

# Should the United States continue to use the Electoral College for Presidential Elections?

## Civics



This photograph shows the counting of electoral votes at the United States Capitol on April 14, 2017. Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/pp.print>

## Compelling Question:

### Should the United States continue to use the Electoral College for Presidential Elections?

#### Standard(s)

**CE.8e** The student will apply history and social science skills to examine the political process at the local, state, and national levels of government by describing the role of the Electoral College in the election of the president and vice president.

*The **Electoral College** is the system the United States uses to officially elect the President and Vice President. It was created in 1787 as part of the Constitution. Instead of voters directly choosing the president, voters in each state vote for a group of people called **electors**. These electors then cast the official votes for president. The candidate who gets 270 of those votes becomes president. During this learning experience, students will explore the origins of the Electoral College, review the winner-take-all system, critically evaluate the debates for and against the system, and make a claim using evidence on whether the United States should maintain the Electoral College to elect the President and Vice President.*

#### **Additional Resources:**

- ★ [USA.Gov - Electoral College](#)
- ★ [National Archives - Electoral College](#)
- ★ [National Archives - About Electors](#)
- ★ [National Constitution Center - Introduction to Electoral College Video](#)
- ★ [The Electoral College Explained - Teen Kids News](#) (Provides an overview from a teen’s “newscast”)
- ★ [Washington Post: How the electoral college works](#) (Step by Step with great visuals)



<b>Supporting Question #1</b>	<a href="#">What are the origins of the Electoral College and how has it changed over time?</a>
<b>Supporting Question #2</b>	<a href="#">How does the Winner Take All System of the Electoral College influence campaign strategies?</a>
<b>Supporting Question #3</b>	<a href="#">What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College?</a>

### Featured Sources

**Source A:** [United States Constitution: Article II, Section I, Clause II](#)

**Source B:** [United States Constitution: 12th Amendment](#) (1804)

**Source C:** [United States Constitution: 23rd Amendment](#) (1961)

**Source D:** [40 States that voted for Same Party in 5 Presidential Elections 2008-2024](#) (Map)

**Source E:** [FairVote Maps the 2012 Presidential Campaign](#) (Modified Article and Map)

**Source F:** [2020 Campaign Stops](#) (Map)

**Source G:** [2020 Campaign Ad Spending](#) (in millions) (Map)

**Source H:** [National Archives: Electoral College History](#)

**Source I:** [Why the Electoral College is so Important, Author Paula Ryan](#) (Blog)

**Source J:** [USA In Brief: Elections](#)

**Source K:** [Understanding America's Electoral College](#)



## Supporting Question #1

### Should the United States continue to use the Electoral College for Presidential Elections?

<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Source A:</b> <a href="#">United States Constitution: Article II, Section I, Clause II</a> <b>Source B:</b> <a href="#">United States Constitution: 12th Amendment</a> (1804) <b>Source C:</b> <a href="#">United States Constitution: 23rd Amendment</a> (1961)
<b>Ancillary Documents</b>	<a href="#">Optional Lesson Slideshow</a> <a href="#">Concept Map</a>

This task leads students through an investigation of the origins and development of the Electoral College, specifically focusing on the causes and effects of Article II, Section 1, Clause 2 of the US Constitution, 12th Amendment, and the 23rd Amendment. Students start to think about the best method of electing the United States President.

Formative Performative Tasks	Instructional Snapshot
<p><b>DELIBERATE:</b> Students will analyze the original intent and structure found in Article II, Section 1, Clause 2 and explain historical problems that surfaced. Students will then analyze changes made with the 12th and 23rd Amendments.</p> <p><b>COLLABORATE:</b> With a partner, students will conduct a Think, Pair, Share about possible problems that may occur with each decision about changing the Constitution regarding the Electoral College.</p>	<p><b>INTRODUCTION: Overview of the Electoral College</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Show the video, <a href="#">The Electoral College Explained - Teen Kids News</a>, which provides a broad explanation of how the Electoral College works.</li></ul> <p><b>PART I: Origins and development of the Electoral College</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Teachers provide whole group instruction on CE.8. Specific instruction on the origins and development of the Electoral College should include compromises from the Constitutional Convention, Article II, the census determining representation, how electors are chosen, Twelfth Amendment, Twenty-Third Amendment, popular vote, electoral votes per state, winner take all system, proportional representation (Nebraska and</li></ul>

**PRODUCE:** Students will independently produce a cause-and-effect chart using content vocabulary that accurately summarizes the causes and intended purposes of Article II, Section 1, Clause 2, causes and consequences of the 12th Amendment, and causes and consequences of the 23rd Amendment.

