 540,000 more votes than Bush. However, Bush won the electoral vote, 271 to 266.

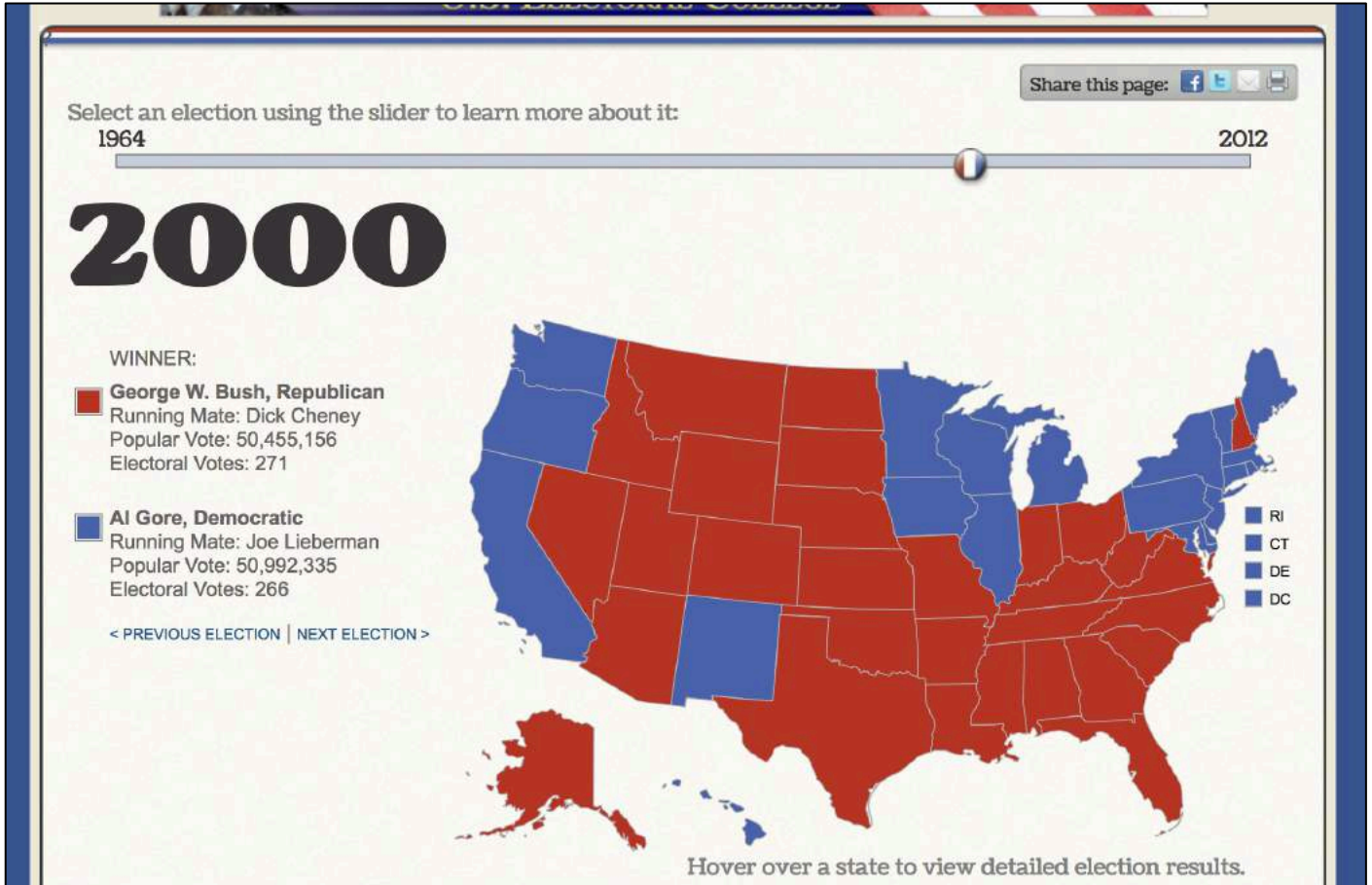
In 2016, Donald Trump won the electoral vote by 304 to 227 over Hillary Clinton, but Trump lost the popular vote. Clinton received nearly 2.9 million more votes than Trump, according to an analysis by the Associated Press of the certified results in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Website can be accessed through this link: <https://www.factcheck.org/2008/03/presidents-winning-without-popular-vote/>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source C: "Voter Map: Year 2000," National Archives and Records Administration.



