



# 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

- **Take five minutes** to review the [Executive Summary](#) for this brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- 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?

### Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- [The Electoral College](#) was approved by the Founding Fathers and incorporated into the Constitution in September 1787, and was modified in 1863 by the [12th Amendment](#) and in 1961 by the [23rd Amendment](#).
- Alaska, Delaware, The District of Columbia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont and Wyoming all have the fewest [number of Electoral votes](#), with 3 each. California has the most with 54, followed by Texas with 40 and Florida with 30.
- The first [controversy produced by the Electoral College](#) dates back to 1800, when Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr received the same number of electoral votes. The most recent controversy was the [2016 election](#) when Hillary Clinton won the popular vote while Donald Trump won the Electoral College.

## Let's discuss

*Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.*

- **Community:** How would our election process change if we went to a popular vote or district system vs. the winner-take-all electoral college system?
  - What voting registration and administration changes would need to take place to ensure a popular vote count was accurate?
  - How would changes improve or impair the current situation where swing states are of significance?
- **Government:** How have recent popular vote vs. electoral college victories impacted the perceived validity of newly elected administrations?

## Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to identify how the Electoral College affects your community. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
2. **Explore the impact of related laws in your community.** See where your state stands on the Electoral College with the [National Council of State Legislature's National Popular Vote tracker](#).
3. **Investigate community programs.** Are there local organizations that engage with young voters?
4. **Research your elected representatives' positions** on the Electoral College and their visions for how to tackle challenges regarding the system facing Americans at large and your community specifically. 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.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** 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](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed on your stance on the Electoral College in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

## Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- **Decide your next meeting topic.** Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? Suggestions include:
  - [The U.S. House of Representatives](#)
  - [The U.S. Senate](#)
  - [The Decennial Census](#)
  - [Elections & Election Integrity](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** 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. Don't miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.