

Testimony of Anne Taliaferro
RE: HB 2927 & SB 825
Oregon Senate Rules Committee

June 21, 2016

Senator Burdick and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing and allowing the voices of the people to be heard on this issue. My name is Anne Taliaferro. I live in Pedee Oregon and am a constituent of Senator Boquist.

There are many reasons that I support the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Briefly, I'd like to highlight one or two. As you know, a healthy democracy depends on citizen participation, and voter participation is dismally low in our country. My 25 year old son finally convinced some of his friends to vote this past year. They were disillusioned when they found that their votes didn't end up counting. In this election that was the case no matter which way they voted. If they voted for Donald Trump, their votes didn't count because all of Oregon's electoral votes were cast for Hillary Clinton. If they voted for Clinton their votes didn't count because of the results of the electoral college.

Oregonians do not vote 100% for one candidate or another. Our state may appear (currently), to be solid blue, but in actuality we are a very purple state. This is true across the country. If you are concerned that a few states will be able to determine the outcome of an election, you should vote YES on this bill. Whether you are pleased or upset by the results of this last election does not matter. We have had battleground states for years, but with technology that is now available, campaigns can simply target a few key precincts in those states, thereby gaming the system.

There have only been five elections in our history when the winner of the popular vote lost the election. Two of them have occurred in the last 16 years. It just so happens that in these two cases the Democrat lost, but we should not assume that will be the case next time. And be assured, there will be a next time - likely quite soon. This is not a good way to choose the President who will represent the entire country, and it's not good for democracy.

There are many misconceptions about the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. One issue that confuses many people is that Oregon will not have a voice in the election. Many people don't understand that the compact will not go into effect until enough states have joined the compact to represent 270 votes. I know that all of you understand how the compact actually works. I also know that you are all too familiar with the way that campaigns are able to distort facts. If you choose to refer this issue to the voters you will knowingly be encouraging that very confusion.

If you oppose the concept, vote NO, but please don't hide behind your opposition by voting for referral, when you know full well that it will result in an expensive and likely confusing campaign. Have the courage of your convictions and let the people know how you stand. I encourage you to go ahead and vote it out of committee so all your colleagues have the opportunity to publicly declare their position.

If there is considerable public opposition to the vote, the Oregon constitution provides a mechanism for voters to overrule the decision that you make. If the bill does not pass, those of us who support it can then work to gather the necessary support to place it on the ballot for a vote of the people. Likewise, if it passes, those who oppose it can do the same. This is the way the system is supposed to work. We have a representative democracy, and you were elected to make these decisions. The initiative process is a way for the people to override your actions should there be insufficient public support. It's not intended to be a way for you to avoid taking a stand on an issue.