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## The Electoral College Has Outlived Its Usefulness

### Guests:

For the Motion: Jamelle Bouie, Kate Shaw

Against the Motion: Tara Ross, Bradley A. Smith

Moderator: John Donovan

### AUDIENCE RESULTS

**Before the debate:****63% FOR****23% AGAINST****14% UNDECIDED****After the debate:****70% FOR****28% AGAINST****2% UNDECIDED**

Start Time: (00:00:00)

Hi, everybody. I'm John Donovan, host and moderator of Intelligence Squared U.S. And thank you for joining us for our second every digital debate. I am online with four debaters who are going to argue with each other, but I am confident that they will argue well and civilly and in a way that sheds light on our topic: the electoral college.

I am coming to you in a debate that we recorded on Friday, May 15th, but we are releasing it live to you right now. And by being live, I'm able to make you all a part of it. There is a chat box on the side and we would like you to go there and share your views as you're listening to the debate unfold. And also, look for prompts from our producers that will tell you things like when and where to cast your vote.

I want to welcome in particular our audience tuning in from Northwestern's Pritzker School of Law in Chicago. We were originally going to be hosting this debate with you on your campus, and we're sorry that we can't get to see you live and in person, but we're happy to have you here now, partnering with us in this way -- with Northwestern -- for this debate.

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And now, let's move on to our debate topic: the electoral college, this unique construct of indirect democracy that -- well, it's not a college as the term is commonly used, but it sure is electoral in that its members -- currently maxed out at 538 -- have been the actual electors of every president we've had ever since we had a constitution -- even those five times in our history when the popular vote went to someone else. In recent memory, the 2000 election, the 2016 election. And what were the founders thinking? That's a question that the Supreme Court is considering right now in an electoral college case. But why do the founders think the electoral college was needed? What good has come of it? And what harm has come from it? We think that, in these questions, we have the makings of a debate.

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So, let's have it. Yes or no to this statement: The Electoral College Has Outlived its Usefulness. I'm here virtually to help juggle the squares on your screen, these two teams of two who are ready to argue for and against that resolution. So, let's meet our debaters. First up, to speak for the resolution -- The Electoral College Has Outlived Its Usefulness -- I want to say hello to Jamelle Bouie. Jamelle, thanks for joining us.

Jamelle Bouie:

Thank you for having me.

John Donvan:

I just want folks to know that, Jamelle, you are a New York Times columnist and a political analyst for CBS News. You are also an alumnus of our series, so it's great to have you back. And back from where? Where are you located, actually, at the moment?

Jamelle Bouie:

I'm in Charlottesville, Virginia.

John Donovan:

Well, it's great to have you joining up. I'm up in [unintelligible] -- I'm in Washington, D.C. Also, arguing on your team for the resolution, I want to say hello to Kate Shaw. Kate, welcome to Intelligence Squared.

Kate Shaw:

Hey, John, thanks so much for having me.

John Donovan:

It's great to have you joining us. And you're a professor at the Cardoza School of Law and co-director of the Floersheimer Center for Constitutional Democracy.

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You're also a host of the very popular law podcast, Strict Scrutiny.

Welcome to Intelligence Squared and where are you located in this world?

Kate Shaw:

Thanks, so I'm normally in New York City but actually I'm now in upstate New York with my family.

John Donovan:

Okay, sounds like you might be sheltering in place a little bit.

Kate Shaw:

For sure.

John Donovan:

I'm so glad you were able to join us. So, that's the team arguing for the resolution, The Electoral College Has Outlived its Usefulness. Now, let's meet the team arguing against that very resolution. First, let's say hello to Tara Ross. Tara, welcome to Intelligence Squared.

Tara Ross:

Hi, John. Thanks for having us.

John Donovan:

It's great to have you with us. I want folks to know that you are the author of a lot of books about the Electoral College, including "Why We Need the Electoral College." You're also a former lawyer and editor of the Texas Review of Law and Politics, which perhaps tells me that you're joining us from Texas?

Tara Ross:

I'm in Dallas, Texas, and my family would joke that I'm a recovering lawyer.

[laughter]

But yes, I did go to law school. [laughs]

00:04:00

John Donovan:

All right, well thanks very much for joining us. And your partner I want to welcome also to Intelligence Squared, Bradley Smith.

Bradley, hi, welcome to Intelligence Squared.

Bradley Smith:

Hi. Thanks, John. Pleasure to be here.

John Donovan:

And you are a professor at Capital University Law School, and you have served as Commissioner, Vice-Chairman, and Chairman of the Federal Election Commission. Welcome, and the same question to you, where are you joining us from?

Bradley Smith:

I'm in the little town of Granville, Ohio.

John Donovan:

All right, so we're spread across the eastern seaboard and then as far down as Texas. And I'm glad that we can all do this. And again, we have a super large audience not just across the United States but around the world. I want everybody to know that as always, our debate will go in three rounds and then you, those folks out in the world, our online audience get to vote to decide who

the winner is. And here's how that works: we're going to ask you to cast two votes; one in just a few seconds, and then another one after you've heard all of the arguments from our debaters. And the team that sways the most minds between the two votes is the one that is declared our winner.

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So, it's time to cast your first vote to get us started. If you're using our chat, you'll see a link to vote from one of our producers coming right now. You just click on that link and cast your vote for or against or undecided on the resolution, the Electoral College Has Outlived its Usefulness, and remember you do that now, and then we're going to ask you to do it again after you've heard all of the arguments. And I want to remind you, it's the side that sways the most minds between the first vote -- it's the difference between the first vote and the second vote -- that determines our winners. And by the way, if you're not seeing that link, don't worry. You can just go to this URL and vote as well, that's [IQ2us.org/ecvote](http://IQ2us.org/ecvote), [IQ2us.org/ecvote](http://IQ2us.org/ecvote). All right, I'm going to give you just a second to get your first vote registered.

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All right, I think we are ready to move on to round one, opening statements from each debater in turn. Those statements will be four minutes each. Our resolution is, The Electoral College Has Outlived its Usefulness, and here first up to speak for that resolution Jamelle Bouie, columnist for The New York Times. Jamelle, your time starts right now.

Jamelle Bouie:  
All right, thank you.

So, to address the resolution, to address why I think it has outlived its usefulness, I'm going to begin with a discussion of how we got to the Electoral College in the first place. And the key thing I want everyone to understand is that the Electoral College that we have, the one that we would use in November's election, is not actually the one that was ratified in 1788. That Electoral College fell out of use very quickly, and what we have is essentially an extra-constitutional mechanism put together to deal with the exigencies of politics as it developed. So, a quick sort of capsuled summary of how we got the Electoral College.

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From the beginning of the constitutional convention, and specifically when they began thinking about the national executive, the delegates were trying to balance essentially four competing things when it came to how to choose the national executive. They wanted a voice for the people, they wanted a fair representation for slave states, they wanted independence from the legislature, and they had to deal with their simple question of how do you actually choose a national executive in a big large diverse country?

They cycled through a few things, several delegates including James Madison proposed popular election, others proposed choosing from the Congress, but by the time they came to a conclusion,

which was at the very last minute of the convention, they decided they would do this elector based system. That each state would choose electors who would gather together as a kind of congress, they would filter through candidates. Whoever won the majority of electors would become president, runner-up vice-president, and if there was no winner it would go to the House who would choose on the basis of the delegations.

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No one was really entirely satisfied with this when they came to the conclusion. But everyone expected, more or less, that the President of the Convention, George Washington, would become the first chief executive, and this was a straightforward way to get George Washington to become President of the United States.

So, no one was really too worried about it. There was debate over during the replication debates, but it wasn't a big sticking point. No one was too worried about mob rule in these discussions. They weren't worried about excess of democracy. Usually, when the founders talked about democracy, they were talking about Athenian style direct assemblies, not representative elections.

So, it works in 1789, in 1792, and then -- to choose Washington, and then it promptly falls apart. 1796 is highly contested. 1800 is famously contested because Aaron Burr and Thomas Jefferson get the same number of electoral votes and this ends up, you know, nearly tearing the country apart.

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And the 12th Amendment is passed to ensure that electors can choose a President and a Vice President on separate ballots and to avoid a repeat of 1800. But by this point, this is key, by 1800 the idea of a non-partisan body of people selecting a President is gone.

We have partisanship. We have political parties. We have partisan electorates. You have the expectation they will choose on a partisan basis. And so, at that point the Electoral College as designed, has basically outlived its usefulness. It's gone within 15 years. And what emerges, the winner take all system, is highly partisan electoral choices, is basically an attempt to get around the conditions of American politics at the time.

Surviving founders lament this, and even Madison even calls for a constitutional amendment to get rid of winner take all at the very least.

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And by the close of the 19th Century, you had several Electoral College misfires or misfires of this new strange system we've devised. And there is an emerging consensus that we should do something different. My debate partner will talk about the Electoral College as it developed in the 20th Century and the problems associated with it. Thank you.

John Donovan:

Thank you, Janelle Bouie, and now we move the argument over to the other side. Arguing against the resolution that The Electoral College Has Outlived Its Usefulness. I want to once again welcome Tara Ross. She is author of "Why We Need the Electoral College." Tara, the screen is yours.

Tara Ross:

Thanks again for having us. So, I'm going to start with the story that might surprise everybody. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, civil rights leaders came out enthusiastically in favor of the Electoral College. Now, this is no token gesture of support. They wrote editorials, they testified before Congress.

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In general, they seemed terrified that the Electoral College were to go away, racial minorities would be harmed. In fact, National Urban League President Vernon Jordan defended the Electoral College saying, "Take away the Electoral College and the importance of that black vote melts away. Blacks, instead of being crucial to victory in major states simply become 10 percent of the total electorate, with reduced impact."

