



The President of the United States is probably the most powerful leader of the world. He has many duties, like **signing bills** and **commanding** the armed forces. The president's **advisors** get together in the Cabinet.

Congress and the **Supreme Court** control the president and his decisions.

America has had great presidents: George Washington, the first president of the newly formed United States, Abraham Lincoln who **abolished slavery**, Franklin D. Roosevelt who led America through World War II or John F. Kennedy, a popular president who was **assassinated** in Dallas.

A presidential **election** is held every four years. Americans do not choose their president directly. Instead, they vote for **electors** who get together in the **Electoral College**.

Jobs and Duties of a President

The President of the United States must lead a strong nation and **make sure** that **laws** are put into effect. He is the **commander** of the army and can send American **soldiers** to war. The President also decides which **relationships** America has with other countries. He is the Head of State and meets with leaders of other nations.

To become president a person

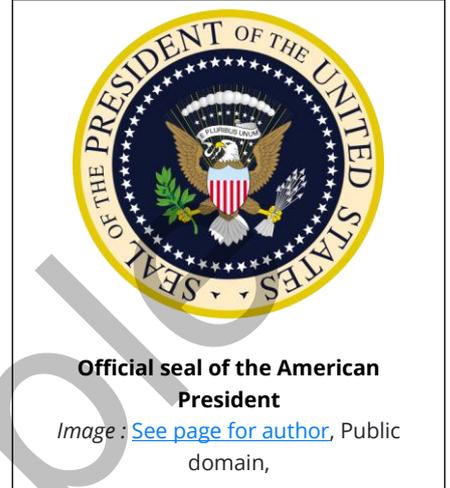
- must be at least 35 years old
- must have lived in the United States for at least 14 years
- must be born in the United States

A president **serves** his country for four years. He can also be **elected** a second time. Until 1951, US presidents were able to **hold office** for more than eight years. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, was elected four times and was president from 1933-1945.

If **Congress** finds out that a president has done something wrong, he can be **removed** from the White House.

The President is the head of the **executive branch** of **government**. When the Senate and the House of Representatives want a new **law** to be passed, they send a **bill** to the President. If he **agrees**, he **signs** the bill and it becomes a law. However, if the President does not like it he doesn't have to sign it. This is called a **veto**. The bill goes back to **Congress** and if two thirds of all members vote against the veto it becomes a law.

The President does not rule the country alone. The Cabinet is a group of people who get together and give him information on many things. The President himself chooses them





and they meet regularly. They are experts in many fields like **defense**, **environment**, education and others.

Life of a President

An American President is always busy. He has several conferences and meets up to a hundred or more people every day.

The President lives in the White House in Washington, D.C. Most of the time he does his work in the Oval Office. There, he meets his helpers, leaders from other countries and other people. Presidents often spend their weekends at Camp David, a **retreat** in the Maryland mountains. There they **relax**, play golf, go riding and fishing and have time for their families.

The Secret Service **protects** the American President around the clock. It checks food and the hotels at which a President stays and plans trips and journeys.

A president travels across the country or **abroad** in his own plane - Air Force One. It is a Boeing 747 in which he can work and live as he does in the White House.

Even though presidents are closely protected some of them were killed in office. Abraham Lincoln was **assassinated** in 1865 when he was at a theatre performance. John F. Kennedy was murdered on the streets of Dallas, Texas in 1963.



Air Force One

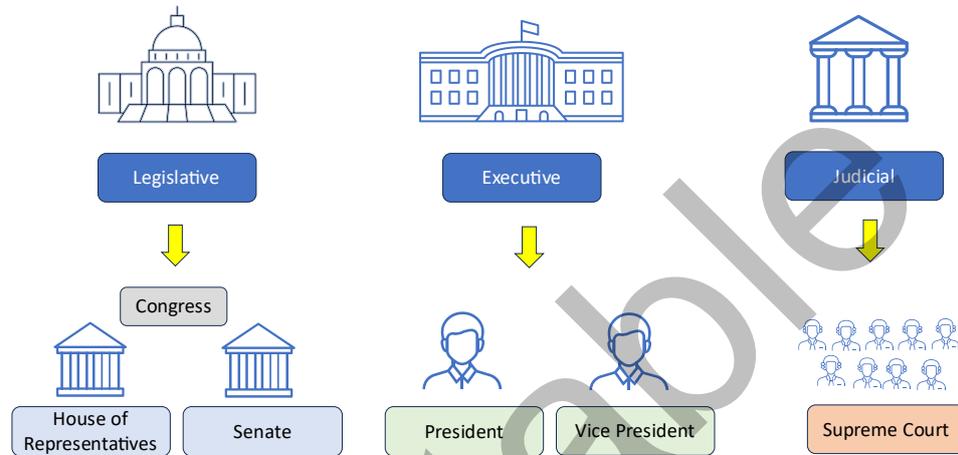
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How the American Government Works

The **legislative branch** makes laws for the country. This is done in **Congress**, which is made up of two parts. The House of Representatives has 435 members. Small states have only a few members and big states, like California or New York have many representatives. The Senate has 100 senators, two from each state. Members of Congress are **elected** every two years.

