

8 | Legal Issues Concerning the Proposed Interstate Compact

The proposed interstate compact entitled the “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” (presented in chapter 6) would change the laws by which presidential electors are appointed in the states belonging to the compact. This chapter addresses the following legal questions in connection with the proposed compact:

- Is the subject matter of the proposed compact appropriate for an interstate compact (section 8.1)?
- May the citizen-initiative process be used to enact interstate compacts in general (section 8.2)?
- May the citizen-initiative process be used to enact a state law concerning the manner of choosing presidential electors (section 8.3)?
- Does the proposed compact encroach on the powers or rights of non-member states (section 8.4)?
- Does the proposed compact impermissibly delegate a state’s sovereign power (section 8.5)?
- Is the six-month blackout period for withdrawals from the proposed compact enforceable (section 8.6)?

8.1 IS THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE PROPOSED COMPACT APPROPRIATE FOR AN INTERSTATE COMPACT?

The U.S. Constitution authorizes states to enter into interstate compacts:

“No state shall, without the consent of Congress, ... enter into any agreement or compact with another state or with a foreign power.”¹

¹ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 10, clause 3.

The U.S. Constitution places no restriction on the subject matter of an interstate compact other than the implicit limitation that a compact's subject matter must be among the powers that the states are permitted to exercise.

The subject matter of existing interstate compacts varies widely and has included such topics as agriculture, boundaries, bridges, building construction and safety, child welfare, civil defense, conservation, corrections, crime control, cultural issues, education, emergency management, energy, facilities, flood control, gambling and lotteries, health, insurance, interstate school districts, low-level radioactive wastes, metropolitan problems, motor vehicles, national guard, natural resources, navigation, parks and recreation, pest control, planning and development, ports, property, public safety, river basins, taxation, transportation, and water (section 5.4).

Beginning in the 1920s, the states have used interstate compacts in increasingly creative ways. The judiciary has been repeatedly asked to consider the validity of various novel compacts; however, we are aware of no case in which the courts have invalidated an interstate compact.²

The subject matter of the proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” concerns the manner of appointment of a state’s presidential electors. The U.S. Constitution gives each state the power to select the manner of appointing its presidential electors.³ As the Supreme Court stated in *McPherson v. Blacker* in 1892:

“In short, **the appointment and mode of appointment of electors belong exclusively to the states** under the constitution of the United States.... Congress is empowered to determine the time of choosing the electors and the day on which they are to give their votes, which is required to be the same day throughout the United States; but otherwise **the power and jurisdiction of the state is exclusive**, with the exception of the provisions as to the number of electors and the ineligibility of certain persons, so framed that

² There are cases where a higher court invalidated a ruling by a lower court invalidating an interstate compact. See, for example, *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims*. 341 U.S. 22. 1950.

³ U.S. Constitution. Article II, section 1, clause 2.

congressional and federal influence might be excluded.”⁴
[Emphasis added]

Thus, the subject matter of the proposed interstate compact is a state power and an appropriate subject for an interstate compact.

Although there is currently no interstate compact concerned with presidential elections, Justice Potter Stewart noted the possibility of compacts involving elections in his concurring and dissenting opinion in *Oregon v. Mitchell* in 1970. In that case, the U.S. Supreme Court examined the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act Amendments of 1970 that removed state-imposed durational residency requirements on voters casting ballots in presidential elections. Justice Stewart concurred with the majority that Congress had the power to make durational residency requirements uniform in presidential elections, and observed:

“Congress could rationally conclude that the imposition of durational residency requirements unreasonably burdens and sanctions the privilege of taking up residence in another State. The objective of § 202 is clearly a legitimate one. Federal action is required if the privilege to change residence is not to be undercut by parochial local sanctions. No State could undertake to guarantee this privilege to its citizens. At most a single State could take steps to resolve that its own laws would not unreasonably discriminate against the newly arrived resident. Even this resolve might not remain firm in the face of discriminations perceived as unfair against those of its own citizens who moved to other States. Thus, the problem could not be wholly solved by a single State, or even by several States, since every State of new residence and every State of prior residence would have a necessary role to play. **In the absence of a unanimous interstate compact, the problem could only be solved by Congress.**”⁵ [Emphasis added]

In summary, the states are constitutionally permitted to use an interstate compact to specify the manner in which they choose their presidential electors.

⁴ *McPherson v. Blacker*. 146 U.S. 1 at 35. 1892.

⁵ *Oregon v. Mitchell*. 400 U.S. 112 at 286–287. 1970.

8.2 MAY THE CITIZEN-INITIATIVE PROCESS BE USED TO ENACT AN INTERSTATE COMPACT?

A state may enact an interstate compact in the same manner as it enacts a state law.

The legislative process at the state level generally entails adoption of a proposed legislative bill by a majority vote of each house of the state legislature. All state governors currently have the power to veto bills passed by their legislatures, so bills are presented to the governor for approval or disapproval.⁶ If a governor vetoes a bill, the legislation may nonetheless become law if the legislature overrides the veto in the manner specified by the state's constitution. Overriding a gubernatorial veto typically requires a super-majority (typically a two-thirds vote) of both houses of the legislature.⁷

In 22 states, an alternative method, called the *citizen-initiative process*, may be used to enact a state law. In those states (listed in table 7.2), the voters have reserved to themselves the power to enact statutes through the citizen-initiative process.⁸ The initiative process is invoked by filing a petition signed by a constitutionally specified number of voters. The voters then decide whether to enact the proposed law in a statewide vote.⁹

In many of these same states, the voters have also reserved to themselves the power to suspend temporarily a law enacted by the legislature and subsequently to vote on whether to retain the law in a statewide referendum—a process called the *protest-referendum*.¹⁰

The Michigan Constitution (article II, section 9) provides a good description of both the citizen-initiative process and the protest-referendum process:

⁶ Council of State Governments. 2005. *The Book of the States*. Lexington, KY: The Council of State Governments. 2005 Edition. Volume 37. Pages 161–162.

⁷ For simplicity, we refer to the two houses of a state legislature, even though Nebraska has a unicameral state legislature.

⁸ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1999. *The Initiative: Citizen Law-Making*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

⁹ In addition, the voters in 19 states may use the citizen-initiative process to propose and enact amendments to the state constitution. These 19 states include two states (Florida and Mississippi) that are not among the group of 22 states with the statutory initiative process. Also, the District of Columbia has a citizen-initiative process for statutes. Thus, there are 25 jurisdictions with the process. See table 7.2 for details.

¹⁰ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1997. *The Referendum: The People Decide Public Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

“The people reserve to themselves the power to propose laws and to enact and reject laws, called the initiative, and the power to approve or reject laws enacted by the legislature, called the referendum. The power of initiative extends only to laws which the legislature may enact under this constitution. The power of referendum does not extend to acts making appropriations for state institutions or to meet deficiencies in state funds and must be invoked in the manner prescribed by law within 90 days following the final adjournment of the legislative session at which the law was enacted. To invoke the initiative or referendum, petitions signed by a number of registered electors, not less than eight percent for initiative and five percent for referendum of the total vote cast for all candidates for governor at the last preceding general election at which a governor was elected shall be required.

“No law as to which the power of referendum properly has been invoked shall be effective thereafter unless approved by a majority of the electors voting thereon at the next general election.

“Any law proposed by initiative petition shall be either enacted or rejected by the legislature without change or amendment within 40 session days from the time such petition is received by the legislature. If any law proposed by such petition shall be enacted by the legislature it shall be subject to referendum, as hereinafter provided.

“If the law so proposed is not enacted by the legislature within the 40 days, the state officer authorized by law shall submit such proposed law to the people for approval or rejection at the next general election. The legislature may reject any measure so proposed by initiative petition and propose a different measure upon the same subject by a yea and nay vote upon separate roll calls, and in such event both measures shall be submitted by such state officer to the electors for approval or rejection at the next general election.

“Any law submitted to the people by either initiative or referendum petition and approved by a majority of the votes cast

thereon at any election shall take effect 10 days after the date of the official declaration of the vote. No law initiated or adopted by the people shall be subject to the veto power of the governor, and no law adopted by the people at the polls under the initiative provisions of this section shall be amended or repealed, except by a vote of the electors unless otherwise provided in the initiative measure or by three-fourths of the members elected to and serving in each house of the legislature. Laws approved by the people under the referendum provision of this section may be amended by the legislature at any subsequent session thereof. If two or more measures approved by the electors at the same election conflict, that receiving the highest affirmative vote shall prevail.”¹¹

The Arizona Constitution provides:

“The legislative authority of the state shall be vested in the legislature, consisting of a senate and a house of representatives, but the people reserve the power to propose laws and amendments to the constitution and to enact or reject such laws and amendments at the polls, independently of the legislature; and they also reserve, for use at their own option, the power to approve or reject at the polls any act, or item, section, or part of any act, of the legislature.”¹²

The Ohio Constitution provides:

“The legislative power of the state shall be vested in a General Assembly consisting of a Senate and House of Representatives, but the people reserve to themselves the power to propose to the General Assembly laws and amendments to the Constitution, and to adopt or reject the same at the polls on a referendum vote as hereinafter provided.”¹³

The origin of the citizen-initiative process is generally attributed to various Swiss cantons in the early 19th century.¹⁴ In 1898, the state

¹¹ Michigan Constitution. Article II, section 9.

¹² Arizona Constitution. Article I, section 1.

¹³ Ohio Constitution. Article II, section 1.

constitution of South Dakota was amended to permit the citizen-initiative process. Oregon adopted the process in 1902. In 1904, Oregon voters became the first in the United States to use the citizen-initiative process to enact legislation when they enacted a direct primary statute and a local-option liquor statute.¹⁵

The initiative process spread rapidly to additional states as part of the Progressive movement in the early decades of the 20th century. Maine adopted the initiative and referendum in 1908. In California, the voters adopted the initiative process in the belief that it would reduce the dominance of the state legislature by the railroads and other corporations and that it would reduce the power of political machines. By 1918, 19 states had adopted the initiative. All were west of the Mississippi River, except for Maine, Massachusetts, and Ohio. The initiative process was included in Alaska's original constitution at the time of that state's admission to the Union in 1959.¹⁶

The question arises as to whether an interstate compact may be enacted by means of the citizen-initiative process.

The scope of the statutory initiative process and the scope of protest-referendum process varies considerably from state to state. Thus, an examination of the provisions of each state constitution is necessary to answer this question.

There is no provision of any state constitution that specifically singles out interstate compacts as being ineligible for enactment by the voters by means of the citizen-initiative process. Likewise, there is no provision of any state constitution that specifically states that interstate compacts are ineligible for temporary suspension and subsequent repeal by the voters by means of the protest-referendum process.

Having said that, there are significant limitations as to subject matter of the citizen-initiative and protest-referendum processes in about half of the states having these processes.¹⁷ The limitations are so severe in Illinois that it would not be possible to enact an interstate compact using

¹⁴ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1999. *The Initiative: Citizen Law-Making*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Alaska, California, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

the citizen-initiative process in that state.¹⁸ In general, the restraints on the protest-referendum process are more severe than those applying to the initiative process.¹⁹ The constitutional limitations typically relate to appropriations, the judiciary, measures involving the support of governmental operations, and emergency measures.²⁰

In short, unless an interstate compact deals with a subject that is outside a state's constitutional power, there is no state with the citizen-initiative process (other than Illinois) where an interstate compact could not, in principle, be adopted by the citizen-initiative process.

There are, in fact, precedents for the use of the citizen-initiative process and protest-referendum processes in connection with interstate compacts.

