



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.*

May 17, 2019

To: House Committee on Rules  
Representative Paul Holvey, Chair

Re: **SB 870** – Enacts National Popular Vote Interstate Compact – **Support**

The League of Women Voters' founding principle is the right to vote, and along with that right comes the conviction that voting matters. However, the Electoral College system as it currently exists does not ensure that every vote counts equally when electing the President of the United States, the highest office in the land. This is why League members have been working for nearly fifty years to fix our flawed Electoral College system and why we testify today in support of SB 870, which allows Oregon to join the National Popular Voter (NPV) Interstate Compact.

NPV is not a radical concept. In simple terms, it guarantees the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most votes in all 50 states and D.C. A bill identical to the one before you today has already been enacted into law in 14 states and D.C., representing 189 electoral votes, and will become effective when the total electoral votes of the states in the Compact reaches 270, the minimum required to win the presidency. Because the Compact does not abolish or replace the Electoral College, a Constitutional Amendment is not needed. And because the Constitution clearly stipulates that each state has the right to choose its method of selecting presidential electors, it is entirely legal.

Why is the Electoral College system so unfair? The main reason is that 48 of the states long ago passed winner-take-all laws that require a state to award all its electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes within that state. The result is that only a handful of states are truly competitive, while the rest reliably swing to one party or the other.

Thus, campaigns only pay attention to the handful of battleground states and ignore the rest. The quirks of the Electoral College have allowed candidates to win the presidency without winning the popular vote five times in our nation's history, most recently in 2016. In that election, micro-targeting of a handful of voters in select battleground states was enough to change the outcome. And because demographic technology is constantly improving, presidential campaigns will depend more and more on exploiting the flaws in the Electoral College system unless steps are taken now to make the selection of the President a fairer process.

NPV allows all votes to be counted equally, no matter where they are in the country. There is a common misperception that under NPV, urban areas or more populous states would control the outcome of an election, but this is not true. The combined population of the 100 biggest cities is only one-sixth of the population, roughly the same as the population of rural America. It's also important to keep in mind that voters in populous states do not belong to just one party, but winner-take-all laws negate all minority votes. NPV would at last make all votes relevant.

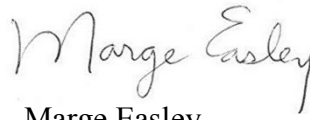
The Electoral College has also been unfair to a large segment of the rural population in Oregon. Over the last eight presidential elections over a half million Oregonians cast their votes for the Republican candidate, but because of the winner-take-all law, none of those votes really mattered. The Democratic candidate won more than half of the votes, so all Oregon's electoral votes went for the Democratic candidate.

As you know, the bill before you today passed the Oregon House four previous times. Four states have very recently passed this same bill, with one more poised to do so, and it is now Oregon's turn. It is unacceptable that the United States is the only practicing democracy where the candidate with the most votes is not assured of being chosen the national leader. A modern society deserves a modern voting system. The League asks that this committee send SB 870 to the House floor with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President



Marge Easley  
LWVOR National Popular Vote Portfolio