So, he and other civil rights leaders noted the benefits that go unappreciated today. First, he noted that third parties cannot gain too big a foothold with the Electoral College. Now, maybe you're not too happy about that because we all sometimes get frustrated with our two choices. But the good side is that extremists cannot have too much of an influence on our election. In particular, the civil rights leaders noted that segregationist George Wallace in 1968 was unable to get a foothold. They noted other benefits as well. They noted that the concentration of minority voters in certain large urban areas can be an advantage.

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Jordan called this the empathy factor. Those who live in the same city tend to have shared concerns. So, the result tends to be coalition building within cities across racial and other lines that might normally divide us. Those coalitions could swing a large metro area and thus a state.

But the beauty of the Electoral College is that it balances us in so many ways. So, while urban areas may have disproportionate power in some parts of the country. In other parts of the country, rural and in small states can make a big difference. And this is because of how electors are allocated, partly based on the population and partly based on one state, one vote.

So we have a balance. And the result of this, historically speaking, has been that we have encouraged presidential candidates to build coalitions. You can't win if you're catering to one region or one type of voter or one special interest group. Those who do the best in the Electoral College have done the best job with coalition building. Historically, those who do a terrible job tend to fail.

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So you're if all -- the virtual audience is looking at me and saying, "But, Tara, that's ridiculous. Look how divided and angry we are." I agree. We're in a bad place. Both parties are broken. Nobody's doing a great job at coalition building, and it's not pretty. But the good news is we have been here before. We were here in the years after the Civil War, stark division between north and south. Lots of anger and division and upset, but the Electoral College helped us.

And the reason it helped us because it was unproductive to stay in that place. Democrats could not win with only their safe areas. If they did -- they simply did not have enough safe areas. By contrast, Republicans could win with only those safe areas, but just barely. If they lost even one part of the country or one state, then they would lose the presidency to the Democrats.

So over time, the incentives were to reach out to people that weren't like you, to learn about people in the middle and to build coalitions. And in fact, by the 1930s, the Democrats were winning in repeated landslides, as we know.

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So I would just encourage everybody to remember that the Electoral College helps us today. When we are most angry and our most divided, it's actually when we need the Electoral College the most because it reminds us to come together as Americans and to reach a hand across the aisles and those who aren't entirely like us. So I would urge everyone to vote against the motion. The Electoral College still serves us today.

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Tara Ross. And that is our resolution. And here to make her opening statement in support of that very resolution, Kate Shaw. Kate's a law professor and co-host of Strict Scrutiny and the floor now is yours, Kate.

Kate Shaw:

Thank you. So I think Jamelle has very successfully demonstrated that the best reading of the drafting history of the Constitution is that the Electoral College is essentially an 11th hour and imperfect solution to one of the most vexing problems that face the delegates at the constitutional convention, which was how to pick a president. And I think that that history is an important corrective to the suggestion that is often made that reforming or abolishing the Electoral College would be inconsistent with the framers' design or the framers' desires.

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And as Jamelle also alluded to, on a number of occasions, this peculiar process set forth in the Constitution -- this 11th hour compromise -- has either failed to produce a result or it has awarded the presidency to someone other than the person who amassed the most votes in the country. So that's true about 1800, 1824, 1876, 1888, all are failures of different sorts. But let me fast forward a little bit to more recent examples with which people might be familiar, 2000 and 2016.

So in the year 2000, of course, George W. Bush wins the presidency narrowly with 271 electoral votes to Al Gore's 266, although losing the popular vote by about half a million. Of course, in 2016, 16 years later, Donald Trump wins a decisive Electoral College victory over Hillary Clinton while losing the popular vote by nearly 3 million. You know, standing alone, no single incident is a complete indictment of the Electoral College.

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But this is an exceptionally high error rate, a rate of error and rate of malfunction for something as consequential as the selection of the U.S. president. And I think that is especially true because we now have some political scientists predicting that we are at an increased likelihood of a recurrence of this kind of divergence between the popular vote on the one hand and the Electoral College outcome on the other.

So let me turn briefly to current practice. So the Constitution gives each state the power to choose electors in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct in the early days, actually, state legislatures themselves sometimes picked electors and various other experiments were undertaken, but relatively quickly -- and very completely by the 1870s -- every state allowed its voters to choose its electors. And since about the mid-19th century, most states have awarded all of their electoral votes to the winner of the state's popular vote. Today, 48 states use what's known as the winner take all scheme, with Maine and Nebraska differing slightly.

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And so these developments, people picking their electors and then the electors casting their votes to align with the votes of the state's voters, have occurred as we have marched in other ways toward a more inclusive democracy with the 15th and the 19th amendments and the direct election of United States senators.

But the Electoral College system, as it has developed, which of course, diverges quite significantly from the originally designed scheme, has also had some deeply troubling consequences.

And in particular, the winner take all character of this scheme means that today only a handful of states matter in selecting the president. And those are states with closely divided electorates, so-called purple states. So very blue states like New York or California, very red states like Alabama or Mississippi, are utterly irrelevant and thus erased from the single most important election in the country. Instead, a handful of states, maybe up to a dozen, are the ones that choose the president.

The states are random in a sense, in that they just happen to have very closely divided electorates, but they also share certain features, and those features distort our politics.

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Their populations are older and more rural and on average whiter than the country as a whole. Larry Lessig gives as an example the prevalence of debates about coal in the presidential election cycle, where seven or eight times as many Americans have jobs in the solar sector, and yet solar never comes up in presidential elections.

So the idea that the framers intended a system in which the presidency would be decided by this pretty arbitrary subset of the states with no role for other states for their voters is pretty hard to defend.

And in addition to assigning outsize importance to this arbitrary subset of the states, the scheme exacerbates polarization and divisions and creates this distorted sense of the country and its political geography. We're not divided into red and blue. In fact, everyone is everywhere.

John Donovan:

Thank you very much, Kate Shaw. And our final opening statement comes from Bradley Smith. Bradley Smith is a law professor and former chairman of the FEC. Bradley Smith, the screen is yours.

Bradley Smith:

Thank you, John, and thank you to our viewers for tuning in. Here in the United States, majority rule is clearly a very important value, but it's not our only political value.

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Our Constitution and institutions contain numerous anti-majoritarian features that are aimed at protecting and enhancing other values. The Bill of Rights most obviously simply takes a lot of items off the table. No matter how much you're bothered by fake news, you can't censor the press. We have separation of powers, enumerated powers by [unintelligible], judicial review, and numerous other checks and balances.

Many people forget that it's possible to win a majority of the U.S. Senate without winning a majority of the votes cast for senators. It's possible to win a majority of the U.S. House and to elect the Speaker, the second most powerful official in the country, without winning a total vote for the House of Representatives. Many people are also under the mistaken belief that the United States is somehow unique in this respect, that we're the only country where you can lose the popular vote and still be elected the chief executive. That's emphatically not true. In countries that use proportional representation, this happens when no candidate gains a majority and then afterwards the various parties get together, and they negotiate a coalition, and sometimes it's the winner or the popular vote, sometimes just not who heads up that coalition.

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And this has happened in recent decades or recent elections in Sweden, Norway, Germany, Israel, Italy, and other democracies.

In other countries such as the United States, chief executives can be elected outright without winning the popular vote. This happened in Japan in 2003. Since World War II, it's happened twice in Great Britain. It's happened twice in New Zealand. And it's also happened at least twice, not only in the United States, but in the other three democracies, great geographic democracies that span a continent or subcontinent, that is India, Australia, and Canada.

And Canada, most recently just in 2019 -- less than a year ago. Have all these countries got it wrong? I mean, our system is different, but the principle is the same.

So are Kate and Jamelle ready to condemn all of these other democracies for just getting it wrong? Now saying that the Electoral College occasionally gives us a president who did not win the most popular votes is merely a statement of fact. It's not an argument. And to call such results misfire or errors, or -- is to fail to understand why we have an Electoral College.

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The question is why do most democracies, especially those spanning a continent, want a system that about once in every twelve elections -- and that's what's been in the United States -- results in someone winning the chief executive's office without winning the popular vote?

Let me suggest that our Electoral College recognizes that in a vast, incredibly diverse country such as ours, it matters how electoral majorities are created.

You don't have to win the popular vote to win the Electoral College, but you have to win a lot of votes, and you have to win a lot of states, too. And that necessarily means that the winning candidate will have appeal that extends beyond any one or two regions or broad social classes.

Some people complain about this focus on swing states, but there's two points here. First, those other states aren't irrelevant. Try winning the Electoral College if you're a Democrat without winning California. It's very, very relevant. Secondly, it's just that the voters there tend to agree. Secondly, those states have tremendous diversity. There were 17 states in the last election that would have swung with less than a five point swing.

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Right? They would have gone to the other candidate. Those include three of the five states with the highest white percentage of voters, but also four or five with the highest percentage of Hispanic voters and three of the eight with the highest percentage of black voters. They include states from every geographic region in the country. They include states that are highly unionized, states are lightly unionized, high tax states, low tax states, big states, small states.

They include pretty much everything that you can think of for the variety that we have in the United States -- farm states, manufacturing states. In this way, the Electoral College fosters governing majorities that are generally more stable over time and thus creates more freedom and more prosperity.

Now, there are practical advantages to the Electoral College, and I hope we'll be able to explore those in the rest of our time. It curbs fraud. It allows for local election rules tailored to local

conditions. It allows for experimentation with voting procedures like voting by mail, and it avoids the catastrophic possibility of a national recount. But for now, just say let's be careful that we don't throw something away unless we understand why we have it. Thank you.

