

National Popular ote!

To: House Committee on Rules Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Chair

Re: HB 2927, Enacts Interstate Compact to Elect the President by National Popular Vote – Support

The time has come to adopt the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact in Oregon by passing HB 2927. In the last three presidential elections, Oregon was ignored by presidential candidates. Not one major candidate held a campaign event in our state, instead focusing on the “battleground” states.

Recent research has revealed that battleground states also receive more federal grant funding than other states. Oregon’s bridges and roads are in disrepair. Our schools desperately need seismic upgrades. Where are the federal funds for this? When Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana, President Bush was slow to respond and slow to acknowledge the disaster there. Would he have done the same had that hurricane hit neighboring Florida? Given that Florida is an important battleground state and Louisiana is not, it’s doubtful. In the 2004 campaign, Bush and Cheney traveled 61 times to Florida in the last five weeks of the campaign and zero times to Louisiana.

There have been at least 700 proposed amendments to modify or abolish the Electoral College. Our founding fathers knew we had a problem right from the beginning and how to set this system up was highly contentious. The Electoral College system that was created in 1787 was a compromise whose sole purpose was to appease the slave states. The three-fifths compromise allowed for slaves to be counted in the population and, thus, for electoral votes. Without this compromise, slave states would have had to bend to the will of the north and chance losing their abhorrent system. In the first presidential election in 1789, the winner- take-all rule was used by only three states. By 1804, the Electoral College system was already being revised via the 12th Amendment. This racist, elitist system was never meant to be the final system.

Recent attempts to reform the Electoral college have occurred in 1950, 1956, 1966, 1969, 1979, 1992, 1997, and 2004. Supporters over the years have ranged from Richard Nixon, to Lyndon B. Johnson, to Newt Gingrich. This is a bipartisan issue. Our legislators know the Electoral College is flawed, and NPV would be the easiest and most logical way to fix it.

Those who claim that the NPV would favor large population states fail to realize that all 50 governors of all 50 states are elected by popular vote. In California, four recent Republican governors were elected and none of them won Los Angeles, one of the largest cities in America and the largest city in California. The population of the 50 biggest cities is only 15% of American population. 85% of the American population live in places with a population less 360,000 people. So rather than disenfranchising the rural population, what NPV will actually do is make the rural vote count too.

The time has come to change this archaic system and it is in your hands to do so. Pass this bill and help increase voter engagement and turnout, make every Oregonian’s voice heard, and ensure a system where one person = one vote.

Sincerely,

National Popular Vote Oregon

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HB 2927 & SB 824

- **What is the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact?**
Often known as NPV or NPVIC, this is an agreement among the states to guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most votes overall. Each state that joins the compact agrees to replace its state winner-take-all law with a new law that guarantees all its electoral votes to the presidential candidate receiving the most popular votes in all 50 states and D.C.
- **How many states are part of the agreement and when will it start working?**
It has already been enacted into law in 10 states and D.C., representing 165 electoral votes. The compact will become effective when the total electoral votes of the states signing onto the compact reaches 270, which is enough to win the presidency.
- **Would NPV require a Constitutional Amendment?**
No, NPV does not abolish the Electoral College or otherwise change the Constitution, so a Constitutional Amendment is not needed. The Constitution gives each state the right to choose its method of selecting presidential electors.
- **Would NPV give big states a greater advantage?**
No, the current winner-take-all system now used in all states except Maine and Nebraska, gives a greater advantage to big states. The 11 biggest states control 270 out of 538 electoral votes, so even small majorities in those states can be enough to tip an election. Twelve of the 13 smallest states are considered one-party states and thus are virtually ignored by presidential candidates. However, under NPV, every vote in every state is equally important. Campaigns would no longer focus most of their attention on voters who live in “battleground” states or in states with large numbers of electoral votes.
- **Would NPV favor urban areas over rural and suburban areas?**
No, under NPV, every vote is equal, so rural and suburban votes would have just as much value as urban votes. The combined population of the 100 biggest cities is roughly the same as the population of rural America—approximately one-sixth of the U.S. population in each segment. Two-thirds of Americans live in suburban areas.
- **Would NPV favor one major party over another?**
No, one political party would not be favored over another, given that the nationwide percentage of Democratic urban voters is roughly the same as the percentage of Republican rural voters, and suburban areas are nearly evenly divided.
- **Is there public support for NPV?**
Yes, statewide polls across the country between 2008 and 2015 show 70% support for a national popular vote for President. In Oregon, support is even higher. A December, 2008, survey of 800 Oregon voters showed 76% overall support.

Why should this be done by you, without a ballot referral?

- Polling shows strong widespread support in Oregon for NPV (76% in 2008), and there is every indication that public support has only increased since the 2016 election. A referral implies being unsure of public support and thus unwilling to take a stand.
- Judging from past elections, a referral would be added to an already crowded slate of ballot initiatives, resulting in an expensive election media campaign and inevitable attempts to sway voters with politicized hype and misleading sound bites.
- The statewide winner-take-all aspect of the Electoral College system is deeply flawed and has caused many Oregonians to believe their votes don't count when electing a President. Our state has been a leader in election reform, and it would be a shame for the idea of "one person, one vote" to be put off any longer.