

Electoral College Debate: Lesson Plan

Topic	
<p>Many people believe the Electoral College should be abolished and replaced with a national popular vote. Opponents of the system argue that the Electoral College is outdated and causes candidates to ignore voters from the vast majority of states. They also believe it is unacceptable that a president could win the Electoral College but not the popular vote. Other people support the Electoral College because it forces candidates to cultivate a geographically diverse voter base and could strengthen the presidential mandate. Additionally, they argue that the Electoral College would be complicated and time-consuming to replace.</p>	
Possible subjects/classes	Time needed
Government, Politics, History	30 - 45 min

Objective: <i>What will students know/be able to do at the end of class?</i>
<p>Students will be able to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List arguments in support of the Electoral College• List arguments in opposition to the Electoral College• Describe the current status of the Electoral College debate
Key Concepts & Vocabulary
Electoral college, Founding Fathers, 3/5 Compromise, Republican, Democrat, electoral votes, swing states / battleground states, popular vote, mandate, constitutional amendment
Materials Needed

Computers, lined paper, envelopes, stamps

Before you watch

Review: Make sure students have a solid understanding of the mechanics of the Electoral College. First, have students pair up and discuss what they know about how the Electoral College works. After a few minutes, have students share with the class. Address any confusion or gaps in knowledge.

While you watch

1. What are the four swing states that held $\frac{2}{3}$ of general election campaign events in 2012?
2. What is one argument in support of the Electoral College?
3. What is the name of the compact through which states have pledged to give all of their electoral votes to the winner of the national popular vote?

After you watch/discussion questions

1. Do you think the Electoral College should be abolished? Why or why not?
2. Under a popular vote, the winning candidate may win the plurality of the vote, but not the majority. How could that weaken a president?
3. During the Constitutional Convention, Virginia delegate George Mason said "The extent of the Country renders it impossible that the people can have the requisite capacity to judge of the respective pretensions of the Candidates." What did he mean? Is this argument still relevant today?

Activity Ideas

Debate: Split students into two groups and assign each group to be either pro- or anti-Electoral College. Stage a debate between the two groups.

Take Action: Have students contact their Congressmen, either in support of or in opposition to the Electoral College. The representative for your district can be found [here](#). Students may write emails or physical letters. Contact information for Congressmen can be found on their websites.

Sources/places to learn more

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1. "Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote." *National Popular Vote*, 8 Mar. 2020, www.nationalpopularvote.com/written-explanation.
 2. "The Electoral College: Top 3 Pros and Cons." *ProCon.org*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, www.procon.org/headline.php?headlineID=005330.
 3. Parks, Miles. "Abolishing The Electoral College Would Be More Complicated Than It May Seem." *NPR*, NPR, 22 Mar. 2019, www.npr.org/2019/03/22/705627996/abolishing-the-electoral-college-would-be-more-complicated-than-it-may-seem.
 4. Pearson, Christopher, and Kevin Frazzini. "Debating the Electoral College." *National Conference of State Legislatures*, National Conference of State Legislatures, 24 Mar. 2020, www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/debating-the-electoral-college.aspx.
 5. Tarr, G. Alan. "Five Common Misconceptions About the Electoral College." *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 5 Dec. 2019, www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/11/five-common-misconceptions-about-electoral-college/602596/.
 6. "What Is the US Electoral College?" *BBC News*, BBC, 25 Aug. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-15764542.

Electoral College Debate: Worksheet

Short Answer Questions

1. Describe three arguments in favor of the Electoral College.
2. Describe three arguments in opposition to the Electoral College.
3. Why would it be hard to change the Electoral College system? Is there more than one way to do it?
4. Why might small states be worried about a popular vote replacing the Electoral College?
5. Do you live in a swing state? Use the Internet to do research if necessary. Based on your answer to this question, would you expect presidential candidates to spend a lot of time in your state during the next presidential election?