

Testimony of Marta Daniels

In Support of the *National Popular Vote Bill* HB 5434 & SB 9

GAE Committee, CT State Legislature, Hartford CT

Feb. 22, 2016

Chairman Fox, Co-Chairs McLachlan and Winfield, and other members of the General Administration and Elections Committee: My name is Marta Daniels from Chester, CT and I am testifying in favor of adopting the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, (NPV IC HB #5434 & SB #9).

I Have 3 Main Points to Make:

#1. Don't be fooled by proposals to gerrymander the Electoral College in CT with a plan to apportion EC votes by congressional districts. They are not more fair and will not fix the problem of losers becoming winners.

While EC allotment by congressional districts *sounds fair*, it's not. It will make the elections less competitive than the current system because the vast majority of congressional districts in the nation today are completely safe for one party or the other, and thanks to the gerrymander, they are most safe for the GOP.

Since 2014, only 8 states out of 50 have truly competitive congressional races, and 55% of all congressional districts nationwide have been drawn to favor Republicans, (just 10% for Democrats). Consequently, Trump carried 230 districts to just 205 for Clinton, even though Clinton won nearly 3 million more votes. So, if every state awarded votes by congressional district, *Trump still would have prevailed*, and so would have Mitt Romney in 2012. This is why several GOP-sponsored district apportionment bills have sprung up in this legislature, and I urge you to reject them.

Adopting a district apportionment EC rule gives legitimacy to red states who hope to enshrine unfairness. This is why Presidential elections historian Neal Pierce says: "These (district allotment) plans are the most overt effort to rig elections for President of the United States that I've seen in a half century of analyzing and writing about our electoral college system."

Even if we lived in a country without massive gerrymandering, I would still oppose this district apportionment rule for the EC because it continues to disenfranchise all

the people who do not vote for the winning candidate in that district. With the NPV all votes are pooled and all count equally and are NEVER discounted.

I urge you to reject my Senator Linares' bill #133 for awarding an elector to the 2nd CD winner, and Sen. Suzio's bill #1088 that would do similarly for all five of CT's CDs. These are distractions and foils for the real thing – adopting the NPV.

#2. The National Popular Vote issue is not a Democratic Party issue, concocted by “sore losers” in 2016. It's an 11-year old, non-partisan effort to equalize the vote for everyone. We've been debating it here in CT for at least 8 years.

Since 1988, the average winning vote margin in the Presidential race has been only 5%. Two of our last five federal elections have awarded the Presidency to the loser – a 41% fail rate. Clearly, losers of the popular vote could increasingly become President by winning razor thin Electoral College vote margins (as in 2016). This should matter to people of all political persuasions.

Because the Electoral College forces candidates to campaign in only 12 “swing states,” it devalues the importance of votes here in CT and 37 other states, and nationally disenfranchises the majority of voters. Connecticut voters should not be less equal than Ohio voters, nor should an electoral vote in Wyoming be 18x more valuable than one in California.

This is not about Democrats or Republicans. It's about franchising “red” voters in “blue” states and “blue” voters in “red” states and making every vote count equally. It's about respecting and encouraging young voters who have been taught that *every vote counts*, and that *every vote should count the same*. It's about making *every* voter in *every* state politically relevant in *every* presidential election.

Because we can all agree that the candidate receiving the most votes should win, many prominent Republicans, Democrats and Independents favor a national popular vote to elect their president, as do legislative bodies across the nation. The NPV has received bi-partisan support in the Republican-controlled Arizona House, the Republican-controlled Oklahoma Senate, the Republican-controlled New York Senate, the Democratic-controlled Oregon House. Two days ago, the New Mexico Senate became the 35th state legislative chamber in the country to pass the NPV.

Support for a national popular vote for President has been strong among Republicans, Democrats, and Independent voters, as well as every demographic group in every state surveyed. In the 41 red, blue, and purple states surveyed, overall support has been in the 67-81% range - in rural states, in small states, in Southern and border states, in big states, and others polled. Surveys in CT show 74% approval.

The bill is achievable by 2020. It has already been enacted into law in 11 states possessing 165 electoral votes. It will take effect when enacted by more states having 105 combined electoral votes. To date, the bill has passed one chamber in 12 *additional* states (including the CT House in 2009) with a total of 96 electoral votes, and approved by unanimous bi-partisan committee votes in 2016 in two other states with 26 electoral votes. A total of 2,955 state legislators have endorsed it. In 2017, the CT legislature should make our 7 electoral votes part of the NPV Compact.

3. If the Electoral College system never existed and someone proposed it today, would anyone be lobbying for it? Surely not.

Shamefully, we are the only democracy in the world that uses an 18thC Electoral College system originally designed for slave owners and distrustful leaders. Why are we stuck in historical obsolescence and debilitated by fear and inertia?

Why would we not decide the most important office in the land in the same way we decide every other election in the nation down to dog catcher?

Tying the Electoral College's outcome to the national popular vote total would destroy the distorting concept of "swing states," and enfranchise Republican voters in CT and CA alongside Democratic voters in MO and NB. It would nullify the partisan disenfranchisement of the gerrymander, and reduce the impact of voter suppression regimens now infecting our body politic.

I urge the CT State Legislature to adopt an effective anti-biotic for a sick electoral process and vote for the *National Popular Vote Interstate Compact*. It won't cost Connecticut taxpayers a penny and it's the only mechanism that can prevent another unfair and disastrous Presidential election in 2020.

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