

February 21, 2017

To the members of the GAE committee:

I write in support of HB 5434.

I'm sure you've heard, pondered, and studied all the facts and figures pertaining to the Compact. You don't need me to rehash all the statistics and talking points. As my contribution to this debate, I would like to underscore the idea of **enfranchisement**.

In order to appeal to the full political spectrum, there are two national creeds I would like to bring up here: "We the People," and "No taxation without representation."

First, "We the People"—this statement would seem to suggest that this government should be of, by, and for all of us. As we all know, the definition of "the People" at the time the nation was founded was shockingly narrow by today's standards: it essentially only encompassed land-owning men of European descent. Luckily, that definition has expanded over time, and our laws and Constitution have adapted and expanded to recognize our broadening definition of citizenship. When the Electoral College was established, however, the limited definition of citizenship played a key role: Southern states wanted an electoral system that counted—at least partially—their vast population of enslaved people who could not vote. For more information on the shady history of the Electoral College, I recommend Yale constitutional law professor Akhil Reed Amar's book, *The Constitution Today* (2016), or his brief essay based on the book, available in [Time magazine](#). It seems to me that if the Electoral College was at least partially created to take advantage of the less-than-personhood of some people, now would be a good time to stop reinforcing the less-than aspect of certain votes. Let's circumvent this antiquated and unfair structure in favor of granting "We the People" each our equal vote.

Now, "No taxation without representation." We Connecticut residents know that the only time we see presidential candidates is if they're looking for donations; they don't come around here campaigning—in fact, I'm sure everyone has already quoted to you the lopsided statistics on how few places the vast majority of campaign events are held. To me, this is an example of "taxation without representation." In addition, states whose votes seem not to count in the national elections due to their tendency to vote reliably or overwhelmingly "blue" often contribute disproportionate funds to the national budget. Our vote should count as much as everyone else's.

To me, HB 5434 represents a chance for Connecticut to help move our country toward true enfranchisement. As Abraham Lincoln said in a speech deploring the Dred Scott decision, simply adhering to an originalist interpretation of founding documents stripped those documents of all their idealism: "Are you really willing that the Declaration be thus frittered away? Thus left no more at most than an interesting memorial of the dead past? Thus shorn of its vitality, and practical value; and left without the germ or even the suggestion of the individual rights of man in it?" (Abraham Lincoln, [speech at Springfield, IL, 6/26/1857](#)).

The Electoral College, as it stands, is in fact dying in the way that Lincoln suggests here. For the enfranchisement of all Americans, and to maintain the vitality and practical value of our beautiful republican democracy, Connecticut needs to join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact by passing HB 5434.

Respectfully submitted,

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