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John Donovan:

Thank you, Bradley Smith. And that concludes our first round of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate, our formal opening statements. And now we move on to our second round, and our second round is much more of a freewheeling conversation in which the debaters can address one another directly and challenge each other and also take questions from me and from members of our audience. But just to resume what we've heard on the resolution, the Electoral College has Outlived its Usefulness, we heard Jamelle Bouie and Kate Shaw. They made up -- they went back to the beginning, which is relevant because we're talking about outlived its usefulness to look at what its original purpose was. And what they point out is that the Electoral College was designed by the founding fathers as a kind of cobbled together concept to solve a thorny problem of how to elect the president. And it was designed for a very specific time of this very specific place in a very specific, almost politics free era, which was soon set aside.

And that they point out that immediately, almost immediately within 12 years, the founding fathers -- or rather their successors -- began to tinker with the concept.

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So pointing out that it's not sacrosanct or set in stone, it was never anybody's ideal way to elect the president. And they also say that it has a high rate of malfunction, that in numerous cases it has produced a failure of a representation of the people's choice of who the president should be. They also say that in a practical sense, it leads today to a situation in only a handful of states really tend to count in a presidential election. And those are the purple states where electoral colleges are up for grabs.

There opponents, Brad Smith and Tara Rose argue -- number one, they take a very interesting philosophical position that the idea that the popularly chosen candidate would not be president is not in itself necessarily as terrible or as wrong as it might sound.

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That we do that with a lot of other elections, a lot of other countries do that, and that it's basically okay. They further point out that there are practical advantages to having an electoral college, that it can be a bulwark against voter fraud, et cetera. And they talk also about its benefits in situations -- they cite specifically during the civil rights era in which civil rights activists felt that the presence of the Electoral College kept out extremist parties that would have been damaging to their interests. And they say that in a very important way, the electoral college serves to keep relevant parts of the population that would be electorally irrelevant if the College were not there.

So, I want to dig into some of this, but I really want to start with, you know, Bradley, you made the statement that this notion that the candidate that most of the population chooses in an election, at least a plurality, if not a majority, not becoming the president, which seems to be the thing that most people, I think, at a sort of visceral level would find questionable or objectionable is really not that problematic.

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And I want to take that to Jamelle Bouie first to respond to that point and then I'll bring it back to you, Brad, to see what -- after he's had to say it.

Jamelle Bouie:

It's an interesting point. But I think the problem with it is that Bradley's examples of coalition governments in places like France, Israel, are fundamentally different than the kind of presidential governments we have here. That in these coalition governments where you can think of executive power is not necessarily being winner take all, the very fact that multiple coalitions can get together after the fact of an election and hash out exactly point of place within

the coalition and can hash out who gets what in terms of governing means that there's an extent to which that executive power is shared.

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And so, in a system where executive power itself is not winner take all -- and setting aside questions of polarization and partisanship -- in that kind of system, a party that does not win a plurality of the vote, it informs the majority of the vote, but informs a coalition with other parties to form a majority. And then the leaders is chosen from, say, the largest vote share among those parties, that's just a completely different kind of scenario than we're talking about in the United States, where executive power is singular, where it's not tied to the legislature, where it is essentially winner take all. That there's only one president, and only one party can occupy the presidency in practical terms. And in that kind of situation, it does become, sort of, democratically problematic for the winner to not have received the majority of the vote.

And I' set aside polarization for a sec.

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Polarization is really important here. You can imagine the situation in which American politics are far less polarized and the popular vote loser electoral vote winner then forms a kind of coalition government upon taking office. This is basically what happens with the Lincoln administration, right. Politics is still very polarized. It's been a long curve, a singular line, and on a host of other issues, there is cause for compromise and coalition in terms of forming the government.

[talking simultaneously]

Jamelle Bouie:

I just want to get to the conclusion that real quick, because we have polarization, because the person who wins the presidency tends to govern for the sake of a particular person ideological

agenda. It makes it even more important that a majority of the public has some -- has assented to that agenda.

John Donovan:

Let me -- I was going to go to Bradley, but I want to actually really, if you can seed that the moment to Tara because Jamelle also turned the point into something that Tara was talking about, which was this whole issue of coalition building. So, Tara, how do you respond to Jamelle's argument?

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Tara Ross:

Well, I guess we're just disagreeing on how we see this play out and the way I see it, it's -- the reason that they do those things and those other countries is because they're looking for a way to ensure that a variety of voices is reflected in the process and they are selecting one person. So I guess I'm not a prime minister or what have you. So I guess I'm not understanding that part of Jamelle's argument. But look, the point is not, you know, America's unique or not just like any of those countries. And we're not trying to be. But the point is just to bring in a variety of voices. This is the one person who is expected to represent all of us. And America is a unique, huge, diverse country. The founders saw 13 states was too diverse, too big for us, too to possibly be self-governing.

That's how big it is, they thought it would be dangerous. And of course, they solved their problem by creating some of these checks and balances in our system, including the Electoral College.

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But we need something special, because if we don't have something special, it's going to end up happening, is you're going to have a president who represents the pro-choice group or the pro-gun group or the whatever. If you would just have nothing that would force people to come

together and to think about their fellow Americans and what you have in common instead of what you have is different.

John Donovan:

So Bradley, you know, Jamelle made the point in his opening statement that the thing was designed for a specific time and place, some very specific political situation or politics-free situation. And then it changed, and then basically saying a thing that was designed for a situation 20, 30 years ago. It hasn't -- it's very, very reasonable that its usefulness would be outdated. And I want to ask you if counterfactual question, if there hadn't been an electoral college, but we had the opportunity to create one, now, would we want to have an electoral college?

Bradley Smith:

You know, I don't know. Right. We'd go into debate. And I don't know.

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But I think I can tell you that this right. First, I want to point out responding to Jamelle. He makes -- he addressed only a kind of a minor part of my point, which was countries that use proportional representation where, by the way, oftentimes the head of the government that leads that coalition that formed after the election is not the party that got the most votes. It's the party that got second or third most votes. But he ignores the part that's most relevant, which is countries such as the United Kingdom, New Zealand, India, Canada, Australia, all of which use systems that do not rely on proportional representation and consistent coalition building created after the election results. In each of those cases, though, you can win a majority and you can win the prime ministership or whatever the office is called without having won a pure majority or even a plurality of the popular vote.

But what you have to win in all of those countries is a lot of votes and you have to win, especially in a large country like the United States, India, Canada, Australia, geographically diverse countries; the United States is very, very different.

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Montana is very different from New York City or New Jersey. And you have to put together a coalition that can carry that full regime. Now, if we go back to the original use of the Electoral College, all I'll point out is that many things we find over time have uses that are different than what we might have originally designed them to be. It may be that, you know, things are not the same as they were in 1800. We should note that the Electoral College is not the same as the one that was created in 1788; it has been changed. But I think it has served us very, very well. We're very stable country. And it's hard to find many countries that have as good a record of electing chief executives like the United States.

John Donvan:

But when I asked Brad if you would invent an electoral college today if we didn't have one and you said, I don't know. Is that because you find the question not reasonable or because you just really don't know? You think that there are too many factors in play?

00:33:06

Bradley Smith:

Well, because I might very much argue for that, right. For an electoral college. But we've got lots of different people, different things. Who knows what we've come up with. What I would suggest is that what we came up with in 1787, amended in 1800 or 1801, I believe, has worked very well for us. You would be hard pressed to find any nation that has found as good a group of leaders as the United States has had over the years. Now, we've had our duds, but if you look at a group that includes, you know, starts with Washington and Jefferson, Madison and so on, Monroe. It includes people like McKinley and Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. And in modern times, it includes some excellent presidents. You know, people disagree with some of the particulars of presidents.

But if we think about them as a group and leave aside sort of policy disagreements, it's a pretty impressive group that really only I think England can even come close to matching. So it's served us pretty well.

00:34:04

John Donovan:

Let me bring in Kate Shaw. And Kate you were the person who started the -- put out the language out there that the Electoral College has this high rate of malfunction. And your opponents dismissed the notion that there have been meaningful malfunctions. So, dig into that point. I'd like to hear more about what you mean by about what constitutes the system not working?

Kate Shaw:

And I think it ties back actually, John, into your first question, which is there is this basic kind of political and moral intuition that the person who wins the most votes in an election ought to be the victor in that election. And I think that by the time the Electoral College gets sort of realigned in first in 1803 through the 12th Amendment, but then over the decades, the 19th century in which states are basically assigning their electors to simply follow the will of the voters of those states, that is the logic that is animating those developments, though it is filtered through this prism of federalism because it is the majority voters in the states as opposed to the majority of the voters in the country that the electors are bound to follow.

00:35:05

But Brad said in response to that, you know, he mentioned some of these kind of comparative questions of how other countries sort of do or don't sort of implement this intuition that the person who gets the most votes ought to win. But it is that -- and he cited, you know, to come back to the domestic context. He cited a couple of examples of three U.S. examples that are inconsistent with that general principle. And I think the two, of course, are the Senate, which, of course, in terms of sort of your national vote share, right. You, of course, could get the most votes in the country. Right, in support of your political party and yet not control the United States Senate. Right. The Senate does not hew to the basic logic of one person, one vote. Right. Sort of basic political equality and majority rule.

And then the fact that because of gerrymandering, I gather, is what Brad was referencing. That is actually also true in the House. It is possible to get more votes nationwide, and yet not to have your party control the outcome in the House.

00:36:02

And I guess I would just say that those examples, first, the Senate is a historical anomaly in exactly the way that the Electoral College is a historical anomaly. And it is inconsistent with contemporary values, particularly political equality. And it's just not the values that I hold, but ones at the Supreme Court in a one person, one vote cases has said are essential to our democracy and that where there are exceptions or deviations from that principle, there are specific, articulable reasons for that. And I'm just not sure any of the reasons given in defense of the Electoral College is deviation from that principle or at all persuasive.

