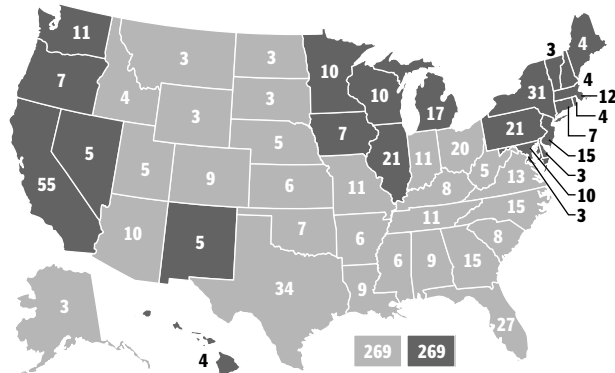
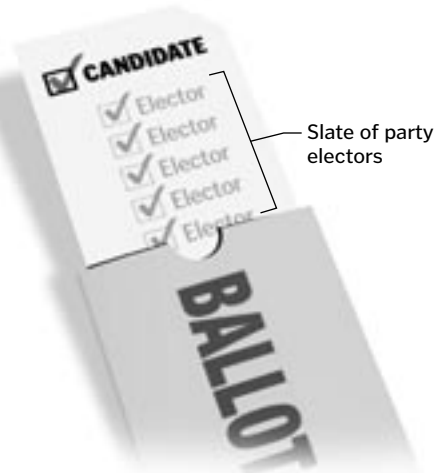
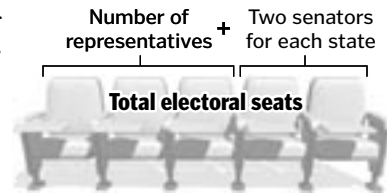


How the Electoral College Works

The electoral college system drew added attention during the last presidential race when Al Gore won the popular vote but lost the election.

- 1 Each state is allotted one elector for each U.S. representative and senator it has. Washington, D.C., receives three electors, the same number of electors as the least populous state.
- 2 Mostly, electors are nominated at state party conventions. The electors' names are given to the state's election official.
- 3 On Election Day, voters in each state cast their ballot for the slate of electors representing their choice of presidential ticket. The electors' names do not usually appear on the ballot.
- 4 The slate of electors for the presidential ticket that receives the most votes is appointed, and all the electoral votes for that state go to those candidates.*
- 5 A candidate needs to win a majority of electoral votes—270—to be elected president. If no candidate wins a majority of electoral votes (see example below), the House chooses the president and the Senate chooses the vice president.



The candidate who wins the popular vote in a state gets all of the electoral votes.*



- 6 In December, in a largely ceremonial gesture, the electors cast ballots for president and vice president and are expected to follow the popular vote of their state.
- 7 The votes are counted at a joint session of Congress, and the president officially is elected.

*Except in Maine and Nebraska, which each give two at-large delegates to whoever wins the state and the rest to whoever wins in each congressional district.

Previous Close Calls

Four times in U.S. history, the candidate who won the popular vote lost the election. In 1824, the House decided the election because no candidate won a majority of electoral votes.

✓ Elected president

**One D.C. elector abstained.

SOURCES: Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, Federal Election Commission, Associated Press

1824

John Quincy Adams ✓
Andrew Jackson
Henry Clay
William H. Crawford

POPULAR VOTE

30.9%
41.3
13.1
11.2

ELECTORAL VOTE

84
99
37
41



Harrison

1876

Rutherford B. Hayes ✓
Samuel J. Tilden

48.0%
51.0

185
184

1888

Benjamin Harrison ✓
Grover Cleveland

47.8%
48.6

233
168



Gore

2000

George W. Bush ✓
Al Gore

47.8%
48.4

271
266**