

Elections

Elections are one of the most fundamentally important aspects of a democracy. Not only do they determine who the leaders of the land will be, but elections are also a check and balance as to how those leaders will act while they are in office. For the presidential elections, the United States uses the Electoral College to elect its president. The Electoral College's capabilities have been especially questioned after the 2000 and 2004 elections. Many feel as though the Electoral College is not a suitable system for electing the president. [The whole purpose of an election is to elect a person into office that the majority of the people voted for.] The Electoral College is an instrument that distorts the peoples' votes, and there are numerous reasons as to why it should be eliminated.

Elections should be simple; one person should have one vote, and that vote should be counted. However, the Electoral College greatly complicates this idea. In fact, most people probably do not even know what the Electoral College precisely is. Who are the people that constitute the College? How are they chosen to do that job? Where do they go to cast their votes? What if they do not come to a consensus over which candidate they want to vote for? The Electoral College poses many questions that average citizens cannot answer. The founding fathers implemented the Electoral College because they thought that they could not trust the masses. [Trusting the masses is a much better route than trusting a small group of unknown Electoral College members.] If no one knows

WHY? WE HAVE REPRESENTATIVE RATHER THAN DIRECT DEMOCRACY?

IS THIS THE PURPOSE?

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who the Electoral College members are, there could be corruption that is unchecked. In fact, in many states do not even have laws that state that the Electoral College members must vote according to the popular vote in that state. Some states that do have laws simply implement fines if the Electoral College members do not vote according to the popular vote. So technically, the Electoral College members could vote however they wanted. This amount of power should never be given to a couple of hundred people in a democratic country.

Also in a democracy, the peoples' votes should not be distorted. The Electoral College distorts the actual popular vote. This was the case in the 2000 US presidential election. The Democratic candidate Al Gore won the popular vote; however, he lost the electoral vote to his opponent, George W. Bush. The Electoral College is not proportionally sound; it distorts the popular vote. The reason is because each state gets the number of electoral votes equal to its number of representatives in Congress. That automatically gives every state a minimum of three electoral votes, two for the Senate, and one for the House of Representatives. That offsets the proportionality of each state's votes. This system was implemented as a way to give smaller states with less population more power. There are several problems with this theory. First of all, the Electoral College does not give smaller states more power. For example, a state like Kansas gets no extra power by using the Electoral College. Nobody ever campaigns in Kansas; it just

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is not that important of a state because there are still not that many votes (both popular votes and electoral votes). And secondly, fundamentally, is it right to give a smaller state a bigger portion of a vote than it actually represents? Yes, people in rural Kansas might want something that is opposite of people in New York City, but the fact is, there are

simply more people in New York City. The people in New York City should have a bigger representation than rural Kansas. And as in any true democracy, majority should rule.)

Another important fault with the Electoral College is that, fewer people are likely to think that their vote counts. If all of a state's Electoral College vote is given to one candidate, then a whole group of people will be misrepresented. For example, there might be a state where the majority of the votes will go to the Republican candidate. In that state, all of the Democratic voters will be misrepresented because the Electoral College will give all of its votes to that one Republican candidate. That is a grave misrepresentation because one hundred percent of that state did not vote for the Republican candidate. This misrepresentation will cause people to think that their vote does not count, and in many cases it actually does not. When people do not think that their votes count, they will be less likely to vote. Consequently, the Electoral College complicates the voting process so greatly, that many people may not even bother to vote.

The US should eliminate the Electoral College in order to encourage a more active democracy. It should implement a direct majority vote as its means of electing a president. That way every vote will count. When every vote counts, more people will be likely to vote because they believe that their vote will actually make a difference. It will be a very basic simple system: one person, one vote. The election system should also be altered in another way to encourage more participation. There should be a majority run-off voting system. This would encourage more candidates to run for office, creating a broader selection from which the citizens can choose. It also encourages the candidates to be more moderate, and extremists are not likely to gain office. The majority run-off

system adds more validity to the whole voting process. A candidate must gain a true majority, 50 percent plus one, in order to win the presidency. Citizens will be able to vote truly in the first round of voting because it is very likely that no one would get a majority in the first round. By voting truly, citizens could vote for a candidate that they do not think will win, but they will still be able to cast a sincere vote. Since this system of voting is clearer, and allows citizens to vote sincerely, more people will want to vote. Even though there would likely be more than one round of votes, citizens would still vote because they know that they will be heard. Any person who is not willing to vote two times probably is not willing to vote in the first place, so a majority run-off system is a good choice.

The US can make these changes in its electoral system because the Electoral College has stood the tests of time, and it has proven to be ineffective. A country like Mongolia however cannot make changes so easily. Mongolia's democratic form of government is not even twenty years old yet. The election system has already been sharply criticized in Mongolia; however, it is too early to make changes to it. The reason is because Mongolia's democratic government still needs time to develop. In order to develop, the government needs some sort of stability. If the electoral system is changed this early in the course of the new government, then it is a sign of instability and weakness on the government's part. For example, the US has been a democratic government for 228 years. The Electoral College is still being used, even though it too has had sharp criticisms. In the US, the fact that sacred government institutions, like the Constitution are so hard to change is very important. It shows to US citizens that institutions in their government are valid and respectable, and cannot be changed very

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easily. It is necessary for Mongolia form that same sort of respect among its citizens. The Mongolian citizens must take a new government's institutions seriously and consider them valid. Once they consider the institutions valid, citizens will be able to accept the institution's rules out of respect for the institutions. Once that level of importance and respect is formed, then changes can be made to better the government. If that importance and validity is not placed on institutions, then the institutions will easily change whenever any extremists take control of government positions.

Mongolia has already had criticisms of its majority vote electoral system. These criticisms include charges of corruption. The focus now should be on how to better the system that is already in place. No matter what system Mongolia implements, there can always be charges of corruption. It makes more sense to try to fix the problems with corruption before changing an entire electoral system. Once the existing electoral system faces the tests of time, then it too can be subject to change.

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