[talking simultaneously]

John Donvan:

Let me let me let first, Tara, because that's going back and forth. And then Jamelle, you'll be next.

Jamelle Bouie:

Okay.

Tara Ross:

Thank you.

I just wanted to jump in on this idea of malfunctions. Look, we have only had three elections over the course of more than 200 years where indisputably the winner of the popular vote -- or the winner of the indisputable popular vote did not also win the Electoral College.

00:37:03

Three, three, you know, quote unquote, "malfunctions" over the course of more than 200 years is not a big number. And really, if you look -- with how I see those elections is those are not problems. Okay. They were such a problem, as I mentioned earlier, there are parties are hoping maybe they're not doing a good job, a coalition going come out of that, but when you look at the dynamics, in 1888, Grover Cleveland, the reason he won the popular vote was because he won massive landslides in a handful -- just a handful of southern states. I mean, literally like 72 percent of the vote or something in some of those states that was not -- that would not have been a fair, just outcome if Grover Cleveland, the winner of the southern region, had been able to be president for the entire United States.

And by the way, he himself seems to have learned this lesson, like, a party. He got another job four years later and he came back to put together a coalition and he won in 1892. So, what I would say in that -- and I said the other thing that I think tempting when people talk about malfunctions they'll say something like, "Well, this year, 200 votes, it swung in this state.

00:38:10

Then we you know, we would have had a disastrous situation where, you know, da, da, da. If you actually look at those election years Judith Bess [spelled phonetically], a professor at New York, has done a great job of going through those and just saying keep making those 200 votes unless you also [unintelligible] in this state and actually that "malfunction," quote unquote, would not have happened. So, I don't think you can look at these in isolation.

John Donovan:

Okay. I want to -- let's go to Jamelle and then Brad. Jamelle, you're up.

Jamelle Bouie:

So, I want to make, sort of, two points. The first is something that's come up a couple of times. That's bring the conversation. I don't want to let it drop, which is this idea that the Electoral College ensures sort of optimal geographic representation. Examples were given of this.

You know, Montana is different than New York. Tara said in her opening statement that in the post-Civil War period, building the Electoral College enabled the construction of a political coalition.

00:39:02

So, to address that claim, this is a matter of history, the extent to which larger political coalitions were able to be built in the post-Civil War era and really the post reconstruction era, the extent to which this was any kind of unity was basically built on the suppression of African-Americans in the South. And so, when you've wiped out essentially the entire voting bloc and realigned politics such that the key issue of civil rights is sort of off the table because you're just not going to deal with it, then yeah, you can build broader coalitions and related to that point. Part of the reason why it took a century, almost a century after the official end of Reconstruction to recreate the conditions of civil rights, although that we saw in the immediate civil war era is because by suppressing the black vote in the South, the white south was able to make those votes essentially irrelevant for a national party, but there was no reason to try to build partisan competition in the South when you knew that there was no chance you're ever going to win the state.

00:40:08

Those were wasted votes. They were minority votes, minority, not in terms of racial, but just in terms of the political minority. And I think that dynamic in which essentially entire populations can be disenfranchised in terms of choosing national political leadership because of the winner take all mechanism. It's something that I think is a reason why we should give pause to the idea that the Electoral College creates the meaningful geographic representation in the present. There are 4 million rural California voters. That's more than more or less most every other predominant rural state put together. New York City may not have much in common with Montana or certainly be Western and rural parts of New York have a lot in common in Montana.

And there are rural regions and urban regions throughout the entire country which are effectively ignored, their interests ignored because there is no reason for political candidates even to address them.

00:41:05

And there is a very easily imaginable counterfactual when we do have a national popular vote for presidential candidates, knowing that their supporters exist in every single state, in every single county, construct coalitions on the basis of finding those supporters in those counties, in those states, especially since it's just numerically impossible to win a national election by popular vote going concentrating in a couple of states and Canada.

John Donovan:

But let me jump in, Jamelle, because --

Jamelle Bouie:

I think that's an important point to make.

John Donovan:

Thank you. I wanted to. You made a lot of points there. I just wanted to let Brad have a crack at some of that. So, thank you.

Bradley Smith:

Yeah, a couple of quick points. First, I want to address one thing Kate said. She dismissed the fact that you can that the House is, you know, is not even so to speak, but you're saying, well, it's because of gerrymandering that you get that.

That's not really true. It's not because of gerrymandering. And in fact, for example, Montana has 50 percent more voters than Wyoming does. Right?

00:42:03

It has the same number of votes in the Electoral College. It's not due to gerrymandering that that's the case. Right? Now, we might say, well, then why should each voter in Montana be worth the same? But that's not true in Congress. And that's what I'm pointing out is not true for congressional representation either.

Just to go on, just a touch more. When we talk about what the states have, you know we have -- to the last point that was made. Well, I shouldn't have lost my train of thought. Perhaps, you better pass on. I'm sorry.

John Donovan:

That's okay. I'd like to I'd like to go to an audience question. And I think this will move us in a somewhat different direction.

So, we've asked for people to join in and send in questions. And I want to welcome to Intelligence Squared, actually, a journalist from Vox, Emily Stewart. Emily, welcome to Intelligence Squared. Tell us your question, please.

Emily Stewart:

Hi, my name is Emily Stewart, I'm a reporter at Vox. So, one thing that happens to me sometimes when I write about the Electoral College is that I get readers [unintelligible], hey if we abolish it, what will happen is that only cities and blue states will need to decide elections. And my question is, how do you respond to those people that live in Nebraska or Wisconsin or states with less of -- that would have less of a say?

John Donovan:

Thanks, Emily, very much for your question. And I want to take that to Kate as it actually comes at a very good time in our conversation. So, what's your response to that?

Kate Shaw:

Yeah, I mean, I guess I've heard that argument as well. I mean, I just as a matter of numbers, the five biggest cities in the country have something like 6 percent of the population.

So I think there is this idea out there that if you went to a national popular vote, that literally candidates would go to five cities, and those five cities would determine the fate of the rest of us. And that just doesn't track the numerical reality. Presidents would have to work hard in many more states than they currently work hard and to amass votes.

00:43:59

Now, could they go to every rural county in every state? Of course not. But, you know, you want to look at the way you run a real popular election across a broad geographic area. You have to do arbitrage, right? Governors have to win statewide. And do they just go to the two or three or four or five biggest cities in their states? Of course not. That's not how you run for governor of New York or California or Wyoming or any kind of big city there. But that's not how you run for governor and it's not how you would run for president. So, of course, we all have to concede with some humility that we don't know precisely how a national a truly national presidential campaign would play out. But I do think it's easy to dismiss the suggestion that a few cities would run the show.

John Donovan:

Tara, you look like -- I'm sorry Jamelle, you go ahead.

Jamelle Bouie:

Just to just to add onto that. I think there's also an important conceptual jump you have to make. Under national popular election, state voting will matter for state offices, but for a national office, it will not be necessarily relevant what the borders of your state are. And so someone in Wyoming or Montana, their state isn't necessarily the relevant [unintelligible] It's them as an individual which matters.

00:45:08

And I would add again to jump on to the point I made earlier. It's a person in a city in Montana will have more in common in a mid-sized city, Montana. Have more come with a person in Mississippi and Louisiana. Person in rural Louisiana may have more in common with a person, rural Iowa. The lines of connection and affiliation and political interests aren't actually state by state. And the framers recognized this. Madison made this exact point in terms of the Senate.

And so it's this idea that what's what we're really looking at -- our interests are divided according to the size of the state or the density of the state. Isn't -- does it really track at all with how politics actually play out in this country.

John Donovan:

Okay. Tara, you've been very patient, and you look like you really want to get into this, so go for it.

Tara Ross:

So much to say. So couple to answer your Vox reporter, this is what I would say.

00:46:03

First of all, remember, you cannot assume that a two-party system that is going to remain stable when this is all over. What's going to end up happening is you're going to be in a situation that's more like France where you literally -- they have as many as 10 or 15 candidates in a presidential election and two people make it into a runoff with something like 19 percent of the vote. So, yes, it with those kinds of numbers, where you only need a plurality and no longer a majority, then yeah, you definitely can be in a situation where big cities and big states can run the show. Another point I would make is that look at the risk of bringing the 2016 emotion into it, which I try hard to avoid. But in 2016, Hillary Clinton got 20 percent of her vote from only two states, New York and California.

And in fact, if you were in those states, by the way, she got most of her votes from cities, from urban areas. So if you remove New York and California from the equation, she no longer is leading in the popular vote. Donald Trump is winning a popular vote.

00:47:01

So, look, our system did not reward that kind of behavior; it penalized it. But you can imagine what would happen if that were rewarded. Candidates would double down on it. And in fact, one little anecdote I'll tell you, I'll be fast. Hillary Clinton is not widely talked about, but Hillary Clinton thought that she was about to win the Electoral College and lose the popular vote. She did not want to defend that kind of a victory. So, she sent resources in the final weeks of the campaign, driving up her vote in safe areas because it was easy because she thought, you know, she thought she had [unintelligible]

Well, what that ended up doing was it took away from what she was supposed to do and what she's supposed to do is be coalition building. And if it had to gone to blue all states that she ended up losing. She could easily, if she just spent those resources doing what she was supposed to do, she probably would have won the election because it was that close.

Because our system rewards coalition building, and that is a good thing.

00:48:01

John Donovan:

I want to go to another questioner from the audience and I want to welcome to Intelligence Squared Barb. Barb, tell us your question, please.

