Election 2020
2020 Election Basics
Who’s On the Ballot?

**Federal**
- President (and VP)
- U.S. Senate
- U.S. House of Representatives

**State**
- State Senate
- State House
- Michigan Supreme Court
- State Board of Education
- UM Regents

**Local**
- County Sheriff
- Prosecuting Attorney
- County Commissioner
- Appeals, Circuit, Probate & District Court Judges
- City Council
Path to the Presidency

- Presidential elections occur four years on the first Tuesday in November. The next one is **November 3, 2020**.
- The first step to becoming a party’s nominee: Primaries and caucuses. Next, the political parties formally select a nominee to unite behind at their nominating conventions. Finally, Americans vote in the general election to elect the president and vice president. Presidential requirements:

- Natural born citizen
- 35+ years of age
- U.S. Resident for 14+ years
HOW TO BECOME PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

U.S. CONSTITUTION’S REQUIREMENTS FOR A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE

- Natural Born Citizen
- Minimum Age 35 Years
- U.S. Resident 14 Years

START

STEP 1: PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES

There are many people who want to be President, each with their own ideas about how government should work.

People with similar ideas belong to the same political party. This is where primaries and caucuses come in.

Candidates from each political party campaign through the country to win the favor of their party members.

STEP 2: NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

At each convention, the presidential candidate chooses a running mate (Vice Presidential candidate).

Each party holds a national convention to select a final presidential nominee.

IN A PRIMARY

Party members vote for the best candidate that will represent them in the general election.

IN A CAUCUS

Party members select the best candidate through a series of discussions and votes.

The presidential candidates campaign throughout the country to win the support of the general population.

STEP 3: GENERAL ELECTION

People in every state across the country vote for one President and Vice President.

When people cast their vote, they are actually voting for a group of people called electors.

STEP 4: ELECTORAL COLLEGE

In the electoral college system, each state gets a certain number of electors based on its representation in Congress.

Each elector casts one vote following the general election, and the candidate who gets more than half (270) wins.

The newly elected President and Vice President are inaugurated in January.

DEFINITIONS

Candidate: A meeting of the local members of a political party to select delegates to the national party convention. A caucus is a substitute for a primary election.

Delegate: A person authorized to represent others as an elected representative to a political party conference.

Elector: A member of the electoral college.

Electoral College: The voters of each state, and the District of Columbia, vote for electors to be the authorized constitutional members in a presidential election.

Natural Born Citizen: Someone born with U.S. citizenship includes any child born “in” the United States, the children of United States citizens born abroad, and those born abroad of one citizen parent.

Primary: An election where voters select candidates for an upcoming general election. Winning candidates will have delegates sent to the national party convention as their party’s U.S. presidential nominee.
The Electoral College
The Electoral College

The Electoral College is the formal body which elects the President (and Vice President) of the United States.

- Established in Article II, Section 1 of the U.S. Constitution

Each state gets as many "electors" in the Electoral College as it has Representatives and Senators in the United States Congress, plus the District of Columbia has three electors. There are 538 total members.

When voters go to the polls in a Presidential election, they actually are voting for the slate of electors vowing to cast their ballots for that ticket in the Electoral College. In this way, the President and VP are indirectly chosen by the people.
How Does the Electoral College Actually Work?

Nomination of electors

Political parties choose their potential electors. The two most common methods the states have adopted are nomination by state party convention and by state party committee.

Parties typically select members known for their loyalty and service to the party (i.e. party leaders, state and local elected officials and activists). When a voter casts a vote for a candidate for President of the United States, they are actually casting a vote for the presidential electors who were selected by that candidate's party.

Awarding electoral votes

**Winner-Take-All:** When a candidate for president wins a state's popular vote, that party's slate of electors will be the ones to cast the vote for POTUS in December. This system is used by 48 states and the District of Columbia.

**Proportional:** One electoral vote is awarded to the candidate who wins the popular vote in each congressional district, and the remaining two electoral votes are awarded to the candidates receiving the most votes statewide. Only used by Maine and Nebraska.
Historical Context

It is possible to **win the Electoral College but lose the popular vote**. This happened in 2016, 2000, and three times in the 1800s. If no candidate receives the majority of electoral votes, the vote goes to the House of Representatives. House members choose the new president from among the top three candidates. The Senate elects the vice president from the remaining top two candidates.

### 2000

The race between George W. Bush (R) and Al Gore (D) resulted in Bush losing the popular vote but eventually defeating Gore in the Electoral College. The results were tied up for weeks, as Florida underwent a recount and the U.S. Supreme Court decided the contested outcome.

### 2016

The race between Hillary Clinton (D) and Donald Trump (R) saw Clinton win the popular vote, but Trump take the Electoral College. Clinton received nearly 3 million more votes nationwide, but lost the electoral vote 227 to 304.
Arguments for and against its preservation

**Keeping the Electoral College**

- Abolishing it would increase polarization, because the EC system requires candidates to broaden their national appeal and discourages extreme policy positions.
- The concepts of a democratic republic and federalism are foundational American beliefs.
- Reduces fraud and minimizes election-related deadlock.

