

Co-chairs Fox, Flexer and McLachlan and distinguished members of the GAE Committee:

My name is Donna Grossman; I am from Windsor. I am testifying in support of proposed House Bill No. 5421, *An Act Adopting The Interstate Compact To Elect The President By National Popular Vote*.

One Founding-era argument for the Electoral College stemmed from the fact that ordinary Americans would lack sufficient information to choose directly and intelligently among leading presidential candidates. This is what I believed until I did some research.

What people don't talk about when discussing the Electoral College is the real issue against direct national elections: slavery. At the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, James Wilson from PA proposed a direct national election of the president. But Virginian James Madison responded that such a system would prove unacceptable to the South: in a direct election system, the North would outnumber the South, whose many slaves (more than half a million in all) of course could not vote. But the Electoral College—a prototype of which Madison proposed in this same speech—instead let each southern state count its slaves, as 3/5 of a person, in computing its share of the overall count.

Virginia emerged as the big winner, with 12 out of a total of 91 electoral votes allocated by the Constitution, more than a quarter of the 46 needed to win an election in the first round. After the 1800 census, Wilson's free state of Pennsylvania had 10% more free persons than Virginia, but got 20% fewer electoral votes. Even worse, the more slaves Virginia, or any slave state, bought or bred, the more electoral votes it would receive. If the system's pro-slavery bias was not obvious when the Constitution was ratified, it quickly became so. For 32 of the Constitution's first 36 years, a white slaveholding Virginian occupied the presidency.

In light of this more complete, and unpleasant, account of the electoral college in the late 18th and early 19th century, we should ask ourselves whether we want to maintain this outdated institution in the 21st century.

Please vote yes on H.B. 5421 and thank you for your time and attention.

Donna Grossman