Map can be accessed through this link: <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/map/historic.html#2000>

Supporting Question 3

Featured Source

Source D: "2016 Electoral College Voter Results," National Archives and Records Administration.

2016 Electoral College Results

Election	<u>2016</u>		
President	Donald J. Trump [R]		
Main Opponent	Hillary Clinton [D]		
Electoral Vote*	Winner: 304	Main Opponent: 227	Total/Majority: 538/270
Popular Vote**	Winner: 62,955,202	Main Opponent: 65,794,399	
Vice President	Michael R. Pence (305)		
V.P. Opponent:	Timothy Kaine (227)		
Notes	<p>*Maine distributes its electoral votes proportionally, with two at-large electors representing the statewide winning presidential and vice presidential candidates and one elector each representing the winners from its two Congressional districts. For the first time since adopting this system, Maine's four electoral votes were split between the two major party tickets. The Clinton-Kaine ticket won the state and received the two at-large electors, as well as the electors from the First Congressional District, where Clinton-Kaine also won. However, the Trump-Pence ticket won the Second Congressional District and, thus, received its one elector. Also, there were faithless votes cast for president and vice president in Hawaii, Texas, and Washington.</p> <p>**Popular vote totals are derived from the states' Certificates of Ascertainment. Donald J. Trump received fewer popular votes than Hillary Clinton, but received a majority of electoral votes.</p>		

Chart can be accessed through this link: <https://www.archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/2016/election-results.html>

Supporting Question 4

Featured Source**Source A:** "The Electors: Ratifying the Voter's Choice," *History.com Editors*. August 21, 2018.

