

Handout 5- *Should the Electoral College be Abolished?*

YES

When the Constitution was written, the typical voter had few opportunities to learn about presidential candidates, so the job of choosing the President was given to the Electoral College: Electors, who were appointed by their states, were better educated than average citizens, who were not thought capable of making an informed choice.

Today, with universal education, TV, radio, newspapers, and the Internet, voters can learn about candidates for themselves. And they should be trusted to choose their President.

The Electoral College is unfair in several ways. First, it gives more weight to votes cast in small states. (Each state's electoral votes are equal to the number of members it has in the House and Senate combined.) Second, because the Electoral College is "winner take all" in all but two states (Maine and Nebraska), people who disagree with the majority in their state are not represented. Finally, the system allows the election of a President who does not have the support of a majority of voters.

Without the Electoral College, candidates would campaign to get as many individual votes as possible in every state, instead of focusing on states that provide key electoral votes. Each vote would make a difference and voters would feel they truly had a stake in the elections, which could lead to increased voting across the country. With a system of direct election, all votes would be equally important and equally sought after. We need to abolish the Electoral College and make our presidential elections one person, one vote.

—Kay J. Maxwell

President, League of Women Voters

NO

The Electoral College is a key part of federalism, which is the foundation of our system of government. It was a part of the compromise between large and small states at the Constitutional Convention of 1787. (The other part was the Senate, in which all states were given two Senators regardless of population.) As President John F. Kennedy noted in opposing abolition of the Electoral College, we cannot change one component of federalism without considering the others.

In spite of what happened in 2000, our system has served us well. Usually, it ensures that the candidate with the most votes wins. Without it, splinter parties would flourish and no candidate would be likely to get a majority.

With the Electoral College, supporters of fringe candidates realize they have little chance of winning a majority in their state, and thus, its electoral votes. Instead of "throwing away" their votes, many compromise by supporting the major-party candidate who more closely fits their views.

The Founding Fathers also wanted to ensure that support for a candidate was broad as well as deep, so that, for example, a candidate who received 90 percent of the vote in Southern states and a slim majority of votes nationally could not be elected against the will of the rest of the country.

Without the Electoral College, close elections would require recounts in every state and hamlet, not just in one state (like Florida in 2000), thus delaying final results for months or longer.

The Founding Fathers had great wisdom, and the federalism they created should not be undermined.

—Robert Hardaway

Professor of Law, University of Denver

Source: Scholastic, Inc. (2016). "Should the Electoral College Be Abolished?" Retrieved from:
<http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/article/should-electoral-college-be-abolished>