

Timetable 2016-2017

2016

JANUARY-JUNE - Political parties choose their candidates in primary elections and caucuses according to individual state

JUNE-SEPTEMBER - Independent presidential filing petitions

JULY 18-21 - Republican Party National Convention in Cleveland, Ohio

JULY 25-28 - Democratic Party National Convention in Philadelphia, PA

NOVEMBER 8 - Election Day

DECEMBER 19 - Joint session of Congress to count ballots cast for President

2017

JANUARY 6 - Joint session of Congress to count Electoral votes.

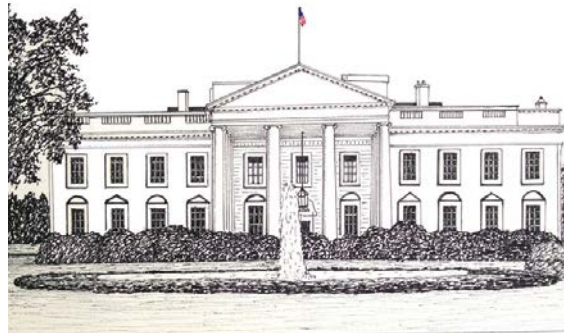
JANUARY 20 - Inauguration Day



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Who Elects the President?



What is the Electoral College?

Courtesy of the
League of Women Voters of the City of New York

Glossary

CAUCUS - Gathering of voters from the same party at the precinct level to choose a candidate.

CENSUS - Constitutional requirement to count citizens every ten years to determine the number of congressional representatives for each state.

CONVENTION - The political parties officially and formally nominate their candidates for office of president and vice president.

DELEGATES - Those individuals selected based on the results of primaries and caucuses, or selected by the state party without being pledged to a candidate. Each party selects its delegates - 4,765 Democrats and 2,472 Republicans in 2016.

ELECTORAL VOTES - Number of electors based on number of congressional districts plus 2 U.S. Senators, i.e. in New York 27 Congressional districts plus 2 U.S. Senators equals 29 electoral votes.

GENERAL ELECTION - All registered voters eligible to vote in November - party affiliation is not required.

POPULAR VOTE - Number of all registered voters who actually vote in the General Election.

PRECINCT - Smallest electoral district within a county.

PRIMARY ELECTION - A preliminary election in which voters of a valid political party nominate candidates for office. *Closed primary*: only voters registered with a certain party may vote in its primary, i.e. New York State has closed primaries. *Open primary*: in some states any registered voter not enrolled in a political party may vote in either the Democratic or Republican Primary Election.

QUADRENNIAL - Recurring every four years.

Q & A

Q: WHAT DOES A COLLEGE HAVE TO DO WITH THE 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION?

A: The Electoral College chooses the President and Vice President of the United States. According to the Constitution: “electors shall meet in their respective States and vote by ballot for President and Vice President.” (Amendment XII)” and the day on which they give their votes shall be the same throughout the United States.” (Article II). These quadrennial formal gatherings in each state capitol are known as a “college.”

Q: HOW ARE THESE ELECTORS CHOSEN?

A: The Constitution allows each state legislature to decide how their electors are chosen. In some states they are selected by state legislators. In others they are elected by voters in Congressional districts, or elected by all the voters in the state. In New York the candidates and the state parties name the electors. They are usually party officials, elected officials, or leading citizens enrolled in the party. The political parties or independent candidates in each state submit a list of individuals pledged to their presidential candidate. (An elector cannot be a member of Congress or hold federal office). Serving as an elector is considered an honor, a reward for faithful service.

Q: COULD WE ELECT A PRESIDENT WHO IS NOT FROM ONE OF THE TWO MAJOR PARTIES?

A: It is possible but not likely, as the present winner-take-all system supports the presidential two-party system. Today the

political party or independent candidate who wins the most popular votes within a state, even by only one vote, wins all of the electoral votes from that state. Maine and Nebraska have variations of proportional representation.

Q: HOW WILL THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WORK IN 2016?

A: On November 8th, voters in each state will cast their ballots for the party state electors representing their choice for president and vice-president. Most state ballots say “Electors for” each set of candidates rather than listing the individual electors on each slate. On December 19th the winning slate of electors will meet in each state capitol and cast their votes. On January 6, 2017 the sealed votes from each state capitol will be opened before a joint session of Congress. The results are certified and the nation has a newly elected president.

Q: HOW MANY VOTES IN THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE DOES IT TAKE TO WIN THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION?

A: The magic number is 270. A majority of at least one more than half is required. The total number of votes in the Electoral College is 538 since there are 100 senators and 435 representatives plus three electors for the District of Columbia.

Q: HOW MANY ELECTORAL VOTES DOES NEW YORK STATE HAVE?

A: New York has 29 electoral votes. Each state has electors equal to the number of its U.S. Senators (always 2) plus the number of its U.S. Representatives. This number may change after each census because the number of each state’s representatives in Congress is based on the census count taken every decade. As a result of the 2010

census the states with over 20 electoral votes are: CA-55, TX-38, FL-29, IL-20, and PA-20. The following each have the minimum three electors: Alaska, Delaware, North and South Dakota, Montana, Vermont, Wyoming, and the District of Columbia.

Q: MUST ELECTORS VOTE FOR THEIR PARTY’S CANDIDATE?

A: Although most states have laws binding electors, this is not mandated by federal law. There have been cases of “defector electors” but such votes have never affected the final outcome of an election.

Q: IF NEITHER CANDIDATE GETS AT LEAST 270 ELECTORAL VOTES, HOW ARE THE PRESIDENT AND VICE PRESIDENT CHOSEN?

A: For the presidency: In January, the newly elected House of Representatives, voting by states—one state equals one vote—elects the president from among the three candidates who received the most electoral votes. A majority of votes (26) is required. (This happened in 1824 with the election of John Quincy Adams over Andrew Jackson, the candidate who had received the largest number of popular votes). For the vice presidency: The Senate picks from the top two vice presidential candidates. Each senator has one vote. A majority (51) of the whole Senate is needed for election. It is possible, particularly in a three-way race, that the House might select a president from one party, and the Senate could select the vice-president from another.

Q: WHY DID THE FRAMERS SET UP SUCH A COMPLICATED SYSTEM?

A: Some delegates at the 1787 Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia favored a direct election by the people

while others believed that the president should be elected by the national legislature (Congress). The idea of election by an Electoral College was a compromise.

Q: WHY DON’T WE CHANGE THE SYSTEM?

A: Proposals for change have been made, especially in years when third parties or independent candidates received substantial popular votes. A constitutional amendment would be required to eliminate or change the system, but state legislatures may alter the process by which their electors are chosen. The League of Women Voters opposes the Electoral College and advocates a direct election by popular vote and supports the ‘National Popular Vote’, a proposal that has received the support of eleven states including New York State. The National Popular Vote proposal is that each state’s electors would vote for the candidate who won the national popular vote even if that candidate had not carried their state. This system might not require a constitutional amendment and could be effective if states having a total of 270 electoral votes approved it. Those in favor of the current Electoral College process say that it contributes to political stability by encouraging a two-party system of representation. Those in the “if it ain’t broke” school point out that every twentieth century president won the popular vote and Electoral College vote. However, in 2000 this was not the case. The Democratic candidate Al Gore won the popular vote and the Republican candidate George W. Bush won the electoral vote. On December 12, 2000 the United States Supreme Court ruled George W. Bush the winner.