



# The Electoral College

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.*

*And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

*Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief.*

- Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
- What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Let's discuss

*Pick 2 or 3 questions that resonate with the group and discuss, or choose your own.*

- In your opinion, what is the priority in regards to the Electoral College?
- Were there some points with which you strongly agreed or disagreed? Was there a perspective that was missing?
- How would our election process change if we went to a popular vote or district system vs. the winner-take-all electoral college system?
  - How would changes improve or impair the current situation where swing states are of significance?
  - How would changes improve or impair the integrity of the election?
  - What voting registration and administration changes would need to take place to ensure a popular vote count was accurate?
- How have recent popular vote vs. electoral college victories impacted the validity of the administrations?

# Let's act

## Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share

- [The Electoral College](#) was approved by the Founding Fathers and incorporated into the Constitution in September, 1787.
- The Electoral College has been modified twice in our nation's history: In 1863 by the [12th Amendment](#) and in 1961 by the [23rd Amendment](#).
- Alaska, Delaware, The District of Columbia, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming all have the least [amount of Electoral votes](#), with 3 each. California has the most with 55, followed by Texas with 38 and Florida with 29.
- Nothing in the Constitution mandates electors vote according to the state's popular vote results. Some states do require electors to do so: Oklahoma imposes a civil penalty of a \$1000 fine on faithless electors and New Mexico considers a faithless vote a felony.
- In the U.S., [rural areas account](#) for 97% of the country's land area, but are only home to 19.3% of the population. [For example](#), New York City is home to more people (8.4 million) than Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas combined (8 million).
- [In 2016](#), 47% of Americans wanted to keep the Electoral College system and 49% wanted a popular vote amendment. [For 2019](#), 43% want to keep the Electoral College and 55% support a popular vote amendment.

## Engage Locally

- *Learn more:*
  - **Research your elected representatives' positions** and their visions for how to tackle the challenges regarding the Electoral College facing Americans at large and your community specifically.
    - Your legislators, state comptroller, attorney general and other local elected officials want to know their constituents. Write to them about your interest in the Electoral College in your community.
    - You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
  - **Explore the impact of the Electoral College in your community.**
    - See where your state stands on the Electoral College with the [National Council of State Legislature's National Popular Vote tracker](#).
- *Reach out:*
  - Explore what organizations, legislators, and journalists you could contact to ask questions, learn more and get engaged.
  - If you have trouble finding the information you are looking for on your municipality's or state's website, consider contacting agency or department heads. You can find the contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#).
  - The Policy Circle offers a number of resources for engaging on the local level. Learn how to write a letter to the editor on [The Policy Circle website](#).
  - It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting

with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).

### Post A Recap / Dive Deeper:

- Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present. Designate who will post a meeting recap.
- Decide your next meeting topic. Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting?
  - [The U.S. House of Representatives](#) and [The U.S. Senate](#)
  - [Government Regulation](#)
  - [Civic Engagement](#)
  - [The Decennial Census](#)
  - Election Series: [Assessing Candidates](#), [Election Integrity](#), and [Campaign Finance](#)
- Dive Deeper into this area. If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness.