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**Al Gore:** [00:00:00] George W. Bush of the state of Texas has received for president of the United States two hundred and seventy one votes, Al Gore and the state of Tennessee has received [00:00:10] two hundred and sixty six votes.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:16] This is Civics 101. I'm Hannah McCarthy.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:18] I'm going to get Buttigieg.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:19] Today we [00:00:20] are tackling a big what if question that we got from a listener. They ask, what is the likelihood that we will get rid of the Electoral College system? Is anyone [00:00:30] actively working toward that goal?

**Nick Capodice:** [00:00:32] First things first. We should establish what it is we're actually talking about here.

**Rebecca Deen:** [00:00:36] First of all, it's not a college. It's not a place.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:38] This is Rebecca Deen, professor [00:00:40] of political science at the University of Texas at Arlington.

**Rebecca Deen:** [00:00:43] It is the process by which we formally choose the president.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:00:47] The Electoral College is a system. It's [00:00:50] a buffer between we, the people who vote and the actual election of a president.

**Rebecca Deen:** [00:00:56] When we go into the voting booth, we're not actually voting for that [00:01:00] person. We're voting for who that person's party have selected as a slate of electors. These people then [00:01:10] in December, they gather in their state, their state capitals, usually the state legislator, the Capitol building, and they vote.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:01:18] Part of the point of the Electoral [00:01:20] College is that in the event that the uninformed citizenry votes for, let's say, a tyrant, an elector can choose not to then vote for that person, [00:01:30] that would make them what's called a faithless elector, a fail safe in the event that the people choose poorly. We have had a handful of faithless electors over [00:01:40] the course of history, but never enough to actually prevent the winner from winning.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:01:44] And very quickly, let's talk about winning. The number of electors your state gets is based on population. There [00:01:50] are 538 total electors. So a really populous state gets a lot of electors like California with 55. But a low population state like Nebraska gets just [00:02:00] three. You need an absolute majority of those 538 electoral votes to win, making 270 the magic number.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:08] Now, why does anyone want to get rid of [00:02:10] the system? Well, it means that you can lose the nationwide popular vote by nearly one to four and still win the election. And [00:02:20] it means that swing states, states that could vote Democrat or Republican, get the most attention during the campaign.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:02:27] Basically, a lot of people say that because of all this, [00:02:30] the Electoral College doesn't give us an outcome that represents the will of the majority of voters. So let's get to that hypothetical now. What is the likelihood that we'll get rid of the Electoral [00:02:40] College? And is anybody actively working towards that?

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:02:43] And let's get one thing clear. The Electoral College is in the Constitution. So to get rid of it, [00:02:50] we'd have to have a constitutional amendment. Here's what that would take.

**Rebecca Deen:** [00:02:54] There are two stages, the proposal stage and the ratification stage. The proposal stage [00:03:00] takes two thirds of state legislatures or conventions hold by state legislatures to get a proposal off the ground. But [00:03:10] it takes three quarters for it to be ratified. The bar that the founding fathers set for changing the Constitution [00:03:20] is quite high.

**Nick Capodice:** [00:03:21] In other words, chances of actually abolishing the Electoral College are pretty slim. Lest we forget, though, the Constitution tells us another little something about how voting [00:03:30] should work in the U.S. that states are in charge of it.

**Hannah McCarthy:** [00:03:33] As of the publishing of this episode, 15 states and the District of Columbia have joined something called the National Popular [00:03:40] Vote Interstate Compact. If it goes into effect, it means that electors from the states who have joined it will vote for whoever won the popular vote nationally as opposed to just [00:03:50] in their state, essentially making the Electoral College moot. Combined, these states have 196 electoral votes, but the popular vote compact doesn't go into effect unless that number [00:04:00] reaches 270. The magic number supermajority they need more states to join on. And so for now, those states are sticking to the Electoral College process. [00:04:10] That does it for Ask Civics 101. But there are way more questions where that came from. And if you want to throw yours into the mix, we will find the answers. Just click the [00:04:20] link on our home page at civics101podcast.org.