HOW THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE WORKS

STEPS TO BECOMING A PRESIDENT

STEP 1:
The **electorate** (voting people) cast ballots for their choice for President of the United States.

STEP 2:
These votes (**popular vote**) are tallied in each state and the candidate who wins a **majority** of the popular vote in that state receives **ALL** of the **electors** (members of the Electoral College). This means that the candidate who wins the majority of the popular vote in a state wins all of the **electoral votes** from that state.
• A state's number of electors is equal to its number of *representatives* in the *U.S. House* and the *U.S. Senate*.
• The total number of electoral votes possible, including D.C., is **538**.

STEP 3:
A candidate must receive a **majority** of the electoral votes to win the presidential election.
• Today, a majority is **270** votes.
• The reason this is a winner-take-all system is that if a candidate only wins a **plurality** (not a clear majority, but more than the other candidates) of the popular votes in a state, he usually wins all of the electoral votes of that state.

STEP 4:
If no candidate wins a clear majority of the **electoral votes**, the election is decided by the **U.S. House of Representatives**. Each state has ONE vote.
• This happened in the elections of 1800 and 1824.

STEP 5:
After votes from the *whole* election are tallied: If a candidate wins the **popular vote** in the national election, but loses the **electoral vote**, he does <u>NOT</u> become president.
• This happened in the elections of 1876, 1888, and 2000.

STEP 6:
The candidate that receives the majority of the electoral votes nationally (or who is voted president in the House) becomes the next official President of the United States.
• As few as *eleven* states can spell victory in the Electoral College!