

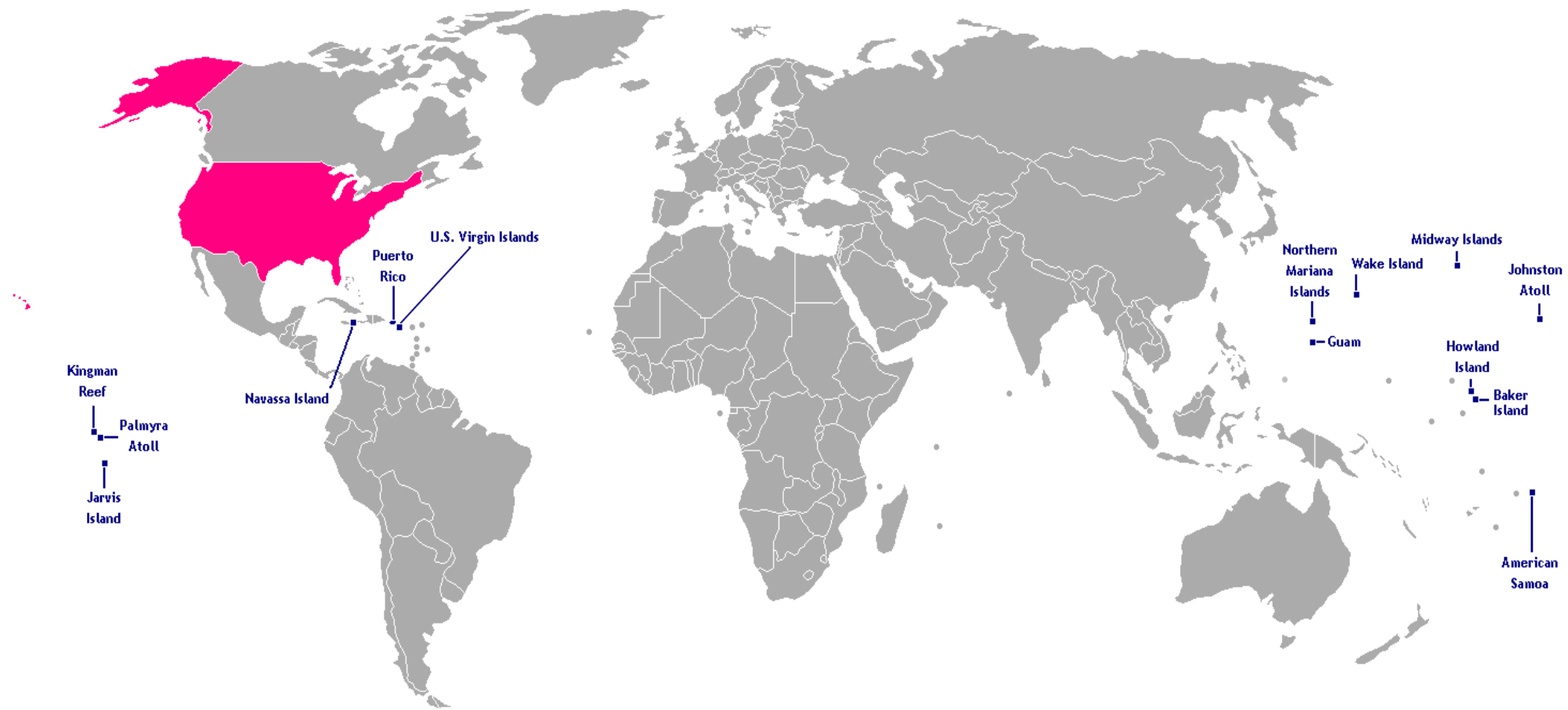
Electoral System in the United States

Introduction, Levels of election

- Presidential election
 - Basics
 - Specifics about the Electoral College
 - Criticism at the Electoral College
 - Procedure
 - Nomination of presidential candidates
 - Election Day
 - Final election of the president
- Congressional elections
 - Basics