In 1988, an initiative petition forced a statewide vote on the question of repealing the law providing for Nebraska's participation in the Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact (enacted several years earlier by the legislature).²¹ In the statewide vote on Proposition 402, voters rejected the initiative proposition to repeal the compact.

In South Dakota in 1984, there was a statewide vote on an initiated law to require the approval of the voters of the state on the state's participation in any nuclear-waste-disposal compact. The measure passed 182,952 to 112,161.

In addition, legislatures have occasionally referred enactment of an interstate compact to the state's voters.²² For example, the Maine legislature referred the question of enactment of the Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact to its voters in 1993. The question on the ballot was:

“Do you approve of the interstate compact to be made with Texas, Maine and Vermont for the disposal of the State's low-

¹⁸ In Illinois, the statutory initiative process is advisory only, and the constitutional initiative process is limited to matters relating to legislative procedure.

¹⁹ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1997. *The Referendum: The People Decide Public Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

²⁰ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1999. *The Initiative: Citizen Law-Making*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

²¹ The protest-referendum process is typically available only for a relatively short period after a state legislature enacts a particular law. After expiration of that period, the citizen-initiative process may be used to repeal an existing law.

²² State legislatures generally have the power to refer questions to the state's voters.

level radioactive waste at a proposed facility in the State of Texas?”

The proposition received 170,411 “yes” votes and 63,672 “no” votes.

8.3 MAY THE CITIZEN-INITIATIVE PROCESS BE USED TO ENACT THE PROPOSED COMPACT?

The proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” could be brought into effect solely by the collective action of state legislatures. Nonetheless, in order to demonstrate public support for the concept of nationwide popular election of the President, the authors of this book suggest (in chapter 7) that the citizen-initiative process might be used to enact the proposed compact in an initial group of states.

Article II, section 1, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution (which we will frequently refer to as “Article II” in the remainder of this section) provides:

“Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the **Legislature** thereof may direct, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress....” [Emphasis added]

The use of the word “legislature” in Article II raises the question of whether the citizen-initiative process may be used to enact legislation specifying the manner of choosing presidential electors.

An answer to this question requires an examination of the way that the word “legislature” is used in the U.S. Constitution.

The word “legislature” appears in 15 places in the U.S. Constitution—13 of which relate to the powers of state legislatures.²³ As will become clear later in this section, the word “legislature” is used with two distinct meanings in the U.S. Constitution, namely

- **the state’s two legislative chambers**—that is, the state house of representatives and the state senate agreeing on a

²³Two of the 15 occurrences of the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution are unrelated to the powers of state legislatures and will therefore not be discussed further in this chapter. The first such provision is the requirement in Article I, section 2, clause 1 that voters for U.S. Representatives have “the Qualifications requisite for Electors of the most numerous Branch of the State Legislature.” The second is the requirement in Article VI, clause 2 that “Members of the several State Legislatures” take an oath or affirmation to support the U.S. Constitution.

common action—either by sitting together in a joint convention or adopting a concurrent resolution while sitting separately;²⁴ or

- **the state’s law-making process**—that is, the process of enacting a state law.

These 13 occurrences of the word “legislature” appear in the following 11 provisions of the U.S. Constitution:

- electing United States Senators in the state legislature (prior to ratification in 1913 of the 17th Amendment providing for popular election of Senators);
- filling a U.S. Senate vacancy (prior to the 17th Amendment);
- ratifying a proposed federal constitutional amendment;
- making an application to Congress for a federal constitutional convention;
- choosing the manner of electing U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators;
- choosing the manner of appointing presidential electors;
- choosing the manner of conducting a popular election to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy (under the 17th Amendment);
- empowering the state’s Governor to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy temporarily until the voters fill the vacancy in a popular election (under the 17th Amendment);
- consenting to the purchase of enclaves by the federal government for “forts, magazines, arsenals, dock-yards, and other needful buildings;”
- consenting to the formation of new states from territory of existing state(s); and
- requesting federal assistance to quell domestic violence.

Table 8.1 displays these 11 provisions of the U.S. Constitution referring to the powers of the state “legislature.”

8.3.1 Electing U.S. Senators

Under the original Constitution, each state legislature elected the state’s two U.S. Senators. Two methods were commonly used by the states. In some states, the two houses of the state legislature met in a joint con-

²⁴ For simplicity, we frequently refer to the “two houses” of a state legislature, even though Nebraska has a unicameral state legislature.

TABLE 8.1 PROVISIONS OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION REFERRING TO POWERS OF THE STATE “LEGISLATURE”

POWER	PROVISION OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION
1 Electing U.S. Senators (prior to the 17th Amendment)	“The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State, chosen by the Legislature thereof , for six Years; and each Senator shall have one Vote.” ²⁵ [Emphasis added]
2 Filling a U.S. Senate vacancy (prior to the 17th Amendment)	“... if Vacancies happen by Resignation, or otherwise, during the Recess of the Legislature of any State, the Executive thereof may make temporary Appointments until the next Meeting of the Legislature, which shall then fill such Vacancies. ” ²⁶ [Emphasis added]
3 Ratifying a proposed federal constitutional amendment	“The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress ... ” ²⁷ [Emphasis added]
4 Making an application to Congress for a federal constitutional convention	“The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the Application of the Legislatures of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments, which, in either Case, shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the Legislatures of three fourths of the several States, or by Conventions in three fourths thereof, as the one or the other Mode of Ratification may be proposed by the Congress ... ” ²⁸ [Emphasis added]

²⁵ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 3, clause 1. Superseded by the 17th Amendment.

²⁶ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 3, clause 2. Superseded by the 17th Amendment.

²⁷ U.S. Constitution. Article V.

²⁸ U.S. Constitution. Article V.

²⁹ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 4, clause 1.

TABLE 8.1 PROVISIONS OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION REFERRING TO POWERS OF THE STATE “LEGISLATURE” (cont.)

	POWER	PROVISION OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION
5	Choosing the manner of electing U.S. Representatives and Senators	“The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.” ²⁹ [Emphasis added]
6	Choosing the manner of appointing presidential electors	“Each State shall appoint, in such Manner as the Legislature thereof may direct , a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress” ³⁰ [Emphasis added]
7	Choosing the manner of conducting a popular election to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy (under the 17th Amendment)	“When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct. ” ³¹ [Emphasis added]
8	Empowering the Governor to fill a U.S. Senate vacancy temporarily until a popular election is held (under the 17th Amendment)	“When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election as the legislature may direct.” ³² [Emphasis added]
9	Consenting to the purchase of enclaves by the federal government	“To exercise exclusive Legislation in all Cases whatsoever, over such District (not exceeding ten Miles square) as may, by Cession of particular States, and the Acceptance of Congress, become the Seat of the Government of the United States, and to exercise like Authority over all Places purchased by the Consent of the Legislature of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings.” ³³ [Emphasis added]

²⁹ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 4, clause 1.³⁰ U.S. Constitution. Article II, section 1, clause 2.³¹ U.S. Constitution. 17th Amendment, section 2.³² U.S. Constitution. 17th Amendment, section 2.³³ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 9, clause 17.

TABLE 8.1 PROVISIONS OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION REFERRING TO POWERS OF THE STATE “LEGISLATURE” (cont.)

	POWER	PROVISION OF THE U.S. CONSTITUTION
10	Consenting to the formation of new states from territory of existing state(s)	“New States may be admitted by the Congress into this Union; but no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.” ³⁴ [Emphasis added]
11	Requesting federal military assistance to quell domestic violence	“The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on Application of the Legislature , or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.” ³⁵ [Emphasis added]

vention in which each state representative and each state senator cast one vote in the election for the state’s U.S. Senator. In other states, the state house of representatives and the state senate voted separately on a concurrent resolution expressing their choice for the state’s U.S. Senator.³⁶ Regardless of which method was used, the state’s Governor was *not* part of the constitutional process of electing U.S. Senators. Neither the decision of a joint convention of the two houses nor the concurrent resolution agreed to by both houses of the legislature was presented to the Governor for approval or disapproval. In other words, the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution, in connection with the election of U.S. Senators (the first entry in table 8.1), refers to the state’s two legislative chambers—not to the state’s usual process for making laws.

³⁴ U.S. Constitution. Article IV, section 3, clause 1.

³⁵ U.S. Constitution. Article IV, section 4.

³⁶ Separate voting for U.S. Senators by the two houses of the state legislature, of course, created the possibility of a deadlock between the two houses. Thus, it became common for U.S. Senate seats to remain vacant for prolonged periods. Article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution provides that “The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.” In 1866, Congress exercised its power under this constitutional provision to change the “manner” by which state legislatures conducted their Senate elections and to specify the “time” of such elections. Congress required the two houses of each state legislature to meet in a joint convention on a specified day and to meet every day thereafter until a Senator was selected (14 Stat. 243).

8.3.2 Filling a U.S. Senate Vacancy

Similarly, under the original Constitution, a vacancy in the U.S. Senate was filled by action of the state’s two legislative chambers (either voting in a joint convention or acting separately by concurrent resolution). That is, the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution, in connection with the filling of U.S. Senate vacancies (the second entry in table 8.1), refers to the state’s two legislative chambers.

8.3.3 Ratifying a Proposed Federal Constitutional Amendment

The meaning of the word “legislature” in connection with the ratification of amendments to the federal Constitution (the third entry in table 8.1) was decided by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Hawke v. Smith* in 1920.³⁷ Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides that proposed amendments

“... shall be valid to all Intents and Purposes, as Part of this Constitution, when ratified by the **Legislatures** of three fourths of the several States...” [Emphasis added]

Before deciding the specific issue in the *Hawke* case in 1920, the U.S. Supreme Court reviewed the Court’s decision in 1798 in *Hollingsworth et al. v. Virginia*.³⁸ The *Hollingsworth* case explored the two distinct meanings of the word “Congress” in the U.S. Constitution (the analog of the issue concerning the two meanings of the word “legislature”).

The U.S. Constitution frequently uses the word “Congress” to refer to the national government’s law-making process—that is, the process by which the legislative bills are passed by the two houses of Congress and presented to the President for approval or disapproval. The word “Congress” appears with this meaning in numerous places in the Constitution, including

“The **Congress** shall have Power To lay and collect Taxes, Duties, Imposts and Excises, to pay the Debts and provide for the common Defence and general Welfare of the United States...”³⁹ [Emphasis added]

³⁷ *Hawke v. Smith*. 253 U.S. 221. 1920.

³⁸ *Hollingsworth et al. v. Virginia*. 3 Dall. 378. 1798.

³⁹ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 8, clause 1.

The word “Congress” also appears in Article V:

“The **Congress**, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution...” [Emphasis added]

The *Hollingsworth* case addressed the question of whether the word “Congress” in the U.S. Constitution meant

- **the national government’s legislative chambers**—that is, the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate sitting separately and agreeing to a concurrent resolution, or
- **the national government’s law-making process.**

In 1798, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that when the Congress proposes an amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the resolution of ratification need not be submitted to the President for approval or disapproval. Referring to the 1798 *Hollingsworth* case, the Court noted in the 1920 *Hawke* case:

“At an early day this court settled that the submission of a constitutional amendment did not require the action of the President. The question arose over the adoption of the Eleventh Amendment. *Hollingsworth et al. v. Virginia*, 3 Dall. 378. In that case it was contended that the amendment had not been proposed in the manner provided in the Constitution as an inspection of the original roll showed that it had never been submitted to the President for his approval in accordance with article 1, section 7, of the Constitution. The Attorney General answered that **the case of amendments is a substantive act, unconnected with the ordinary business of legislation**, and not within the policy or terms of the Constitution investing the President with a qualified negative [veto] on the acts and resolutions of Congress. In a footnote to this argument of the Attorney General, Justice Chase said:

‘There can, surely, be no necessity to answer that argument. **The negative of the President applies only to the ordinary cases of legislation. He has nothing to do with the proposition, or adoption, of amendments to the Constitution.**’

“The court by a unanimous judgment held that the amendment was constitutionally adopted.”⁴⁰ [Emphasis added]

In other words, the 1798 *Hollingsworth* case concluded that a federal constitutional amendment was *not* the “ordinary business of legislation.”

