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POLITICS

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Americans Call for Term Limits, End to Electoral College

Virtually no partisan disagreement on these long-discussed constitutional reforms

by Lydia Saad



PRINCETON, NJ -- Even after the 2012 election in which Americans re-elected most of the sitting members of the U.S. House and Senate -- as is typical in national elections -- three-quarters of Americans say that, given the opportunity, they would vote "for" term limits for members of both houses of Congress.

Americans' Support for Establishing Term Limits for Federal Lawmakers

Suppose that on Election Day you could vote on key issues as well as candidates. Would you vote for or against a law that would limit the number of terms which members of Congress and the U.S. Senate can serve?

	Would vote "for" term limits	Would vote "against" term limits	No opinion
	%	%	%
National adults	75	21	5
Republicans	82	15	3
Independents	79	17	4
Democrats	65	29	5
18 to 29 years	74	22	4
30 to 49 years	73	22	5
50 to 64 years	77	19	4
65 and older	74	21	5

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Republicans and independents are slightly more likely than Democrats to favor term limits; nevertheless, the vast majority of all party groups agree on the issue. Further, Gallup finds no generational differences in support for the proposal.

These findings, from Gallup Daily tracking conducted Jan. 8-9, are similar to those from 1994 to 1996 Gallup polls, in which between two-thirds and three-quarters of Americans said they would vote for a constitutional amendment to limit the number of terms that members of Congress and the U.S. Senate can serve.

More Than Six in 10 Would Abolish Electoral College

Americans are nearly as open to major electoral reform when it comes to doing away with the Electoral College. Sixty-three percent would abolish this unique, but sometimes controversial, mechanism for electing presidents that was devised by the framers of the Constitution. While constitutional and statutory revisions have been made to the Electoral College since the nation's founding, numerous efforts to abolish it over the last 200+ years have met with little success.

There is even less partisan variation in support for this proposal than there is for term

limits, with between 61% and 66% of all major party groups saying they would vote to do away with the Electoral College if they could. Similarly, between 60% and 69% of all major age groups take this position.

Americans' Support for Doing Away With U.S. Electoral College

Would you vote for or against a law that would do away with the Electoral College and base the election of the president on the total vote cast throughout the nation?

	Would vote "for" doing away with Electoral College	Would vote "against" doing away with Electoral College	No opinion
	%	%	%
National adults	63	29	8
Republicans	61	30	9
Independents	63	29	8
Democrats	66	30	4
18 to 29 years	69	28	4
30 to 49 years	62	27	11
50 to 64 years	64	28	8
65 and older	60	32	8

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Gallup has asked Americans about the Electoral College in a number of ways over the years, and regardless of the precise phrasing, large majorities have always supported doing away with it. That includes 80% support in 1968 and 67% in 1980 with wording similar to what is used today.

Compared with today, support for abolishing it was slightly lower from 2000 through 2011, ranging from 59% to 62%, when using a question that asked Americans if they would rather amend the Constitution so the candidate who wins the most votes nationally wins the election, or keep the current system in which the winner is decided in the Electoral College.

Gallup trends show that Republicans were far less supportive than Democrats of abolishing the Electoral College in late 2000, when Republican presidential candidate George W. Bush had lost the popular vote, but was fighting a legal battle to win Florida and therefore the Electoral College. Since then, however, Republicans have gradually

become less protective of the Electoral College, to the point that by 2011, a solid majority of Republicans were in favor of abolishing it.

Bottom Line

Large majorities of Americans are in favor of establishing term limits for members of the U.S. House and Senate, and doing away with the Electoral College. Despite sharp polarization of the parties on many issues in 21st century politics, Republicans and Democrats broadly agree on both longstanding election reform proposals.

Survey Methods

Results for this Gallup poll are based on telephone interviews conducted as part of the Gallup Daily tracking survey Jan. 8-9, 2013, with a random sample of 1,013 adults, aged 18 and older, living in all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia.

For results based on the total sample of national adults, one can say with 95% confidence that the maximum margin of sampling error is ± 4 percentage points.

Interviews are conducted with respondents on landline telephones and cellular phones, with interviews conducted in Spanish for respondents who are primarily Spanish-speaking. Each sample includes a minimum quota of 500 cellphone respondents and 500 landline respondents per 1,000 national adults, with additional minimum quotas by region. Landline telephone numbers are chosen at random among listed telephone numbers. Cellphone numbers are selected using random-digit-dial methods. Landline respondents are chosen at random within each household on the basis of which member had the most recent birthday.

Samples are weighted by gender, age, race, Hispanic ethnicity, education, region, adults in the household, population density, and phone status (cellphone only/landline only/both, cellphone mostly, and having an unlisted landline number). Demographic weighting targets are based on the March 2012 Current Population Survey figures for the aged 18 and older non-institutionalized population living in U.S. telephone households. All reported margins of sampling error include the computed design effects for weighting.

In addition to sampling error, question wording and practical difficulties in conducting surveys can introduce error or bias into the findings of public opinion polls.

[View methodology, full question results, and trend data](#)

For more details on Gallup's polling methodology, visit www.gallup.com.

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