

**Testimony in support of HB5434, SB9 and HB 6574
Against SB133**

**Submitted by Together We Rise CT
February 22, 2016**

Dear Members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Colleen Shaddox. I am chair of the Political Action Committee of Together We Rise CT. Our group is composed of residents from East Haddam and surrounding towns who oppose discrimination in all of its forms. We hold a weekly vigil that draws about 80 people dedicated to this principle, and we promote civic engagement to help our neighbors become more involved in our democracy. About 700 people – and growing every day – are part of our email action network and join us for various events. Together We Rise CT writes to support HB5434 and SB9, under which Connecticut would join the National Popular Vote Compact and HB 6574, which would require presidential candidates on the Connecticut ballot to disclose their tax returns. We oppose SB133, which would create an exception to election practice in our Congressional district to benefit one political party and provide no benefit to voters.

The National Popular Vote Compact

As an organization that encourages active citizen participation in government, perhaps the most fundamental principle we stand for is One Person, One Vote. The current Electoral College system undermines this principle and therefore undermines democracy. Twice in recent years we have seen the presidency go to a candidate who was not the winner of the popular vote. No matter which party this system favors, it harms America.

The National Popular Vote Compact would oblige electors from any state that adopts it to cast their electoral votes for the national popular vote winner. We would make the Electoral College obsolete without the burden of a Constitutional convention. Eleven states have already passed this legislation.

There is particular urgency to do so in Connecticut. Because the state is a winner-take-all state that has traditionally gone blue, presidential candidates pay little attention to the state and the concerns of its citizens. We have less access to the democratic process that voters in more highly contested states. For this reason alone, legislators should support the reform.

Disclosure of Tax Returns

True civic participation cannot happen without good information. Having knowledge of a candidate's business activities and financial loyalties is critical to

casting an informed vote. Any candidate who wants the privilege to serve as president of the United States should be required to disclose their tax returns.

Electoral Votes in the Second Congressional District

We were disappointed by the introduction of SB133, which is a cynical and partisan attempt to prolong the antidemocratic Electoral College system for partisan gain. If awarding electoral votes by congressional district were sound policy, one assumes that that the bill would address each congressional district instead of the one that is currently a swing district. We want true Electoral College reform. We do not want a flawed system exploited to support one party.

This is a unique time in American history when civic engagement is reaching new heights. On a personal note, I find it hard to keep up with the volunteers who are offering their help to monitor the work of our legislators and prepare for more informed and active participation in elections. Our members and so many other Connecticut residents are demanding more influence on what happens in Hartford and Washington. They are demanding free and fair elections. I hope that you vote in a way that honors their deep sense of civic duty.

Thank you for your attention.

Colleen Shaddox
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