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The Electoral College - I

Lead: It is among America's least popular constitutional creations, yet the nation cannot rid itself of the cranky, musty way of electing its President, the Electoral College.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: The founders never really intended it to be the way the Chief Executive was elected. They expected it to be an elaborate nominating committee. In a largely rural Republic where distances prevented all but a very few candidates from

attaining true national stature, the College would elevate several. They would then be referred to the House of Representatives which would choose the President and Vice-President. After the unanimity of the two elections of George Washington, however, the election of the President degenerated into a series of closely contended cat fights highlighted by the growth of what the founders said they hated most, factions and political parties.

The College has been the malevolent culprit in not a few elections over the years. Multi-party election messes occurred in 1912 and 1968, contested results such as the Hayes-Tilden disaster in 1876 and

Bush vs. Gore in 2000 set voters teeth on edge. Minority Presidents rode to power in 1824, 1860, 1912 and 2000, and the danger of traitorous electors who threatened to abandon their candidates in 1948 and 1960 gave too much to power to an unregulated honor system.

Over the years reformers have come up with three basic proposals: a national popular vote, election of electors by congressional district with perhaps the state-wide winner getting a couple of bonus electors and proportional representation with each candidate getting the percentage of electoral votes that closely matches his or her state-wide vote total. All have their supporters and none has a

ghost of a chance of being adopted. For all the grumbling Americans have grown accustomed to their unpopular system and would be reluctant to give up the devil you know for the one you really don't know. Next time: saying a good word or two about the Electoral College.

From Richmond, Virginia this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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**Wilmerding, Lucius S. *The Electoral College*. New
Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1958.**

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