The Electors: Ratifying the Voter's Choice

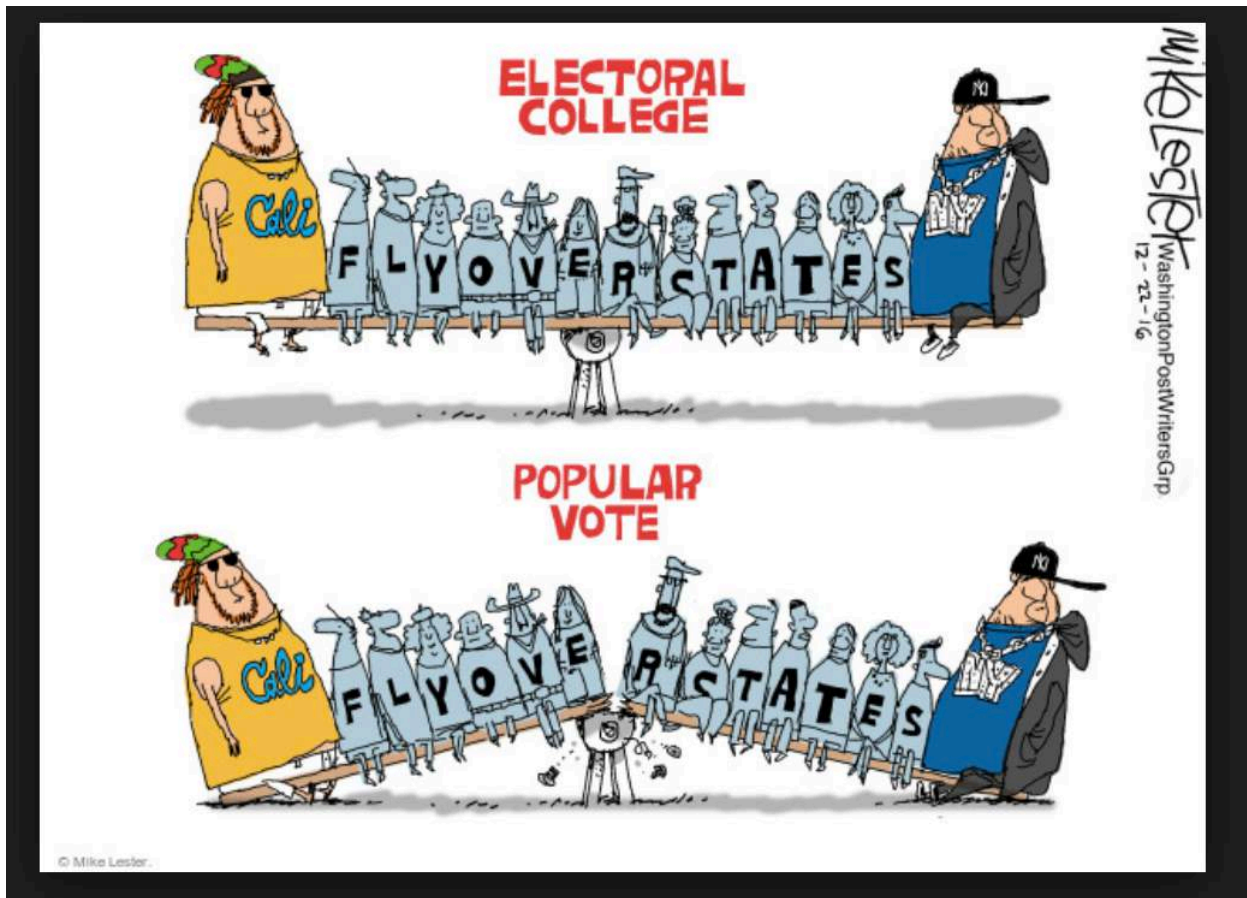
Presidential electors in contemporary elections are expected, and, in many cases pledged, to vote for the candidates of the party that nominated them. While there is evidence that the founders assumed the electors would be independent actors, weighing the merits of competing presidential candidates, they have been regarded as agents of the public will since the first decade under the Constitution. They are expected to vote for the presidential and vice presidential candidates of the party that nominated them. Notwithstanding this expectation, individual electors have sometimes not honored their commitment, voting for a different candidate or candidates than the ones to whom they were pledged; they are known as "faithless" or "unfaithful" electors. In fact, the balance of opinion by constitutional scholars is that, once electors have been chosen, they remain constitutionally free agents, able to vote for any candidate who meets the requirements for President and Vice President. Faithless electors have, however, been few in number (in the 20 century, one each in 1948, 1956, 1960, 1968, 1972, 1976, 1988, and 2000), and have never influenced the outcome of a presidential election.

Article can be accessed through this link: <https://www.history.com/topics/us-presidents/electoral-college>

