

Testimony to the Senate Rule Committee, June 21, 2017

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I appreciate the opportunity to comment on HB 2927 and SB 825. I know that the legislature has other issues that are very important, but I think the problems addressed by HB 2927 are, in the long run, as important as any other issue we face.

First of all, I'll state my recommendations, in case you don't have time to read my whole testimony: **I urge you to pass HB 2927, not SB 825.**

Why?

My overriding principle is that **everyone's vote should have same weight**, regardless of whether they live in a big state or a little state, a battleground state or a deep-red or deep-blue state. This isn't true now because of the way electoral votes are allocated ("winner-take-all" in 48 of the 50 states, with some modification in the other 2).

There are many perverse effects of this system. Some of the most important among them:

1. We have elected 2 presidents in the last 5 elections who had fewer popular votes than their opponents. Clearly, not all voters' votes had the same weight. This doesn't happen in gubernatorial elections, or mayoral elections, or high school class elections. It's not a healthy result.
2. People who live in deep-red or deep-blue states are discouraged from voting for president because they feel like their votes don't matter, and as a result are more likely not to vote at all, leaving important local offices and issues neglected. These voters know their votes don't have the same weight as others'. They can't be blamed if they feel it isn't their government.
3. Presidential campaigns have concentrated on the populations and issues of the 10-12 battleground states, leaving the populations and issues of the other 38-40 states neglected. The votes of the 38-40 non-battleground states are given less weight by the campaigns, and the candidates.

The winner-take-all system was not specified in the U.S. Constitution. It was the result of decisions by state legislatures on their states' allocations of electoral votes. HB 2927 is part of a movement by many states' legislatures to change their states' allocations of electoral votes. If that movement is successful it will make all U.S. citizen's votes for president count equally, and correct the perverse effects of the existing system that I've described.

1. Presidents who get the most popular votes will be elected, every time.
2. Voters will know that even if they are in a minority of their state, their votes will count equally toward electing the president, and they'll be more likely to vote, not only for president but on local issues.
3. Campaigns, and candidates' attention, can be expected to focus on voters they think they can persuade, wherever they are, in pockets of undecided

voters even in deep-red or deep-blue states, big states, little states, wherever they are.

Why HB 2927 and not SB 825?

I can understand the temptation for a legislator to refer an important decision like this to the people in an election. But when I consider the prospect of boatloads of out-of-state money coming into the state, the 30-second TV spot and bumper sticker distortions of the issue, the limited funds available to public-interest groups that have backed HB 2927, I'm afraid that "referral" is equivalent to "kill." This is too important. You in the legislature have the authority **and the responsibility** to step up and make this decision. I have to tell you that punting it back to the voters is not doing your job.

Thank you again for the chance to comment.

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