

KATE BROWN  
SECRETARY OF STATE



STEPHEN N. TROUT  
DIRECTOR

255 CAPITOL STREET NE, SUITE 501  
SALEM, OREGON 97310-0722

(503) 986-1518

## ELECTORAL COLLEGE INFORMATION

The Electoral College is the body of electors who meet after a presidential election to select the next president and vice-president of the United States. All of the Electoral College members elected throughout the country will meet in their respective states on December 17, 2012, to cast their votes (the first Monday after the second Wednesday).

Under the provisions of the US Constitution, voters who participate in the presidential election choose the members of the Electoral College. Written into the Constitution of 1787, the Electoral College was designed to balance the states' and the peoples' interests. Of primary concern was the possibility a nationwide election breaking down into chaos and confusion. This was before the emergence of national political parties and nationwide communications systems.

A voter who casts a vote for a presidential candidate is not voting directly for the candidate, but is, instead, casting a vote for a slate of electors who pledged their support for that candidate. There is no Constitutional provision or Federal law that requires Electors to vote according to the results of the popular vote in their States. Some States, however, require Electors to cast their votes according to the popular vote. In Oregon, a candidate for elector must sign a pledge form that if elected the candidate will vote in the Electoral College for the candidates of the party.

Pursuant to ORS 248.355, each political party nominating candidates for President and Vice President selects a number of candidates equal to the number of U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators - which is 7 for Oregon (two US senators and five US representatives). The party certifies the names of the selected candidates for elector to the Secretary of State not later than the 70th day before the election of electors. Each major and minor political party follows their party rules for selecting the electors. The Secretary of State does not have jurisdiction to enforce those party rules.

To be elected to the presidency, a candidate must receive a majority of the Electoral College votes cast (at least 270 votes). A separate vote is taken to elect the vice president. If no presidential candidate receives a majority of the Electoral College votes cast, the US House of Representatives chooses the president from the candidates who came in first, second and third in the Electoral College vote. The selection is made by a vote of the state delegations in the House, with each delegation allotted one vote.

Only two presidents have been selected in this manner: Thomas Jefferson in 1800 and John Quincy Adams in 1824. It is interesting to note that although Adams became president in 1824, Andrew Jackson actually received a greater number of the Electoral College votes (99 to 84). He did not, however, receive a majority of the 261 total votes and the House decided the election. If no candidate for vice-president receives a majority vote, the US Senate makes the selection from the top two candidates for the office. Each senator has a single vote. The Senate has not elected a vice-president since 1836, when Richard M. Johnson was selected to serve under President Martin Van Buren.