Supporting Question 4

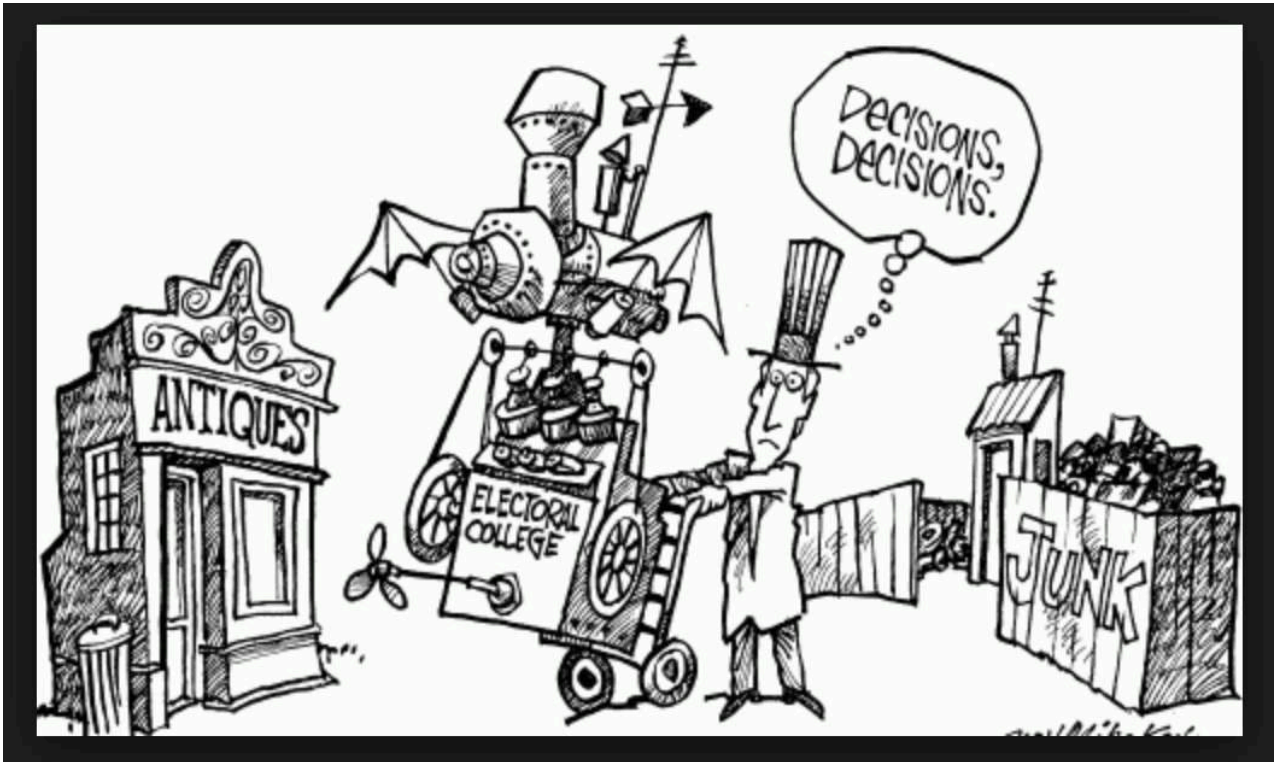
Featured Source

Source B: Political Cartoon Bank.
 Flyover States Cartoon, Illustrated by Mike Lester for the Washington Post, December 22, 2016.
 Uncle Sam Cartoon, Illustrated by Mike Kagle, December 12, 2004.
 Your Vote Matters Cartoon, Illustrated by Charlotte Seton, 2018.



Article can be accessed through this link: <http://www.cartoonistgroup.com/store/add.php?iid=152566>

TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK



Article can be accessed through this link: <https://www.intoon.com/cartoons.cfm/id/1488>



Article can be accessed through this link: redwoodbark.org

Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source C: "The United States Needs the Electoral College More Than Ever Before." Jeffrey H. Anderson. *Opposing Viewpoints Online Collection*, Gale, 2018. *Opposing Viewpoints in Context*, Accessed 15 Oct. 2018. http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/HSGGBF048183074/OVIC?u=uky_main&sid=OVIC&xid=35076069. Originally published as "The Founders Knew What They Were Doing with the Electoral College," *The Weekly Standard*, 27 Dec. 2016.

