

2012 ELECTORAL COLLEGE INFORMATION

The Electoral College is a body of electors who meet after a presidential election to select the next president and vice-president of the United States. All of the Electoral College members elected throughout the country will meet in their respective states on December 19, 2012, to cast their votes. (The first Monday after the second Wednesday.)

Pursuant to ORS 248.355, each political party nominating candidates for President and Vice President will select a number of candidates equal to the number of U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators. The number for Oregon is 7. A candidate for elector must sign a pledge form stating the candidate will vote in the Electoral College for the candidates of the party. Each Oregon political party will certify the candidates selected for elector. The selection will be certified to the Secretary of State not later than the 70th day before the election of electors. Each major and minor political party will follow party rules to select electors. The Secretary of State does not have jurisdiction to enforce these party rules.

Under the provisions of the US Constitution, voters who participate in the presidential election choose the members of the Electoral College. An elector who casts a vote for a presidential candidate is not voting directly for the candidate, but is, instead, casting a vote for a slate of electors who pledged their support for the candidate.

In more than half of the states, the names of the presidential candidates and the elector's names appear on the ballot. In Oregon, only the presidential candidates appear on the ballot. In each state, the winning presidential candidate is determined by counting the votes for each slate of electors. The slate that receives the most votes is declared elected.

To be elected to the presidency, a candidate must receive a majority of the Electoral College votes cast (at least 270 votes). A separate vote is taken to elect the vice president. The US Constitution provides that the president and the vice-president may not be from the same state. If no presidential candidate receives a majority of the Electoral College votes cast, the US House of Representatives will choose the president from the candidates who came in first, second and third in the Electoral College vote. The selection is made by a vote of the state delegations in the House, with each delegation allotted one vote.

Only two presidents have been selected in this alternative manner: Thomas Jefferson in 1800 and John Quincy Adams in 1824. Although Adams became president in 1824, Andrew Jackson actually received a greater number of the Electoral College votes (99 to 84). Jackson did not receive a majority of the 261 total votes and the House decided the election. If no candidate for vice-president receives a majority vote, the US Senate makes the selection from the top two candidates for the office. Each senator has a single vote. The Senate has not elected a vice-president since 1836. Richard M. Johnson was selected to serve under President Martin Van Buren.

Written into the Constitution of 1787, the Electoral College was designed to balance the states' and the peoples' interests. Of primary concern was the possibility a nationwide election breaking down into chaos and confusion. This was before the emergence of national political parties and nationwide communications systems. Originally presidential electors had the freedom to exercise their own personal will when voting. The function of the Electoral College has drastically changed over the years. Today presidential electors are chosen by direct popular vote in every state. Presidential electors only meet to confirm the decision made by the voters on Election Day.