

THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

Preserving the Past to Protect the Future

National Archives

www.archives.gov

National Archives at Boston (Waltham, MA)

www.archives.gov/northeast/boston/

Electoral College

<http://archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/about.html>

National Archives DocsTeach teachers' resources

www.docsteach.org

National Archives Digital Vaults resources for students

www.digitalvaults.org

National Archives Youtube Channel

www.youtube.com/user/usnationalarchives

National Archives Charters of Freedom – See the Constitution

www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html

National Archives Exhibits

www.archives.gov/exhibits/index.html

AMERICA VOTES

OUR POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY

We the People

Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors. . . but no Senator or Representative, or Person holding an Office of Trust or Profit under the United States, shall be appointed an Elector.

The executive Power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America.

No Person except a natural born Citizen, or a Citizen of the United States, at the time of the Adoption of this Constitution, shall be eligible to the Office of President...

NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT BOSTON



NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT BOSTON

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A process, not a place

What is the Electoral College?

The Electoral College is administered by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). It is not a place; it is a process that began as part of the original design of the U.S. Constitution. The Electoral College was established by the founding fathers as a compromise between election of the president by Congress and election by popular vote.

The people of the United States vote for the electors who then vote for the President.

The term "electoral college" does not appear in the Constitution. Article II of the Constitution and the 12th Amendment refer to "electors," but not to the "electoral college."

The founders appropriated the concept of electors from the Holy Roman Empire (962 - 1806). Electors were princes who participated in the election of the German king. The term "college" (from the Latin *collegium*) refers to a body of persons that acts as a unit. The term "electoral college" was first written into Federal law in 1845.

Today a President must win 270 electoral votes, a majority, to become President. If no candidate wins a majority of electoral votes, the 12th Amendment to the Constitution provides for Presidential election by the House of Representatives with each state delegation receiving one vote. Twice in our history, the House of Representatives has chosen the President -- Thomas Jefferson's election in 1801 and John Quincy Adams's election in 1825.

Learn more about the Electoral College at
<http://archives.gov/federal-register/electoral-college/>

Activities for Schools and Families

The records of our government are preserved for the American people in the National Archives. For original documents and resources for teaching and learning, visit www.archives.gov and www.archives.gov/northeast/boston.

1. **Consider:**
 - When and how did the first presidential election occur?
 - Who ran in the first presidential election? Who won?
 - Which states participated in it? For whom did they vote?
 - How was it different from modern elections?
2. **Create visual representations (bar graphs) of the electors' votes for various elections, and for 2012. Consider:**
 - Which states had the largest and smallest populations?
 - What was the average number of electors per state?
 - Consider what might have changed the election's outcome.
3. **Include historic documents as part of vocabulary study.** Use the terms "constitution," "ratification," "unanimously," "elector," "union," "executive," "naturalize," "legislatures."
4. **Create a chart showing the issues and positions of all candidates running for President.**
5. **Practice reading old script using historic documents.**
6. **Read the U.S. Constitution, Article III, to study how we elect a President.** www.archives.gov/exhibits/charters/charters.html