Female Speaker:

Hi, my name is Barb and I'm from Washington State. What will happen in future elections if Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico become a state?

John Donovan:

Okay. Well, I want to point out Washington, D.C. may not be a state, but it does have three electoral votes in the Electoral College. Puerto Rico does not. But I kind of feel that what Barb is getting at is that Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico would likely be well, DCR are always votes for Democrats in Puerto Rico, likely would be. And I want to sort of pivot that question to a slight, slightly different direction.

And I'll put it to you this way. Bradley, does the present Electoral College system in favor, one party over the other. Today is it -- is it? Well, I'll just leave the question open you.

Bradley Smith:

Well, favor is an interesting issue, right, because the parties are not static. They can change what they stand for with their messages.

00:49:01

They can trim their message almost any time that they choose. In fact, one of the issues you have right now is that candidates, I think, feel that there's no need to trim. But when you have an electoral college you discover, there is a need to trim. That is not good enough for Hillary Clinton to pile up a huge electoral majority in New York and in California. She lost a bunch of states. She never went to Wisconsin.

John Donovan:

But wait -- can I interrupt you, Brad, because we are we just had a conversation about that point? But my question really is very specifically, are Republicans liking the Electoral College today because it works, it's giving them an advantage?

Bradley Smith:

Oh, there's absolutely no doubt that many do and that many Democrats dislike it for the same reason. That is not the reason on which people should be making their decisions. To the best of your ability, we need to separate ourselves out and think what is this going to be like going forward? And indeed, I think part of -- I think this is one part of this debate, so to speak for us, because what is creating this emphasis of getting rid of the Electoral College is that Democrats have had two recent elections where they've lost the Electoral College and won the popular vote.

00:50:08

So, naturally, you're like oh we got to get rid of the Electoral College. What's funny is remember in both of those elections, going it in the widespread view is that you might have the opposite where the Democrat would win the Electoral College, but lose the popular vote. Remember all the talk about Hillary Clinton's blue wall? The idea was that Republicans couldn't win enough states even if they won the popular vote. So, I think you're right. I do think it's there's no apparent polling thing, but we literally set that aside and look at the merits.

John Donovan:

But let me let me take that to Kate just very briefly. Are all sides making self-serving -- I'm not talking about the four of you, but are in generally is this is this has this shaped up as a conflicting sides, making self-serving interests as opposed to interest on a larger principle? What would you think of that Kate?

Kate Shaw:

Look, I think there's some self-serving argument. I also think that in some ways it's unfortunate for the tenor of this debate that in 2004 -- so there -- it was actually a very live possibility that in 2004, John Kerry would have won the Ohio electoral votes at the state of Ohio. He lost very narrowly to George W. Bush and would have won an Electoral College victory and lost the popular vote.

00:51:10

So, we would have had a partisan flip. And instead we have in the last two decades this divergence and increasing divergence potentially in 2020, we could see an even wider split than 2016, where you have popular Democrats winning the popular vote and Republicans winning in the Electoral College. Now, I think that Texas trending blue could also sort of scramble that electoral logic. But I think that -- I think Brad is right, that it is that certain demographic trends and realities suggest that Democrats would do better in a popular vote election and Republicans do better in Electoral College vote election.

But again, I think that you could see a couple of states flip and all of a sudden the electoral logic of the current state of affairs could change quickly.

John Donovan:

Okay.

Jamelle Bouie:

Can I jump in -- jump on to that.

John Donovan:

Sure. Please do, Jamelle.

Jamelle Bouie:

So, I mentioned earlier in this conversation that we can't ignore the role of polarization in American politics and sort of driving particular outcomes.

00:52:05

And I think the reason to be worried about popular vote electoral college splits has everything to do with the fact that there's no indication that our society or politics are going to become less polarized in the future. And so, what you'll be looking at potentially -- and right now, it's

Democratic -- Democrat, Republican, and that's the parse and valence of it. But I would encourage you to think thinking this not interpretive partisanship, but in terms of just sort of how democracy is maintained legitimacy.

So, what you may be looking at this year, four years from now, eight years from now, are situations where one candidate doesn't just win a couple more million votes, doesn't just win four or five more million votes, but conceivably wins 7-, 8-, 9 million more votes than their opponent. Large numbers, large percentages and does not become the president. In that scenario, the person who has won or who has lost, rather, doesn't necessarily have a less diverse coalition, a less geographically broad coalition.

00:53:06

It's just sort of the vagaries of chance that voters are geographically ill distributed. And the result of that outcome is that the winning candidate not only has executive power, but because of our polarized politics and the fact that the Democratic and Republican parties are pretty much ideologically, you know, don't vary much from or from their polls would mean that you would have a governing coalition that doesn't really reflect the entire public pursuing what is essentially is a factional agenda.

And I'd like to note that the framers and Jefferson and Madison in particular -- Madison more than Jefferson -- who worried about this in the final years of their lives that winner take all electoral college essentially make factionalism that sort much more attractive. I think that's what we're witnessing. I do believe that if -- to bring in contemporary politics -- if President Trump had won an outright majority of the vote, that was the basis on which he is governing in that coalition necessarily would have been broader than what he actually had.

00:54:13

He would perform much differently than he has. Setting aside, what do you agree with his decisions? I think it's hard to dispute that the President has governed in a factional manner.

John Donovan:

Tara, what do you think about that point?

Tara Ross:

I think there's a lot in there is trying to figure out what to hit first.

John Donovan:

But in the last part, though, that that if the president had to appeal to a broader coalition, actually I'm going to withdraw the question and back up because we don't want to make this the debate about -- we're trying very hard not to make this a debate about Trump.

So once you find different points --

Tara Ross:

I try to do that, too. I don't want to get into the personalities so much, but look, I think I got to go back to what I said in my opening statement. I do agree that we are in a divided time. I do agree that both parties are broken. And I do agree that everybody needs to do a better job, a coalition building.

00:55:01

But I would just lay the blame equally on everybody. Everybody is doing it. I think that the Democrats feel like they see they see weakness in the Republican Party. So, they're doubling down on their cater to the base that Republicans are also, if they work, cater to their base that they believe it or not. I just think that's what it is. I want to go back to some of the states, the swing states that I just been in and out, and it hasn't always been fully addressed.

Look, my view is there is no such thing as a permanently safe or swing state. They change all the time. Kate mentioned that, you know something, Texas, goes purple I was you know; it just changes.

West Virginia. People forget in 2000, if West Virginia had not slipped from a safe blue state, which it was a before 2000 to a safe red one, George W. Bush would not have won that election regardless of what happened in Florida. And you can see examples throughout history. California used to vote Republican. Texas used to vote Democrat. Jimmy Carter, there's a whole slew of Southern states that voted for Barack -- or voted Bill Clinton that would not dream of voting for Barack Obama.

00:56:06

It is constantly shifting. In 2016, Utah is threatening to vote third party, even though they've been a safe little red state forever. That little red state was so important to the Republican Party, which knew it needed every vote, but they dispatched MAGA pens out to Utah in the closing days of the campaign. So, I would just push back on this notion that states just don't want -- safe states matter. Utah mattered in 2016 with its small allocation of votes. Texas matters, even though it's been voting red for a while.

California [unintelligible] there's no Democrat that wants to go to the election without California or Republican without Texas, but right now. So, you know, [unintelligible] it's going to happen. So this is just constantly shifting like a pendulum that goes back and forth. Safe states or states that have made up their minds early in the process based on the prior four years of governance that preceded the election, but there's nothing certain about that. And they will flip anytime they feel its [unintelligible].

00:57:00

John Donovan:

I want to I'd like to go to another audience question. And this one comes from Dylan. Dylan, welcome to Intelligence Squared. And please tell us your question.

Male Speaker:

Thank you for taking my question. When the founding fathers created the Electoral College, one of the chief functions, they envisioned performing was that of a failsafe against the sometimes poor judgment of popular opinion. Electors could step in to prevent the presidency from, quote, from Federalist 68, "falling into the lot of any man who is not in an eminent degree and down with the requisite qualifications."

There's never been a meaningful enough number of faithful electors for the body to perform this function. Is there a way to reform the College so it can perform these functions or are there alternative constitutional arrangements that we could make to prevent unqualified candidates from succeeding? Thanks.

John Donovan:

Okay, thank you, Dillan. And your question goes to, you know, what's the solution for the future?

00:58:02

Which is not, strictly speaking, what we're debating, but what I found interesting in your question was your presumption that the Founding Fathers were -- didn't trust democracy, didn't trust the general public to make wise decisions, and that the original concept was that there would be a group of wise men -- and white men in that particular case -- but that their wisdom was the thing that was -- and their sobriety was the thing that would qualify them for this role of choosing the president for us in the long run. And I'd like to -- since we started a little bit going back to the beginning, I'd like to go to you, Bradley.

That notion, I think, inherent in that and I think Dillan likes the idea that the Electoral College was meant to protect us from irrational choices made by the public. And I think he's saying that they should be able to make choices.

00:59:00

This is what the Supreme Court case is about now. They should be able to make choices based on their consciences rather than reflecting the popular will. What do you take away about that?

Bradley Smith:

Well, this brings up a lot of different points, but I tend to think that, yes, they thought electors would use their judgment, but it would be very rare that you would want electors to go against the will of their state as expressed by their voters. Right? A lot of people look at, for example, 2016 and think that they -- maybe they think that Donald Trump should not have been president, the electors should have turned against him. Well, how would Trump's voters have reacted to that?

What would that do to our sense of how the country is operating?

So I have generally been in favor of the notion that, in fact, electors are not bound. But at the same time, it would be very, very rare that you would want any elector to go against the understanding that people bring into the election that "My party or my candidate carries my state. That's how my electors are going to vote."

