



Testimony of Sophia Kecskes
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Support for H.B. No. 5126

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Hello Co-chairs Senator Musto and Representative Jutila, my name is Sophia Kecskes. I am a freshman at Yale University from Portland, OR originally, prospectively majoring in Global Affairs. I am also the Education Director for Democracy United, an organization working to promote fairness, transparency, and accessibility in government. I've come to speak today in favor of HB No. 5126 and Connecticut's support National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. In the current system, every person does not have an equal vote; this is simply unfair and must change.

If National Popular Vote is adopted, national candidates will finally address Connecticut, listening to voters' concerns and pledging to advocate for reforms that benefit our state, not just, for example, the interests of corn growers in Ohio. During the last general presidential election, presidential candidates visited only 10 states, and 98% of campaign funding went to those states, only leaving 2% for the other 40. Connecticut was one of those 40, disenfranchised and ignored by presidential candidates. Because Democrats know they'll win Connecticut's vote regardless of how they act, Congress does not allocate discretionary funds for improvements in our state.

Further, visits from presidential candidates can serve to invigorate the population and inspire engagement with the political process. I remember at age 13 getting to skip school and watch Obama speak in Portland during the 2008 election cycle. Looking around the room I noticed I was surrounded by engaged, intelligent, caring individuals who were trying to educate themselves about political issues and impact the political process. After hearing Obama speak, I became more invested in the election, going out to canvass a few weeks later and having many playground debates with classmates about who we thought would win. Since, my desire to impact politics has grown; a year after Obama's visit I joined our city's youth commission and became involved with our city council. I attribute my continuing commitment to public service to Obama's visit and the spark it ignited in my heart for political engagement.

Many cite similar stories; upon the visit of a political candidate, individuals feel closer to the often seemingly bureaucratic world of Washington, DC and become engaged at the local level to impact national or local elections and policy decisions. America benefits from an engaged populous, as it promotes debate and encourages policy makers to create policies that help the interests of all Americans.

If a national popular vote system was adopted, Connecticut would be visited more by presidential candidates, receive more campaign money during election years, be considered more seriously for discretionary funding from Congress, and would experience an increase in political participation.

In addition to receiving state benefits, Connecticut's decision to adopt national popular vote would promote purer democracy across the nation. In our 21st century world, each citizen should get 1 equal vote, and it need not be more complicated than that. Currently, voters in more populous states like California have 3.3 times more power in choosing the next president than smaller states such as Montana. Changing to a national popular vote system would promote pure, fair, open, and equitable democracy for America, and therefore I ask that you vote yes on HB 5126. Thank you for your time.

Sophia Kecskes
Education Director, Democracy United