The U.S. Supreme Court then addressed the specific issue in the 1920 *Hawke* case, namely the constitutionality of a 1918 amendment to the Ohio Constitution. This state constitutional amendment extended the protest-referendum process to resolutions of ratification by the Ohio legislature of proposed federal constitutional amendments. Specifically, the 1918 amendment to the Ohio Constitution provided:

“The people also reserve to themselves the legislative power of the referendum on the action of the General Assembly ratifying any proposed amendment to the Constitution of the United States.”

The *Hawke* case arose as a result of the Ohio Legislature’s ratification of the 18th Amendment prohibiting the manufacture, sale, and transportation of intoxicating liquors for beverage purposes. On January 7, 1919, the Ohio Legislature passed a concurrent resolution⁴¹ ratifying the Amendment.⁴² Ohio’s ratification was crucial because the U.S. Secretary of State was in possession of resolutions of ratification from 35 other states, and 36 ratifications were sufficient, at the time, to make a pending amendment part of the U.S. Constitution. A protest-referendum petition was quickly circulated in Ohio. Supporters of the 18th Amendment challenged the petition’s validity in state court. The Ohio Supreme Court decided that the legislature’s ratification of the 18th Amendment should be temporarily suspended and submitted to the state’s voters for approval or disapproval in a statewide referendum. The U.S. Supreme Court, however, decided otherwise.

“The argument to support the power of the state to require the approval by the people of the state of the ratification of

⁴⁰ *Hawke v. Smith*. 253 U.S. 221 at 229–230. 1920.

⁴¹ A concurrent resolution is a type of resolution that is passed by both houses of the legislature but not submitted to the Governor for approval or disapproval.

⁴² The resolution of ratification for the 18th Amendment was adopted by the Ohio Legislature in accordance with the long-standing practice in Ohio (and other states) of not submitting the legislature’s resolution to the state’s Governor for approval or disapproval.

amendments to the federal Constitution through the medium of a referendum rests upon the proposition that the federal Constitution requires ratification by the legislative action of the states through the medium provided at the time of the proposed approval of an amendment. This argument is fallacious in this—**ratification by a state of a constitutional amendment is not an act of legislation** within the proper sense of the word. **It is but the expression of the assent of the state to a proposed amendment.**⁴³ [Emphasis added]

In short, in connection with ratification of amendments to the U.S. Constitution (the third entry in table 8.1), the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution refers to the state’s two legislative chambers. Ratification is

- “unconnected with the ordinary business of legislation,”⁴⁴ and
- “not an act of legislation.”⁴⁵

Appendix U contains the full text of the Supreme Court’s 1920 decision in *Hawke v. Smith*.

8.3.4 Making an Application to Congress for a Federal Constitutional Convention

The word “legislature” appears in the U.S. Constitution in connection with one of the two ways by which amendments to the Constitution may be proposed to the states. Article V provides:

“The Congress, whenever two thirds of both Houses shall deem it necessary, shall propose Amendments to this Constitution, or, on the **Application of the Legislatures** of two thirds of the several States, shall call a Convention for proposing Amendments....” [Emphasis added]

State legislatures sometimes call on Congress to convene a federal Constitutional Convention. For example, prior to congressional passage of the 17th Amendment, 26 states had petitioned Congress for a federal Constitutional Convention to consider the specific question of the

⁴³ *Hawke v. Smith*. 253 U.S. 221 at 229–230. 1920.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at 230.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

popular election of U.S. Senators. In addition, two additional states had, during the period immediately prior to congressional action on the 17th Amendment, issued requests for a federal Constitutional Convention without mentioning the topic to be considered by the Convention. Similarly, by the time Congress acted on the 21st Amendment, almost two-thirds of the states had petitioned Congress for a federal Constitutional Convention to repeal the 18th Amendment.

According to Orfield's *The Amending of the Federal Constitution*, when state legislatures apply to Congress for a federal Constitutional Convention, the long-standing practice of the states has been that the action of the legislature is not presented to the state's Governor for approval or disapproval.⁴⁶ Instead, the two houses of the state legislature pass a concurrent resolution. Thus, in connection with applications to Congress for a federal Constitutional Convention (the fourth entry in table 8.1), historical practice indicates that the word "legislature" in the U.S. Constitution refers to the state's two legislative chambers.

8.3.5 Choosing the Manner of Electing U.S. Representatives and Senators

As demonstrated in the previous four sections, judicial precedent and long-standing practice by the states indicate that the word "legislature" in the U.S. Constitution refers, in connection with the first, second, third, and fourth entries in table 8.1, to the state's two legislative chambers—not to the state's Governor or the state's citizen-initiative or protest-referendum processes.

In many other parts of the U.S. Constitution, however, the word "legislature" has a different meaning—namely, the state's law-making process. In these parts of the Constitution, "legislature" includes the state's Governor—an official who is manifestly not part of the state legislature. Moreover, in these parts of the U.S. Constitution, "legislature" may also include the state's voters—who, like the Governor, are plainly not members of the two chambers of the state legislature.

An example of this second meaning of the word "legislature" is found in Article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution concerning the manner of holding elections for U.S. Representatives and Senators (the fifth entry in table 8.1).

⁴⁶ Orfield, Lester Bernhardt. 1942. *The Amending of the Federal Constitution*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.

“The Times, Places and **Manner** of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the **Legislature** thereof; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.” [Emphasis added]

The U.S. Supreme Court addressed the meaning of “legislature” in Article I, section 4, clause 1 in *Smiley v. Holm* in 1932.⁴⁷ The issue in *Smiley* was whether the Minnesota Governor could veto a law passed by the legislature redrawing the state’s congressional districts after the 1930 census. In other words, the question in *Smiley* was whether the word “legislature” refers to the state’s two legislative chambers or the state’s law-making process which, in Minnesota in 1932, included the Governor.

The question of whether the word “legislature” includes a state’s Governor depends, in large part, on the answer to the following question:

“When a state exercises authority pursuant to powers granted to it by the U.S. Constitution in connection with deciding on the manner of electing its U.S. Representatives,

- (1) does it derive the power to act solely from the U.S. Constitution, or
- (2) does it enact the legislation in accordance with the procedures specified in the state’s constitution?”

The 1932 *Smiley* case involving the meaning of the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution came to the U.S. Supreme Court over a decade after various cases arising from the adoption of the initiative and referendum processes in the early years of the 20th century. These earlier cases included the 1920 *Hawke* case (discussed above) and the 1916 case of *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant* (discussed below). *Smiley* thus provided the Court with the opportunity to put all of these related cases into perspective. The U.S. Supreme Court wrote in *Smiley* in 1932:

“[W]henever the term ‘legislature’ is used in the Constitution, it is necessary to consider the nature of the particular action in view.”⁴⁸ [Emphasis added]

⁴⁷ *Smiley v. Holm*. 285 U.S. 355. 1932.

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 366.

Applying this test, the Court found that the term “legislature” in Article I, section 4, clause 1 referred to “making laws”⁴⁹ and therefore included the Governor.

“[I]t follows, in the absence of an indication of a contrary intent, that **the exercise of the authority must be in accordance with the method which the State has prescribed for legislative enactments. We find no suggestion in the Federal constitutional provision of an attempt to endow the legislature of the State with power to enact laws in any manner other than that in which the constitution of the State has provided that laws shall be enacted.**”⁵⁰ [Emphasis added]

Thus, the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution, in connection with the state’s deciding on the “manner of holding Elections” for U.S. Representatives” (the fifth entry in table 8.1), refers to the state’s process of making laws—not just to the two chambers of the state legislature.

Appendix V contains the full text of the Supreme Court’s 1932 decision in *Smiley v. Holm*.

In 1916, the U.S. Supreme Court addressed the specific question of whether the word “legislature” in Article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution included the voters acting through the processes of direct democracy. The Supreme Court described the origins of *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrand* as follows:

“By an amendment to the Constitution of Ohio, adopted September 3d, 1912, the **legislative power was expressly declared to be vested** not only in the senate and house of representatives of the state, constituting the general assembly, but **in the people**, in whom a right was reserved by way of referendum to approve or disapprove by popular vote any law enacted by the general assembly.”⁵¹ [Emphasis added]

The Supreme Court continued:

“In May, 1915, the general assembly of Ohio passed an act redistricting the state for the purpose of congressional

⁴⁹ *Id.* at 365.

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 368.

⁵¹ *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrand*. 241 U.S. 565 at 566. 1916.

elections, by which act twenty-two congressional districts were created, in some respects differing from the previously established districts, and this act, after approval by the governor, was filed in the office of the secretary of state. The requisite number of electors under the referendum provision having petitioned for a submission of the law to a popular vote, such vote was taken and the law was disapproved.

“Thereupon, in the supreme court of the state, the suit before us was begun against state election officers for the purpose of procuring a mandamus, directing them to disregard the vote of the people on the referendum, disapproving the law, and to proceed to discharge their duties as such officers in the next congressional election, upon the assumption that the action by way of referendum was void, and that the law which was disapproved was subsisting and valid.”⁵²

Summarizing the issue, the Supreme Court wrote:

“The right to this relief was based upon the charge that the referendum vote was not and could not be a part of the legislative authority of the state, and therefore could have no influence on the subject of the law creating congressional districts for the purpose of representation in Congress. Indeed, it was in substance charged that both from the point of view of the state Constitution and laws and from that of the Constitution of the United States, especially [clause] 4 of article 1, providing that

‘the times, places and manner of holding elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each state by the legislature thereof; but the Congress may at any time by law, make or alter such regulations, except as to the places of choosing Senators;’

and also from that of the provisions of the controlling act of Congress of August 8, 1911 (chap. 5, 37 Stat. at L. 13, Comp. Stat. 1913, 15), apportioning representation among the states, the attempt to make the referendum a component part of the

⁵² *Id.* at 566–567.

legislative authority empowered to deal with the election of members of Congress was absolutely void. **The court below adversely disposed of these contentions, and held that the provisions as to referendum were a part of the legislative power of the state, made so by the Constitution, and that nothing in the act of Congress of 1911, or in the constitutional provision, operated to the contrary,** and that therefore the disapproved law had no existence and was not entitled to be enforced by mandamus.”⁵³ [Emphasis added]

The U.S. Supreme Court then upheld the Ohio Supreme Court and rejected the argument that the word “legislature” in Article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution excluded the referendum process. The popular vote rejecting Ohio’s redistricting statute was allowed to stand.

Additionally, the Court noted:

“Congress recognize[d] the referendum as part of the legislative authority of a state.”⁵⁴

Appendix P contains the full text of the Supreme Court’s 1916 decision in *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant*.

In 1920, the U.S. Supreme Court distinguished its decision in *Hawke* from its decision in *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant* by saying in *Hawke*:

“But it is said this view runs counter to the decision of this court in *Davis v. Hildebrant* (241 U.S. 565) 36 S. Ct. 708. But that case is inapposite. It dealt with article 1 section 4, of the Constitution, which provides that the times, places, and manners of holding elections for Senators and Representatives in each state shall be determined by the respective Legislatures thereof, but that Congress may at any time make or alter such regulations, except as to the place for choosing Senators. As shown in the opinion in that case, Congress had itself recognized the referendum as part of the legislative authority of the state for the purpose stated. It was held, affirming the

⁵³ *Id.* at 568.

