

## GUIDE FOR ELECTORAL COLLEGE STUDY

### Definitions:

Majority: 1 more than half of the total votes cast.

Plurality: 1 more vote than any other candidate.

Contingent elections: No electoral vote majority.

House and Senate elect President and Vice President.

### WHAT IS THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

- A. The Constitutional provisions for the Electoral College are found in Article II, Section 1, of the Constitution of the United States.

The President and Vice President of the United States are to be selected by the members of the Electoral College. Each state selects one elector for each U.S. Representative and one elector for each U. S. Senator. (A state has at least 3 electors. Illinois has 26 Electors.)

Congress determines the time of choosing the Electors, and the day on which they shall give their votes. (They are chosen on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November; and vote on the first Monday after the second Wednesday in December).

- B. Constitutional amendments:

12th Amendment, 1804: provides that there should be separate electoral ballots for President and Vice President.

23rd Amendment, 1961: gives District of Columbia electoral vote.

24th Amendment, 1964: bans poll tax.

### WHO ARE THE ELECTORS? HOW DOES THE SYSTEM WORK?

- A. BEFORE ELECTION DAY. The Constitution leaves the manner in which electoral slates are selected up to the states. Several methods of selection are used:

Party conventions (Illinois and 34 other states)

Party Primaries (2 states)

State Party Committee (6 states)

Other methods (8 states)

- B. ON ELECTION DAY. The state ballots may present to the voters:

Only the names of the Presidential and Vice Presidential nominees.

The names of the Electors themselves.

The names of the Presidential and Vice Presidential candidates with a heading such as "Presidential Electors for."

C. AFTER ELECTION DAY.

The electors of the party receiving the greatest number of popular votes meet in their respective states.

The result of their vote is sent to the President of the U. S. Senate.

The votes are counted before a joint session of Congress. The candidate with a majority of votes is elected President.

HOW DID THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE SYSTEM ARISE?

- A. Election by "electors" was a compromise solution of the Constitutional Convention in 1787. The following were some of the intentions:

Electors would know which candidates were best qualified.

This method would overcome the disproportion of qualified voters in the north and the south.

Smaller states would have adequate representation.

- B. Evolution of the Electoral College system.

How have the electors voted in the past 36 elections?

- (a) In 27 elections: statewide electoral vote (victorious party got all of state's electoral votes)
- (b) In 9 elections: split electoral vote (defection of elector or split vote by voter at the polls)

Has the "popular" candidate won in the 36 elections?

- In 22 elections: winner had majority of popular vote.
- In 11 elections: winner had plurality of popular vote.
- In 3 elections: winner had minority of popular vote.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

- A. On the strategy of political campaigns?

Since "winner takes all" of the electoral vote in each state, campaigns and nominations may be limited to large states and "swing states".

Electors are not bound by the U. S. Constitution to follow the vote of the electorate. They are free to vote against their party's candidates. "Unpledged" electors may hold a balance of power.

Although small states have fewer electoral votes than large states, the individual vote has more weight in the small state. (In Nevada there are 37,755 voters for each elector; in New York 164,001 voters for each elector).



B. On contingent elections: If there is no electoral vote majority, the United States House of Representatives elects a President and the United States Senate elects a Vice President. Each state has one vote in the House, and one vote in the Senate.

C. On the formation of new political parties:

The required Majority of electoral votes tends to discourage the formation of third or minor parties.

Minority parties increase the chances of contingent elections, and the minor party could hold the balance of power.

#### PROPOSALS FOR REFORM

A. Direct Election Plan. The Electoral College would be abolished and the President elected by voters, as for other offices.

B. Proportional Vote. Office of Electors abolished, but electoral vote retained for each state. This would be divided in proportion to the division of the popular vote in the state.

C. District Plan. Each state would be divided into districts, as in Congressional districts. The winner in each district would get the electoral vote of that district, with two additional votes in the state going to the candidate who had the most electoral votes in the state. Electors would be retained, but would be bound to vote for the winner.

D. Unit vote. The present system could be retained, with the electors eliminated.

The history of the Electoral College shows how political institutions can adapt over time; and remain with anachronisms. Changes in institutions can have ramifications throughout the political and legal systems. They may have further and unintended effects in addition to the immediate and obvious ones.

#### SHOULD THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE BE CHANGED?

Committee: Jeanne Stahl, Chairman; Frances Doubleday, Helen Gill, Mary Langenberg, Marilyn Tenney, Pauline Jurgens, Laura Verbanac, Dee Meyerson.

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(Continued)

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History and the Direct-Vote Alternative. Simon & Schuster, 1968

Daniels, Walter M., ed. Presidential Election Reform. H. W. Wilson Co., 1953

Doris Bowers, Bulletin Editor

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Decatur, Illinois

Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the League of Women Voters of Decatur was held in the Holiday Inn, 450 E. Pershing Rd., March 12, 1969 beginning at 12:30 a.m. Twenty-five persons were in attendance for the meeting following the luncheon. Mrs. Keith Westenhaver presided.

MINUTES: The minutes of the 5/15/68 annual meeting were approved as read by Mrs. Charles Hippler, secretary. Mrs. Westenhaver asked if should appoint a committee to approve the minutes of this year's annual meeting so they won't have to be read at next year's meeting. There was no objection. Those appointed are: Mrs. Gerald Redford, Mrs. Clifford Smith and Mrs. Clarence Crow.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Mrs. William Johnson presented the financial statement as of March 12, 1969:

Cash on hand - \$548.66 in Millikin Bank checking account. (This figure remains after payment of all bills and deposit of receipts as of this date.)

Because of the fact that our annual fund drive was not held in the Fall:

On October 22, 1968 - Cash on Mutual Home & Savings \$1,000.00

Certificate of Deposit. \$500.00 - to Millikin account

\$503.40 - to MHS Savings Account  
(\$8.40 interest)

On February 21, 1969 - Closed MHS savings account which after dividends and withdrawals made prior to Feb. 21 amounted to \$401.37.

\$211.87 - to Millikin account

\$189.50 - to new MHS account opened

2-21-69 as LWV 50th Anniversary Campaign account.

(\$189.50 is the amount of contributions received up to Jan. 30 of this fiscal year.)

The treasurer recommended that an official audit be made of the treasurer's books.

BUDGET: Mrs. Mann presented the proposed budget for 1969-1970, giving each member a copy. Mrs. Lois Smith suggested we add an explanation of 02, the increase in Local Publications, on the proposed budget.

Mrs. Mann moved we adopt the proposed budget with the inclusion of the above mentioned explanation. Seconded and passed.

LOCAL PROGRAMS: Mrs. Clarence Crow presented 5 items for the proposed local program, as recommended by the Board. (See board minutes 2/20/69) Mrs. Westenhaver called for additional items to be presented. There were none. Mrs. Crow briefly explained each item.

Item 1. Human Resources and Civil Rights. Mrs. Crow moved its adoption. Seconded and passed. Mrs. Redford moved to amend by adding "Support for funds for the Decatur Human Relations Commission." Seconded and passed.

Item 2. Decatur Public Schools. Mrs. Crow moved its adoption. Seconded and passed.