01:00:06

So I like that they are a safeguard, but I think we should be very, very hesitant to pull that trigger.

John Donvan:

Jamelle, I thought you said in your opening statement that you do not believe that the founding fathers were worried about mob rule. Did I hear you correctly that you don't think that was a factor?

Jamelle Bouie:

Yeah. That's right. I think when it comes to -- the notes of the convention, the recollections of the people who were there, it's clear that that was not their primary concern, that they were thinking really in practical terms.

When it comes for -- to justifying the Electoral College to the voters, to ratify the constitution -- and a parenthetical here, I will note that ratification of the constitution was done on a majority vote. That this was one of the arguments Hamilton in particular used to defend the Electoral College. I think I want to come to in Bradley's answer to the question is this -- you know, the faithless elector question and the sense that the voters of each state do have the expectation that -

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01:01:08

John Donovan:

We should define faithless elector. If you could take just a moment to talk about that.

Jamelle Bouie:

Right. Faithless electors, meaning electors who do not vote in accordance with a partisan decision of the state or the majority of voters in the state. So I live in Virginia, if Virginia votes for Joe Biden in November and one of Joe Biden's electors cast the vote for Donald Trump, that electorate would be a faithless elector.

But this expectation that voters in the states, that their electors are voting in accord to the partisan choice of the state -- I think sits across purposes with this idea that the Electoral College is meant to enhance the representation of political minorities in the country. Right?

That if you live in a state where 50.1 percent of the voters supported one candidate and 49.9 percent of the voters supported the other candidate, under the rules as they exist, that 49.9, effectively half, is politically disenfranchised.

01:02:09

And I would ask listeners, watchers, to consider the extent to which if you don't agree with getting rid of the Electoral College, that the winner take all rules that we've adopted, that we've grafted onto this institution, the extent to which they serve to rob millions of people of meaningful political representation in every State of the union.

Bradley Smith:

Can I come in here?

John Donovan:

Sure, go ahead.

Bradley Smith:

I want to ask a question of Jamelle. So do you think that in 1976, voters in the country were disenfranchised when Jimmy Carter was elected with 50.1 percent of the vote?

Jamelle Bouie:

I think that Jimmy Carter's election in 1976 -- I think the extent to which Carter was a down the line partisan Democrat represents a kind of disenfranchisement in that regards. Right?

01:03:06

Because it's clear from the election results that the public didn't -- wanted some sort of -- was divided on the kind of government they wanted, but they didn't want -- I could say -- I think you could fairly say, did not want highly partisan form of government, and Carter wasn't particularly partisan. But you see the point I'm trying to make, that narrow decisions like that I think do

represent in some regards some Americans not getting the kind of political representation they wanted.

But I also think that this example doesn't quite fit. Right? Because we're not -- because what we're talking about is the political representation of individual voters and whether or not their choice matters for the outcome. And if you were in this minority in Virginia, your choice simply doesn't matter for the outcome --

Bradley Smith:

That's not true.

Jamelle Bouie:

-- that counts.

Bradley Smith:

That's just not true. Of course, it matters for the outcome --

Jamelle Bouie:

How --

Bradley Smith:

-- you know, because eventually if not -- because any one voter is unlikely to switch the election.

01:04:07

Right? There's 200 million voters, any one voter in that sense doesn't change the election, so you can see no voter matters. Voters matter eventually in the aggregate. And you can't go around --

in any election that's going to be won, there's going to be a losing candidate. And you can't use terms as you used like "disenfranchised" to say you lost. I'm sorry that you lost, but you were not disenfranchised. And let's not confuse those two things. I think that's a very important distinction to make.

Jamelle Bouie:

No, I think you can use that. No, I think you can use the disenfranchisement level if you live in a state where voting is highly racially polarized such that your particular political group will never be able to form a meaningful majority to win that state's electoral votes? And this isn't a hypothetical. This is Mississippi. This is Louisiana. This is Alabama. Right? States where large percentages of the voters, 35, 40 percent are African American but because of the high level racial polarization, those voters will never -- barring some real -- no.

01:05:01

Let me finish -- will never be able to form a coalition with enough white voters to win. Those voters are effectively disenfranchised in a winner take all.

Bradley Smith:

So voters who, for example, want to abolish the income tax in the state -- and they may be risen 20 percent to vote -- they can never get a majority. Are they disenfranchised?

Jamelle Bouie:

I think that is -- precisely [laughs] because --

Bradley Smith:

No. They're not. Your answer is no.

Jamelle Bouie:

No, no, no.

Bradley Smith:

You know your answer is no --

Jamelle Bouie:

They --

Bradley Smith:

-- they're just out voted, and that's a different thing.

Jamelle Bouie:

No. My answer is no, because it's an example that has no relevance in the actual way our politics plays out.

In the real world, in the real world of American politics in 2020, polarization along lines of identity is the relevant form of polarization. And when we are as polarized as we are along the lines of identity and geography -- these two things are connected -- then winner take all in states where people who represent the minority identity are unable to build large enough coalitions amounts to a kind of disenfranchisement.

01:06:08

No one's polarized on income taxes.

[talking simultaneously]

John Donovan:

You know, as moderator, I need to bring in our other two debaters because it's been a one on one for a while. I want to start with Kate, and then we'll come to Tara. Kate, you want to jump into this, or do you want to pass?

Kate Shaw:

I would just take one beat to say there is a distinction, I think, between a scheme that erases duly cast votes the way our current state-based Electoral College scheme does and a system in which you simply failed to successfully carry a majority support for a position.

And I think that, of course, no one is claiming that any party that loses in a majoritarian contest is thereby disenfranchised, but that there is a distinction between losing in a genuine and fair majoritarian contest and losing in a scheme in which certain votes are simply not relevant and does effectively not count.

01:07:01

John Donovan:

Tara.

Tara Ross:

Okay, I'll see if I can read my chicken scratch here. I've been making notes. [laughs] I'm going to push back on some of this. Well, first of all, nobody's being disenfranchised. We have changed how we think about this election, but the fact of the matter is that we are talking about state level elections, not one national election. And in that state level election for presidential elector, there are winners or losers, just like when you have a governor. And if you're, you know, whatever state you're living in and you feel that you're the losing side, you just -- that's what's happening in your state. Also, there is no permanent -- this is not a permanent situation. Several of the states that were mentioned here as these supposedly immovable for, you know, but will never be able to make their voices heard, as they are so solidly Republican -- we'll, no. They voted for Clinton not that long ago.

There was some talk about how racial minorities could not make their voice heard. Well, I mean, I said in my opening statement, one of the reasons that civil rights leaders in the 60s and 70s so for the Electoral College is because they felt like there were parts of the country where we have an inflated -- right now in New York City or in some of the other big cities, you can see where there would be more of an impact.

01:08:15

And so, I think the Electoral College is about balance and how you balance things out over the country. And, you know, for the rural voters in New York, who probably feel really awful having represented in their state government or in the presidential election for the electors, well, there are a rural voters and small city voters in small states and other parts of the country, they're getting inflated a little bit. It all balances out.

And at the end of the day, what we have is a system that reflects the variety of voices in this nation. And that is supposed to be our end game.

Bradley Smith:

So, there's a --

John Donovan:

There's an important --

John Donovan:

I want to get to one more question, but Brad, you can have a brief response to what was just said.

Bradley Smith:

I want to make a point here that's very important, which is if you look at the states, they're very, very different.

01:09:03

In the 17 states that were decided by -- where a five-point swing would make a difference. Right? They include manufacturing states, they include states with very little manufacturing, Ohio and Michigan, manufacturing; New Hampshire, none. They also include, for example, three of the five states with the highest percentage of white voters, but four of the five states with the highest percentage of Hispanic population, and three of the eight states with the highest percentage of black population. So, the magnificence here is that you've got to appeal to all those groups. You can't say, "I'm going to ignore Hispanic voters or black voters or white voters," because if you do, you're going to lose those key states.

John Donovan:

All right. We have one more question. And this one comes from Robert Bennett, professor of law at Northwestern University, former dean there also.

And again, Northwestern Law is our partner in this debate, and we're delighted to have this question submitted by Dean Bennett. And it's this: If the substitute for the Electoral College would be a uniform nationwide popular vote, how would the uniformity be established?

01:10:02

So, it goes a little bit to the question of practicality, which really hasn't come up a lot. You know, we don't know how to do a single nationwide vote. Should that be an obstacle to pursuing this? I'll go to you first, Jamelle, on that.

Jamelle Bouie:

I don't think it should be an obstacle doing this. We have, you know, a state like California or Texas is so large, just to, you know -- have been the size of the United States in prior -- in terms of population in prior decades. And so, I don't think -- which is to say that simply having many people and having many administrative units, I don't think it's necessarily an obstacle to doing a single uniform national vote.

It'll be difficult. Right? Like, no, I don't think anyone thinks that this is an easy undertaking to do. My recollection from the effort to repeal the Electoral College in 1968 and 1970 is that there is an immense amount of intellectual work done thinking about how to actually implement this kind of thing.

01:11:02

But the reason to do it is because it better reflects our democratic values. It better reflects our intuitions about how democracies should be run. And so, if it takes a little work to align our institutions to their intuitions, it takes little work.

John Donovan:

Tara? So Jamelle's saying that practical obstacles should not be a reason to oppose this philosophically.

Tara Ross:

I'm so happy I get to answer this question. I'm so happy it was submitted. Look, this is the number one reason not to go to the national popular vote plan. Because the way you get uniformity is you have a single [unintelligible] bureaucracy, a single federal election code that governs everybody.

