

Presidential Election Process

The electoral system of the United States is a two-party system. This means that two parties, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, dominate the political scene and compete for supremacy. Every 4 years, the United States holds a presidential election (always in November) to vote for the president and vice president. Primary elections and caucuses are held 6-9 months ahead of a presidential election. In these early elections, some states require voters to vote within their chosen party, other states do not. The president is not chosen by popular vote. In presidential elections, there is a two-part process. Voters decide state-level contests and electors choose the winner. This is why a presidential candidate can win the popular vote, but be defeated by the Electoral College. This Constitutionally based process of using electors is a compromise between the popular vote by citizens and a vote in Congress.

National Conventions

Each party holds a National Convention to officially select the party's presidential nominee, and vice presidential nominee, adopt a unifying comprehensive party platform, and launch the fall campaign. The **Republican National Convention** is July 15-18, 2024, and will be held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The **Democratic National Convention** is August 19-22, 2024 in Chicago, Illinois. To become a nominee, a candidate typically has to win a majority of votes from the state delegates attending the convention. If a majority is not reached, the delegates at the convention go through rounds of voting to choose the nominee.

Delegates

The number of delegates awarded to each candidate is based on a set of complex rules that vary by state. The rules are set at a national and state level by each party. Chosen delegates are active in their party, state or community leaders, or early supporters of the candidate. Once selected, they attend their party's national convention and can vote for the party's nominee. The delegates' role is very important, for it is the delegates that determine who will be the party's nominee. The presidential and vice presidential nominees from each party will then be placed on the November national ballots.

Electoral College

The Electoral College is not a place. It is a group of people, called electors, chosen to decide who will be the next president and vice president. Each state gets a number of electors based on the number of members of Congress it has (House and Senate). A presidential candidate needs 270 electoral votes to be elected, which is more than half of all electors. The Constitution does not require an elector to vote based on the state's popular vote, most do. If no candidate receives a majority, the vote goes to the House of Representatives to decide.

Usually, a winner is known on election night, but the Electoral College formally votes mid-December when electors meet in their states.

This Year

- On June 27th CNN News is hosting a Presidential debate between President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump without an audience. Uniquely, this debate comes before the National Conventions.
- July 15-18 is the Republican National Convention.
- August 19-22 is the Democratic National Convention.
- September 9th ABC News is hosting the second Presidential debate of this election season, again, without an audience.
- November 5th is the Presidential election

After Reading:

- Highlight any vocabulary you would like clarified.
- What qualities are important to you when choosing a president?
- What events in the recent news do you think are influencing voters in this election?