The **executive branch makes sure** that people follow the laws that the **legislative branch** makes. The leaders of this branch are the President and his Vice President. They are elected by the people every four years.

When people are not sure about the meaning of a law, the **judicial branch** listens to the **opinions** and makes a decision. It is made up of courts. The U.S. **Supreme Court** is the highest in the country. 9 **judges**, who are **appointed** by the President, meet in a building in Washington D.C.



How the American government works

Road to the White House

1. Primaries

There are many people who would like to become president. From January to June of the election year, the two big parties, Republicans and Democrats, hold primaries in many states. In these primaries, people decide who should become the party's **candidate** for the **presidential election** in November.

2. Conventions

At the end of the primaries, each party organizes a big party called a convention. Thousands of party members meet and **select** the candidate who did best in the primaries. At the convention, the candidate also tells the people who will become Vice President if he or she gets elected .

3. General Election

From August to November the candidates of each party travel all over the country, hold **speeches** and try to get the people to vote for them. On the Tuesday after the first Monday in November the American people vote for one of the presidential candidates.

In most cases, there are only two candidates, a Republican and a Democrat, but in the last elections candidates from other parties have taken part in the election.



Voting machine at an American election

Image :[Douglas W. Jones](#) / CC0



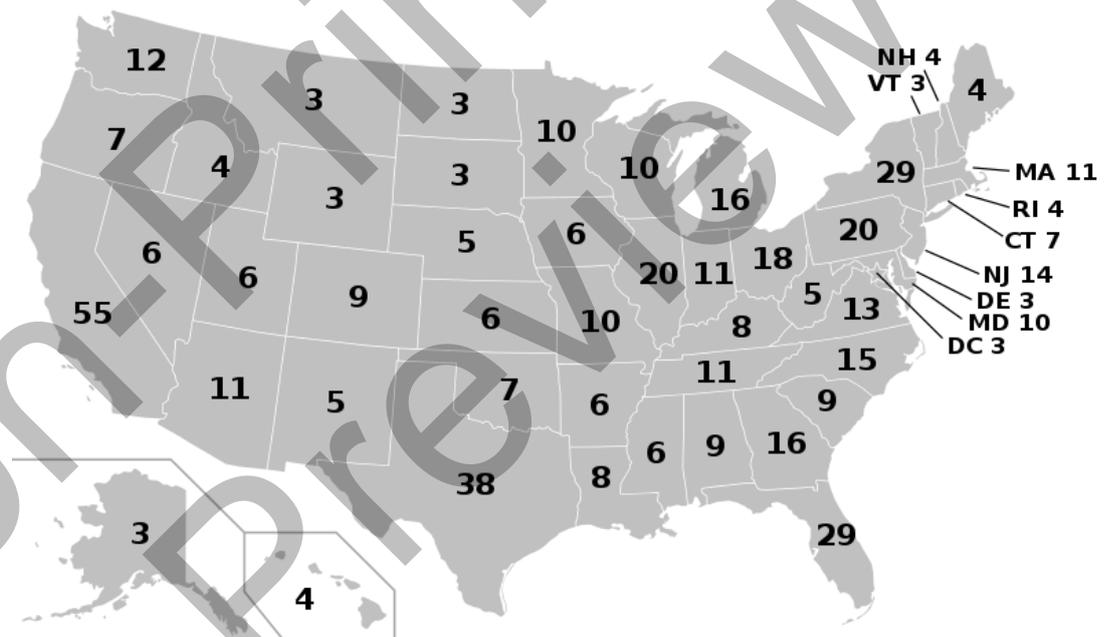
4. Electoral College

Americans do not vote for the President directly. They select **electors** who represent them in the **electoral college**.

Each state has a certain number of electors. Big states with a large **population**, like California have many electors (55) and small states, like Hawaii only have a few electors. All together there are 538 electors who get together in the Electoral College.

In December all the electors meet and elect a president. Most of the time they vote for the candidate who has won in their state. The candidate who has 270 or more **electoral votes** becomes President.

Candidates often **concentrate on** the big states with lots of electors. They know that if they win in states like California, New York or Texas they have a **good chance** of becoming President.



Number of electors of each state in the Electoral College
Image: [Original: Cg-realms](#) Derivative work: [Ali Zifan](#) / Public domain

5. Inauguration

On January 20th of the following year the new President and his Vice President begin the new term. They put their left hand on a Bible and **take an oath**.