You make sure that everybody is abiding by all of the same rules, because otherwise you've got equal protection problems. The same kind of early voting, the same kind of decisions about whether felons get to vote the same -- you name your issue, how to get on the ballot, how to get an absentee ballot. All of it. Name your issue, and they would have to be uniform at the national level.

01:12:02

There are several things about that. One is if you have a uniform plan and bureaucracy at the federal level, you have just put the incumbent president in charge of his own reelection, and that is dangerous. Right now, it is decentralized. It is spread across 50 states plus D.C., each have their own process. So, if you want to manipulate things, you've got to figure out how to manipulate 51 different processes or at least a couple of really important ones that you think might swing the thing.

By the way, if you're trying to control a couple of little ones -- like, think Ohio in 2004, which was mentioned here, everybody descends on the state. I knew people, lots of people -- I'm a lawyer, so I knew people that went to watch the ballots to make sure that things were happening right. We have a system because it is decentralized that makes it harder to steal an election. You cannot steal an election unless you know in advance which state is going to be close enough that it's going to matter. And, by the way, you have a close national elections so and that just stealing one or two states makes a difference, as opposed to a national popular vote where you have to be on defense in every single precinct, at every single state at all times, because if there is a national popular vote, then you could steal as many votes as you want --

01:13:17

John Donvan:

Okay.

Tara Ross:

Blue is blue California or red --

[speaking simultaneously]

John Donovan:

Forgive me for jumping in. I'm doing it only in the interest of time --

Tara Ross:

Sure.

John Donovan:

-- but you point out several kinds of moral hazards.

Tara Ross:

Right.

John Donovan:

-- in trying to -- doing -- do it this way. I just want to let Kate Shaw respond to that general problem. That's it's not just about the mechanics, but there are some truly threatening, potentially constitutional issues.

Kate Shaw:

Well, to take a step back, I'm not sure when Professor Bennett raises uniformity, he's talking about uniform qualifications, because, of course, states now have significant constitutional leeway to set the qualifications of their voters and I presume in and out a genuine nationwide system, we would have nationwide qualifications.

But I thought the question might also have spoken to this question, which some of these answers have addressed, which is administration. Right? So, a nationwide administration of an election where obviously election administration has been intensely local throughout our history.

01:14:04

And I guess I would just say when we're talking about sort of the degree and difficulty of change, that the important question is compared to what. And I don't think there's a lot of strong defenders out there of the system of election administration that we currently have. It is decentralized, but it is also controlled by partisan players, many of whom are quite self-interested, either individually or simply as partisans in the outcome and administration implementation of election rules. And, you know, we started out this conversation taking something of a comparative look at other democracies. Every other democracy in the world thinks it's crazy to have partisan election administration.

And so, you know, Tara mentions the president being somehow overseeing a uniform national system of election administration. We have that problem at the local level, so, we could think creatively about ways to create bipartisan entities that would administer a truly nationwide presidential election, or it could be done in a cooperative federal and state manner in the way many federal programs are.

01:15:03

So, I'm not deterred by some of the administer ability hurdles, in part because we already face them in the system we currently have.

John Donovan:

Okay. Brad, I can give you the last word on that and then we're going to wrap this round today.

Bradley Smith:

Sure. Just note, that experimentation is good. But you know, if you have a national system right, then you don't have vote by mail experimentation in Colorado or Washington State. Right, you can't experiment and try things and then you can't have other states trying to decide, you know, how they want to do things you can't have states experiment with different methods of voting, different voting ages, different restrictions on felon voting. So, there's a lot of local differences that I think we really ought to respect.

John Donovan:

Okay. And that concludes round two of this Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. It was really lively. And I want to thank all of you for how you conducted yourselves and you made it really, really interesting. So, here's where we are. We are about to hear a brief closing statements by each debater in turn, those statements will be two minutes each.

01:16:01

And this is their last chance to try to persuade you to vote for their side. Remember, after this round, you will be asked to vote for the second time and your votes are going to decide who our winners are. So, let's move on to round three closing remarks. And here to make his statement, closing the argument, The Electoral College has Outlived its Usefulness is Jamelle Bouie. Jamelle, once again, the screen is all yours.

Jamelle Bouie:

Thank you. I have mentioned at the beginning of my remarks and throughout this conversation that not long after the founding, 20, 30 years later, some surviving people who participated on this particular James Madison and Thomas Jefferson were dismayed at how the Electoral College played out, they worried that winner take all that hyper partisanship involved would create unnecessary factionalism, that it would create unnecessary division, that it would lead to the underrepresentation of political minorities and encourage presidencies that don't actually govern for the entire nation.

01:17:02

And it's true that there have been large parts, large swaths in this country's history where we have avoided some of these things. But because of polarization happening in our culture, not just in our politics but in our culture, that this collection of ills that result from this extraconstitutional method of selecting a president, one that wasn't designed, that kind of just emerged as we as we - - as our politics emerge. As we become more polarized, we have been subject to these ills more and more.

People genuinely believe that there are somehow red states and blue states that if you live in a in New York, that you are therefore a Manhattan liberal, that if you live in Wyoming, that you are a rural conservative. And Americans, I feel, have forgotten that political diversity exists in every state of the union, that coalitions can be built across regions and across states, that interests aren't tied to state lines or tied to things that go beyond them.

01:18:07

Support -- the Electoral College has outlived its usefulness, in part because it's no longer useful to think about our politics in these kind of rigid terms were too polarized and what the Electoral College does is enhance that polarization. If you don't want to enhance it, I think we should vote on our side.

John Donovan:

Thanks very much, Jamelle. Our next speaker will be speaking against the resolution in her closing statement. Here is Tara Ross.

Tara Ross:

I'm going to ask everybody to put themselves in the place of the founders in a way perhaps that they've never quite done before. The founders lived at a unique moment in time. They had just fought a war for self-governance. Self-Governance was really, really important to them. They'd laid their lives on the line. They lost fathers and sons. And they also knew something else that we had forgotten, okay, it is not enough to be self-governing. They knew that if they get a seat at the table in parliament, then they would have been outvoted time and time again, the majority of citizens at home in England.

01:19:07

So, the founders had had a problem on their hands. Fortunately, the founders also lived in a unique moment in time where there were no partisan interests. There was no Republican Party or Democratic Party. What they had to help them with their knowledge of history and their knowledge of human nature. And they knew that power corrupts. They knew what had worked

and what had not worked. In other democracies that came before them. So, they came up with a unique solution.

And the unique solution is our Constitution, which is an incredible blend of some democratic self-governing factors, but also some republican factors, small "r," deliberation and compromise and federalism, states, acting and states. This unique blend ensures that we can be a huge, diverse country that still manages to govern itself without ignoring some part of the country. So, the Electoral College has not outlived its usefulness because we are, if anything, greater and more diverse than we were before.

01:20:03

We are more in need of a unique solution to this problem of how do you combine self-governance with an avoidance of majority tyranny. So, I would urge you to vote no on the resolution.

01:20:14

John Donovan:

Thank you, Tara Ross. And our next debater will be arguing on the opposite side once again for the resolution. The Electoral College has outlived its usefulness. Here is Kate Shaw.

Kate Shaw:

Thank you. So, look, the ideals of both genuinely representative democracy and of basic political equality are ones we have moved ever closer to throughout the country's history, imperfectly and consistently, but steadily.

And it is not to return to something that Brad said at the outset, that in a democracy like ours, everything must be put to a popular vote. Think about the role of courts in our system, right, who often do set to invalidate laws passed by majorities in Congress or the states. But in

general, and particularly when you're talking about elections, any deviation from basic principles of representative democracy and political equality require genuine and compelling justifications.

01:21:04

And instead, what we seem to be hearing are post-hoc justifications of this idiosyncratic scheme that we happen to have today. Look, to make one final point that actually turns a bit away from what we've been mostly talking about today. The presidency today is a massively powerful institution. We can debate how well that power fits within our constitutional scheme. We can debate the wisdom of having a presidency like today's president, but no one should want an unchecked president. So, it's important to ask how the mechanisms that operate to check the president have performed in recent years. And in a word, I would say they have performed badly.

Take Congress, an important rival of the president. It has been lax at best in its oversight of the president. Whatever you thought of the impeachment case against President Trump, one big take away seem to be it's impossible to convict and remove a president if his party or even a good number of co-partisans control the Senate. Courts as well have been extraordinarily deferential to the president.

01:22:01

And when those institutions have failed to act to check the president, they have frequently done so, pointing out that the most important check on the president is at the ballot box, that he is the only person in our constitutional scheme who is elected by the people as a whole. And so, long as we have the Electoral College, that's actually not the system that we have in the ballot box isn't a real check on the president. And none of these other checks operate. We actually don't have a president; we have a king. And that is about as far as you can get from the idea of America. So please, I urge you to vote yes on the resolution.

John Donvan:

Thank you, Kate Shaw.

And finally, making his statement in his closing argument against the resolution, the electoral college has outlived its usefulness. Arguing against, Bradley Smith.

Bradley Smith:

Thank you, John. I want to thank everyone for watching. I think Kate and Jamelle for their thoughts. The great political scientist Walter Burns once said, "in all the years I have engaged on this issue, I've yet to encounter a critic of the Electoral College who argues that a president chosen by direct popular vote is likely to be a better president." And we haven't really heard that argument tonight.

01:23:01

The goal of our Constitution is good government. And the purpose of the Electoral College is to elect good presidents. We love to bash our presidents, and that's okay, it's a uniquely American thing to do. But if we set aside our partisanship and skepticism, we see that our list of chief executives is probably unrivaled by any country, say possibly the United Kingdom, which also allows the second place finisher in the popular vote to win the prime minister's office. It's not just early presidents like Washington, Adams, Jefferson. Madison, Monroe, but mid-20th 19th century presidents like Polk and Lincoln, Cleveland, McKinley, and 20th century presidents like Wilson and the Roosevelts, and Coolidge; and the postwar period, Truman and Ike and Kennedy and Reagan and G.W., Bush and Clinton and Obama.

