

# The Bristol Press

## Letter: Some insights about the electoral college

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Dear Voter, Did you know?... “The United States is the only country that elects a politically powerful president via an electoral college and the only one in which a candidate can become president without having obtained the highest number of votes in the sole or final round of popular voting.” (George C. Edwards, III)

The Electoral College from each state is mandated by the U.S. Constitution to meet in their own state, on the same date, to cast votes for president and vice president. In 1787 when the U.S. Constitution was adopted, the requirement to meet separately on the same day was devised to minimize the opportunity for collusion among electors.

States are awarded electoral votes equal to the number of members in Congress. In Connecticut we have two U.S. senators (as does every state) and currently have five representatives in Congress. Therefore, Connecticut is allotted seven of the 538 total electoral votes.

How are these seven “electors” selected? In Connecticut, a set of seven electors is nominated by each political party with a presidential candidate. These electors pledge to vote for that political party’s nominee. When you vote “for president,” you are actually voting to select the “electors” pledged to vote for your candidate. All seven electors pledged to the president receiving the most votes in the general election become electors to Connecticut’s Electoral College. Although the electors are pledged to a particular presidential candidate, no elector is mandated by federal law to honor a pledge.

With seven electoral votes, why aren’t they apportioned among candidates? This “winner-take-all” approach is set by state law. Currently, Maine and Nebraska are the only states which apportion their electoral votes by congressional district rather than using the “winner-take-all” approach.

So, is it true that the presidential candidate with the most votes nationwide may not win the election? Yes, because every state has the same number of U.S. senators (two) the Electoral College is not apportioned according to population. Additionally, the U.S. Constitution allows states to set election rules such as whether or not electoral votes are apportioned among presidential candidates. Indeed, a candidate can lose an election receiving fewer electoral votes than an opponent yet, receiving more total votes nationwide.

What about a national popular vote? There are arguments for and against a national popular

vote. A movement is gaining traction in America to create a hybrid system to retain the Electoral College; yet, assure the candidate with the most votes nationwide wins the presidential election. Because the Electoral College is part of the U.S. Constitution, the creators of the National Popular Vote Compact are betting that it will be easier to pass state legislation than to adopt and ratify a constitutional amendment.

Connecticut legislators are considering a bill to join the Interstate Compact referred to as “National Popular Vote”. If the legislature votes and the bill is signed by the governor to enter into the interstate compact, Connecticut’s seven Electoral College votes will be assigned to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of votes nationwide. The compact does not take effect until jurisdictions representing a majority of the Electoral College votes (270) have signed on. To-date 10 jurisdictions representing 136 electoral votes have signed on. For more information on the National Popular Vote Compact, visit [nationalpopularvote.com](http://nationalpopularvote.com). As you scroll down the home page, on the right side you will find video of debates on the compact. I watched the Cato Institute debate; arguments on both sides provide examples to back up their position. Well worth watching.

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