

Testimony in Opposition of  
HB 5421 and SB 408:  
Acts Concerning the National Popular Vote Compact

Government Administration and Elections Committee  
March 18, 2018

Good Morning Co-Chairs Senator McLachlan, Senator Winfield, Representative Fox; Ranking Member Representative Devlin; and distinguished members of the Government Administration and Elections Committee. I am submitting this testimony in opposition to the two bills which would have Connecticut join the National Popular Vote Compact: HB 5421: An Act Adopting the Interstate Compact to Elect the President of the United States and SB 408: An Act Entering Connecticut into the National Popular Compact.

My name is Dr. Patricia A. Crouse and I am a professor of political science who has taught for the past 8 years throughout the CSCU and currently teach at the University of New Haven. My main area of focus in teaching is on American Politics and Government and my research focuses on voting and voting behavior. In 2013, I wrote a paper with two co-authors while at Western Connecticut State University, State Representative Michael Ferguson and Mike French, who is currently a graduate student at the New School in New York City. The paper, "The National Popular Vote Compact: Undermining States' Rights", was published in the 2014-2015 edition of *State and Local Government* by Sage Publications/CQ Press.

While I fully support the idea of making every vote count, the National Popular Vote Compact will not achieve this goal. It will, in fact, do quite the opposite. If the popular vote in the state of Connecticut is won by one candidate and the national popular vote is won by another candidate, the State must cast its Electoral College votes for the second candidate. How is this counting the votes equally? In essence, this now renders the preferences of the people of the state of Connecticut, and any other state that has joined this compact, completely meaningless in the selection of our president.

Under the NPVC, the idea that "every vote, in every state, will matter" is unrealistic. The only way to make every vote, in every state truly matter, is to amend the Constitution and abolish the Electoral College. The NPVC has found a way around having to do this. The NPVC states, "there is nothing in the U.S. Constitution that needs to be amended in order for states to change from the current system of awarding all of a state's electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in each individual state (the winner-take-all rule) to a system in which the states award their electoral votes to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The states already have the power, under the U.S. Constitution, to make this change. As a result, a federal constitutional amendment is not required" ([www.nationalpopularvote.com](http://www.nationalpopularvote.com)). This statement is indeed true but what the NPVC does is render the Electoral College obsolete without having to abolish it through the amendment process. I believe this undermines the legitimacy of our elections system by circumventing the Constitution. If the NPVC really wants to make every vote count, it should be garnering support for an amendment to abolish the Electoral College and establish the national popular vote as the sole means for electing our president.

Although the NPVC seems relatively straight forward, it has not made clear what the states are actually giving up to be a part of this compact. What the NPVC does is, “eliminates the states as electoral districts in presidential elections. It creates, through a state compact, a national electoral district for the presidential election. In that way, the NPVC advances a national political identity for the United States” (Samples 2008). The NPVC has the ability to take away state identities, much like the 17th Amendment did when it abolished the appointment of U.S. Senators by state legislatures and moved to direct election of senators. States likely do not realize this, but they have to ask themselves how much state sovereignty are they willing to give up because of the NPVC? This serves as a clear example of the never-ending debate over federalism. The Electoral College has allowed states to play the critical role of electing the president, and the NPVC essentially takes this away. A presidential election would ultimately become a federal issue. In a sense, the states now become a rubber stamp for the National Popular Vote Compact.

If you pass the NPVC, you take away Connecticut’s voice in the election process. It does not get louder, it simply disappears. This bill is bad for the state of Connecticut and bad for the election process in general and in no way guarantees that “every vote of every person in every state” will count.

I would like to thank the committee for reading my testimony. I have attached the paper here for your reference and I would respectfully ask that you read it before making any final decisions on the bills listed above. I strongly urge the committee to oppose HB 5421 and SB 408.

Thank you,

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