

Our outdated electoral system disenfranchises large numbers of voters

Allie Diffendal | Friday, October 17, 2008

On November 4th, American citizens will wake to the sobering realization that the votes they cast on that day will not directly elect their next president. Instead, their votes will contribute to a state tally - the winner of which will obtain the votes of a number of electors equal to the size of their state's congressional delegation. As voting day quickly approaches, American voters must re-examine the antiquated, anti-democratic system of the 221-year-old Electoral College.



Although every other U.S. office is elected on the basis of popular vote, the Electoral College appears to value some voters over others. The current system allows political analysts to declare a state's winner - hours, sometimes days - before the state's polls even close. Analysts create red and blue maps predicting states' party leanings months before the polls open. At the end of Election Day, it is each state's electors' vote that carries weight - not the votes of the American citizenry. Whether the difference in that

state's votes is one or one million, the result remains the same: The state's electors vote for the declared winner.

Over the past 200 years, Congressional members have introduced more than 700 proposals to change the process of the Electoral College. According to Gallup polls, nearly two out of every three Americans favor abolishing the College and electing the president by direct popular vote. The Electoral College system creates a targeted campaign in the most competitive states, as opposed to a national campaign. During the 2000 campaign, seventeen states didn't see the candidates at all. With no incentive to use campaign resources on states likely to go in one particular direction, candidates can ignore noncompetitive states. A system requiring 51 percent of the direct popular vote requires true majority support. Electoral College backers note that the current system forces candidates to visit diverse states and not just electoral powerhouses; however, the system does not require a broad electoral backing as this assertion suggests. Those opposed to abolishing the Electoral College point to the fact that such an action would require amending the Constitution.

The Constitution specifies that each state is entitled to one member of the Electoral College for each of its U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators. Today, there are a total of 538 electoral votes in the Electoral College. This total corresponds to the 435 U.S. Representatives from the 50 states *plus* the 100 U.S. Senators from the 50 states *plus* the three members of the Electoral College to which the District of Columbia became entitled under the 23rd Amendment (ratified in 1961). Every 10 years, the 435 U.S. Representatives are reapportioned among the states in accordance with the latest federal census, thereby automatically reapportioning the membership of the Electoral College among the states. The 538 members of the Electoral College cast their votes for President and Vice President in meetings held in the 50 state capitals and the District of Columbia in mid-December of presidential election years. If all 538 electors are appointed, 270 electoral votes are required to elect the President and the Vice President. (nationalpopularvote.com)

1. In appropriate paragraph form, compare and contrast the strengths and weaknesses regarding "the antiquated, anti-democratic system of the 221-year-old Electoral College". Design and construct a Venn diagram to accurately organize the pros and cons of the modern day voting system. Complete a persuasive essay defending your opinion as well as that of the one you oppose. **(GPS – Grades 6 – 8: MRC a, d)**
2. Design and solve a series of simple one-step equations using each of the four basic operations and evaluate algebraic expressions, including those with exponents, given the following data: Barack Obama and John McCain are both seeking the U.S. presidency. In Utah, McCain currently holds lead of 46 percentage points whereas Obama carries a 69 point lead in D.C. McCain has an eight point advantage in Georgia and similarly, Obama holds the same advantage nationally. **(GPS - Grade 6: M6P1 – M6P5; MRC; M6A3)**
3. Solve question two. Define a variable, write and solve an equation, and interpret the solution. Simplify and evaluate these algebraic expressions using the commutative, associative, and distributive properties as appropriate. Describe how change in one variable affects the other variable when McCain is symbolized by the variable *m* and Obama *o*. **(GPS Grade 7: M7P1 – M7P5; MRC; M7A1b; M7A2 a; M7A3c)**
4. Represent a given situation (question three) using algebraic expressions or equations in one variable in terms of others. Simplify and evaluate the results. **(GPS Grade 8: M8P1 – M8P5; M8A1 a - e)**
5. Upon completion of this assignment, how far have we progressed through the 2008-09 series of *The Daughtry Times*®? Express your answer interchangeably as a fraction, decimal, percentage, and circle graph. **(GPS – Grade 6: M6N1f, g; M6D1c; Grade 7: M7D1f)**
6. Using contextual clues only, define the following italicized words: *sobering*, *delegation*, *abolishing*, *antiquated*, and *incentive* obtained from the passage above. Additionally, use each word in a complete sentence to demonstrate further comprehension. **(GPS – Grades 6 –8: MRC a, c, d)**

Please visit <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/map/polling/> is just one of a plethora of political sites which provides updated results regarding the advanced votes placed in the 2008 United States presidential election race scheduled for Tuesday, November 4, 2008.

Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) adapted from georgiastandards.org. Standards specifically addressed in this edition are strategically aligned with the curriculum map and annotated adjacent to the respective grade level inquiry.

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