Democracy's Safety Net

From the Constitutional Convention's opening days, delegates debated how the president should be selected. Yet their decision to have that office chosen by electoral vote was one of the last decisions they made. In one enduringly important respect, the system they chose is a departure from a national popular vote. That is the Electoral College's weighting mechanism, which grants each state a particular say in the overall result. This remains just as good an idea as it was in 1789. Indeed, in nine key ways, the test of time has proven the Electoral College to be an ever better idea than the convention delegates realized:

1. It requires a candidate to have cross-sectional support. The Electoral College makes it hard for a candidate to win who is not supported by large swaths of the country, from sea to shining sea. In this way, it is a nod to—yes—diversity. A presidential candidate cannot easily prevail by dominating just a few heavily populated regions or municipalities. He or she must appeal to the nation as a whole.
2. It almost always produces a clear winner. A national popular vote would at times result in razor-thin margins, but the electoral vote has rarely been close. Over the past century, the presidency has been decided by fewer than 100 electoral votes only five times and by fewer than 50 only twice. (It was decided by 77 this year.) The median margin of victory across the past 100 years has been a whopping 277 electoral votes. This has certainly added to the president's perceived legitimacy.
3. It avoids the specter of a nationwide recount. To this day, no one really knows who won the popular vote between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon—a contest Kennedy nevertheless won by 84 electoral votes. (Apart from the dead voters in Cook County, Illinois, it comes down to how the popular vote is counted in Alabama, where people cast their votes for delegates, not candidates.) Imagine if such an election were to require a nationwide recount, with the results of that recount potentially being disputed. Without hyperbole, a constitutional crisis could easily follow. And the more divided the nation gets, the more dire such a scenario would become.
4. It reduces the influence of fraud. With many Democratic-leaning states adamantly refusing to check voters' IDs, or relying almost exclusively on mail-in ballots, a nationwide popular vote would be an open invitation to fraud. Even if more Democratic-leaning states started ID'ing voters, many of them—such as California—give driver's licenses to illegal immigrants, so checking their IDs would largely be pointless. Such states would pad their votes and illegitimately alter the national tally.
5. It reduces the incentive to depart from Election Day. All other things being equal, the longer a state keeps open its polls, the more votes will be cast in that state. A national popular vote would give states a perverse incentive to turn Election Day into Election Week, Fortnight, Month, or even Year—the better to influence the national tally. Meanwhile, states that stick to the time-honored notion of Election Day, a day of civic pride and shared citizenship, would reduce their influence on the election.
6. It reflects federalism. We are the United States of America, not a nation without state designations or borders. It is altogether appropriate that states should matter in determining who will be president.

TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK

7. It is weighted just like Congress. If the Electoral College is illegitimate, then so is the Senate, with its equal-state representation (the only part of the Constitution that the Constitution itself says cannot be amended). When critics of the electoral vote complain about its departure from the supposedly sacrosanct principle of “one person, one vote,” they seem oblivious to the fact that each state’s number of electoral votes is simply equal to its number of representatives (population-based) plus its number of senators (two per state). In other words, representation in Congress “violates” this same principle—and by exactly the same amount as the Electoral College does. Smaller states didn’t want to be entirely dominated by larger states in the union they all agreed to form. The same motivation underlies the Electoral College. Its history is not tainted. Showing great ignorance of the Constitution’s history and structure, the New York Times editorial board recently claimed that the Electoral College is more than just a vestige of the founding era; it is a living symbol of America’s original sin. When slavery was the law of the land, a direct popular vote would have disadvantaged the Southern states, with their large disenfranchised populations. Counting those men and women as three-fifths of a white person, as the Constitution originally did, gave the slave states more electoral votes.

8. This is rich. Aside from the fact that slavery was never “the law of the land” (but was the law in the South), the Electoral College had nothing to do with that peculiar institution. That fractional calculation pertained to the House of Representatives, in which states’ representation was originally based on their number of free persons plus three-fifths of all slaves, with the three-fifths clause a holdover from the Articles of Confederation. Is the House, then, “a living symbol of America’s original sin”? If it’s not—and it’s not—then the Electoral College certainly isn’t. Moreover, the three-fifths clause has been a dead letter since 1865. It abides by the principle of majority rule. A candidate cannot win the electoral vote with a mere plurality but must obtain a majority. Advocates of a national popular vote want to abandon the principle of majority rule and allow a plurality to prevail. They would like Hillary Clinton (who won 48 percent of the popular vote) to be declared president despite her failing to win a majority of counties, states, or votes.

