

Why did the Founders create

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

AN AGE-OLD PROBLEM:

The Founders believed in self-governance. Remember: They fought a Revolution, at least in part, because they had no representation in Parliament.

On the other hand, the Founders knew that simple democracy does not work. A seat at the table in Parliament wouldn't have been enough. They would have been constantly outvoted by the majority in England. Two wolves and a lamb voting on what's for dinner is unjust.

How can self-governance and protection of minorities occur simultaneously?

THE FOUNDERS' SOLUTION:

The Founders developed a unique solution: Our Constitution blends the best elements of democracy (self-governance), republicanism (deliberation and compromise), and federalism (state-by-state action).

The result is that our Constitution has many checks and balances:

- Power is separated among three branches of government. It is further divided between states & the national government. Some power stays with the people.
- The Constitution requires super-majorities to take some actions, such as to amend the Constitution or to override a presidential veto.
- Our Electoral College blends principles of "one person, one vote" with principles of "one state, one vote." The same compromise was made when it came to the composition of Congress.

The goal is to be self-governing, but to put up hurdles that prevent bare or emotional majorities from tyrannizing everyone else.

MODERN BENEFITS:

Historically speaking, the Electoral College has served Americans in many ways, but because the system operates in the background, these benefits too often go unappreciated.

- Presidential candidates are encouraged to build national coalitions. The need to win many states makes it unproductive to focus too exclusively on one type of voter.
- Moderation, compromise, and working together are rewarded. Our presidential elections do not degenerate into European-style, fractured, multi-party affairs.
- Election problems are isolated to one or a handful of states. By contrast, direct elections and national recounts would make Florida 2000 look like a picnic.
- Fraud is minimized because it is hard to predict where stolen votes will matter. If one person predicts it, then everyone else has, too. The state is closely watched.