⁵⁴ *Id.* at 569.

judgment of the Supreme Court of Ohio, that the referendum provision of the state Constitution, when applied to a law redistricting the state with a view to representation in Congress, was not unconstitutional. **Article 1, section 4, plainly gives authority to the state to legislate within the limitations therein named. Such legislative action is entirely different from the requirement of the Constitution as to the expression of assent or dissent to a proposed amendment to the Constitution. In such expression no legislative action is authorized or required.**⁵⁵ [Emphasis added]

Relying on *Smiley v. Holm*⁵⁶ and *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant*,⁵⁷ the Colorado Supreme Court wrote in *Colorado, ex rel. Salazar v. Davidson* in 2003:

“[T]he United States Supreme Court has interpreted the word ‘legislature’ in Article I to broadly encompass any means permitted by state law [including] citizen referenda and initiatives, mandatory gubernatorial approval, and any other procedures defined by the state.”^{58,59}

Chief Justice Rehnquist, joined by Justices Thomas and Scalia, affirmed this view in a dissenting opinion when the U.S. Supreme Court denied review of the *Colorado, ex rel. Salazar v. Davidson* decision. Rehnquist stated that the Court had

“explained that the focus of our inquiry was **not on the ‘body’ but the function performed** [and that] the function referred to by Article I, §4, was **the lawmaking process**, which is defined by state law.”⁶⁰ [Emphasis added]

⁵⁵ *Hawke v. Smith*. 253 U.S. 221 at 230–231. 1920.

⁵⁶ *Smiley v. Holm*. 285 U.S. 355. 1932.

⁵⁷ *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant*. 241 U.S. 565. 1916.

⁵⁸ *Colorado, ex rel. Salazar v. Davidson*. 79 P.3d 1221, 1232 (Colorado 2003).

⁵⁹ In *Cook v. Gralike*, 531 U.S. 510, 526 n.20 (2001), the Court declined to consider whether the Elections Clause of Art. 1, §4, which is a grant of power to “each State by the Legislature thereof,” could be invoked to protect to a statute adopted by referendum. The Court reaffirmed, however, the notion in *Smiley* that “[w]herever the term ‘legislature’ is used in the Constitution, it is necessary to consider the nature of the particular action in view.” *Id.*

⁶⁰ *Colorado General Assembly v. Salazar*; 124 S. Ct. 2228 at 2230. 2004.

The distinction between “the lawmaking process” and the two chambers of the state legislature is not new. In fact, this distinction has been made since the earliest days of the U.S. Constitution. When the U.S. Constitution took effect in 1788, two states had the gubernatorial veto.^{61,62}

The provisions of the Massachusetts Constitution at the time when the U.S. Constitution took effect were substantially the same as the procedures for gubernatorial approval, veto, and legislative override found in most state constitutions today (and substantially the same as the procedures for presidential veto in the U.S. constitution).

“No bill or resolve of the senate or house of representatives shall become a law, and have force as such, until it shall have been laid before the governor for his revisal; and if he, upon such revision, approve thereof, he shall signify his approbation by signing the same. But if he have any objection to the passing of such bill or resolve, he shall return the same, together with his objections thereto, in writing, to the senate or house of representatives, in whichever the same shall have originated, who shall enter the objections sent down by the governor, at large, on their records, and proceed to reconsider the said bill or resolve; but if, after such reconsideration, two-thirds of the said senate or house of representatives shall, notwithstanding the said objections, agree to pass the same, it shall, together with the objections, be sent to the other branch of the legislature, where it shall also be reconsidered, and if approved by two-thirds of the members present, shall have the force of law; but in all such cases, the vote of both houses shall be determined by yeas and nays; and the names of the persons voting for or against the said bill or resolve shall be entered upon the public records of the commonwealth.”⁶³

⁶¹ Kole, Edward A. 1999. *The First 13 Constitutions of the First American States*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

⁶² Kole, Edward A. *The True Intent of the First American Constitutions of 1776–1791*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

⁶³ Massachusetts Constitution of 1780. Chapter I, Section I, Article II.

On November 20, 1788, both chambers of the Massachusetts legislature approved legislation specifying the manner for electing U.S. representatives. This legislation was forwarded to Governor John Hancock, and he approved it.⁶⁴

The New York Constitution of 1777 was in effect when the U.S. Constitution took effect. The New York Constitution (like many state constitutions of the colonial era and immediate post-independence era) had a Governor's Council.⁶⁵ In particular, the New York Constitution required that all bills passed by the legislature be submitted to a Council of Revision composed of the Governor, the Chancellor, and judges of the state supreme court. A two-thirds vote of both houses of the legislature was necessary to override a veto by the Council. On January 23, 1789, the New York legislature approved legislation specifying the manner for electing U.S. representatives. The bill was presented to the Council; the Council approved the bill; and the bill became law.

Article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution covers the manner of electing U.S. Senators as well as the manner of electing U.S. Representatives.

“The Times, Places and **Manner** of holding Elections for **Senators** and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the **Legislature** thereof....” [Emphasis added]

The two meanings of the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution are dramatically illustrated by the actions of the first New York legislature that met under the U.S. Constitution. As mentioned in section 8.3.1, the state's Governor was not part of the constitutional process of electing U.S. Senators under the original Constitution. The two chambers of the state legislature elected the state's U.S. Senators. The Governor of New York was, however, part of the law-making process that decided the *manner* of electing U.S. Senators. For example, in 1789, both houses of the New York legislature passed a bill providing for the manner of electing U.S. Senators. This bill was presented to the Council composed of the Governor, the Chancellor, and the judges of the state supreme court. The

⁶⁴ Smith, Hayward H. 2001. *Symposium, Law of Presidential Elections: Issues in the Wake of Florida 2000*. History of the Article II Independent State legislature Doctrine. 29 *Florida State University Law Review* 731-785 at 760. Issue 2.

⁶⁵ Currently, Massachusetts has a Governor's Council and New Hampshire has an Executive Council.

Council vetoed the bill.⁶⁶ That bill did not become law. In short, when a state chose the “manner” of electing its U.S. Senators, the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution meant “the lawmaking process” (which included the Governor and Council); however, when the state elected its U.S. Senators, the same word “legislature” meant only the two legislative chambers (which did not include the Governor or the Council).

Congressional districting is arguably the most important aspect of the “manner” of electing U.S. Representatives. In recent years, the voters have used the processes of direct democracy not only to review congressional districting plans enacted by the state legislature (as they did in Ohio in the 1916 case of *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant*), but also to entirely exclude the state legislature from the process of congressional districting. For example, Arizona voters recently approved an initiative establishing a non-partisan commission to draw the state’s congressional districts. The voters’ decision to exclude the state legislature power from the redistricting process was taken by the voters unilaterally through the citizen-initiative process—without the involvement, much less the consent, of the state legislature. The power of congressional redistricting in Arizona now resides in the non-partisan commission. Similar initiative measures were on the ballot in the November 2005 elections in California and Ohio (but were defeated). Initiative petitions were in circulation in 2005 in Florida and Massachusetts for similar measures.

In summary, present-day practice, practice at the time of ratification of the U.S. Constitution, and court decisions consistently support the interpretation that the word “legislature” in article I, section 4, clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution (the fifth entry in table 8.1) does not refer to the two chambers of the state legislature but, instead, refers to the “lawmaking process” that includes

- the state’s Governor, an official who is manifestly not a member of the two chambers of the state legislature, and
- in states having the citizen-initiative process and protest-referendum process, the state’s voters, who, like the Governor, are manifestly not members of the two chambers of the state legislature.

⁶⁶ DenBoer, Gordon; Brown, Lucy Trumbull; and Hagermann, Charles D. (editors). 1986. *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections 1788–1790*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. Volume III.

8.3.6 Choosing the Manner of Appointing Presidential Electors

The word “legislature” appears in Article II of the U.S. Constitution (the sixth entry in table 8.1).

“Each State shall appoint, in such Manner **as the Legislature thereof may direct**, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress...”⁶⁷
[Emphasis added]

In *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton*, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1995 noted the parallelism between the use of the word “legislature” in Article I, section 4, clause 1 (relating to the “manner” of electing U.S. Representatives) and the word “legislature” in Article II. The Court wrote,

“... the provisions governing elections reveal the Framers’ understanding that powers over the election of federal officers had to be delegated to, rather than reserved by, the States. It is surely no coincidence that **the context of federal elections provides one of the few areas in which the Constitution expressly requires action by the States**, namely that

‘[t]he Times, Places and **Manner** of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the **legislature** thereof.’ [Art I., §4, cl. 4.]

“**This duty parallels the duty under Article II** that

‘Each State shall appoint, in such **Manner** as the **Legislature** thereof may direct, a Number of Electors.’
Art II., §1, cl. 2.

“These Clauses are express delegations of power to the States to act with respect to federal elections.”⁶⁸ [Emphasis added]

The parallelism noted by the Court supports the power of the people to act legislatively through the citizen-initiative process concerning the manner of electing presidential electors.

⁶⁷ U.S. Constitution. Article II, section 1, clause 2.

⁶⁸ *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton*. 514 U.S. 779 at 805. 1995.

The question of whether the word “legislature” includes the state’s initiative and referendum processes depends, in large part, on the answer to the following question:

“When a state exercises authority pursuant to powers granted to it by the U.S. Constitution in connection with deciding on the manner of choosing its presidential electors,

(1) does it derive the power to act solely from the U.S. Constitution, or

(2) does it enact the legislation in accordance with the procedures specified in the state’s constitution?”

The leading U.S. Supreme Court case interpreting Article II, section 1, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution is the 1892 case of *McPherson v. Blacker*.⁶⁹ In *Blacker*, the U.S. Supreme Court rejected a challenge to Michigan legislation providing for selection of presidential electors by district, as opposed to the statewide winner-take-all method that Michigan had been using prior to 1892 and that had become the national norm. In that case, the Court analyzed the meaning of the word “legislature” as used in Article II and noted that the interpretation of this word was governed by fundamental law of the state. The U.S. Supreme Court wrote:

“The state does not act by its people in their collective capacity, but through such political agencies as are duly constituted and established. The legislative power is the supreme authority, **except as limited by the constitution of the state**, and the sovereignty of the people is exercised through their representatives in the legislature, **unless by the fundamental law power is elsewhere reposed**. The constitution of the United States frequently refers to the state as a political community, and also in terms to the people of the several states and the citizens of each state. What is forbidden or required to be done by a state is forbidden or required of the legislative power under state constitutions as they exist.”⁷⁰
[Emphasis added]

⁶⁹ *McPherson v. Blacker*. 146 U.S. 1. 1892.

⁷⁰ *Id.* at 27.

The possibility that a state's legislative power might be "reposed" in a place other than the state legislature is noteworthy, given that the case was decided when the idea of the citizen-initiative process was an active topic of public debate (just before South Dakota became the first state to adopt the citizen-initiative process in 1898).

Given that the citizen-initiative process is generally considered to be a co-equal grant of authority to that given to the state's legislature, the treatment of the initiative process as a legislative power is consistent with the fundamental law of states that have the initiative process.

