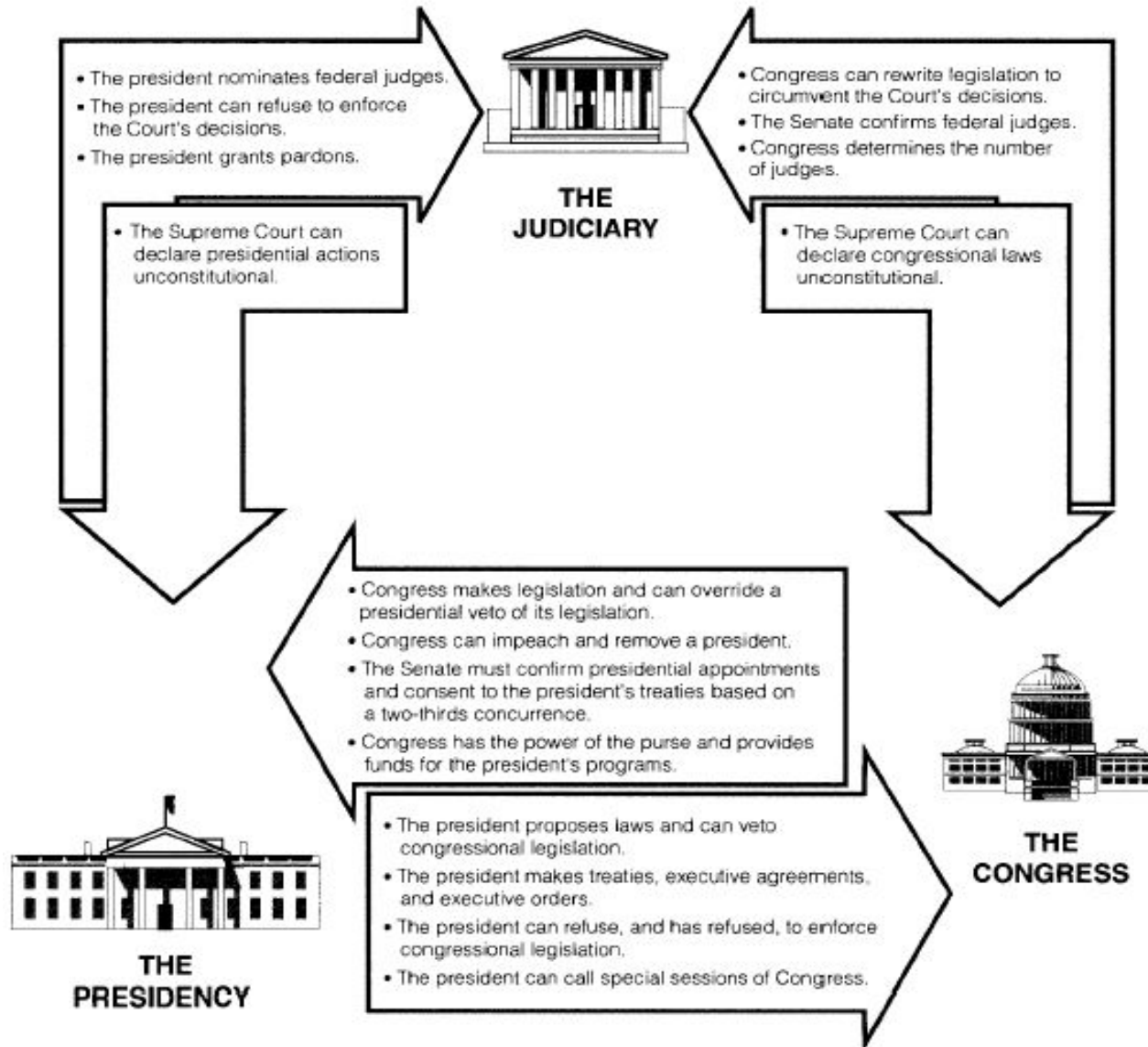


The Political System of the United States

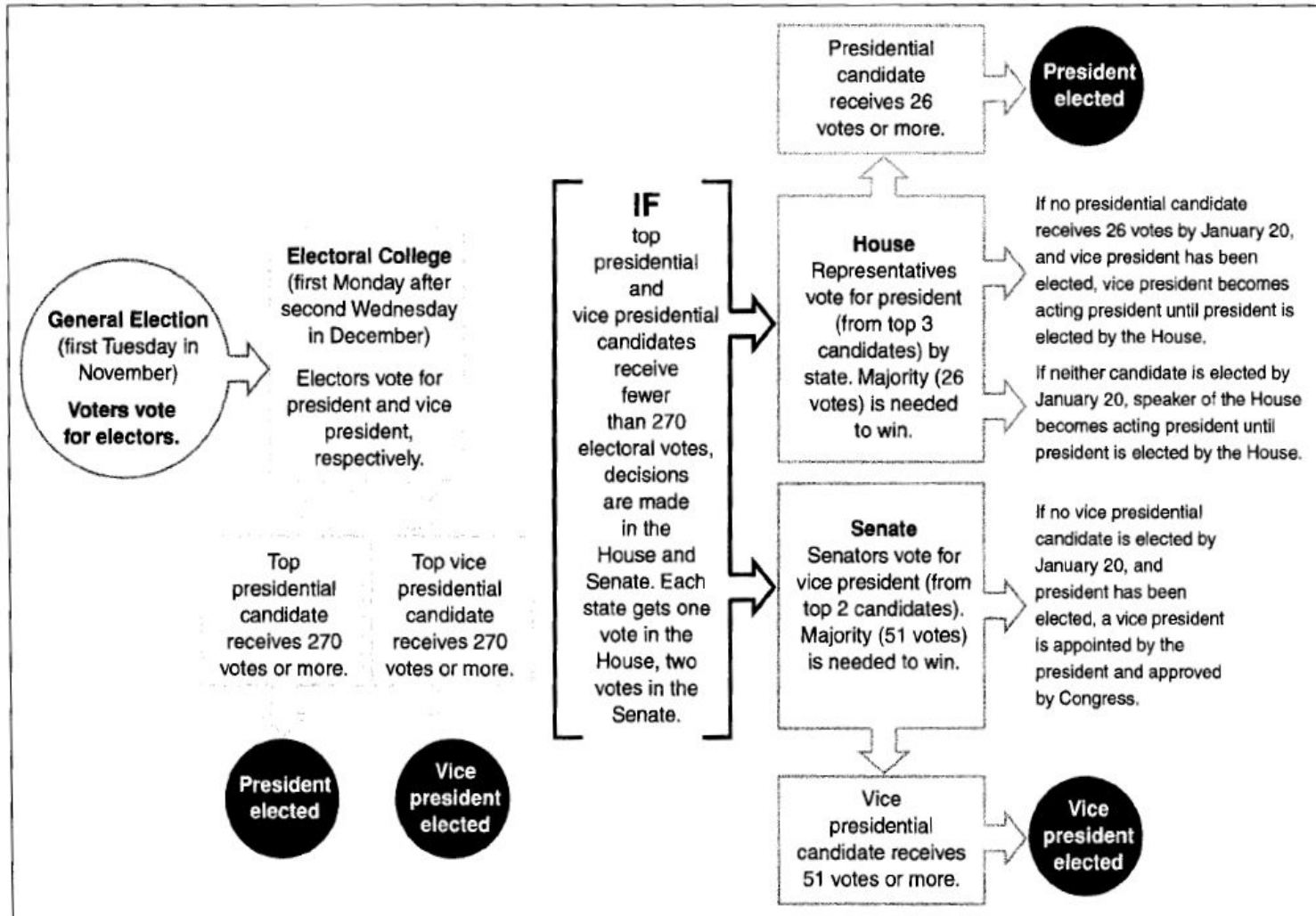
Checks and balances: confrontation of powers



Presidential elections in the USA

FIGURE 9-3

How Presidents and Vice Presidents Are Chosen



ELECTORAL COLLEGE EXPLAINER

The president and vice president are elected by 538 Electoral College voters, one per senator and representative from each state, who usually cast a ballot for the candidate who wins the popular vote. In addition, the District of Columbia has three votes. A candidate must receive a majority of 270 votes to win the election. [More](#) ▶

