



Testimony of **Jonathan Perloe**, one of the citizen-leaders of the National Popular Vote CT grassroots effort in **SUPPORT of H.B. 5434, *An Act Adopting The Interstate Compact To Elect The President Of The United States By National Popular Vote* and S.B. 9, *An Act Entering Connecticut Into The National Popular Vote Compact.***

Chairman Fox, Co-Chairs McLachlan and Winfield, and other members of the General Administration and Elections Committee, thank you for hearing my testimony in support of H.B. 5434 and S.B. 9, raised bills to have Connecticut join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. For most of my career, until just recently, I was an advertising executive. Last month I started a new job working for an advocacy group here in Connecticut. I have lived in Cos Cob for the past 22 years, where my wife and I are raising our two daughters.

It is with my oldest daughter, now a sophomore in college, that my testimony begins. Among the many wonderful things about the college she chose, I was quite pleased it was in Pennsylvania so that she would be able to register and vote there.

It wasn't for sentimental reasons because that's where I cast my first vote for President. No. It was because I knew that her vote would matter in Pennsylvania, whereas here in Connecticut it would not matter since for the past quarter-century our state has been reliably blue. Presidential candidates put all their attention on the ten or so battleground states. Whether you look at ad spending, the number of campaign events, or more importantly the topics they discuss, it's pretty obvious that safe states—be they Democratic or Republican—are merely spectators in the general election. Of the nearly 400 general election campaign events in last year's election, 94 percent were held in the battleground states. Only one was held here in Connecticut.

That's why I'm here to advocate for the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. Once adopted by states that collectively have 270 electoral votes, it will guarantee the presidency to the candidate who wins the most votes in all 50 states and DC. I don't think it makes sense that in the world's greatest democracy the power of my vote for president depends on where I live. It makes no sense that because of the winner-take-all-method of casting electoral votes approximately 70% of the nation has no say in selecting the leader of our country. While I was writing this testimony someone strongly opposed to the Compact posted on our Facebook page, "If a

popular vote were to decide the president, there would be no battleground states.” He’s exactly right, and that would be a good thing.

Which brings me to my second point. It turns out I’m not alone in believing the current system isn’t worthy of our democracy. I’d like to share with you a bit about this because I believe it’s pretty remarkable. We know from public polling that nearly three-quarters of Connecticut voters prefer a national popular vote to the Electoral College. Over the past several months I’ve seen first-hand that there are a lot of other citizens in Connecticut that feel just the way I do.

When I read just after the election that Representatives Albis and Lesser were going to introduce the bill that is now before this Committee I remembered a friend had told me about the Compact. I did some reading and quickly concluded that electing the candidate who receives the most popular votes while working within the Constitutional framework of the Electoral College appealed to my notion of equality and the concept of “one person one vote.” I wrote an op-ed for the Hartford Courant and wanted to demonstrate the widespread support for the Compact. So I posted a message in a Facebook group and within a day had nearly 50 co-signers from 32 towns around the state.

Then people started getting in touch with me and telling me to get in touch with others and so on until we had a core working group of some 25 citizen activists. A couple of months later we now have hundreds of advocates from well over 50 towns across Connecticut. Over the past month we’ve been working with the Action Together CT state and county groups, Pantsuit Nation groups, the Women’s March on Washington CT organization, chapters of The League of Women Voters, Democracy Awakens CT, Democratic Town Committees in Chester, Glastonbury, Stamford, Greenwich, Westport, the Shoreline Democratic Women’s group, and student activist groups at Yale, Quinnipiac and UCONN. A few of these folks showed up today, many taking a day off from work or school because making our votes matter really matters.

I’ve heard a lot of challenges to the Compact over the past couple of months. National Popular Vote put a lot of time into responding to 130 of them. It starts on page 343 in their book Every Vote Equal and runs through page 774. One that I’ve heard frequently refers to the sanctity of the Constitution. As one legislator said to me, “that’s the way the Founding Fathers wanted it.” Others call the Compact an “end run” around the Constitution, implying illegitimacy.

I have enormous respect for the Constitution. Which is why I’ve spent time understanding what it says about electing the President. As fits our federal system of government, it leaves it up to the states to decide how to vote their electors. The

Constitution says "Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct, a Number of Electors." In her 2013 testimony before this committee Committee, our Secretary of the State, Denise Merrill testified, "this plan is consistent with the Constitution." It wasn't until the 1820s that states began adopting the winner-take-all method of voting electors. By then my guess is most of the Founding Fathers were dead.

The one unfortunate thing about my group of friends here is that we're mostly Democrats. Which is a shame because what we want is pretty uncontroversial, I believe: that every vote cast in CT, and every other state in the nation, matters equally. I'm not sure where the Republican opposition is coming from nor why it's so strong. The GOP 2016 party platform said the Compact "would be a grave threat to our federal system and a guarantee of corruption, as every ballot box in every state would offer a chance to steal the presidency." That's pretty alarmist, I'd say.

I hope all members of the Committee can put aside political calculations and decide on the basis of what's good for voters in Connecticut.

It should come as no surprise that President Trump and I don't agree on most things. But on the issue of how we should elect the president I think we see eye to eye. In the 60 Minutes interview he gave after the election, he said "I would rather see it where you went with simple votes." Just after the inauguration the Wall Street Journal reported that the President "was interested in using a national popular vote."

The bill enjoys bipartisan support beyond the President. In 2014 Newt Gringrich wrote, "America would be better served with a presidential election process that treated citizens across the country equally. The National Popular Vote bill accomplishes this." The "founding parents" of the National Popular Vote Compact were from both parties.

For as long as I can remember, I've heard the phrase "one person one vote" when people talk about our American democracy. Unfortunately today we aren't living up to its true meanng. In my opinion, the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is the best, most practical way to achieve that principle, which is why I support HB 5434 and SB9.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

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