

PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION: THE FRAMERS' PLAN

TEXT SUMMARY

The Framers debated at length about the way the President would be chosen. Most Framers opposed electing a President by Congress or by a direct vote of the people.

The Framers decided that a body of **presidential electors**, known as the **electoral college**, should choose the President and Vice President. Each of these electors cast two **electoral votes**, each one for a different candidate. The candidate with the most votes became President, and the runner-up became Vice President.

Problems with this system soon arose, partly due to the growth of political parties. In 1796 John Adams, a Federalist, was elected President. Thomas Jefferson, of the opposing Democratic-Republican party, came in second and so became Vice President.

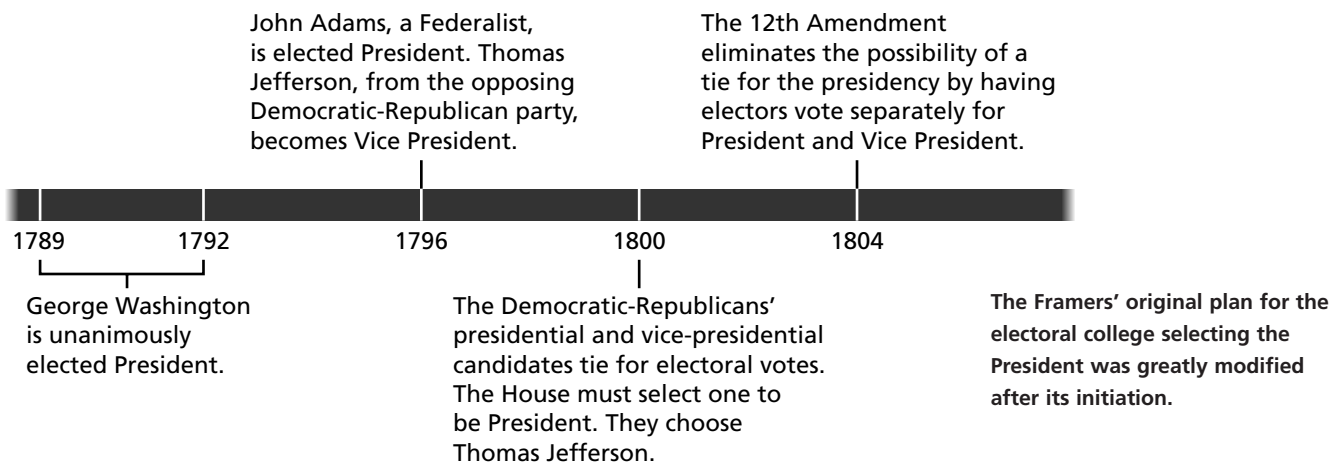
In the election of 1800, the parties each nominated candidates for President and Vice President. Thomas Jefferson and his running mate, however, tied for electoral votes. The House of Representatives had to choose one for President; they selected Jefferson after many votes.

To avoid such problems, the 12th Amendment, passed in 1804, said electors would cast separate votes for President and Vice President. The election of 1800 also introduced the nomination of electors pledged to vote for their party's presidential ticket and the automatic casting of electoral votes in line with those pledges. Today, the President and Vice President are still formally elected by the electoral college.

THE BIG IDEA

The Framers set up an electoral college to choose the President and Vice President, but the system changed quickly.

GRAPHIC SUMMARY: *The Framers' Plan for the Electoral College*



REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the purpose of the electoral college?
2. **Time Line Skills** Why did the House select the President in 1800?