

## Part 1

# The working of the US Presidential Elections

*Watch the two videos below and answer the following questions:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLIOqJaboUc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2apJ95D8vX4>

### 1. Who can run for President?

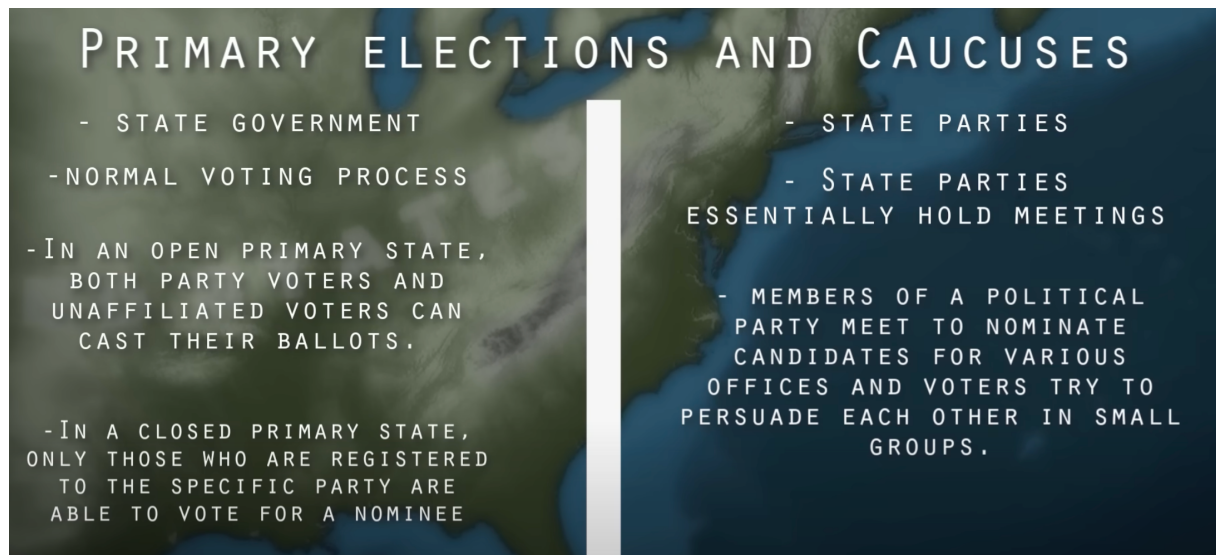
To run for office:

- > The President must be a natural-born US citizen
- > They must be a minimum of 35 years old
- > They must be a resident of the US for a minimum of 14 years

These qualifications were laid out by the Constitution in 1787 and have never changed since then.

### 2. What is the difference between **primaries and caucuses**?

Both the primaries and caucuses begin at the start of an election year and determine each party's nominee for the actual presidential race.



The primaries tend to attract a wider demographic of voters due to the less time-consuming structure and easier way of voting while caucuses tend to only attract voters who are very strongly politically involved. Still, some states choose a caucus over a state-funded primary because it allows the state parties to pick their own voting date and general rules.

The results of the pre-election proceedings play a direct part in the decision that each party makes as to who will be their official candidate for the presidential race. Generally, the number of votes that each candidate receives will decide the number of delegates that are chosen to attend the party's national convention.

### **3. How do national conventions work?**

Thousands of delegates rally to vote on procedural rules, adopt a party platform and officially name the presidential and vice-presidential nominees. Though there are many primaries and caucuses, it feels like a public decision, but it remains a party decision.

The delegates are usually people heavily involved in state politics and they're assigned to candidates based on the results of primaries and caucuses. When a candidate wins the delegates in a state, they are expected to vote for that candidate at the convention. To secure the nomination, a candidate must win a majority of delegates. And the final vote should ordinarily reflect the candidate who received the highest number of votes from the primaries and caucuses but, if there is no clear winner on the first vote of the convention, there will be a second vote. In between votes campaigns wheel and deal on the convention floor, trying to convince delegates to support their candidate. There hasn't been a real nomination fight on the convention floor in decades. Then the nominees give acceptance speeches on national television.

### **4. What events make the campaign race?**

Candidates host rallies and other events, make TV commercials and blaze the campaign trails. They also participate in a series of televised debates, as do their VP running mates.

### **5. How does the popular vote work?**

Election Day happens every four years on the Tuesday after the first Monday in November. Although many people wait to cast their ballots in person on this day, numerous states have options for early voting, whether it be in person or mail-in ballots. So technically voting can begin a while before the actual Election Day and as demonstrated in the 2020 election, ballot counting can last well beyond election night.

Many people are under the assumption that the candidate who wins the popular vote, meaning the one who has the most ballots cast in support of them, actually wins the election. The popular vote does matter but really only to a certain extent.

### **6. How does the electoral college work? Why is it subject to controversy today?**

A presidential candidate wins not through the votes of the people alone but through the accumulation of 270 or more electoral votes. This is when the electoral college comes into play. The electoral college is made up of a group of electors split amongst all 50 states and Washington DC. **The number of Electors that each state holds is determined by the number of members that state has in Congress.** California for example has 55 Electors whereas Alaska only has 3. **For who becomes an Elector, the rules for those selections also vary by state. The laws that determine how Electors must vote also comes down to what state governments decide as the Constitution fails to cover this.** In DC and 48 states, all but Nebraska and Maine, the Electors must all vote in favor of whoever wins the state's popular vote. For that reason, when ballot tallying begins, we will see each individual state counting their own ballots and determining whether their citizens went red or went blue.

Even though, due to the state laws, we essentially know how states and DC will cast their Electoral votes, it technically does not happen until mid-December. Plus, any recounts or court disputes concerning the results of the election at a state level must be resolved before the Electors cast their official votes.

Currently, there are some debates as to whether the Electoral College should be reformed or even eradicated, allowing the popular vote to directly elect each new president alone.

**7. What are the aspects that differ from one state to the other? Why? What problems does that create?**

Republican voters in predominantly democratic states, and vice versa, often feel that their votes do not count.

Winning a popular vote doesn't guarantee a candidate the Presidency. In 2016, Hillary Clinton won the popular vote around 66 million to around 63 million but Donald Trump beat her in the electoral vote, which came to 304 to 227.

**8. What would happen if no candidate received a majority of the electoral votes?**

In the case that no candidate receives a majority, the House of Representatives would choose the next President while the Senate would choose the VP.

**9. What change did the 12th Amendment bring?**

Before, the winner of the electoral votes would become President and the runner-up would be their VP. When Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr tied in 1800, it put too all the power in the hands of the House of Representatives. Seeing the flaw in their system, the states decided to split the power between both sections of Congress through the 12<sup>th</sup> amendment.

**10. When is the President officially elected? and when do they come into office?**

At the start of January, Congress comes together to count the Electoral votes and, assuming that one candidate reaches the minimum of 270, the President of the Senate formally announces who will be the new President of the United States (POTUS). Inauguration Day then falls on January 20<sup>th</sup> via the Constitution which specifies that a President's term begins at exactly noon on January 20<sup>th</sup> after each election. The ceremony is presided over by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) and is usually attended by any living former Presidents as the outgoing President (incumbent) welcomes the President-elect into the White House before the latter takes his Oath of Office by 12pm that day.