

Ethan Rodriguez-Torrent
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Testimony

In support of

H.B. 5736, and by extension H.B.s 5205, 5434, 5435 and S.B. 9

To the members of the Government Administration and Election Committee:

I am writing to register my strong support for the proposals before the Committee that would legislate Connecticut's entry into the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

The electoral college, as it currently stands, fails both to serve its original purpose – the election of the President by an elite group of well informed citizens (electors) in whom local citizens have placed their trust – and to reflect the will of the majority of Americans. More importantly, it contributes to the disenfranchisement and disengagement of voters throughout the country who do not live in “swing states” and are left to wonder whether their vote is meaningful at all.

There are many reasons why voter registration and participation in the United States is much lower than in many of our peer countries. A major one, in my belief, is the feeling of helplessness that voters in non-swing states feel when they go to the polls. That feeling has been magnified in recent years by the election of two presidents who failed to win even a plurality of the popular vote; right or wrong, their effectiveness in fulfilling their roles has also been hobbled as a result of their lack of legitimacy.

In 1969, a national popular vote bill was supported by Nixon (the newly elected President), Humphrey (his defeated challenger), and more than 80% of the House of Representative. It was defeated by a narrow majority in the Senate. Now the states, with their Constitutionally granted authority to appoint their electors as their legislatures see fit, have a second chance to right this injustice.

The number of electors assigned to each state is undemocratic. As a resident of Connecticut, why should my vote have only 65% of the value of the vote of a resident of New Hampshire? The “winner take all, segregated by state” system is even more undemocratic and disempowering, leading to a consistent and excessive focus by major party candidates on 9-12 “swing states” every four years. To return to the New Hampshire comparison: between the primaries and the general election, Connecticut hosted one (1) campaign event by a Presidential or Vice Presidential candidate. New Hampshire (with only 40% of our population) hosted twenty-one (21).

A true democracy requires anonymity, or symmetry – the academic terms for the very basic principle of “one person, one vote.” Where the status quo is otherwise, then it is time for a change.

Thank you for the opportunity to have my testimony read and entered into the record.

Sincerely,

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