There are two cases that have specifically involved the question of whether the word "legislature" in Article II of the U.S. Constitution includes the initiative and referendum processes.⁷¹

The first case arose as a result of a 1919 law entitled "An act granting to women the right to vote for presidential electors." This law was passed by the two houses of the Maine legislature and presented to the state's Governor. The Governor signed the law. Under the protest-referendum provisions of the Maine Constitution, if a petition protesting a just-enacted law is filed with the signatures of at least 10,000 voters, the new law is temporarily suspended and referred to the voters for their approval or disapproval in a statewide referendum. A petition was circulated and duly filed with the Governor's office concerning this statute. Before proceeding with the referendum, the Governor raised the question of whether the referendum provision of the Maine Constitution applied to legislation involving the manner of appointing the state's presidential electors. Specifically, he propounded the following question to the Justices of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court:

"Is the effect of the act of the Legislature of Maine of 1919, entitled 'An act granting to women the right to vote for presidential electors,' approved by the Governor on March 28, 1919, suspended by valid written petitions of not less than

⁷¹ Court cases specifically interpreting the word "legislature" in Article II in relation to the initiative or referendum process are necessarily rare for several reasons. First, the initiative and referendum processes are only slightly more than 100 years old. Second, the initiative or referendum processes are available in fewer than one half of the states. Third, only a handful of the laws that a state enacts in a typical year involve the conduct of elections. Fourth, few new state laws involve the manner of conducting congressional and senatorial elections, and even fewer relate to presidential elections. Fifth, the vast majority of new state laws each year are enacted without the use of either the initiative or referendum processes.

10,000 electors, addressed to the Governor and filed in the office of the secretary of state within 90 days after the recess of the Legislature, requesting that it be referred to the people, and should the act be referred to the people as provided in article 4 of the Constitution of Maine, as amended by Amendment 31, adopted September 14, 1908?”

On August 28, 1919, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court unanimously answered this question in the affirmative. Relying extensively on the 1892 decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *McPherson v. Blacker*,⁷² the Maine Supreme Judicial Court wrote:

“The language of section 1, subd. 2, is clear and unambiguous. It admits of no doubt as to where the constitutional power of appointment is vested, namely, in the several states.

‘Each state shall appoint in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct’

are the significant words of the section, and their plain meaning is that **each state is thereby clothed with the absolute power to appoint electors in such manner as it may see fit, without any interference or control on the part of the federal government**, except, of course, in case of attempted discrimination as to race, color, or previous condition of servitude under the fifteenth amendment. The clause,

‘in such manner as the Legislature thereof may direct,’

means, simply that **the state shall give expression to its will, as it must, of necessity, through its law-making body, the Legislature**. The will of the state in this respect must be voiced in legislative acts or resolves, which shall prescribe in detail the manner of choosing electors, the qualifications of voters therefor, and the proceedings on the part of the electors when chosen.

⁷² *McPherson v. Blacker*. 146 U.S. 1. 1892. The *Blacker* case is also discussed in section 2.2.5 and later in this section. The complete opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Blacker* case is found in appendix O.

“But these acts and resolves must be passed and become effective in accordance with and in subjection to the Constitution of the state, like all other acts and resolves having the force of law. The Legislature was not given in this respect any superiority over or independence from the organic law of the state in force at the time when a given law is passed. Nor was it designated by the federal Constitution as a mere agency or representative of the people to perform a certain act, as it was under article 5 in ratifying a federal amendment, a point more fully discussed in the answer to the question concerning the federal prohibitory amendment. 107 Atl. 673. It is simply the ordinary instrumentality of the state, the legislative branch of the government, the law-making power, to put into words the will of the state in connection with the choice of presidential electors. The distinction between the function and power of the Legislature in the case under consideration and its function and power as a particular body designated by the federal Constitution to ratify or reject a federal amendment is sharp and clear and must be borne in mind.

“It follows, therefore, that under the provisions of the federal Constitution the state by its legislative direction may establish such a method of choosing its presidential electors as it may see fit, and may change that method from time to time as it may deem advisable; but **the legislative acts both of establishment and of change must always be subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the state in force at the time such acts are passed** and can be valid and effective only when enacted in compliance therewith.”⁷³
[Emphasis added]

The Court continued:

“It is clear that this act, extending this privilege to women, constitutes a change in the method of electing presidential electors....

⁷³ *In re Opinion of the Justices*. 107 A. 705. 1919.

“... this state during the century of its existence prior to 1919, had by appropriate legislative act or resolve directed that only male citizens were qualified to vote for presidential electors. By the act of 1919 it has attempted to change that direction, by extending the privilege of suffrage, so far as presidential electors are concerned, to women. Had this act been passed prior to the adoption of the initiative and referendum amendment in 1908, it would have become effective, so far as legal enactment is concerned, without being referred to the people; but now under Amendment 31 such reference must be had, if the necessary steps therefor are taken.”

“... This is the public statute of a law-making body, and is as fully within the control of the referendum amendment as is any other of the 239 public acts passed at the last session of the Legislature, excepting, of course, emergency acts. It is shielded from the jurisdiction of that referendum neither by the state nor by the federal Constitution. In short, the state, through its Legislature, has taken merely the first step toward effecting a change in the appointment of presidential electors; but, because of the petitions filed, it must await the second step which is the vote of the people. The legislative attempt in this case cannot be fully effective until

‘thirty days after the Governor shall have announced by public proclamation that the same has been ratified by a majority of the electors voting thereon at a general or special election.’”⁷⁴ [Emphasis added]

Appendix Q contains the entire text of the Court’s opinion in *In re Opinion of the Justices*.

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ There was a flurry of activity concerning women’s suffrage at the time. The Maine legislature adopted its contested law on women’s suffrage in presidential elections on March 28, 1919. Congress proposed the women’s suffrage amendment to the U.S. Constitution on June 4, 1919 and sent it to the states for ratification. The Maine Supreme Judicial Court announced its decision on August 28, 1919. The Maine Legislature ratified the proposed federal constitutional amendment on November 5, 1919. Tennessee’s ratification on August 18, 1920, brought the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution into effect.

When the voters of Maine voted on the suspended law, it was passed by a vote of 88,080 to 30,462.⁷⁵

The second case involving an interpretation of the word “legislature” in Article II of the U.S. Constitution came just prior to the November 2, 2004, presidential election. *Napolitano v. Davidson* involved a federal court challenge to an initiative petition proposing an amendment to the Colorado Constitution to adopt the whole-number proportional approach for choosing the state’s presidential electors (section 4.1.14). In that case, a Colorado voter asked that the Colorado Secretary of State be enjoined from holding the election on the proposed amendment. The plaintiff alleged that Amendment 36 violated Article II of the U.S. Constitution in that the voters were attempting to unconstitutionally preempt the role of the “legislature” in connection with the manner of appointing presidential electors.

The Colorado Attorney General defended the Secretary of State. Two representatives of those who had signed initiative petitions to place Amendment 36 on the ballot (the “proponents”) were granted the right to intervene in the litigation. Additionally, one Democratic and one Republican candidate for presidential elector in the November 2004 election attempted to intervene.⁷⁶

The Colorado Attorney General unqualifiedly defended the substantive provisions of Amendment 36. In response to the claim that the voters’ exercise of the initiative power to allocate presidential electors infringed upon Article II, the Attorney General stated that, when the people of Colorado use the initiative process, they act as the “legislature.” Specifically, the State of Colorado took the position that its voters were fully empowered to act, pursuant to Article II, to allocate presidential electors.

“Article II, §1 authorizes each state to act in a lawmaking capacity to select the manner in which it appoints its presidential electors.... For example, the lawmaking authority conferred by Article II, §1 encompasses the people’s power of referendum when such power is provided by the state constitution. *Cf. Hildebrant*, 241 U.S. at 569.⁷⁷ It follows that **the**

⁷⁶ The Elector-Intervenors were permitted to brief each of their legal arguments. After addressing the substance of their arguments, however, Judge Babcock ruled from the bench that their attempted intervention was not authorized, as they lacked standing to participate in the litigation.

⁷⁷ Appendix P contains the opinion of the U.S. Supreme Court in the case of *State of Ohio ex rel. Davis v. Hildebrant* cited by the Colorado Attorney General.

lawmaking authority conferred by Article II, §1 also encompasses the people’s power of initiative where the people are empowered by the state constitution to legislate via initiative....

“The Proposal (to proportionally allocate presidential electors based on the state’s popular vote) is an initiative by the people of Colorado as authorized by the Colorado Constitution. As such, it is an exercise of legislative power for the purpose of appointing presidential electors. The Proposal, therefore, is authorized by Article II, §1.”⁷⁸ [Emphasis added]

By the time the matter was fully briefed for the court, early voting had commenced in Colorado. Most absentee ballots had been sent to voters. A little more than one week remained until election day. On October 26, 2004, Judge Lewis Babcock heard the motions for preliminary injunction, filed by the plaintiff and the elector-intervenors, as well as the motions to dismiss filed by the Colorado Attorney General and the petition’s proponents. Judge Babcock denied the former and granted the latter, clearing the way for a vote by the people on Amendment 36 on November 2, 2004.

From the bench, Judge Babcock noted that the matter was not ripe for adjudication, as an actual controversy could be said to exist only if the election were held and a majority of voters approved the proposed change in the method of allocating Colorado’s presidential electors. Until that time, any opinion would only be advisory in nature.

Judge Babcock also noted that the issues involved in this case should be resolved in the first instance by the Colorado state courts and, therefore, that it was proper for the federal courts to abstain from intervening in this matter. Indeed, the Colorado challenge to the initiative petition on Amendment 36 was unusual in that it started in federal court. Most challenges to initiative and referendum petitions start in state courts.

In his oral ruling, Judge Babcock noted that the elector-intervenors had argued that Amendment 36 was “patently unconstitutional.” The judge expressly stated that this was not the case, but he added that

⁷⁸The Secretary of State’s Combined Motion to Dismiss and Response to Motion for Preliminary Injunction at 21–22, filed in *Napolitano v. Davidson*, Civil Action No. 04-B-2114, D.Colo. (2004).

because he did not have to reach the merits of the case, his ruling should not be taken as a judicial imprimatur concerning the constitutionality of Amendment 36.

In order to obtain a preliminary injunction, one generally must establish (among other things) that there is a substantial likelihood of prevailing on the merits when the matter goes to trial. This standard generally applies when one seeks to enjoin an election or any part of the election process.⁷⁹ The federal district court, in evaluating the motions for preliminary injunction, did not find that either the plaintiff or the elector-intervenors had a substantial likelihood of success on the merits with regard to their argument that Amendment 36 violated Article II.

On November 2, 2004, Amendment 36 was rejected by the voters (section 4.1.14), so none of the legal issues raised by the pre-election lawsuit was subsequently addressed in court. Nonetheless, the voters' right to use the initiative process to change the manner of appointing presidential electors in Colorado was not disturbed by the judiciary.

Long-standing historical practice by the states is consistent with the 1920 decision by the Maine Supreme Judicial Court and the outcome of the 2004 litigation in Colorado concerning the meaning of the word "legislature" in Article II of the U.S. Constitution.

When the U.S. Constitution took effect in 1788, the gubernatorial veto existed in Massachusetts and New York.^{80,81}

On November 20, 1788, both chambers of the Massachusetts legislature approved legislation specifying the manner for appointing the state's presidential electors. This legislation was presented to Governor John Hancock—an official who was manifestly not part of the two chambers of the state legislature. Governor Hancock approved the legislation.⁸²

In New York, a comprehensive bill was introduced in the Senate on December 13, 1788, for electing presidential electors, U.S. Representatives, and U.S. Senators. The Federalists controlled the state

⁷⁹ *Libertarian Party v. Buckley*. 938 F.Supp. 687, 690 (D. Colo. 1997). See also *Chandler v. Miller*. 520 U.S. 305, 311. 1997.

