

Senate Elections committee testimony – 2023

Chair Carlson and committee members -

In two recent presidential elections the winner of the national popular vote did not become president. In other words, the majority did not rule when it comes to the highest office in our land. One person, one vote, was meaningless in those elections. The operation of the Electoral College disenfranchised about 3 million voters in 2016 because their votes were not relevant. In 2020, if 21,461 voters in three states had changed their minds (Arizona, Georgia and Wisconsin), Joe Biden would have lost the election despite leading nationally by over 7,000,000 votes.

The electorate in some states is so heavily tinted “blue” or “red” that the outcome in those states is predetermined. Why show up to vote when the outcome in your state is already decided? And when the campaigning only takes place in the ten to twelve states where the vote may be close? There was no major campaign event in 33 states in 2020. This system also encourages an incumbent President to corruptly direct federal resources to those ten to twelve states prior to the election.

A constitutional amendment to abolish the Electoral College seems like a long shot. However, there is an alternative. Article II of our Constitution provides that each state has plenary power over how to allocate its Electoral College votes. This means that the states can act together to determine how their votes are allocated for election of the President. And this effort is already well underway. Under the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact each participating state passes a statute providing that its electoral votes are awarded to the presidential candidate who wins the popular vote in the entire country.

To date 15 states and the District of Columbia have adopted the Compact with a total of 196 electoral votes. By the terms of the NPV compact, it becomes operative when states with 270 electoral votes have adopted it. Additionally, in nine states with 88 electoral votes, one legislative body has adopted NPV. It may very well be possible to have the Compact in effect soon. Although NPV legislation has been introduced in Minnesota, we still have not joined the Compact. This a goal of many reformers for 2023.

It is important to note the support for NPV by some Republicans, like St. Paul’s Patrick Rosenstiel, the CEO of a national public relations firm. Rosenstiel helped get John G. Roberts, Jr. and Samuel A. Alito, Jr. confirmed to the Supreme Court. He believes that a nationwide campaign is best for our country and that Republican ideas will win. He believes that small red states will not suffer because small red and small blue states are ignored now. Some argue that the Republican party needs a course correction that would require it to contest all states, including California and New York.

If you believe, as Clean Elections does, in majority rule and one person, one vote, please support this bill.

George Beck, Board of Directors, Clean Elections Minnesota