

Support for NPVIC SB870
Prepared by Will Hobbs, HD32, SD16

I'd like to weigh in in favor of Senate Bill SB870, which is being considered for a House vote. I have testified in favor of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, or NPVIC, in both the House and Senate Rules Committees in previous years, but unfortunately cannot make it to today's hearing. I'd like to make a few points that my testimony would have provided.

NPVIC is a bi-partisan issue. Either party can achieve a popular vote victory while losing the electoral vote. Coupled with "winner takes all," the Electoral College essentially makes half of the votes cast in a state worthless. Once a candidate receives a simple majority plus one vote, all other votes become meaningless. A vote cast by a Republican in a blue state never sees the light of day, and vice-versa. The fact that around half of the votes don't count undoubtedly contributes to the disturbing and widespread attitude of "Why vote? My vote doesn't count anyway." With NPV, though, all votes count equally at the national level and are not wasted.

One consequence of the Electoral College is the emergence of 10 to 12 "swing states," which effectively determine the winner of a presidential election, and disenfranchises the remaining 38 to 40 states. With a flood of unlimited money from the likes of the Koch brothers and SuperPACs, a few people can spend large sums in a few counties of a few states and essentially determine who will be president. They have a huge vested interest in keeping the Electoral College as-is. With the EC, they don't have to spread their money across the entire country. The payoff in 2016 was a tax "reform" that will net the Koch's and their ilk billions of dollars—each year! Quite a return on investment, and quite an assault on our democracy!

The Electoral College is clearly undemocratic when one person's vote can have more than 3 times the power of another's, depending on where a person lives (Wyoming versus California, E.g.). Roughly speaking, the power of a voter is inversely proportional to the population of the state he/she resides in. This is anything but one person one vote. Shifting demographics make mismatches between the popular vote and the electoral vote likely to happen with increasing frequency in the future, giving even more power to the smaller states and the "swing states." The structure of the Senate already gives the smaller states an outsize influence in the legislature. The presidency should be decided by the people, not a handful of states.

The Electoral College puts our entire election in a position of being very sensitive to random events, such as the 1978 Iran Hostage Crisis, Florida's "hanging chads" of 2000, Comey's 2016 last minute announcement that the email investigation was being reopened, events which didn't greatly impact the total vote count, but likely produced wide differences in the EC count. This is the classic definition of a "chaotic system," where a small change in initial conditions results in a dramatic change in the outcome. Our democracy deserves better.

In a climate of growing division between people of different political beliefs, the Electoral College heightens the "red state/blue state" mentality, reinforcing an "us versus them" attitude and deepening perceived political divides. We can do better as a united citizenry than as a group of citizens pitted against each other.

The Oregon Legislature should pass NPVIC HB870—it's the right thing to do.

Respectfully submitted by:

Will Hobbs