⁸⁰ Kole, Edward A. 1999. *The First 13 Constitutions of the First American States*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

⁸¹ Kole, Edward A. *The True Intent of the First American Constitutions of 1776–1791*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

⁸² Smith, Hayward H. 2001. Symposium, Law of Presidential Elections: Issues in the Wake of Florida 2000, History of the Article II Independent State legislature Doctrine, 29 *Florida State University Law Review* 731 at 760.

Senate, and the Anti-Federalists controlled the Assembly. The two houses could not agree on the method by which the legislature would elect presidential electors or U.S. Senators because each house wanted to enhance its own power in the process. The three issues were therefore considered separately.

As previously mentioned (section 8.3.5), the legislature passed legislation on January 27, 1789, providing the “manner” of electing U.S. Representatives (including the districts to be used). That bill was submitted to the Council of Revision composed of the Governor, the Chancellor, and the judges of the state supreme court. The Council approved the bill; the bill became law; and the elections of U.S. Representatives were held on March 3, 1789, in accordance with that law.

In addition (section 8.3.5), the legislature passed a bill in 1789 providing for the manner of electing U.S. Senators. This bill was presented to the Council, but the Council vetoed the bill, and the bill did not become law.

The legislature also debated a bill entitled “An act for regulating the manner of appointing electors who are to elect the President, and Vice-President of the United States of America.”⁸³ That is, the legislation specifying the manner of appointing presidential electors was in the same form as the vetoed bill specifying the manner of electing U.S. Representatives and U.S. Senators. That is, the legislature debated the bill concerning the manner of appointing presidential electors as an ordinary legislative bill—not as a concurrent resolution to be voted upon only by the two houses.

As it happened the two chambers of the New York legislature did not reach an agreement on the manner of appointing presidential electors in time for the first presidential election. Consequently, New York did not cast any electoral votes in the 1789 presidential election. Later, a bill was passed by both chambers of the legislature and submitted to the Council in time for the 1792 presidential election. It took effect.

Thus, actual practice in the two states that had the gubernatorial veto at the time when the U.S. Constitution first took effect indicates that, in connection with the state’s decision on the manner of appointing

⁸³ DenBoer, Gordon; Brown, Lucy Trumbull; and Hagermann, Charles D. (editors). 1986. *The Documentary History of the First Federal Elections 1788–1790*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. Volume III. Pages 217–435.

presidential electors, the word “legislature” in Article II meant the state’s lawmaking process—not just the two chambers of the state legislature.

Present-day practice by the states is consistent with practice from the time when the U.S. Constitution first took effect. Table 8.2 shows the section of each state’s current law specifying the manner of appointing

Table 8.2 PRESENT-DAY PRACTICE BY THE STATES CONCERNING THE MEANING OF THE WORD “LEGISLATURE” IN CONNECTION WITH STATE LAWS SPECIFYING THE MANNER OF APPOINTING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS

STATE	SECTION	WAS THE LEGISLATURE’S BILL PRESENTED TO THE STATE’S GOVERNOR?
Alabama	Ala.Code § 17-19-4	Yes
	Ala.Code § 17-19-5	Yes
	Ala. Code § 17-19-6	Yes
Alaska	AK ST § 15.15.450	Yes
Arizona	A.R.S. § 16-650	Yes
Arkansas	Ar. Code §7-8-304	Yes
California	Cal.Elec.Code § 15505	Yes
Colorado	C.R.S. § 1-11-106	Yes
	Section. 20 of Schedule to Colorado Constitution	No—Provision of 1876 Colorado Constitution
Connecticut	C.G.S. § 9-315	Yes
Delaware	15 Del. C. § 5703	Yes
	15 Del. C. § 5711	Yes
District of Columbia	D.C. Code, Sect. 1-1001.10	Yes
Florida	F.S.A. § 9.103.011	Yes
Georgia	Ga. Code Ann., § 21-2-499	Yes
Hawaii	H.R.S. § 2-14-24	Yes
Idaho	ID ST § 34-1215	Yes
Illinois	10 ILCS 5/21-2	Yes
	10 ILCS 5/21-3	Yes
Indiana	IC 3-12-5-7	Yes
Iowa	I.C.A. § 50.45	Yes
Kansas	KS ST § 25-702	Yes
Kentucky	KRS § 118.425	Yes
Louisiana	LSA-R.S. 18:1261	Yes
Maine	21-A M.R.S. § 723	Yes
	21-A M.R.S. § 802	Yes
Maryland	MD Code § 11-601	Yes
Massachusetts	M.G.L.A. 54 § 118	Yes
Michigan	M.C.L.A. 168.42	Yes
Minnesota	M.S.A. § 208.05	Yes
Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-605	Yes
Missouri	V.A.M.S. 128.070	Yes

Table 8.2 PRESENT-DAY PRACTICE BY THE STATES CONCERNING THE MEANING OF THE WORD “LEGISLATURE” IN CONNECTION WITH STATE LAWS SPECIFYING THE MANNER OF APPOINTING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTORS (cont.)

STATE	SECTION	WAS THE LEGISLATURE'S BILL PRESENTED TO THE STATE'S GOVERNOR?
Montana	Mt. St. §13-25-103	Yes
	Mt. St. §13-1-103	Yes
Nebraska	NE ST § 32-710	Yes
	NE ST § 32-1040	Yes
Nevada	N.R.S. 293.395	Yes
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. § 659:81	Yes
New Jersey	§19:3-26	Yes
New Mexico	N. M. S. A. 1978, § 1-15-14	Yes
New York	§ 12-102	Yes
North Carolina	N.C.G.S.A. § 163-210	Yes
North Dakota	ND ST 16.1-14-01	Yes
Ohio	R.C. § 3505.33	Yes
Oklahoma	26 Okl.St.Ann. § 7-136	Yes
	26 Okl.St.Ann. § 10-103	Yes
Oregon	O.R.S. § 254.065	Yes
Pennsylvania	25 P.S. § 3166	Yes
Rhode Island	§ 17-4-10	Yes
South Carolina	Code 1976 § 7-19-70	Yes
South Dakota	SDCL. § 12-20-35	Yes
Tennessee	T. C. A. § 2-8-110	Yes
Texas	§ 192.005	Yes
Utah	Utah Code 20A-4-304	Yes
	Utah Code 20A-13-302	Yes
Vermont	VT ST T. 17 § 2731	Yes
	VT ST T. 17 § 2592	Yes
Virginia	§ 24.2-675	Yes
	§ 24.2-673	Yes
Washington	Rev. Code Wash. (ARCW) § 29A.56.320 ⁸⁴	Yes
West Virginia	Article VII, Section 3 of West Virginia constitution ⁸⁵	No
Wisconsin	W.S.A. 5.01	Yes
Wyoming	WY ST § 22-17-117	Yes
	WY ST § 22-19-103	Yes

⁸⁴ Article III, section 4 of the Washington State Constitution specifies that, in all elections, the candidate “having the highest number of votes shall be declared duly elected.”

⁸⁵ Article VII, section 3 (ratified November 4, 1902) specifies that, in all elections, the candidate with “the highest number of votes for either of said offices, shall be declared duly elected thereto.”

presidential electors.⁸⁶ In every state, the law was not enacted merely by action of the two chambers of the state legislature but, instead, was presented to the state's Governor for approval or disapproval.

None of the state laws in table 8.2 was enacted by means of the citizen-initiative process; however, there have been numerous initiatives and referenda over the years on provisions of state election laws involving the manner of electing presidential electors.

On February 23, 1917, Maine voted on a "Proposed Constitutional Amendment Granting Suffrage to Women upon Equal Terms with Men." The proposition received 20,604 "yes" vote and 38,838 "no" votes.

In 1919, the Maine Supreme Judicial Court upheld a statewide referendum on a state statute entitled "An act granting to women the right to vote for presidential electors."⁸⁷

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was considerable controversy in Michigan (and other states) concerning the coattail effect of votes cast for President on races for lower offices. In particular, Republican county and township officeholders in Michigan sought to eliminate the voter's option to vote for all nominees of one party by casting a single so-called *straight-party* vote. When the Republicans ended 14 years of Democratic control of the Governor's office in 1962, the new Republican Governor and the Republican legislature enacted a statute requiring that voters cast a separate vote for President and a separate vote for each other office on the ballot (the so-called *Massachusetts ballot*).⁸⁸ A protest-referendum petition was circulated and filed, thereby suspending the statute. The voters rejected the statute in the November 1964 elections. Thus, presidential electors remained tethered in Michigan to the party's candidates for other offices (if the voter so desired).

Similarly, in 1972, an initiative petition was filed in Maine proposing to change the form of the ballot from party columns to individual offices (the *Massachusetts ballot*). This proposition passed by a vote of 110,867 to 64,506.

In 1976, an Oklahoma court wrote the following in *McClendon v. Slater* about state legislation concerning the manner of appointing presidential electors:

⁸⁶ That is, the statewide winner-take-all rule in 48 states and the District of Columbia and the congressional district system in Maine and Nebraska.

⁸⁷ *In re Opinion of the Justices*. 107 Atl. 705. 1919.

⁸⁸ Michigan Public Act 240 of 1964.

“It is fundamental that each state and its Legislature, under a Republican form of government possess all power to protect and promote the peace, welfare and safety of its citizens. The only restraints placed thereon are those withdrawn by the United States Constitution and the state’s fundamental law. Art. V, ss 1 and 2 express that these reservations **or withdrawals in the people under the Constitution of the State of Oklahoma are two in nature and as explicitly set out in Art. V, s 2 to be the ‘initiative’ and the ‘referendum’ processes.** For our purpose, **no other withdrawal or restraint is placed upon the broad fundamental powers of this state’s Legislature** by Art. V of the State Constitution.”⁸⁹ [Emphasis added]

More recently, voters have considered initiatives for instant run-off voting for presidential electors and other offices in Alaska in 2002, requirements for voter identification in Arizona in 2004, and voting by convicted felons in Massachusetts in 2000.

In *Commonwealth ex rel. Dummit v. O’Connell*, the Kentucky Court of Appeals wrote the following in 1944 in connection with a state law permitting soldiers to vote by absentee ballot for U.S. Representatives, U.S. Senators, and presidential electors:

“[T]he legislative process must be completed in the manner prescribed by the State Constitution in order to result in a valid enactment, even though that enactment be one which the Legislature is authorized by the Federal Constitution to make.”⁹⁰

It is important to note that the decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in *Bush v. Gore* in 2000 did nothing to change the meaning of the word “legislature” in the U.S. Constitution in Article II. In that case, the Court settled the dispute over Florida’s 2000 presidential vote by halting the manual recount of ballots that the Florida Supreme Court had ordered.

Referring to the 1892 case of *McPherson v. Blacker*, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote in *Bush v. Gore*:⁹¹

⁸⁹ *McClendon v. Slater*. 554 P.2d 774, 776 (Ok. 1976).

⁹⁰ *Commonwealth ex rel. Dummit v. O’Connell*. 181 S.W.2d 691, 694 (Ky. Ct. App. 1944).

⁹¹ *McPherson v. Blacker*. 146 U.S. 1 at 27. 1892.