And while all of us would disagree with any number of them on policy. Leaving that aside, that's a pretty distinguished group when it comes to raw executive talent. So, I often hear an argument goes something like this. If you could go back in time, would you adopt the Electoral College? My answer is simple. I kind of said it earlier. I don't really know what I would have done if I'd been a delegate to the constitutional convention, but I know this.

01:24:01

If I were transported back in time September of 1787 and watched the delegates walk out of Independence Hall, I hope that I would have the good sense not to lecture the likes of Washington, Madison, Franklin, James Wilson and Alexander Hamilton about how to structure a successful republic and how derelict they'd been and not anointing direct election by plurality vote of the electorate as the sole legitimizing principle for a chief executive. We should not fear change, but when something has a long, distinguished pedigree and create such a prosperous, free societies we live in, we should be very careful and humble before tossing it aside.

So, I urge people to vote no on this resolution. Remember, the Electoral College doesn't outlive its usefulness just because our favorite son hasn't won a couple of elections. Thank you.

John Donvan:

Thanks very much, Bradley Smith. That concludes round three of our Intelligence Squared U.S. debate. And now to those of you who are watching and listening. It's your turn to get involved. We want to ask you to vote the second time to help us choose our winner.

01:25:00

If you go to the chat, you'll see a link that will come from our producer. You just click on that and you can tell us where you're standing now on our resolution for, against, or undecided that resolution one more time: The Electoral College has Outlived its Usefulness.

Remember, the way we do this, it's the side that sways the most votes between the -- the most minds between the first and the second vote that declares our winner. Also, if you're not getting access to the chat, you can go to [IQ2US/ecvote](https://iq2us.org/ecvote). That's IQ2, the number two, U.S.org, forward slash ecvote. Make sure to keep the ".org" in there. We're going to keep that open until midnight tonight. And then if you can't wait to see who won, you can go online at [IQ2US.org](https://iq2us.org) right at 12:01 tonight and you can subscribe to our mailing list and we will also be announcing a winner there. So, the competition part of this program is over. But as you go vote, I just want to have a very quick chat with our debaters since we do have them here about something else and that's the 2020 election.

01:26:04

Given where we are, this extraordinary circumstance of an election season in which because of the threat of the coronavirus, we don't even have candidates out there holding rallies.

We may have conventions that don't really happen in a real place but would be happening virtually. We're just wondering, what does this mean for our democracy and what impact will the coronavirus have on our elections in general and our mechanisms of voting? What should we be thinking about right now? So, I just want to very, very quickly. This is not to be extensive, but you're all good at this. So, I'll start with you Kate. What are your what are your thoughts or your concerns or your suggestions for the reality of a 2020 election when we're not sure where we're all going to be able to be?

Kate Shaw:

Well, I think the experts bottom line right now is that it's basically that both the federal government and the states need to take every step possible to facilitate voting by mail. Many states already have no excuse to vote by mail.

01:27:00

Some states like Pennsylvania, have for the first time implemented that scheme for this cycle. A lot of others don't. And still could move to do that. I mean, you know, you asked earlier about sort of how much the argument in the sphere are actually kind of veiled partisanship. And I would just urge everyone there has long been this kind of partisan valence to debates about kind of access to the ballot as something that sort of, you know, Democratic Party has pushed and concerned about election integrity is something that institutions Republican Party has stood for.

And I would suggest that it is absolutely essential to set aside those kinds of partisan lines and just work to facilitate broad access and security, but safety and health of the population is something that it should be possible to coalesce around regardless of party. But that all of that needs to be happening on the ground in the states now, because we elect -- the administration of elections in this country, even in this decentralized way, is a ship that is very slow to turn and

that all of that work needs to be done. You know, starting about a month ago, but really starting now.

John Donovan:

How about your brother and you ran the Federal Election Commission?

01:28:01

I'm sure you've given us a lot of thought and maybe a little bit of relief that you're not in the seat right now having to figure this out. What about that?

Bradley Smith:

But I think that the that there are benefits to keeping it local, precisely in this type of situation.

For example, some states might be very hard hit by the virus in the fall. That's the case now in New York, New Jersey, for example, whereas other states are not. Oddly enough, it's a lot of the Republican states, more rural states that are as hard hit by the virus now. Right? The Electoral College sort of walls that off. It doesn't enable the fact that more people may not go out to vote in the states that are hard hit, too. It doesn't cost that party votes, so to speak, is limited to within that state. So, there are a lot of advantages to having sort of 50 separate jurisdictions that can tailor their response to the jurisdiction, you know, to the situation at the time and can't use it to get disproportional influence nationally by jiggering their laws in particular situation.

John Donovan:

What about you Tara?

01:29:01

Tara Ross:

So, I will just say, as I'm watching everything unfold the past couple months, my main concern has been the number -- how we become a country that is, like, distant dependent on executive order and that everything happens by executive order now.

So, I would encourage states. I agree with Brad. I mean, this should be a state by state thing. I would encourage states to remember that separation of powers and checks and balances is important even during a pandemic. Some state legislatures are out of session. Maybe they need to be called into special session. And there's some stuff like that that needs to be happening. However, I do not agree with the idea that any governor can single handedly decide what the election role should be for this unique, unique moment in time. I really, really hope that we will see a change in that. As mail in ballot balloting goes, you look -- I think it depends on the locality what's going on and the difference. As I mentioned, different states and cities have different needs. But, you know, South Korea did in-person voting without resorting to any kind of massive mail in ballot kind of situation.

01:30:08

So, again, I think these are things that state legislatures would debate. And the point of checks and balances and separation of powers is to get all of the ideas out there, so you don't just have one man or woman idea of what will solve this problem.

We need to be debating it and we need to have voter input, and then and then we need to decide what does or doesn't need to be done in the fall.

John Donovan:

Thank you. Jamelle, last word for you on this one.

Jamelle Bouie:

I'm with Kate on this. I think that the paramount thing that election officials should be looking towards across the country is making sure that people who want to vote can vote. And we if the

states are laboratories of democracy, then we have several very successful experiments in very different kinds of states that vote by mail, works for safe, effective, and secure way for people to be able to cast their ballot. So, I would just strongly encourage election officials in every state to adopt vote by mail to use it as the way they're going to help their populace vote.

01:31:08

I think it's the rational and reasonable thing to do. And it also happens that there's no particular representative that any one side benefit either Republicans or Democrats get any particular damage by that.

So, it really should be seen as seen as a as a sensible solution to a particular problem, as, incidentally, the Electoral College was for 10 years.

John Donovan:

All right. I want to I want to thank you all for me for your thoughts on that. But I also want to thank you, Jamelle and Kate and Tara and Bradley, for doing this debate this way, making it so good, being so civil, so interesting. Our thanks also to Northwestern University Pritzker's School of Law for being our partner in this. I want to release you all from this now. You're free to stand up and wander as far as the boundaries of your home to the kitchen or wherever else is safe. But thanks for sitting in with us for this time. It's been a pleasure.

01:32:00

We move forward in this new world and you really help us take a step forward. And so, thank you. Goodbye, everybody.

Tara Ross:

Thank you.

Kate Shaw:

Thanks, everyone.

Jamelle Bouie:

Thank you.

John Donovan:

This is, in fact, our third partnership with the Newton Jo Minow Debate Series. That series was generously established by the colleagues and friends of Newton and Minow to commemorate his numerous contributions to public and civic life. Newt is a 1950 graduate of Northwestern Law. He is senior counsel at Sidley Austin and the former chair of the Federal Communications Commission. So thank you to all of the supporters of the Minow Debate Series and especially to Newt and Jo Minow, themselves, for making this program possible.

And we want Newt to have a word in this. And so here it is:

Newton Minow:

Well I, myself, benefited from a great education at Northwestern Law School. And Northwestern University is really the -- have won more debates -- national championships than any other college or university.

01:33:02

And I was once a member of the Northwestern Debate Team. We did our homework when we decided to go with a debate program and we checked and did research, and we found that Intelligence Squared is the most respected debate institution in America. And we were very lucky and fortunate -- and also I say very smart to have hooked up with Intelligence Squared.

John Donovan:

This is our third installment of the Newton and Jo Minow Debate Series and it's always such a pleasure to put these on with you. So again, thank you very much for your partnership in this. And I want to thank you, our live audience. As always, it's your support that keeps Intelligence Squared going. We are, as I mentioned many times, we're a philanthropy. We do these debates and put them out to the world for free. They get used in all sorts of venues, schools, colleges, elementary schools, high schools, civic clubs. We're very proud of what we do and we're very proud to be doing this for you. But we need to keep, especially in this situation, we need to keep and we're trying to keep innovating and pivoting and continue to serve and service as a rule, a home for real debate, even in challenging times where opposing views can come together and hear each other out, even as they clash and disagree.

01:34:18

So, you can support us. You can donate at [IQ2US.ORG/SUPPORT](https://IQ2US.ORG/SUPPORT). Or look in the chat for a direct link.

So, we hope to see you again on June 3rd for another digital debate. We're going to be looking at China and the changing world order in this time of coronavirus. And you can see all of our upcoming debates, of course, as always on our website, [IQ2US.ORG](https://IQ2US.ORG) or by subscribing to our mailing list. Until then, I'm John Donovan. Thank you so much for joining us. It's really been a pleasure. It's really been interesting. And there's a lot more to come. We will see you next time.

01:34:55

[end of transcript]

**This is a rough transcript. Please excuse any errors.**