9. The Electoral College has not only served us well but is needed more than ever in a country that’s increasingly divided. Maybe instead of calling for abandoning this time-honored method of choosing the president, liberals should simply pick better candidates. Hillary Clinton managed to do something no one had done for 140 years: win the popular vote by 2 points yet still fail to win the electoral vote. Her ineptitude is no reason to question the Founders’ brilliance.

Supporting Question 4

Featured Source

Source D: "Time to End the Electoral College," *New York Times*, December 20, 2016.

By overwhelming majorities, Americans would prefer to elect the president by direct popular vote, not filtered through the antiquated mechanism of the Electoral College. They understand, on a gut level, the basic fairness of awarding the nation's highest office on the same basis as every other elected office -- to the person who gets the most votes.

But for now, the presidency is still decided by 538 electors. And on Monday, despite much talk in recent weeks about urging those electors to block Donald Trump from the White House, a majority did as expected and cast their ballots for him -- a result Congress will ratify next month.

And so for the second time in 16 years, the candidate who lost the popular vote has won the presidency. Unlike 2000, it wasn't even close. Hillary Clinton beat Mr. Trump by more than 2.8 million votes, or 2.1 percent of the electorate. That's a wider margin than 10 winning candidates enjoyed and the biggest deficit for an incoming president since the 19th century.

Yes, Mr. Trump won under the rules, but the rules should change so that a presidential election reflects the will of Americans and promotes a more participatory democracy. The Electoral College, which is written into the Constitution, is more than just a vestige of the founding era; it is a living symbol of America's original sin. When slavery was the law of the land, a direct popular vote would have disadvantaged the Southern states, with their large disenfranchised populations. Counting those men and women as three-fifths of a white person, as the Constitution originally did, gave the slave states more electoral votes.

Today the college, which allocates electors based on each state's representation in Congress, tips the scales in favor of smaller states; a Wyoming resident's vote counts 3.6 times as much as a Californian's. And because almost all states use a winner-take-all system, the election ends up being fought in just a dozen or so "battleground" states, leaving tens of millions of Americans on the sidelines.

There is an elegant solution: The Constitution establishes the existence of electors, but leaves it up to states to tell them how to vote. Eleven states and the District of Columbia, representing 165 electoral votes, have already passed legislation to have their electors vote for the winner of the national popular vote. The agreement, known as the National Popular Vote interstate compact, would take effect once states representing a majority of electoral votes, currently 270, signed on. This would ensure that the national popular-vote winner would become president.

Conservative opponents of a direct vote say it would give an unfair edge to large, heavily Democratic cities and states. But why should the votes of Americans in California or New York count for less than those in Idaho or Texas? A direct popular vote would treat all Americans equally, no matter where they live -- including, by the way, Republicans in San Francisco and Democrats in Corpus Christi, whose votes are currently worthless. The system as it now operates does a terrible job of representing the nation's demographic and geographic diversity. Almost 138 million Americans went to the polls this year, but Mr. Trump secured his Electoral College victory thanks to fewer than 80,000 votes across three states: Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

This page has opposed the Electoral College for at least 80 years, and it has regardless of the outcome of any given election. (In 2004, President George W. Bush won the popular vote by more than three million, but he could have lost the Electoral College with a switch of fewer than 60,000 votes in Ohio.)

TEACHING THE C3 FRAMEWORK

Many Republicans have endorsed doing away with the Electoral College, including Mr. Trump himself, in 2012. Maybe that's why he keeps claiming falsely that he won the popular vote, or why more than half of Republicans now seem to believe he did. For most reasonable people, it's hard to understand why the loser of the popular vote should wind up running the country.