

## **Election of the President**

One of the most difficult problems faced by the framers at Philadelphia was that of choosing the president. Having decided that the head of the state must be elected, the problem before them was to decide how he would be elected. Ultimately, it was decided that the president would be indirectly elected by the people. But the growth of political parties and political practices has set up the method of presidential election. First we shall see the constitutional provisions and then examine how the election is actually held.

The plan of election as provided in the constitution is rather simple. The president is elected by an electoral college consisting of the representatives of the states. The people of each state elect presidential electors (members of Electoral College) equal to the number of representative the state has in Congress. No member of the Congress is allowed to be a presidential elector. The presidential electors meet in each state on fixed dates and vote for the president. All the votes are sealed and sent to the capital of the US. The president of the senate counts the votes in the presence of members of both the Houses of Congress. The candidate who secures majority of the electoral votes cast for the president is declared elected. If no candidate receives a clear majority of the electoral for the president, the members of the House of Representatives choose a president

from among the three candidates who have received the highest number of electoral votes and the new president assumes office.

### **Election in Practice**

According to the constitution, the American president is elected indirectly; but in practice

his election has become direct. Although the language of the constitution of presidential

election remains unchanged, whether that be the party system or the means of communication and transportation, all make his election direct. The developments have

reduced the importance of the Electoral College. The following are the various stages of

his election.

(i) National convention: The first step in the election of the president is taken by the political parties who proceed to nominate their candidates early in the year in

which the election is due to take place. Both the major political parties convene a

' national convention' . The convention may be held sometime in June or July. Delegates to the national convention are chosen according to certain rules framed

by the parties. About a thousand delegates take part in the Convention, and all of them are leading and active party workers in their states. The convention selects

the presidential nominee and issues a manifesto which in the US is known as the ' platform' .

(ii) The campaign: The campaign generally begins in the month of July and continues

till the Election Day in November. The parties have their campaign managers and

a very effective machinery to conduct the nationwide propaganda. The presidential

candidate visits all the states and addresses as many meetings as he can, delivers a number of nationally televised speeches. His supporters use various media of mass contact.

(iii) Election of the Electoral College: The election of the members of the Electoral

College is held in November. Technically voters go to polls to elect members of the Electoral College; but as we have seen above, this in practice means direct vote for a particular candidate. Due to the rise in party system, the electors are to vote for their party nominee for the presidential office.

They do not have a free hand in the choice of the president. They are rubber stamps. As it is known beforehand for which candidate each elector will vote, the result

of the presidential election is known when the results of the election of the presidential electors are announced.

Thus, the election of the president has become direct. It is no longer indirect. The American voters personally participate in the election of the president. Hence, the president

election in the month of December merely becomes a formality. Thus, theoretically, the president is elected indirectly, but in practice he is elected directly.