



U3AM at Home

US ELECTIONS 2020

There could be a million or more Americans nominating for office at the elections to be held on Tuesday, 3rd November 2020. The names - Donald Trump, Michael Pence, Joseph Biden and Joseph Biden's running mate – will not be on any ballot paper or electronic voting screen.

The Presidential Election has dominated the headlines but there will be thousands of other elections in the US on Tuesday 3rd November. The actual election of the next president will be on Monday 14th December 2020 when the Electoral College formally elects the president.

The following institutions will be holding elections on Tuesday 3rd November –

Federal Government – Presidential College Election, House of Representatives and Senate.

States (50) – Governors, State Legislatures and State Senates.

Counties (3,034) - members of county councils and other officials.

Municipal Councils (19,429) – members of municipal councils and other officials.

Townships (16,504) – members of town councils and fascinating positions like Fence Viewer, Tree Warden, Propane Tank Inspector and Shellfish Constable.

School Districts (13,506) – members of school boards.

Special Purpose (35,052) – utilities, environmental, cemetery, fire, library, law enforcement, etc.

A total of 87,576 institutions will have total or partial elections on Tuesday 3rd November. Some institutions will also have ballots for proposals or referenda questions. A voter could be in the polling booth for a very long time if he/she wants to make a personal decision on each choice or just follow the party line and effectively 'vote above the line' and be out in no time. That is, most voters just vote either for the whole Democrat ticket or the whole Republican ticket from the President to the local Dog Catcher. It is just too hard for minor parties to get a look-in.

The **US FEDERAL GOVERNMENT** is made up of two parts – **The CONGRESS** and **The ADMINISTRATION**

The CONGRESS is comprised of -

The Senate (Upper House) – 100 senators, 2 from each state, 6 year terms beginning 3rd January after being elected, 33 plus 2 or 3 more senate elections will be held on 3rd November.

House of Representatives (Lower House) – 435 members, numbers based on population, 2 year terms beginning 3rd January after being elected. All 435 positions are up for election on 3rd November.

The **ADMINISTRATION** is comprised of –

President and Vice President elected on the same ticket by the Electoral College and the **Cabinet Secretaries** who are appointed by the President.

A total of 538 persons will be elected to the **Presidential Electoral College** on Tuesday 3rd November according to the following table.

Composition of the Presidential Electoral College

STATE	No of Reps	Senators	Electoral College
Alabama	7	2	9
Alaska	1	2	3
Arizona	9	2	11
Arkansas	4	2	6
California	53	2	55
Etc etc			
District of Columbia (DC)	0	0	3
TOTAL COLLEGE	435	100	538

It is likely that Democrats and Republicans will make up all 538 persons elected to the Electoral College and it will be highly unlikely that any members will vote against their own party. There will be quite a number of other parties on the Electoral College ballot paper. In 2016 the following parties nominated – Libertarian Party, Green Party, Constitution Party, Legal Marijuana Now Party, Nutrition Party, etc. It is most unlikely that any of these parties will get any Electoral College positions.

Cabinet Secretaries appointed by the President to the following departments

- | | | |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| 1. State | 6. Agriculture | 11. Transportation |
| 2. Treasury | 7. Commerce | 12. Energy |
| 3. Defense | 8. Labor | 13. Education |
| 4. Attorney General | 9. Health | 14. Veterans Affairs |
| 5. Interior | 10. Housing | 15. Homeland Security |

The **STATE GOVERNMENTS** are similar in structure to the Federal Government. Each has an Administration and a Legislative Parliament. The Administration consists of a Governor, Deputy Governor and officials nominated by the Governor. The Legislative Parliament consists of a House of Representatives (Lower House) and a Senate (Upper House). A small number of states have different names for their lower house and Nebraska is like Queensland in that it only has one elected house.

Most States will be holding House of Representatives elections for all positions on 3rd November. A proportion of Governor and State Senate positions will be up for election as well.

COMMENTS

1. The divide between Federal and State powers and responsibilities is somewhat similar to the situation in Australia and there are sometimes conflicts and confusion.
2. The US States control the Federal Elections. Unlike Australia where a Federal Electoral Commission controls and runs Federal Elections.
3. Voting is not compulsory and there is no preferential voting.
4. With House of Representative elections being held every two years, political campaigning is practically a full time job for members of the House of Representatives.
5. The Senators coming from the more populous states usually carry more clout.
6. After the legislative branch (Congress) and the executive branch (Administration) there is of course the third branch, the Judiciary (Supreme Court). These three Federal branches of government together make up the checks and balances are set out in the US Constitution. Appointments to the Supreme Court are made by the President with Senate approval.

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