



# 3.5: THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

UNIT 3: AP U.S. GOVERNMENT



# WHAT DO THE FOLLOWING FOUR MEN ALL HAVE IN COMMON?

- A. Andrew Jackson
- B. Samuel Tilden
- C. Grover Cleveland
- D. Al Gore

## THE ANSWER

- They all won the popular vote in a Presidential election but did not become President.

# WHY?

- Because we do not pick our President by direct ballot. Technically, we only select electors. These electors form what is called the Electoral College and are the people who officially elect the President.

# Electoral College

- Created by the founding fathers at the Constitutional Convention.
- When you vote for the President you are actually voting for an ELECTOR to vote for you.
- Founding Fathers DID NOT think Americans were educated enough to vote for their President.
- Each state has a determined number of electors based on Proportional Representation

## WHY WAS IT CREATED?



- People (then) were not knowledgeable enough to select a President.
- This was a check that gave the states a voice in choosing the President
- To maintain regional balance

# BACKGROUND OF THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

- Established in 1787 as a way to select the President
- In Article II, Section I, each state was given the same number of electors as members of Congress (House + Senate)
- The present size of the Electoral College is 538 members
  - 435 members of the House, 100 members of the Senate, and D. C. gets 3 electoral votes

# BACKGROUND TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE (CONTINUED)

- Since the number of representatives in Congress a state gets is determined by the Census every 10 years, electoral votes are also determined every 10 years
- A Presidential candidate must receive a majority vote of the Electoral College in order to win an election (270 votes)
- There have been 3 instances when a candidate has won the popular vote (vote of the people) and not the electoral vote
  - Hayes in 1876, Harrison in 1888, and Bush in 2000



# A state's number of Electors is the total number of Senators and Representatives in the House

## *Pennsylvania*

**2 Senators**  
**19 Representatives**

**Total**      **21 Electors**



## There are a total of 538 electoral votes

-The District of Columbia (DC) is not a state but is given 3 electoral votes.

-A candidate must have **270** electoral votes to win the Presidential election.

-If no single candidate gets the required 270 electoral votes then the House of Representatives votes to decide the President.



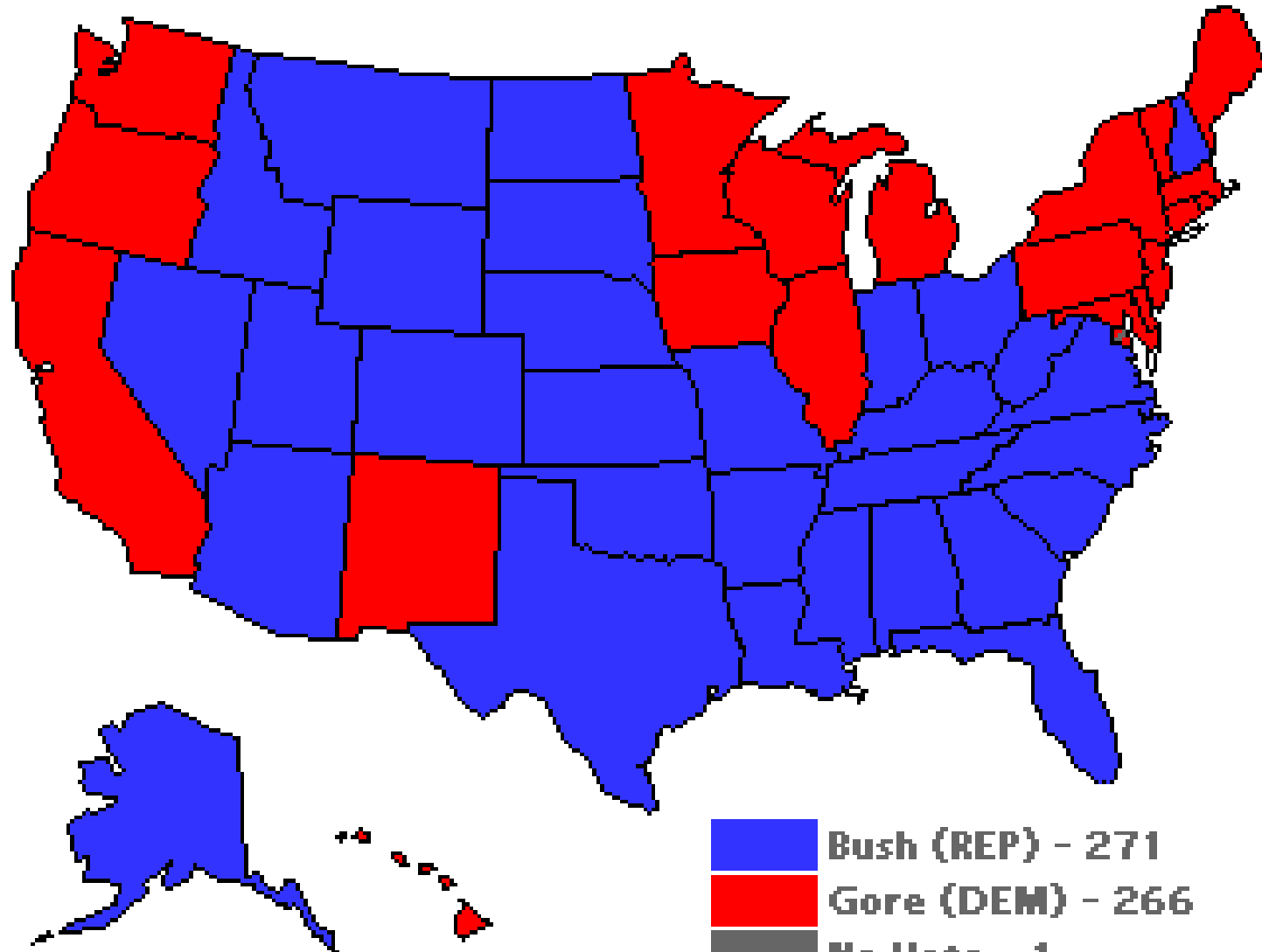
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## 48 out of the 50 states have a “winner takes all” method

If you get the most votes in that state you get **ALL** of their electoral college votes

\*\*\*It is possible to get more votes overall (win the popular vote) in the Presidential election and **NOT** be elected President.

# 2000 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION



2000		
AL	KY	ND
AK	LA	OH
AZ	ME	OK
AR	MD	OR
CA	MA	PA
CO	MI	RI
CT	MN	SC
DE	MS	SD
DC	MO	TN
FL	MT	TX
GA	NE	UT
HI	NV	VT
ID	NH	VA
IL	NJ	WA
IN	NM	WV
IA	NY	WI
KS	NC	WY

# WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS TO THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE?

- Encourages low voter turnout
- Diminishes third party influence
- Person with most popular votes may not win
- Leads to tactical, insincere voting
- If there is no majority winner in the Electoral College, the election goes to the House of Representatives and there is a loss of separation of powers

# WHY LOW VOTER TURNOUT?

- The Electoral College is a winner take all system of deciding who receives a states electoral votes. Consequently, if a person gets 50.1% of the popular vote (in a two man race), he gets 100% of the electoral votes. Therefore, many people feel that their vote does not matter and choose to not vote.

## THIRD PARTIES

- The Electoral College discourages 3<sup>rd</sup> parties because a candidate must have a broad based, national platform to have a chance to gain the highest office. Rarely are 3<sup>rd</sup> parties financially and politically able to do this.