

How the Electoral College Works

Each state gets a number of electors equal to its U.S. Congressional representation. ***Alaska has three electors.***

The electors from the state cast the Electoral College vote which ultimately elects the President and Vice-President of the United States.

State law determines how the names of the electors are chosen. In Alaska, each political party selects their electors, equal in number to the state's electoral vote, by the state party convention or in another manner prescribed by the party's bylaws. Third party and independent candidates merely designate their electors.

The names of the electors are submitted to the director of the Division of Elections by September 1st of the presidential election year. Members of Congress and employees of the federal government are prohibited from serving as electors. In Alaska, each elector must "pledge" that as an elector the person will cast his or her electoral vote for the candidate of the party.

When voters go to the polls on Election Day, they are really voting for electors to serve in the Electoral College. The vote marked for the President and Vice-President candidate on the ballot is considered and counted as a vote for the electors of the party. Whichever presidential candidate wins the popular votes in the state wins all the "pledged" votes of the state's electors. (The two exceptions to this are Maine and Nebraska, where two electors are chosen by statewide popular vote and the remainder by the popular vote within each Congressional district).

On the Monday following the second Wednesday of December (as established in federal law) each state's electors meet in their respective state's and cast their electoral votes. Each elector gets one vote. The electoral votes are then sealed and transmitted from each state to the President of the Senate who, on the following January 6, opens and reads them before both houses of Congress.

Currently, there are 538 electors in the nation and the votes of the majority of them – 270 votes – are required to be elected.