Problems of the Electoral College System

On Election Day voters go to the **polls** to choose the **electors** in their state; however, they only see the names of the presidential and vice presidential **candidates**. When they vote for a candidate of a party they actually vote for an **elector** of that state. This is called the **popular** vote.

In almost all of the states the candidate who **receives** the most popular votes wins all that state's **electoral votes**. A candidate needs 270 votes to win the election. Even though the winner of the election is often known by the following morning he or she is **officially** elected president in December when the electors meet.

Many people don't **agree** with the way the Americans elect their president. They think it's wrong for the winning candidate to get all the electoral votes of a state and the loser none. That's why it is possible for a candidate to **receive** fewer votes from the people and still win the election by winning the "big" states. This happened last in 2016, when the Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton got three million **popular votes** more than Donald Trump but lost the Electoral College by 227 to 304.

Others criticize that candidates **concentrate** their **campaign** on the big states, like California, New York, Texas, Florida and others because they have the most electors. Smaller states or those in which a candidate feels safe may get less **attention** in the campaign.

Those who are **in favor of** keeping the system say that smaller states are better represented because they have more electors.

The voting system in America goes back to the days of the **founding fathers** who wrote the first **constitution**. They did not want the people to vote directly for the president. Because there was no radio and TV, they thought that it was too hard for the people to get information about a candidate.

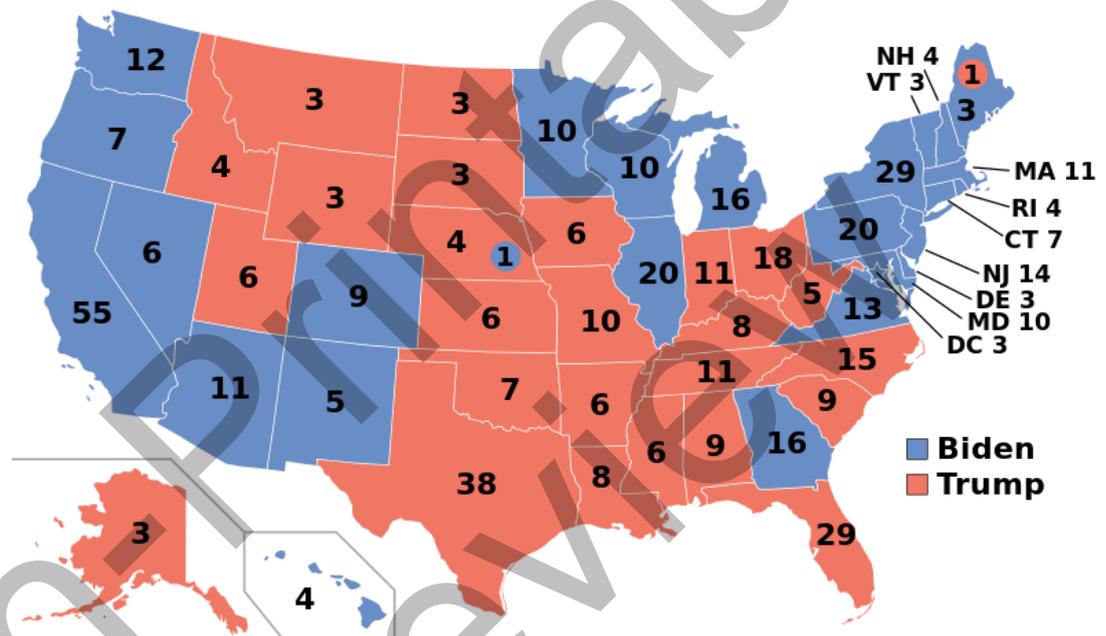
At first, electors could vote for whoever they wanted to, but then political parties became stronger, and they had a growing **influence** on the electors.



The 2020 Presidential Election

In the 2020 **election** Donald Trump ran for a second **term** against former Vice President Joe Biden. After Biden had beaten Trump in the **Electoral College** vote, he refused to **admit** he had lost. Instead, the President **challenged** the results in many states. He went to court and **claimed** that there was **fraud** in the states that he had lost.

On December 14, 2020, the **Electoral College** confirmed that Joe Biden had won the election. He **received** 306 electoral votes compared to 232 for Trump.



Electoral College results in 2020

Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:ElectoralCollege2020.svg>,

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The **former** president continued to state that the election was **rigged** and many of his **supporters** believed him. After Trump held a **speech** near the White House on January 6, 2021 hundreds of supporters **stormed** the Capitol, where **Congress** was counting **electoral votes** and **confirming** election results. Many Trump supporters were **arrested**, and one person was even killed.

In 2022 Trump **announced** that he wanted to run for President again. In the following year he was **charged** with a series of crimes, **including** plans to **overturn** the election and **remain** in power, as well as keeping **secret documents** in his private home. The cases never went to **trial** because in November 2024 Donald Trump was elected President for a second term.