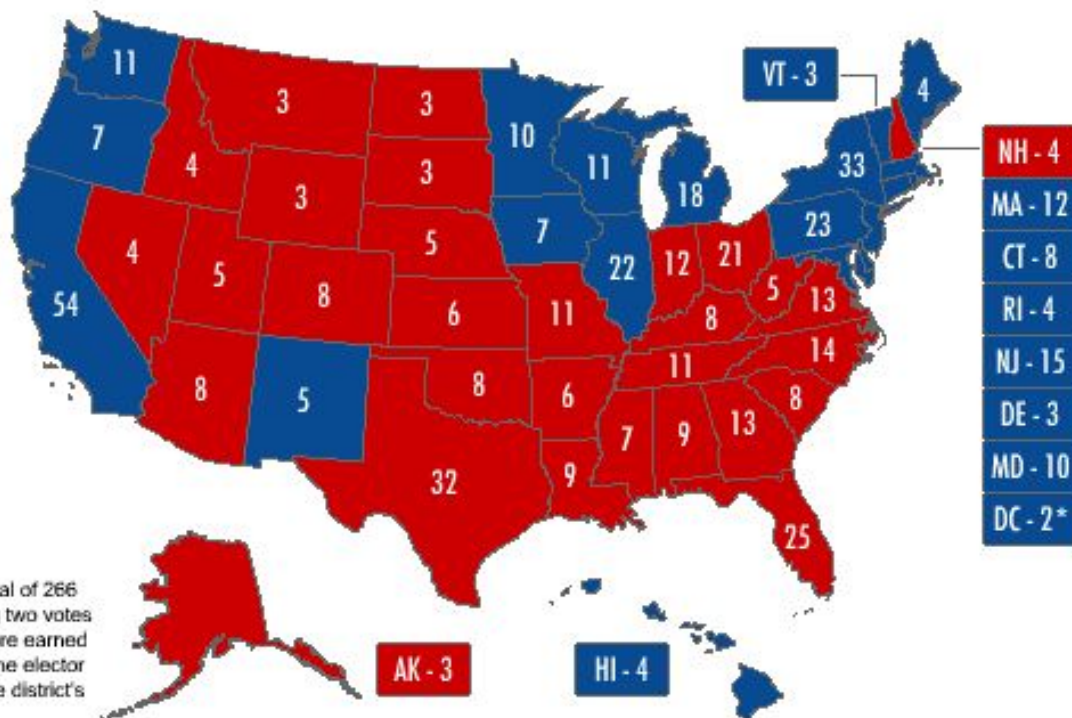
ELECTOR COUNT

Use tabs to the right to navigate between maps

2004

2000

TOTAL
538*
BUSH
271
GORE
266*



* Al Gore received an official total of 266 electoral college votes, counting two votes from Washington D.C. While Gore earned all three of the district's votes, one elector left her ballot blank to protest the district's lack of statehood.

Who's leading in the race for Electoral College votes? Here's the [latest survey](#) from the CNN political unit.

How does the Electoral College work?

- Each state has a number of electors in the Electoral College equal to the total of its US senators (always two) and its representatives, which are determined by the size of the state's population. Technically, Americans vote for the electors not the candidate.
- California, the most populous state, has 55 electoral votes. A few small states and the District of Columbia have only three.
- There are 538 electors in the College. In all but two states, Maine and Nebraska, the College works on a winner-takes-all basis. The winner of the popular vote in a state gets all the Electoral College votes in that state.
- To become president, a candidate needs 270 Electoral College votes. The winning candidate does not need to win the national popular vote.

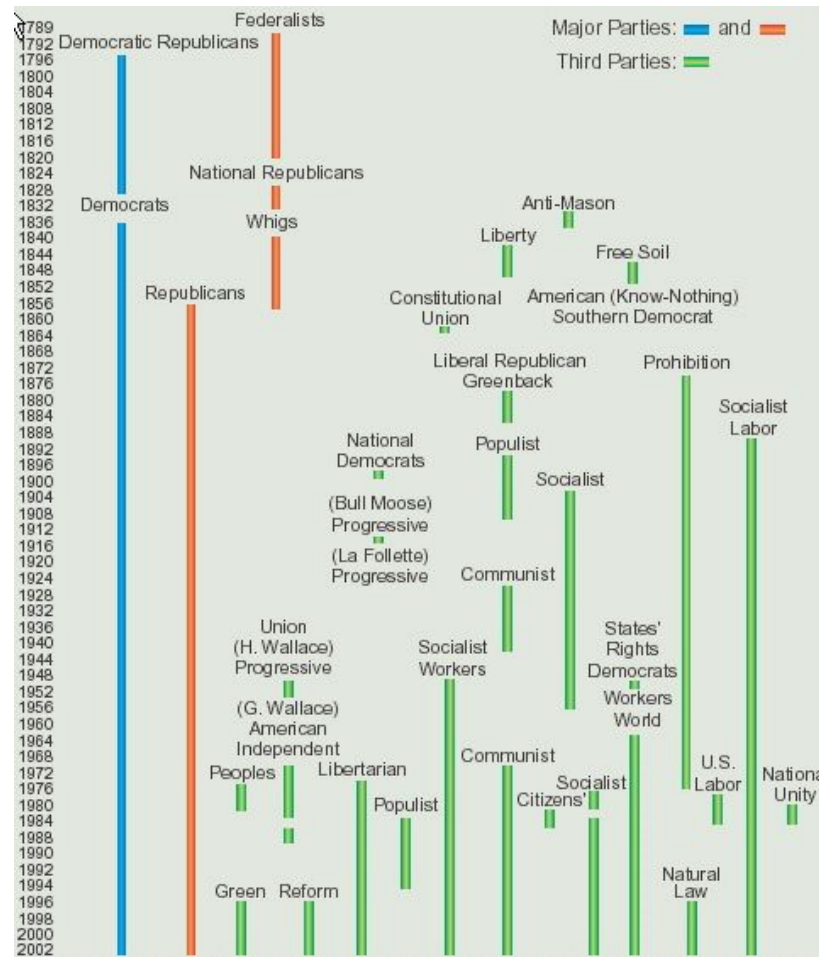
Fairness?

In 2000 Al Gore won 48.38% of votes nationwide compared to George Bush's 47.87%. Ralph Nader took 2.74%.

Yet Mr Bush won because he got 271 Electoral College votes compared to 266 for Mr Gore.

The winning votes came from Florida whose 25 College seats all went to Mr Bush despite the difference between the two in the state's popular vote being only 537.

American political parties since 1789



The Federal Government

FIGURE 12-3 Organization Chart of the Federal Government

