

Rules Committee,

Dear Senate President Courtney, Members of the Rules Committee and Oregon Senators:

This is an appeal to approve without amendments or ballot referral HB-2927, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC). This is the bill that, if enough states take similar action, would guarantee that the President of the United States is elected directly by the people on a strict one-person, one-vote basis by obviating the ancient Electoral College, which gives some states double the voting power per person than others.

Look at it this way: You go to a baseball game and watch your home team win, 8 to 7. But wait, at the end an announcement says your team didn't win after all. Why? Because the other team was from another state where each run counts as 1.2 runs. So the score is adjusted and your team loses, 8 to 8.4, even though it scored the most runs. Is that fair? Of course not.

Or you go to a soccer match. Your team loses 4 to 3. But since your team is from a state where each goal counts for 1.5 points instead of the usual one, your team ends up winning. That may make you feel good, in a way, but nobody would consider it fair.

Yet this is basically how we elect our presidents. As I'm sure you know, under the Constitution the number of individual votes a candidate gets nationally from the people basically means nothing. Whoever gets the most electoral votes nationwide wins, period. Did more people vote for your candidate for president than the one who was given the job? The Constitutional response up until now has been "Tough luck."

Electoral votes are part of an archaic system embedded like a thorn in today's modern election machinery that can jam up the works at any time, defeating the will of the voting public. It's been there in one form or another since Constitution was drafted in 1787.

That's nearly 230 years ago and, in the beginning, there were some good reasons (along with some very bad ones) for giving the non-elected elites of the Electoral College the ultimate power to pick the President.

A main concern was that ordinary voters would not have the information or sense necessary to vote for the most "qualified" candidate. Without any communication system that moved faster than a horse, collecting and counting votes from remote areas was very slow and difficult. And there was a fear that many Americans, still loyal to King George III, might vote for a candidate who would support making the fledgling nation a colony of a monarchy again.

The Constitution was drafted just four years after the Revolutionary War ended and the country was so new and insecure that there was still great nervousness about the whole concept of a life without a monarch. Even Alexander Hamilton wrote that, given its fragile state, that a buffer in the form of the Electoral College of hand-picked men was necessary to stand between the voting public and the actual election of a president "to avoid tumult and disorder." And, as a historian observed, Shays' Rebellion involving some 4,000 newly-minted Americans in Massachusetts seemed to give rise to a "class of men in the community who gave very serious apprehensions to the advocates for a Republican form of government".

Indeed, when the Constitutional Convention created the idea of an Electoral College, there were even delegates who toyed with idea of returning the country to a monarchy. Among the possibilities discussed for a new American king were the brother of the king of Prussia, and even the eldest son of King George III.

Clearly, these reasons for creation of the Electoral College no longer exist today. Voters today receive news at lightning speed and voting results are gathered and tabulated nearly as quickly. And the idea of the voters picking a foreign potentate to rule America is so remote, it's laughable.

The second original justification for the Electoral College was to appease the smaller agricultural states of the South by giving them extra electoral votes basically just for having slaves, even though (obviously) slaves could not vote in the elections that chose the electors. It was a bribe by the northern states, pure and simple, and was offered up for the same reason that the issue of slavery isn't even mentioned in the original Constitution. If the founders pushed through a plan to directly elect the president it would have given dominance to the more-populace North, sparking Southern fears of losing slavery and causing those states to refuse to sign the Constitution and perhaps even try to return to the British fold.

But it's now more than two centuries later. It's time we grew up as a nation and began picking our presidents unencumbered by the long-gone fears and onerous compromises of the 18th Century.

I respectfully ask you to allow HB-2927 to move to the Senate floor where I hope the Senate as a whole will do what is right and good by voting to deliver Oregon's electoral votes to whoever wins the most votes nationally.

Sincerely,
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