

TESTIMONY OF DOUGLASS TAFT DAVIDOFF  
114 STATE STREET, #202 | BRIDGEPORT, CONNECTICUT 06604  
DOUGLASS.DAVIDOFF@GMAIL.COM | (203) 290-4371 | @DAVIDPFFKILTER

Mr. Chair Fox and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to testify. My name is Douglass Taft Davidoff. I live in Downtown Bridgeport, where I am a constituent of Representative Ezequiel Santiago and Senator Ed Gomes.

I read about this hearing at breakfast and rushed here. It is my first time in a committee room since I was a high-school intern to Senator George Guidara of Westport in 1974, before this structure appeared. I scurried here because I believe the proposal for national popular voting and binding Connecticut's electors is unwise -- one of the most profoundly unwise ideas Connecticut could consider for the long term of its autonomy.

I grew up in Westport. In 1975, I graduated from Staples High School and left Connecticut to go to college in North Carolina. During the next 40 years, I lived in the Southeast, the Middle West, and Northern New England. Finally, in 2015, I moved back to Connecticut to be close to my mother, and I brought my solo public relations practice with me to my home office in Bridgeport overlooking the structure elected by another of your former colleagues, Representative Phineas Taylor Barnum. I've discovered the joy of being home again bearing the wisdom of living in other regions.

In 2000, on the Thursday after Election Day, I was serving as the communications director for the Indiana Democratic Party. I was sent to Florida and stayed there two weeks to represent on the team searching for votes to elect Vice President Gore to the presidency.

I was directed to fly to Tampa and drive my rental car to one of Florida's smallest counties, where there lived more beef cattle than people. I spent that night and the next day advising the county Democratic chair on protecting a military ballot to be opened in front of the county canvass commission. We knew the service member was the son of one of the county's most loyal Democratic families. Over daylong objections of our Republican friends, the ballot was found to be pristine and in total accord with Florida's military-ballot laws. It was opened and it was indeed a straight-party vote for Al Gore and every Democrat. I treasure my framed copy of the certificate that county sent to Secretary of State Katherine Harris: One more vote for Al Gore. My work for 36 hours.

Then I went to Miami-Dade County and spent days deputized as a Florida Democratic observer in a county courthouse room examining the famous punch-card ballots. Paired with an Ohio member of Congress who was a Republican, we watched as county employees rotated the cards in front of us. If either of us asked, the card was referred to the members of the Miami-Dade Canvass Commission.

I sat next to the steel file cabinets containing each card cast by Miami-Dade voters. To this day, I believe the votes for Al Gore were in those cabinets. I know studies have produced a different

conclusion. I rest with my gut. I believe on my own faith that I was sitting next to Al Gore's winning votes.

So close elections matter to me. This proposal is a band-aid for something I also believe, having been a professional in a highly competitive state. You don't let the other side "win" close elections. You take responsibility for losing them. I believe, to jump ahead to 2016, when I was no longer a paid off political professional, that our side failed to compete to the end in the Middle West. I know Michigan. I know Wisconsin. The results reflect campaign priorities, and they reflect not a loss, but a failure to win. It is like football. A game of inches. It is also like baseball, a game in which the defense carries the ball. We win in baseball despite that and despite bad bounces and wind drafts and fans' outstretched hands. But my side gave up Michigan and Wisconsin. You could see it coming, lurking. We can blame the Russians, but in those two states, I believe we should only blame ourselves.

Which makes the direct democracy proposal now the darling of disappointed friends of mine. But you, as practitioners of self-government, surely you know that tyranny of the majority is a danger to be avoided in government.. The Electoral College, much like the compromise in which the national House of Representatives is apportioned by population, and the U.S.Senate provides equal weight to each state, is a bulwark against tyranny of the majority.

So is the Electoral College. The most likely victims are the bodies politics in the smaller states. Connecticut and New England benefit more than any other region from this system. So do the less-populous states of the Intermountain West, as well as Alaska. And let's not forget Delaware, too.

I would never give away this advantage. In fact that's why I am here: to ask that you preserve our advantage by rejecting this short-sighted idea that would cave into the opinions of people far distant from Connecticut. Why cave in to the population centers distant from us? Boston, New York, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, San Francisco. No general election candidate will campaign in Bridgeport. No general election candidate will campaign in Waterbury, or Portland, Maine, or Manchester, New Hampshire, or even in Las Vegas, Newark, Dayton, Allentown, San Bernadino, or any other smaller city. Our Connecticut electoral votes will be cast as fine Americans who do not know us dictate to us. We will be subject to tyranny of the majority. Our small towns will incidentally be the biggest losers.

The current system is far better. It mirrors the national popular vote -- most times. We win. We lose. We try again. But we ought not change the rules, especially when we hand our advantage to Americans who don't appreciate the special issues in Connecticut or New England.

I understand my partisans' passions. I worry that the Russians interfered, which is a unthinkable and a possibility that needs thorough investigation. Still, I believe that in the end, despite the Russians and despite the work (which I support) of Westporter and FBI Director Comey, when push came to shove, we lost Michigan and Wisconsin.

We wouldn't even be able to identify such a conclusion if the national vote idea took hold. The current system lets us focus where we need to do better, a job for the next Democratic national

chair. (I hope it is the young Hoosier, 36-year-old Pete Buttigieg, the mayor of South Bend.)

I came to your hearing room from Bridgeport because tyranny of the majority is the countervailing wisdom to the popular vote idea. This state, like its New England siblings, is susceptible to tyranny of the majority. It has been thus since the pre-Revolution, when Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and Virginia, threatened the powers of the smaller colonies. A positive vote hands our protection to the trust of strangers for good, in perpetuity.

We will not get it back. It is an advantage of priceless value. It is one of Connecticut's most valuable assets, worth the annual combined state and local annual public finance expenditures many times over. Do not give it away. Preserve this asset. Thank you for hearing me.