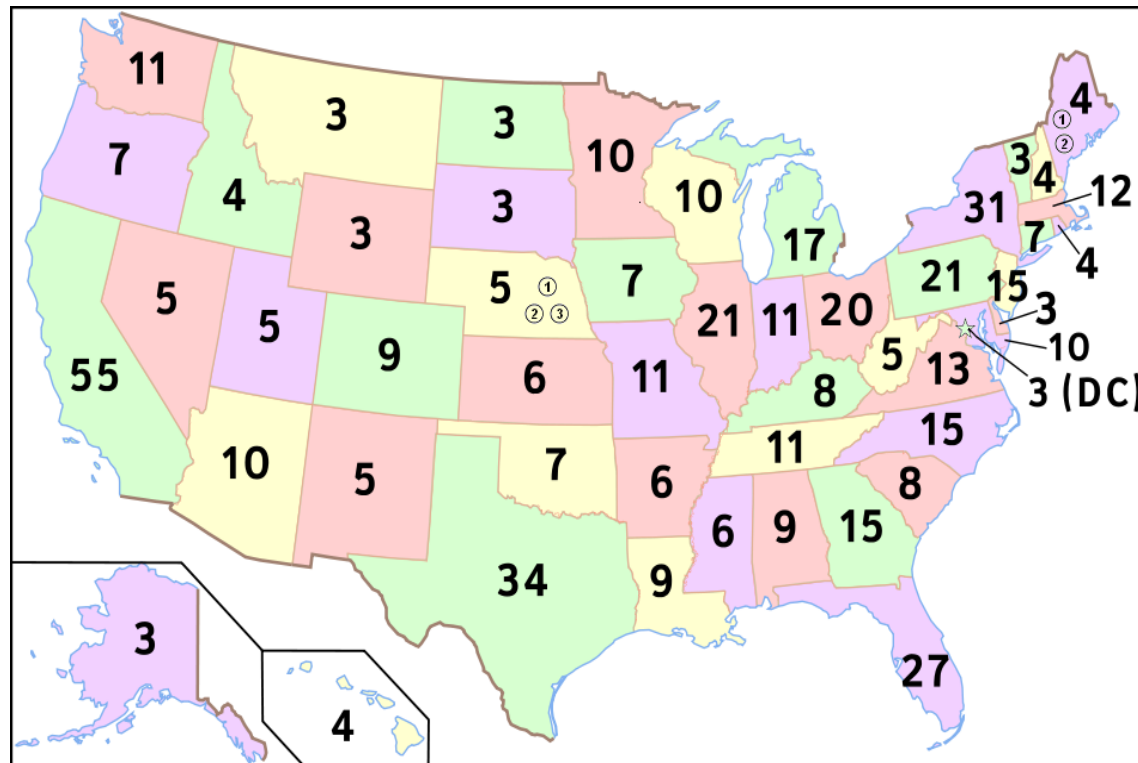
Presidential Election

- election of the president every 4 years, max. 1 re-election
 - limit to 2 premierhips was introduced in 1947 after four premierhips of president Franklin D. Roosevelt
 - *eligible* : every native citizen of the US, at least 35 years old, resides in the US for at least 14 years
- election is indirect, people elect Electoral College
- since the 19th century electors are bound to a party
 - electors which vote against the popular vote in their state are called *faithless electors* (158 so far)
- entitled to vote: every US-American who is at least 18 years old and resides in one of the 50 federal states or in D.C.
- inhabitants of the territories (Guam, Puerto Rico, etc.) don't have *active suffrage*



Specifics about the Electoral College

- electors of a party in one federal states make up a list, so called slate of electors
- party who reached the majority of votes in a federal state gets all votes of all electors -> other parties come away empty-handed ("winner-takes-all" system)
- example: 43 electors, 22 votes for Democrats and 21 votes for Republicans -> all 43 votes go to Democrats
- simple majority is sufficient to become President



Criticism at the Electoral College

- often criticized of being undemocratic because only voters in *swing states* determine the outcome of the election
- inequality in that the populations of very small states, which have a minimum of 3 Electoral college votes, are overrepresented compared with voters from larger states
- example:
 - Wyoming: population of 493,782 and 3 EC votes
 - 164,594 people per EC vote
 - California: population of 33,871,648 and 55 EC votes
 - 615,848 people per EC vote

Nomination of presidential candidates

- Primaries and Caucuses
 - Caucus: people elect delegates for the *presidential nomination convention* , delegates usually bound to a certain presidential candidate
 - Primary: people vote (in secret *ballots*) for whom the delegates should vote
 - incumbent usually re-nominated without discussion
 - getting a lot of delegates from big states often vital
- nominating convention
 - one of the highlights in a year of election
 - decision about presidential candidate
 - its central role has changed to a public event

Election Day

- occurs on the first Tuesday following the first Monday of November
- historical reason for the date:
 - harvest is completed (important in an agrarian society)
 - winter storms have not yet begun in earnest
- uniform date determined by the Congress in 1845
- objections against this date because it's part of the workweek and thus decreases *turnout*
 - in some states legal holiday, in some other states laws that allow workers to take time off from employment without reprisal, and often without loss in pay

Final election of the president

- electors meet 5 days after 2nd Wednesday of December in capitals of federal states
 - **whole Electoral College never meets!**
- if there's no absolute majority, the House of Representatives has to elect the new president and Senate has to elect vice-president
- on 20th January at 12:00 am local time president and vice-president swear an oath:
 - „I (Name) do solemnly swear (or: affirm) that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States.“

Congressional elections

- Congress consists of
 - House of Representatives ("lower house")
 - Senate ("upper house")
- both houses' approval is necessary for the passage of legislation
- direct elections in every even-numbered year
 - for all (435) seats in the House of Representatives
 - representation proportional to each state's population
 - for approximately 1/3 of the Senate (total of 100 seats)
 - equal representation amongst the states
 - six-year terms