

The "National Popular Vote" Interstate Compact Is a Bad Idea

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Connecticut should not join the proposed Interstate Compact to substitute the outcome of the National Popular Vote (NPV) for the current Electoral College procedure for electing the President. In addition to the reasons outlined by other opponents at this hearing today, this Compact should be opposed because:

- The Compact would substitute the will of outsiders for the determination of Connecticut citizens. It would require that Connecticut's 7 electoral votes for president be cast for the winner of the national popular vote, regardless of whom the voters of Connecticut voted for. For example, in 2004, if the compact had been in effect, Connecticut's electoral votes would have gone NOT to John Kerry, who won 54% of Connecticut's popular vote, but to George W. Bush. Overturning the will of Connecticut voters flagrantly renounces their clear choice.
- It actually diminishes Connecticut's voting power in the contest for president.

This fact is obscured by the deceptive ads of the NPV proponents, who assert that "A voter in Connecticut should matter *as much as* anywhere else." In reality, under the current Electoral College system, a voter in Connecticut matters MORE than he or she would under the NPV scheme, because of two factors:

- a) The number of electoral votes allotted to each state, as a result of a compromise authored by Roger Sherman and his Connecticut colleagues at the Constitutional Convention of 1787, is computed by adding the number of Senators to the number of Congressmen. For Connecticut, that means a total of 7 (2 U.S. Senators plus 5 U.S. Congressmen). The allocation is designed to favor small states, like Connecticut, because small states have more electoral votes per voter. "It's not a huge effect," notes Andrew Gelman of Columbia University. "It's trivial compared to the small-state bias of the U.S. Senate, but it's there."
- b) The minimal advantage enjoyed by small states is augmented greatly by the "winner-take-all" provision currently in effect. The voting power of the majority in Connecticut is enhanced because all of the state's 7 electoral votes are cast for the candidate receiving the most votes in the state. The 979,316 votes received by Barack Obama in Connecticut in 2008 were 1.56% of the 62,612,951 (50% plus 1) of the votes he would have needed to win the national popular vote. But his 7 Connecticut electoral votes were 2.59% of the 270 electoral votes he needed to win in the Electoral College. This enhanced voting "clout" of the majority of Connecticut voters under the current system – 66% higher than their voting power in a national popular vote system – would be obliterated by the NPV proposal.

- Deferring to the outcome of the national popular vote would decrease the likelihood that any candidate would pay attention to Connecticut.

This result is more than a little ironic, since proponents of the National Popular Vote weakly defend the evisceration of the state's voting power noted above by arguing that, under the current system, Connecticut "gets no attention" by candidates for president: "a candidate who is sure to carry Connecticut will always take us for granted, and a candidate who is sure to lose will write us off."

But being the object of attention doesn't make up for the loss of real voting power. Increasing the number of "campaign visits" does not maximize my clout. Running additional "ads on the radio and TV" doesn't increase my influence. Conducting additional polls of Connecticut voters makes not a whit of difference in the poll that counts, on Election Day in November.

Much more probable is that candidates would, like Willie Sutton (who robbed banks because that's where the money was), focus on geographic areas with large concentrations of voters. The relatively small size of Connecticut would certainly not attract as much interest as metropolitan areas like New York or Chicago or Los Angeles or Houston.

- The NPV Compact would greatly enhance the influence of plutocrats who can afford to buy national advertising to cynically manipulate the passions of a nationwide electorate. Rich individuals, corporations and businesses, under the *Citizens United* decision, can now fund ideological propaganda that can sway the national popular vote. James Madison, in The Federalist, warned of "specious declamations" by "adversaries to liberty" who introduce "instability, injustice and confusion" into government. The contemporary capacity of millionaires to use electronic media to persuade voters to pursue faddish but foolish ideas would not have diminished Madison's concerns.
- Such a radical change in the method of electing the President should occur by constitutional amendment, not by a backdoor mechanism which would circumvent the extraordinary majority requirement demanded by the Framers. They set out, in Article V of the Constitution, procedures which were meant to ensure that any alterations to the framework they established would only occur after a full national review of the implications of the proposed revision. If electing the President by national popular vote is such a good idea, it should be able to withstand the scrutiny required by following the process delineated in the Constitution.

For all these reasons, close scrutiny of the NPV scheme should result in its rejection.