“The individual citizen has no federal constitutional right to vote for electors for the President of the United States unless and until the state legislature chooses a statewide election as the means to implement its power to appoint members of the Electoral College. U.S. Const., Art. II, §1. **This is the source for the statement in *McPherson v. Blacker*, 146 U.S. 1, 35 (1892), that the State legislature’s power to select the manner for appointing electors is plenary;** it may, if it so chooses, select the electors itself, which indeed was the manner used by State legislatures in several States for many years after the Framing of our Constitution. *Id.*, at 28-33. History has now favored the voter, and in each of the several States the citizens themselves vote for Presidential electors. When the state legislature vests the right to vote for President in its people, the right to vote as the legislature has prescribed is fundamental; and one source of its fundamental nature lies in the equal weight accorded to each vote and the equal dignity owed to each voter. The State, of course, after granting the franchise in the special context of Article II, can take back the power to appoint electors. See *id.*, at 35.”⁹² [Emphasis added]

The U.S. Supreme Court did not change the prevailing definition of the word “legislature” in *Bush v. Gore* but, instead, identified the source (i.e., *McPherson v. Blacker*) of the undisputed statement that the “legislature” is indeed supreme in matters of choosing the manner of appointing a state’s presidential electors. The issues in *Bush v. Gore* did not concern the way that Florida’s election code was originally enacted (e.g., whether the election code was presented to the Governor for approval or disapproval or whether the voters had perhaps enacted the election code through the citizen-initiative process). Indeed, the Florida election code at issue in *Bush v. Gore* was not enacted by the legislature alone but, instead, was enacted as part by the ordinary lawmaking process involving presentation of the bill to the Governor for approval or disapproval (as shown in table 8.2).

Rather, *Bush v. Gore* was concerned with the breadth of authority of the Florida Supreme Court to establish a recount process *not found in*

⁹² *Bush v. Gore*. 531 U.S. 98 at 104. 2000.

Florida's pre-existing legislation after the voters had cast their votes on November 7, 2000. The U.S. Supreme Court specifically identified two issues to be decided in *Bush v. Gore*, namely

- (1) “whether the Florida Supreme Court established new standards for resolving Presidential election contests, thereby violating Art. II, §1, cl. 2, of the United States Constitution and failing to comply with 3 U.S.C. §5, ...”⁹³ and
- (2) “whether the use of standardless manual recounts violates the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses.”⁹⁴

In reaching its decision in *Bush v. Gore*, the Court referred to the “safe harbor” provision (3 U.S.C. §5).

“If any State shall have provided, **by laws enacted prior to the day fixed for the appointment of the electors**, for its final determination of any controversy or contest concerning the appointment of all or any of the electors of such State, by judicial or other methods or procedures, and such determination shall have been made at least six days before the time fixed for the meeting of the electors, such determination made pursuant to such law so existing on said day, and made at least six days prior to said time of meeting of the electors, shall be conclusive, and shall govern in the counting of the electoral votes as provided in the Constitution, and as hereinafter regulated, so far as the ascertainment of the electors appointed by such State is concerned.”⁹⁵ [Emphasis added]

The Court ruled (on December 12, 2000) that insufficient time remained to conduct a constitutional recount before the meeting of the Electoral College scheduled for December 18, 2000. Because there was insufficient time for a constitutional recount, Bush’s 537-vote plurality that had already been certified under terms of the Florida election code was allowed to stand.⁹⁶

⁹³ *Bush v. Gore*. 531 U.S. 98 at 103. 2000. See Appendix B for the complete wording of the so-called “safe harbor” provision—Title 3, Chapter 1, section 5 of the United States Code.

⁹⁴ *Bush v. Gore*. 531 U.S. 98 at 103. 2000.

⁹⁵ Title 3, chapter 1, section 5 of the United States Code.

⁹⁶ *Bush v. Gore*. 531 U.S. 98 at 110. 2000.

In *Bush v. Gore*, the Supreme Court did not address the issue of whether the Florida voters could substitute themselves for the legislature, through the citizen-initiative process or the protest-referendum process, concerning the manner of choosing presidential electors in Florida. In fact, the 1892 case (*McPherson v. Blacker*) cited by the Court in *Bush v. Gore* specifically mentioned the possibility that a state's legislative power might be "reposed" in a place other than the state legislature.

"The legislative power is the supreme authority, except as limited by the constitution of the state, and the sovereignty of the people is exercised through their representatives in the legislature, unless by the fundamental law power is elsewhere reposed."⁹⁷ [Emphasis added]

The citizen-initiative process—representing the authority of the citizens of a state to make their own laws—is consistent with the two exceptions contained in *McPherson v. Blacker*, namely that the legislature's power is supreme "except as limited by the constitution of the state" and except when "power is elsewhere reposed" "by the [state's] fundamental law." Initiatives are limitations on the power of the legislature because they enable the voters to displace the legislature by enacting laws of their own design. The initiative process is established by the state's fundamental law (i.e., constitution). Indeed, initiatives are the obvious alternative place where the state's legislative power might be "elsewhere reposed."

The citizen-initiative process has consistently been viewed as a limitation on the state legislature. For example, in 1964, *Lucas v. Forty-Fourth General Assembly*⁹⁸ approved the use of the initiative to "obtain relief against alleged malapportionment" of state legislative seats. In 1975, *Chapman v. Meier*⁹⁹ concerned the adoption of an initiative substituting the voters' will for the legislature's unwillingness to act. As a reservation of legislative power by the voters, the initiative process is necessarily an element of the fundamental law. In *Eastlake v. Forest City Enterprises, Inc.*, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote in 1976:

"Under our constitutional assumptions, all power derives from the people, who can delegate it to representative instru-

⁹⁷ *McPherson v. Blacker*. 146 U.S. 1 at 25. 1892.

⁹⁸ *Lucas v. Forty-Fourth General Assembly*. 377 U.S. 713 at 732–733. 1964.

⁹⁹ *Chapman v. Meier*. 420 U.S. 1 at 21. 1975.

ments which they create. See e.g., *The Federalist*, No. 39 (J. Madison). **In establishing legislative bodies, the people can reserve to themselves power to deal directly with matters which might otherwise be assigned to the legislature.**^{100,101} [Emphasis added]

In commenting on *Bush v. Gore* in *Breaking the Deadlock*, Judge Richard Posner wrote:

“[I]t is important that the approach be understood, and not rejected out of hand as meaning, for example, that the governor of a state cannot veto a proposed law on the appointment of the state’s Presidential electors or that the state’s supreme court cannot invalidate an election law as unconstitutional. **Article II does not regulate the process by which state legislation is enacted and validated**, any more than it precludes interpretation. **But once the law governing appointment of the state’s presidential electors is duly enacted**, upheld, and interpreted, (so far as interpretation is necessary to fill gaps and dispel ambiguities), the legislature has spoken and **the other branches of the state government must back off...**”¹⁰² [Emphasis added]

Bush v. Gore was not about “the process by which state legislation is enacted” but, instead, was about the extent to which the Florida Supreme should “back off.”

In summary, present-day practice by the states, actual practice by the states at the time that the U.S. Constitution took effect, legal commentary, and court decisions are consistent in supporting the view that the word “legislature” in Article II, section 1, clause 2 of the U.S. Constitution (the sixth entry in table 8.1) means the state’s lawmaking process—a process that includes the state’s Governor and the state’s voters in states having citizen-initiative and protest-referendum procedures.

¹⁰⁰ *Eastlake v. Forest City Enterprises, Inc.* 426 U.S. 668 at 672. 1976.

¹⁰¹ *Cf. James v. Valtierra*, 401 U.S. 137, 141 (1971) “[p]rovisions for referendums demonstrate devotion to democracy.”

¹⁰² Posner, Richard A. 2001. *Breaking the Deadlock: The 2000 Election, the Constitution, and the Courts*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Page 111.

As Kirby stated in 1962,

“it is safe to assume that state legislatures are limited by constitutional provisions for veto, referendum, and initiative in prescribing the manner of choosing presidential electors.”¹⁰³

8.3.7 Choosing the Manner of Conducting a Popular Election to Fill a U.S. Senate Vacancy

The 17th Amendment (providing for popular election of U.S. Senators) was ratified in 1913—in the midst of the period (1898–1918) when 19 states were adopting the initiative and referendum processes.^{104,105} The 17th Amendment provides:

“When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election **as the legislature may direct.**” [Emphasis added]

The phrase “as the legislature may direct” in the 17th Amendment parallels the wording of Article II of the U.S. Constitution concerning presidential electors, namely

“Each State shall appoint, in such Manner **as the Legislature thereof may direct**, a Number of Electors, equal to the whole Number of Senators and Representatives to which the State may be entitled in the Congress....”¹⁰⁶
[Emphasis added]

Moreover, the phrase “as the legislature may direct” in the 17th Amendment and Article II parallels the wording of Article I, section 4,

¹⁰³ Kirby, J. 1962. Limitations on the powers of the state legislatures over presidential elections. 27 *Law and Contemporary Problems* 495 at 504.

¹⁰⁴ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1999. *The Initiative: Citizen Law-Making*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

¹⁰⁵ Zimmerman, Joseph F. 1997. *The Referendum: The People Decide Public Policy*. Westport, CT: Praeger.

¹⁰⁶ U.S. Constitution. Article II, section 1, clause 2.

clause 1 of the U.S. Constitution concerning the “manner” of holding elections for U.S. Representatives and Senators, namely

“The Times, Places and Manner of holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be **prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof**; but the Congress may at any time by Law make or alter such Regulations, except as to the Places of chusing Senators.” [Emphasis added]

The practice of the states in enacting laws to implement the 17th Amendment is shown in table 8.3. This table shows the section of each state’s law that specifies the manner of holding the popular election to fill a vacancy in the U.S. Senate under the 17th Amendment and the section that specifies whether the Governor is empowered to make temporary appointments to the U.S. Senate prior to the vacancy-filling election. As can be seen, in no state was the enactment of implementing legislation for the 17th Amendment accomplished merely by action of the two chambers of the legislature. Instead, the actual practice of all states has been to treat the word “legislature” in the 17th Amendment to mean the “law-making process.” The “lawmaking process” concerning the 17th Amendment has involved legislative bills that have been presented to the state’s Governor for approval or disapproval and the use of the citizen-initiative process (in the cases of Arkansas in 1938 and Alaska in 2004).

Arkansas’s implementation of the 17th Amendment is noteworthy for two reasons. First, its current implementation was proposed by a citizen-initiative petition that was adopted by the voters in the November 8, 1938, general election. Second, Arkansas’s implementation was in the form of an amendment to the state constitution as distinguished from a statutory enactment.¹⁰⁷ In other words, neither the “legislature” nor “legislation” was involved in implementing the 17th Amendment in Arkansas.

The November 2004 elections provided two additional examples of the interpretation given to the word “legislature” by the states in connection with the 17th Amendment.

When U.S. Senator John Kerry was running for President in 2004, the Democratic-controlled legislature in Massachusetts passed a bill changing the procedure for filling U.S. Senate vacancies in Massachusetts. Under the pre-existing Massachusetts law, the Governor had the power to

¹⁰⁷ Section 1 Amendment 29 adopted November 8, 1938.

