

APGoPo Unit 5

EVOLUTION OF THE PRESIDENCY

DELIBERATIONS AT THE CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION	
Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some proposed a plural executive ○ Some wanted an executive council to have veto power over presidential actions ○ Some (e.g. Alexander Hamilton) wanted a President with a life term ○ Eventually, compromises brought about a single, elected President with a fixed term of office
Concerns of the Founders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fear of an excessively strong President <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fear that the presidency would be the “fetus of monarchy” ▪ Concern over no term limits (no 22nd Amendment until 1950) ○ Fear of an excessively weak President who would become a “tool of the Senate” because of its ratification and confirmation powers ○ The basic problem of creating a presidency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Make him too weak: the legislature will usurp his powers ▪ Make him too strong: he will usurp the legislature
Election of the President	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some wanted Congress to elect the President — fear of congressional dominance ○ Some wanted direct election. Problems: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inordinate weight to large states ▪ Demagogues might appeal to masses ▪ Illiteracy was common ▪ Communication was poor ○ The compromise: The Electoral College (read below) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The people had some input ▪ Large states had a good amount of influence, but small states were protected by having a minimum of three electoral votes ▪ Small states would also have a great deal of clout if the election were thrown into the House (and it was assumed that this would happen often). Under this scenario, each state has one vote.
Term of Office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Fear of an unlimited number of terms of office was quieted when Washington decided not to run for a third term ○ This precedent was followed until 1940 (FDR ran for a third term and fourth term in 1944)

THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

The method of selection of the president was one of the most controversial topics at the Constitutional Convention. Most of the framers did not trust the public to directly elect the president, but under the checks and balances system, neither could Congress be allowed to select the head of the executive branch. The solution to the dilemma was to create an electoral college, a group of electors chosen by each state who would meet in their respective state capitals to vote for president and vice president. Many framers believed that states would vote for favorite sons and that often the election would be decided by the House of Representatives. It did not work out as they expected, largely because they did not foresee the important role that political parties would play in presidential selection.

Today, all major presidential candidates are selected by their political parties, even though Ross Perot tried to capture the presidency in 1992 without the backing of a party. In 1996, he proved the importance of political parties in the selection process when he tried to run again, but as head of a third party. Presidential candidates are chosen through presidential primaries, and are nominated at a party convention in the summer before a general election in November. The Electoral College members in each state vote - either by law or tradition - for the same candidate that the majority of voters in the state chose.

Until the election of 2000, the Electoral College was regarded primarily as a formality that didn't affect the outcomes of presidential election. However, in 2000 Democratic candidate Al Gore won the popular vote, but George W. Bush became President because he won the electoral vote. The situation opened a debate, with Electoral College supporters arguing that the system protects regional and local balance, and its critics claiming that the Electoral College voting system is undemocratic.