

**Testimony of Amanda Machin
Student, Yale Law School¹
In Support of Raised Bill No. 6437
February 18, 2009**

Senator Slossberg, Representative Spallone, and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee: thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of Raised Bill No. 6437, the bill to elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote.

My name is Amanda Machin, and I am a first-year law student at Yale Law School. I live in State Representative Toni Walker's district and the district of State Senator Toni Harp.

Today I would like to talk about Connecticut's political power. Under the current system of electing the President, the American ship of state has two very different classes: the safe states are like lower-class cabins, to which the presidential candidates do not pay nearly as much attention to as they do the first class cabins—that is, the swing states. In the current system, Connecticut is a lower-class cabin, and while there are hundreds of selfless reasons to vote for HB6437, this state's own interests are one of the best.

Connecticut does not get the first-class attention to its voters and its issues that swing states get. With Connecticut's electors being a sure thing for one side, both sides leave us well enough alone. Last fall, Obama beat McCain by 23 points, and so it's no surprise that the two campaigns wasted none of their money on political ads in our state in the months before November 4th.² Nor did any of the nominees visit the state.³ Instead, they spent 99% of their money and the majority of their time aggressively campaigning in the 17 swing states that mattered to them.⁴

It isn't just about the candidate's time and money. It's also about having a meaningful chance to shape their platform. No candidate can hope to win Florida without having a hard-line position on Cuba.⁵ Nor would anyone think of campaigning in Nevada without openly opposing depositing nuclear waste in the Yucca Mountain.⁶ This year, NAFTA was a central part of presidential debates in both the primary and the general election. The candidates also spent a lot of time talking about clean coal and ethanol. These issues are primarily of importance to key

¹ The author prepared this testimony through the Yale Law School Legislative Advocacy Clinic, under the supervision of J. L. Pottenger, Jr., Nathan Baker Clinical Professor of Law.

² Obama spent zero dollars in Connecticut in the months leading up to the general election, though he spent plenty of money here during the contested primary election (\$730,555).
<http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/map/ad.spending/>.

³ While some spectator states, such as Texas, were at least visited once or twice, none of the four people on the major parties' tickets visited Connecticut. States like Ohio, however, were visited upwards of 50 times.
<http://fairvote.org/tracker/?page=2473> or <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/map/candidate.visits/>.

⁴ FairVote, "2008's Shrinking Battle Ground." December 4, 2008.
<http://fairvote.org/tracker/?page=27&pressmode=showspecific&showarticle=230>.

⁵ Steven Hill, "The Cuba Connection." *Prospect*. September 2006.
http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2006/the_cuba_connection.

⁶ See both Jon Ralston, "McCain's About-face on Yucca." *Las Vegas Sun*, May 28, 2008.
<http://www.lasvegassun.com/news/2008/may/28/mccains-about-face-yucca/> and Sarah Wheaton, "Obama Ad Attacks McCain on Yucca Mountain." *New York Times (The Caucus Blog)*, August 9, 2008.
<http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/obama-ad-attacks-mccain-on-yucca-mountain/>

Midwestern and Appalachian states, whose votes simply matter more to the candidates in the current system.

It's not all campaign promises, either. In 2002, former President Bush granted Pennsylvania steelworkers a protectionist tariff, despite his support of free trade principles during the 2000 campaign.⁷ In 1965 after Hurricane Betsy, Louisiana's then-swing votes served as a bargaining chip to get LBJ's attention and assistance.⁸ Presidents and presidential nominees lavish this type of attention on swing states, but those are the first class cabins.

Here, below deck, no national candidate pays that kind of close attention to our issues. Did either Obama or McCain talk about pharmaceutical innovation? Or military contracts? Or any other issue that's critical to Connecticut in particular? Maybe they would have, if we were important enough to visit. But right now we simply aren't. And as a former Ohio resident and voter, I have to tell you that moving to Connecticut feels like a demotion in terms of how important my vote is to the presidential candidates. That's particularly troubling at this moment in history, when presidential favoritism could redirect billions of federal dollars elsewhere.

All that can change. The Constitution grants you the power to decide how Connecticut will grant nominees the state's electoral votes. The bill before you today would help Connecticut, in cooperation with other states, ensure that the Connecticut and its voters matter just as much as Florida and Ohio's.

Thank you again for your time. If you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them.

⁷ Jennifer L. Rich, "U.S. Admits That Politics Was Behind Steel Tariffs." *New York Times*, March 14, 2002.

⁸ David Remnick, "Letter from Louisiana: High Water." *New Yorker*, October 3, 2005.
http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2005/10/03/051003fa_fact.