**Abolishing the Electoral College**

- All votes should be considered equal, and no state should have outsize importance in presidential elections.
- Doesn’t account for high income inequality and widespread geographic disparities, or encourage vote enfranchisement.
- The majority of Americans favor electing the president through a direct, nationwide popular vote.

Note: Eliminating the Electoral College would require amending the Constitution, via two-thirds vote in Congress or ratification by legislatures of three-fourths of the states.
Presidential candidates need 270 electoral votes to win the election.
Absentee Voting: By the Numbers

- In Michigan, nearly **2.4 million** absentee ballot requests have been submitted as of Tuesday, September 21.
- Nearly **two-thirds** of Americans favor allowing all voters to vote by mail or absentee ballot.
- About **6 in 10** registered voters say they’d prefer to cast their ballot prior to Election Day. (60% of GOP voters say they prefer to vote in person, while 58% of democrats say they would rather vote by mail.)
- Experts estimate as many as **70%** of all ballots cast in November's general election could be cast by mail.
2020 Election Forecast

- Key **battleground states** in the 2020 presidential election presently include Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.
- States with close Senate races include Maine, Iowa, North Carolina, Montana, Georgia, Colorado and Arizona. The U.S. Senate currently has 53 Republicans, 45 Democrats, 2 Independents
- Almost all national polls indicate that Joe Biden is *favored* to win, but his lead is within the margins of error in most polls.
Election Day Concerns

- **Poll workers and other election inspector shortage:** Poll workers are historically older, making them more vulnerable to Covid-19. Many have already indicated that they won’t work this election cycle. If there aren’t enough volunteers in November, the number of polling places may be reduced, leading to longer lines and possible voter disenfranchisement.
  - Michigan launched the “Democracy MVP” program to recruit more (and younger) poll workers for Election Day. Other states have similar initiatives.
Election Day Concerns

- **Unprecedented vote-by-mail numbers**: The U.S. Postal Service and states are already resource-strapped, and Secretaries of State are facing new challenges as absentee voting becomes a more popular choice for registered voters. While many have championed early voting, systems may be strained to count all of the ballots in a timely manner on Election Day.
  - As the USPS faces delivery delays across the country, elections officials are recommending that voters return their ballots as early as possible or utilize drop boxes.
Election Day Concerns

Misinformation & Confusion

- Bots on social media, partisan news outlets, and misleading ads all sow confusion, often with the goal of suppressing turnout.
- President Trump has called vote-by-mail a “rigged” process, and is claiming widespread voter fraud.
- He has also indicated that he isn’t sure if he will ensure a peaceful transfer of power in the event of a Biden electoral victory.
Tabulating (& Litigating) Ballots
Election Day Returns

- Using exit poll data, media outlets typically “call” a race once that state’s polls have closed and a Presidential candidate establishes an insurmountable lead. States conduct the official election certification process, which can take weeks or even longer.
- For many races, especially tight races, it’s unlikely that we’ll have results on Election Night because many states won’t be able to begin counting absentee ballots until their polls close.
- 2020 could be the most litigious election in history, as both political parties have already filed numerous lawsuits. This could delay the certification of election results for days, weeks, or months.
Electon Returns

- It’s likely that Michigan’s results won’t be available until the Friday or the weekend after Election Day.
- MI clerks can’t begin processing absentee ballots until the polls close on Election Day.
- Election Day could turn into “Election Week” or even longer
Contested Elections

- **1876**: During post-Civil War Reconstruction, widespread voter intimidation against African Americans in the South led to the creation of an election commission that awarded disputed electoral votes to Rutherford B. Hayes.
- **1888**: In an effort to defeat President Cleveland, Benjamin Harrison and his campaign devised a scheme to bribe voters to cast a ballot for the Republican ticket. Harrison won the Electoral College but lost the popular vote.
- **1960**: Kennedy narrowly beat Nixon (by just 100,000 votes nationwide), leading to Republican accusations of voter fraud in Texas and Illinois, which handed Kennedy an Electoral College win.
- **2000**: The heavily-litigated 2000 election was contested due to the “hanging chads” found on the punch card ballots of Floridians. The U.S. Supreme Court ultimately ruled against a statewide recount, giving Bush the electoral victory.
To Share with Peers

City Clerk’s Satellite Office
Now open at UMMA!
Monday-Friday 10 a.m.-7 p.m.

General Election:
November 3, 2020
How to Stay Engaged

Direct folks to [govote.umich.edu](http://govote.umich.edu)

Follow us on IG @umichvotes

Upcoming Debates

Vice Presidential: October 7th from 9-10:30 pm

Presidential: October 15th and 22nd from 9-10:30 pm