Maine), and number of electoral votes to win. [Optional Electoral College Lesson Slideshow Resource](#)

- During instruction, teachers should embed Sources A-C.
  - For example, after providing instruction on Article II, Section 1, Clause 2, have students complete Source A so they can work on the primary sources while learning the material.
  - When tackling primary sources, teachers may do any of the following to assist with comprehension and learning.
    - Read passages and questions out loud
    - Use specific strategies for reading comprehension including summarizing, encouraging discussion, and building vocabulary.
    - Allow students time to work through reading comprehension questions.
- Upon completion of instruction and Sources A-C, students will complete the concept map independently.

## Supporting Question #2

### How does the Winner Take All System of the Electoral College influence campaign strategies?

<b>Featured Sources</b>	<p><b>Source D:</b> <a href="#">40 States that voted for Same Party in 5 Presidential Elections 2008-2024</a> (Map)</p> <p><b>Source E:</b> <a href="#">FairVote Maps the 2012 Presidential Campaign</a> (Modified Article and Map)</p> <p><b>Source F:</b> <a href="#">2020 Campaign Stops</a> (Map)</p> <p><b>Source G:</b> <a href="#">2020 Campaign Ad Spending</a> (in millions) (Map)</p>
<b>Ancillary Documents</b>	<p><a href="#">Analysis Chart</a></p> <p><b>Teacher’s Guide to Analyzing Charts and Graphs:</b> Public Domain. Available at the Library of Congress. <a href="https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Charts_and_Graphs.pdf">https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Analyzing_Charts_and_Graphs.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Primary Source Analysis Tool:</b> Public Domain. Available at the Library of Congress. <a href="https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf">https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources/documents/Primary_Source_Analysis_Tool_LOC.pdf</a></p> <p><a href="#">FairVote.Org Permission to use website materials</a></p>

This task leads students through an investigation of presidential candidates’ selections of campaign events and focus of advertisement funding. Students will read an article and analyze maps of 21st century Presidential elections and evaluate patterns between election cycles.

Formative Performative Tasks	Instructional Snapshot
<p><b>DELIBERATE:</b> Analyze maps of 21st-century presidential elections to identify patterns in campaign visits, swing states, and advertising concentrations.</p> <p><b>COLLABORATE:</b> Students will exchange ideas about patterns they see in the maps and text.</p> <p><b>PRODUCE:</b> Complete an analysis chart and provide a clear explanation of the patterns they discovered, citing evidence from the article and maps.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Prior to starting Part II, teachers should provide whole group instruction on CE.8. Specific instruction on campaigns should include campaign contributions, the cost of campaigns during presidential elections, influences on campaigns, swing states, and the roles of candidates, volunteers, and media.</li> <li>● Key Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Swing State</a> - A swing state is a state targeted by presidential campaigns because it is believed to be a close race and could "swing" to either candidate.</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Modeling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Teacher should model how to use The Library's Primary Source Analysis tools <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ <a href="#">Library of Congress Analyzing Charts and Graphs Information</a> (Teacher resource)</li> <li>■ <a href="#">Library of Congress Primary Source Analysis Tool (Observe, Reflect, Question)</a> (Fillable analysis tool)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>● Upon completion of instruction, students will complete the formative task independently.</li> <li>● Formative Tasks: Students will analyze various maps and charts, describe patterns, and make a determination how the winner-take-all system impacts candidate's selection of campaign events.</li> </ul>

### Supporting Question #3

#### What are the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College?

<b>Featured Sources</b>	<b>Source H:</b> <a href="#">National Archives: Electoral College History</a> <b>Source I:</b> <a href="#">Why the Electoral College is so Important, Author Paula Ryan</a> (Blog) <b>Source J:</b> <a href="#">USA In Brief: Elections</a> <b>Source K:</b> <a href="#">Understanding America's Electoral College</a> <b>Optional Source:</b> <a href="#">Mr. Citizen, Here is How Little Your Vote Counts for President.</a>
<b>Ancillary Documents</b>	<a href="#">Cost/Benefits Analysis</a>

*The Electoral College was a compromise of the 1787 Constitutional Convention and has evolved over time. After more than 2 centuries of use, a debate continues about its advantages and disadvantages, particularly after a presidential election when the winner of the popular vote does not win the election.*

Formative Performative Tasks	Instructional Snapshot
<p><b>DELIBERATE:</b> Analyze evidence from multiple sources to identify arguments for and against the Electoral College.</p> <p><b>COLLABORATE:</b> Students will participate in a classroom discussion. They will cite evidence, connect observations, and clarify others' ideas with follow-up questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Prior to starting Part III, teachers should provide whole group instruction on CE.8.</li><li>• Modeling<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Teacher should model how to evaluate the information and use the cost benefits chart</li></ul></li><li>• Upon completion of instruction and analysis of the readings, students will complete the formative task independently.</li><li>• Formative Tasks: Students will analyze various maps and charts, describe patterns, and make a determination how the</li></ul>

**PRODUCE:** Create a cost-benefit analysis chart that clearly lists the advantages and disadvantages of the Electoral College based on evidence from the investigation.

winner-take-all system impacts candidate's selection of campaign events.

