

Testimony in Support of HB 5434; A personal perspective

I urge you to support HB 5434, the proposal to elect the President by the National Popular Vote in all 50 states. I am 80 years old and this is the first time I have offered testimony for a bill. (I have also recently written my State Representative Mike Bocchino and State Senator Scott Frantz and hope to hear back from them soon.)

I have deep roots in this state. I was born and raised in Stamford. I have lived in Old Greenwich and Riverside since 1976. My grandfather came from Lithuania in the 1880s and graduated from New Britain High School and went on to become a doctor graduating from Harvard Medical School in 1903. My father taught at Stamford High School from 1934 until his death in 1957. He founded a teacher's union and fought for teacher's rights. After he died my mother took up teaching in the Stamford school system. I worked for 25 years for a leading Connecticut company and later started a small business of my own in Stamford. I love our state and wish the best for the people living here.

Like many Americans I believed our democracy worked pretty well and didn't need fixing. That changed with this past presidential election. I don't mean to be partisan, but Donald Trump's election and his ignorance and careless disregard for our democratic institutions frightens me. I began to wonder whether our democracy would survive and whether there were ways to strengthen it. My first conclusion was that the Electoral College had outlived its usefulness, if it ever had any, since it didn't carry out our founding father's intentions of keeping the presidency from falling into the hands of someone as unqualified as Mr. Trump. (Apologies to some of my good friends who are Trump supporters.)

It wasn't long before I discovered the idea of the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. I did not come quickly to support this idea. While it is an easy concept to grasp many questions have been raised about its legality, desirability, and feasibility of implementation. I waded through these issues, talked to friends, and had more than one sleepless night thinking thing through. I can list most of the arguments for and against this bill. I can tell you the names of prominent Republicans and Democrats who have both supported and opposed the idea of one-person-one vote. Some critics have thoughtful reasons for opposing it.

I won't repeat the arguments for and against that will be given in testimony today. In the end, I think this is a fairness issue. The votes for too many Americans have counted for little in electing our president under the present winner-take-all method of awarding electoral votes. That has got to change.

While not perfect, I am convinced that our democracy will be strengthened by adopting this approach. No one can guarantee success but I think its time to stand up and take some risks to improve this great government of ours.

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