

ELECTION 2020

GRADES
7-10



THE ROAD TO THE White House

Everything you need to know about the candidates,
the issues, and how America elects a president



SCHOLASTIC

The Electoral College

The voting isn't over on Election Day. Here's how the U.S. actually chooses its president.

What is the Electoral College?

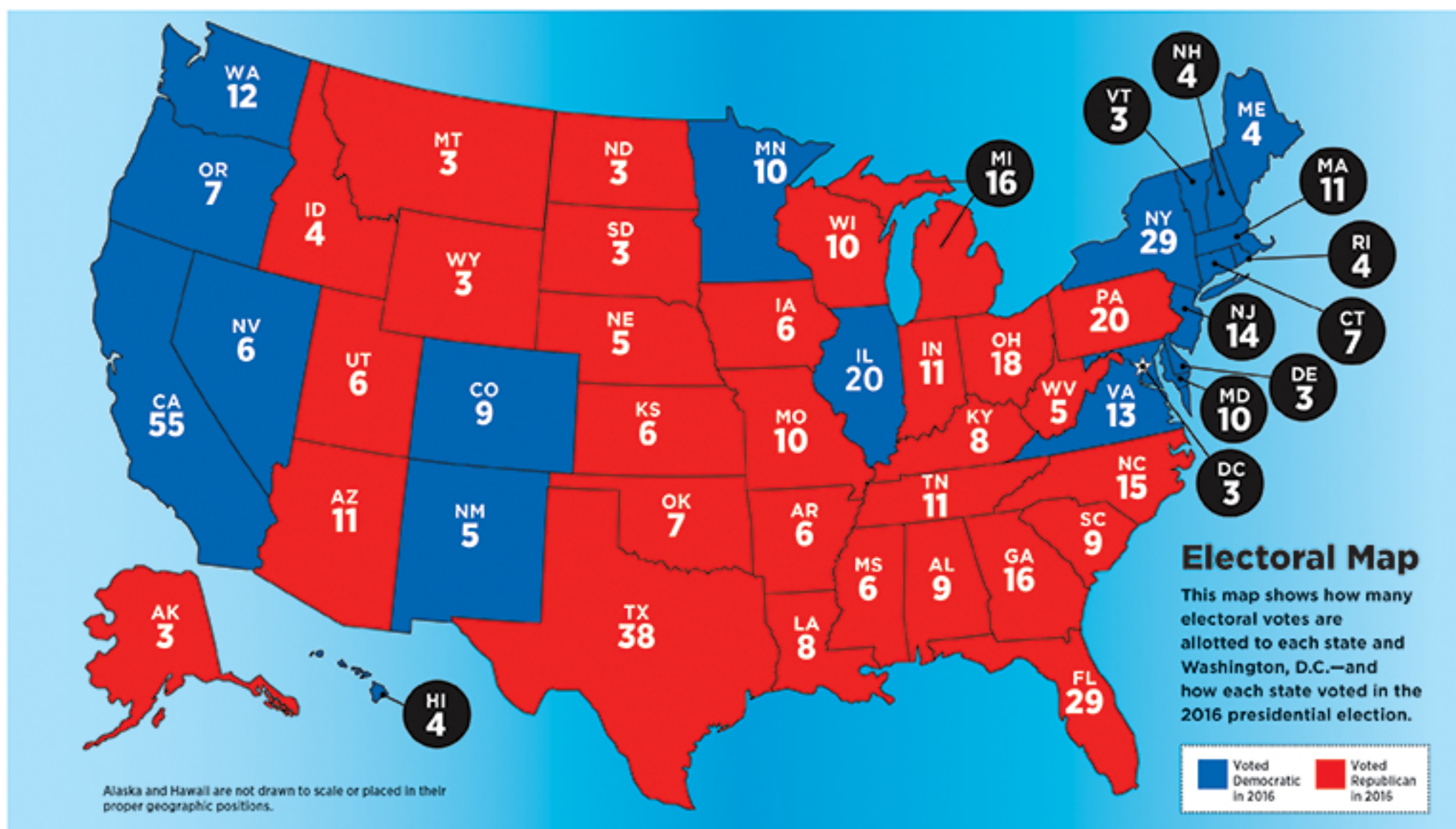
It may sound like a school, but it's not. It's a group of 538 people from all 50 states and Washington, D.C., called electors. According to the Constitution, they are officially responsible for electing the president and vice president.

How did this system come about?

As the Framers drafted the Constitution in 1787, they clashed over how the president should be chosen. Some thought that citizens should vote directly for the president. Others argued that average citizens weren't educated enough to decide. They thought that Congress should pick the president. In the end, the two sides came up with a compromise, creating a system that came to be known as the Electoral College.

What is Election Day really all about?

Most voters will cast their ballots in the popular vote on November 3. They will see presidential candidates' names on the ballot, but technically they'll be voting for a slate of electors who have pledged to support a particular candidate.



How many electors does each state get?

Each state has a number of electors equal to its total number of senators and representatives. For example, California has 53 representatives and 2 senators, so it has 55 electors. The number of senators for each state is two, regardless of size, but because the number of representatives is

based on population, states with more people have more electors. (Although Washington, D.C., has no senators or voting representatives, it still has three electors.)

How does a candidate win?

In most states, the candidate who wins the popular vote gets all of that state's electoral votes. (Maine and Nebraska

have different systems.) That means states that have a lot of electors—like California, Texas, and New York—can play a big role in the outcome of an election. States in which it's hard to predict who will win—known as swing states or battleground states—are also key. A candidate must win at least 270 electoral votes (a majority of the total 538) to become president.

When do the electors pick the president?

The electors meet in their respective state capitals to cast their votes in December, about one month after Election Day. Electors almost always vote for the candidate they have pledged to support. But the system is not perfect. To find out why, see p. 18.

This map shows how many electoral votes are awarded to each state.

Use it to answer the questions.
Write your answers on a
separate sheet of paper.

1. What is the combined number of U.S. senators and representatives in Ohio?
2. List the states that have exactly six electoral votes.
3. What is the smallest number of states a candidate can win to get the 270 votes he or she needs? Which states are in that group?
4. Which states have the fewest electoral votes possible? What is that number of electoral votes? Explain why it's not possible for a state to have fewer than that number.
5. It's election night. So far, Candidate A has won in states with electoral votes adding up to 244. Candidate B has won in states with electoral votes adding up to 212. New York, North Carolina, Florida, and Colorado have not yet announced their results. If Candidate A wins Florida, will he or she definitely win the election? Explain your answer.