

**TEXT SUMMARY**

The presidential campaign ends on election day, which is held every four years on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Soon after, the electoral college elects the President.

When the **electorate**—the voters—vote for President, they are really voting for electors pledged to support a particular candidate. In 48 States, the candidate with the most votes from the electorate, or popular votes, wins all of the State's electoral votes. Maine and Nebraska use a district system to allot electoral votes.

Congress counts the electoral votes and declares a winner. If no candidate receives a majority of the votes, the House of Representatives elects the President.

The electoral college system has three problems. First, it is possible for the winner of the popular vote not to become

President. If a candidate wins in a State by only a small majority, he still gets all its electoral votes. Also, the electoral votes are not divided according to State population and voter distribution.

Second, nothing forces a State's electors to vote for the candidate who wins the State's popular vote. Third, a strong third-party candidate could win enough votes to prevent any candidate from winning a majority, thus putting the election into the House.

Reformers have suggested four methods of changing the electoral system: the **district plan**, the **proportional plan**, **direct popular election**, and the **national bonus plan**. (See the Graphic Summary below.)

**THE BIG IDEA**

**On election day, voters choose the next President, but the election is not official until the members of the electoral college cast their ballots.**

**GRAPHIC SUMMARY: Proposed Reforms to the Electoral College**

Alternative Plan	Summary of Plan
<b>The District Plan</b>	Electors would represent congressional districts and support the popular vote winner in their district.
<b>The Proportional Plan</b>	Each candidate would receive the same share of the State's electoral vote as he or she received of its popular vote.
<b>Direct Popular Election</b>	The voters would directly elect the President.
<b>The National Bonus Plan</b>	Would add to the current system by giving "bonus" electoral votes to the popular vote winner.

The proposals for changing the electoral college system have not been accepted because of much criticism against them.

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What group officially elects the President of the United States?
2. **Chart Skills** Why might someone criticize the proportional plan?