

-YALE COLLEGE- DEMOCRATS

Testimony of Zach Glass
Legislative Captain, Yale College Democrats

February 20, 2017
206 Elm Street, Suite B12
New Haven, CT 06520

In favor: H.B. 5434/S.B. 9
An Act Entering Connecticut Into the National Popular Vote Compact

As a freshman at Yale University, I had the privilege of experiencing an American general election as a participant for the first time in the state of Connecticut. It's no secret that Yale is one of the most politically active communities around, and the month leading up to November 8 was a whirlwind of debate-watching, poll analyzing, and general political discourse. That's why, on election day, I was shocked to see business as usual. Students were going to classes, participating in extracurriculars, and making preparations to watch election coverage in the evening, but hardly anyone was going to the voting booth. After asking my friends, I became aware of two main reasons for this: either they didn't vote at all because Connecticut is so solidly blue that it wasn't "worth their time", or they voted absentee in their old home states because their vote "mattered more" there.

The first answer is indicative of a systemic obstacle to achieving a more effective and fair electoral system. Though the two major parties can't agree on much, surely they both would welcome higher voter participation rates amongst US citizens -- after all, exercising the right to vote is a cornerstone of our democracy. The latter answer raises similar concerns, but more importantly exposes a flaw that is specifically detrimental to the state of Connecticut. This state is home to over 20 four year colleges, and around three quarters of these are private institutions with a large percentage of their student bodies constituted by those who are originally from out of state. Critics worry that a national popular vote would erode state identity, but this couldn't be further than the truth. College campuses are bastions of political activism, yet from my experience are often insulated from their communities because there is no incentive amongst students to take interest in local politics. Thus, enacting the Popular Vote Compact would not only empower Connecticut residents to feel as though their vote matters, but it would also encourage countless college students to feel and act more connected to the wonderful state that they now call home.