



4 Park St Room 200
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January 29, 2019

To: Chair David Cote and members of the House Election Law Committee

From: Liz Tentarelli, president, League of Women Voters NH LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com

Re: **HB 541 in support of adopting the National Popular Vote Compact**

League of Women Voters NH has testified before in favor of New Hampshire joining the National Popular Vote compact. Our national League position supports abolition of the Electoral College as a violation of the one person/one vote principle, and further supports the NPV compact as an interim step to abolition.

The League testified in January of 2017 in support of HB 447, Rep. Pearson's bill, which was defeated in the House in February. As part of my testimony at that time, I pointed out the following from a 2008 NH survey to show the support for NPV among our state's voters:

A survey of 800 New Hampshire voters conducted on December 16-17, 2008 showed 69% overall support for a national popular vote for President. Support was 80% among Democrats, 57% among Republicans, and 69% among independents. By age, support was 65% among 18-29 year olds, 66% among 30-45 year olds, 69% among 46-65 year olds, and 72% for those older than 65. By gender, support was 76% among women and 57% among men. By race, support was 72% among whites (representing 92% of respondents) and 56% among Others (representing 8% of respondents). The survey has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 1/2%.

Some points for the committee to consider:

When the Electoral College was made part of the US Constitution, the difference in size between the states was much smaller than it is now (merely 10 to 1 ratio). Nor was there as pronounced a divide between urban and rural populations. Now, contrast California's 55 electoral votes with NH's 4 votes, based on population. Voting residents in less populous states have more influence over their electoral votes than do voting residents in more populous states. For instance, a vote from a Wyoming resident has twice as much influence as a vote from one Pennsylvania resident. This imbalance was the primary reason for the formation of the National Popular Vote Compact.

At the time the Electoral College was the brainchild of our Founding Fathers, Alexander Hamilton described the electors as wise men "most likely to possess the information and discernment" to choose a good President, and he didn't want the electors pledged to any candidate. But these days, the electors are almost always party faithful and former elected officials, chosen almost as honorary representatives of the party, merely rubber stamping the electoral ballots. They are not the independent body of wiser-than-us people deciding whether to ratify the people's choice.

I urge this committee and the entire Legislature in voting on this bill to put aside the possible side effects on NH. In 2016 we had 21 visits by the presidential or vice-presidential candidates post

primary; California had only one such visit. Florida topped the list with 72 major events by candidates vying for their 29 electoral votes. It is not size that determines the attention of the candidates; it is whether we are a swing state or not. While all these visits to purple NH may be good for the local economy and exciting for the residents, it is not a fair way for candidates and voters to connect.

It is unfortunate for our non-partisan argument that it has been the same party that has won the popular vote but lost the election twice in the twenty-first century. The difference was only half a million votes in 2000, but in 2016 it was a difference of more than 2.9 million votes. Everyone, no matter their party, should be bothered by a system that ignores the wishes of the majority.

The League of Women Voters NH, in alignment with our national position, urges you to recommend OUGHT TO PASS on HB 447.

Appendix:

The NationalPopularVote.com website gives the following current statistics:

[The NPV Compact] has been enacted into law in 12 states with 172 electoral votes ([CA](#), [CT](#), [DC](#), [HI](#), [IL](#), [MA](#), [MD](#), [NJ](#), [NY](#), [RI](#), [VT](#), [WA](#)).

The bill will take effect when enacted by states with 98 more electoral votes.

It has passed at least one house in 11 additional states with 89 electoral votes ([AR](#), [AZ](#), [CO](#), [DE](#), [ME](#), [MI](#), [NC](#), [NM](#), [NV](#), [OK](#), [OR](#)) and has been approved unanimously by committee votes in two additional states with 26 electoral votes ([GA](#), [MO](#)).

The bill has recently been passed by a 40–16 vote in the Republican-controlled Arizona House, 28–18 in Republican-controlled Oklahoma Senate, 57–4 in Republican-controlled New York Senate, 34-23 in Democratic-controlled Oregon House, and 26-16 in the Democrat-controlled New Mexico Senate in 2017.