Table 8.3 PRACTICE BY THE STATES CONCERNING THE MEANING OF THE WORD “LEGISLATURE” IN CONNECTION WITH STATE LAWS SPECIFYING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 17TH AMENDMENT

STATE	SECTION	WAS THE LEGISLATURE'S BILL PRESENTED TO THE STATE'S GOVERNOR?
Alabama	Ala.Code § 36-9-7	Yes
	Ala.Code § 36-9-8	Yes
Alaska	AK ST § 15.40.140	No—Citizen-initiative process
	AK ST § 15.40.145	
Arizona	A.R.S. § 16-222	Yes
Arkansas	Const. Am. 29, § 1	No—Citizen-initiative process
California	Cal.Elec.Code § 10720	Yes
Colorado	C.R.S.A. § 1-12-201	Yes
Connecticut	C.G.S.A. § 9-211	Yes
Delaware	DE ST TI 15 § 7321	Yes
Florida	F.S.A. § 100.161	Yes
Georgia	Ga. Code Ann., § 21-2-542	Yes
Hawaii	HI ST § 17-1	Yes
Idaho	ID ST § 59-910	Yes
Illinois	10 ILCS 5/25-8	Yes
Indiana	IC 3-13-3-1	Yes
Iowa	I.C.A. § 69.8	Yes
Kansas	KS ST § 25-318	Yes
Kentucky	KRS § 63.200	Yes
Louisiana	LSA-R.S. 18:1278	Yes
Maine	21-A M.R.S.A. § 391	Yes
Maryland	MD Code, Election Law, § 8-602	Yes
Massachusetts	M.G.L.A. 54 § 140	Yes
Michigan	M.C.L.A. 168.105	Yes
Minnesota	M.S.A. § 204D.28	Yes
Mississippi	Miss. Code Ann. § 23-15-855	Yes
Missouri	V.A.M.S. 105.040	Yes
Montana	Mt. St. 13-25-202	Yes
Nebraska	NE ST § 32-565	Yes
Nevada	N.R.S. 304.030	Yes
New Hampshire	N.H. Rev. Stat. § 661:5	Yes
New Jersey	§19:3-26	Yes
New Mexico	N. M. S. A. 1978, § 1-15-14	Yes
New York	Mckinney's Consolidated Laws of New York, Chapter 47, Article 3	Yes
North Carolina	N.C.G.S.A. § 163-12	Yes
North Dakota	ND ST 16.1-13-08	Yes
Ohio	R.C. § 3521.02	Yes
Oklahoma	26 Okl. St. Ann. § 12-101	Yes

Table 8.3 PRACTICE BY THE STATES CONCERNING THE MEANING OF THE WORD “LEGISLATURE” IN CONNECTION WITH STATE LAWS SPECIFYING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 17TH AMENDMENT (cont.)

STATE	SECTION	WAS THE LEGISLATURE'S BILL PRESENTED TO THE STATE'S GOVERNOR?
Oregon	O.R.S. § 188.120	Yes
Pennsylvania	25 P.S. § 2776	Yes
Rhode Island	§ 17-4-9	Yes
South Carolina	Code 1976 § 7-19-20	Yes
South Dakota	SDCL. § 12-11-4	Yes
	SDCL. § 12-11-5	Yes
Tennessee	T. C. A. § 2-16-101	Yes
Texas	§ 204.001	Yes
	§ 204.002	Yes
	§ 204.003	Yes
	§ 204.004	Yes
Utah	§ 20A-1-502	Yes
Vermont	VT ST T. 17 § 2621	Yes
	VT ST T. 17 § 2622	Yes
Virginia	§ 24.2-207	Yes
Washington	RCW 29A.28.030	Yes
	RCW 29A.28.041	Yes
West Virginia	W. Va. Code, § 3-10-3	Yes
Wisconsin	W.S.A. 17.18	Yes
	W.S.A. 8.50	Yes
Wyoming	WY ST § 22-18-111	Yes

appoint a temporary replacement who would serve until the next general election. In other words, if Democrat Kerry had won the Presidency in November 2004, then the Republican Governor of Massachusetts would have been able to appoint a Republican to serve in the then-closely-divided U.S. Senate until November 2006 (almost two full years). Under the bill that the legislature passed, the Senate seat would remain vacant until a special election could be held (between 145 and 160 days after the creation of the vacancy). Thus, a special Senate election would have been held in Massachusetts in the spring of 2005 if Kerry had been elected President. The legislative bill was presented to Governor Mitt Romney for his approval or disapproval. That is, the constitutional phrase “as the Legislature thereof may direct” was interpreted to mean the law-making process. Predictably, the Republican Governor vetoed the bill passed by the Democratic legislature. As it happened, the legislature overrode the Governor’s veto, and the bill became law.

The election of U.S. Senator Frank Murkowski as Governor of Alaska in 2002 created a vacancy in the U.S. Senate. Murkowski appointed his daughter Lisa to serve the last two years of his Senate term, thereby focusing public attention on the operation of the 17th Amendment in Alaska. An initiative petition was circulated and filed to require that, in the future, a vacancy in the U.S. Senate would remain vacant until a special election could be called. The Alaska Constitution enables the legislature to keep an initiative proposition off the ballot if the legislature responds to the petition by enacting a “substantially” similar law. The legislature’s bill resembled the proposal in the petition in that it required a special election to fill a Senate vacancy; however, the legislature’s bill differed from the petition in that it authorized the Governor to appoint a temporary Senator prior to the popular election. This legislature’s bill was presented to the Governor for his approval or disapproval, and he signed it. The petition’s sponsors protested that the legislature’s alternative approach was not substantially the same as the initiative proposition because it gave the Governor’s appointee the advantage of incumbency in the special election.

On August 20, 2004, the Alaska Supreme Court decided that the legislature’s alternative was not substantially the same as the proposition in the initiative petition.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, the Court refused to consider a pre-election challenge to the use of the citizen-initiative process to change the manner of filling a vacancy in the U.S. Senate on the grounds that the U.S. Constitution required the “legislature” to make the decision. The Alaska Supreme Court allowed the voters to vote on the proposition in the petition in the November 2004 election. The voters then enacted the proposition in the petition (Ballot Measure 4) in the November 2004 election by a margin of 165,017 to 131,821.¹⁰⁹

That is, the phrase “as the Legislature thereof may direct” in the 17th Amendment (the seventh entry in table 8.1) has been interpreted as the state’s entire law-making process—not action by the two chambers of state’s legislature.

¹⁰⁸ *State of Alaska et al. v. Trust the People Initiative Committee*. Supreme Court Order No. S-11288.

¹⁰⁹ In the same election, the voters elected Lisa Murkowski to a full six-year term in the Senate by a margin of 149,446 to 139,878.

8.3.8 Empowering the Governor to Temporarily Fill a U.S. Senate Vacancy Until a Popular Election Is Held

The word “legislature” also appears in the 17th Amendment in connection with temporary appointments to the U.S. Senate.

“When vacancies happen in the representation of any State in the Senate, the executive authority of such State shall issue writs of election to fill such vacancies: Provided, That **the legislature of any State may empower the executive thereof to make temporary appointments until the people fill the vacancies by election** as the legislature may direct.” [Emphasis added]

As shown in table 8.3, the word “legislature” in the 17th Amendment (the eighth entry in table 8.1) has meant the state’s entire law-making process—not action by the two chambers of state’s legislature.

8.3.9 Consenting to the Federal Purchase of Enclaves

The U.S. Constitution empowers Congress to exercise exclusive

“... Authority over all Places purchased by the **Consent of the Legislature** of the State in which the Same shall be, for the Erection of Forts, Magazines, Arsenals, dock-Yards, and other needful Buildings.”¹¹⁰ [Emphasis added]

Prior to ratification of the U.S. Constitution, the states had been paying for the operation and maintenance of 13 lighthouses. Moreover, in 1789, several additional lighthouses were under construction. When the first Congress met in 1789, it offered to fund the operation and maintenance of all the lighthouses; however, Congress insisted that the sites become federal enclaves. Accordingly, Congress passed the Lighthouse Act on August 7, 1789, offering permanent funding for lighthouses on the condition that the state “legislatures” consented to the creation of the federal enclaves by August 15, 1790.¹¹¹ The Constitution required consent from the state “legislatures” and thus set the stage for a contemporary

¹¹⁰ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 9, clause 17.

¹¹¹ Grace, Adam S. 2005. *Federal-State “Negotiations” over Federal Enclaves in the Early Republic: Finding Solutions to Constitutional Problems at the Birth of the Lighthouse System*. Berkeley, CA: Berkeley Electronic Press. Working Paper 509. <http://law.bepress.com/expresso/eps/509>. Pages 1–11.

interpretation of the word “legislature” in the Enclaves Clause of the U.S. Constitution. The question was whether the word “legislature” referred to the two chambers of the state legislature or “the lawmaking process.”

At the time when the U.S. Constitution took effect, the gubernatorial veto existed in Massachusetts and New York.¹¹² Both chambers of the legislatures of Massachusetts and New York approved legislation consenting to the cession of their lighthouses. These legislative bills were then presented, respectively, to the Governor of Massachusetts (an official who was manifestly not part of the state legislature) and the New York Council of Revision (a body composed of the Governor and other officials who were manifestly not part of the state legislature). The Massachusetts legislation became law on June 10, 1790,¹¹³ and the New York legislation became law on February 3, 1790.¹¹⁴ Cession legislation was similarly enacted in New York in connection with the construction of a new lighthouse at Montauk in 1792—with the legislative bill again being presented to the Governor and the Council.¹¹⁵

Thus, practice by the states in connection with the ninth entry in table 8.1 has interpreted the word “legislature” to mean the state’s law-making process in connection with the consent by a state to the acquisition of enclaves by the federal government (the ninth entry in Table 8.1).

8.3.10 Consenting to the Formation of New States from Territory of Existing States

The U.S. Constitution provides:

“... No new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the **Consent of the Legislatures** of the States concerned as well as of the Congress.”¹¹⁶ [Emphasis added]

As of the time of the writing of this edition, the authors believe that this usage of the word “legislature” refers to the state’s law-making

¹¹² Kole, Edward A. 1999. *The First 13 Constitutions of the First American States*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

¹¹³ Ch. 4, 1790 Massachusetts Laws 77.

¹¹⁴ New York, Ch. 3, February 3, 1790.

¹¹⁵ New York, Ch. 4, December 18, 1792.

¹¹⁶ U.S. Constitution. Article IV, section 3, clause 1.

process in connection with the consent of a state to the formation of a new state from its territory (the 10th entry in table 8.1).

8.3.11 Requesting Federal Military Assistance to Quell Domestic Violence

The U.S. Constitution provides:

“The United States shall guarantee to every State in this Union a Republican Form of Government, and shall protect each of them against Invasion; and on **Application of the Legislature**, or of the Executive (when the Legislature cannot be convened) against domestic Violence.”¹¹⁷ [Emphasis added]

This provision of the U.S. Constitution (the Guarantee Clause) specifically creates a contrast between the state’s “executive” and the “legislature.”

The Guarantee Clause has been only rarely invoked. On April 4, 1842, Rhode Island Governor Samuel Ward King requested that President John Tyler provide federal military aid to quell a potential insurrection, known as the Dorr Rebellion, in which an alternative government for Rhode Island was attempting to gain recognition and legitimacy. The Governor’s request was not accompanied by any action by the state legislature. President Tyler took no action in response to the Governor’s request.¹¹⁸

Then, in 1844, the Freeholders’ legislature of Rhode Island passed a resolution requested that President John Tyler provide federal military aid to quell the Dorrites. Again, President Tyler took no action in response to the Legislature’s resolution.¹¹⁹

The Guarantee Clause of the U.S. Constitution distinguishes the state’s “legislature” from the state’s Governor. These two requests concerning the Dorr Rebellion in Rhode Island suggest that the word “legislature” Article IV, section 4 of the U.S. Constitution (the 11th entry in table 8.1) was interpreted, in Rhode Island in the 1840s, to mean the two chambers of the state legislature.

¹¹⁷ U.S. Constitution. Article IV, section 4.

¹¹⁸ Wiecek, William M. 1972. *The Guarantee Clause of the U.S. Constitution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. Page 105.

¹¹⁹ Gettleman, Marvin E. 1973. *The Dorr Rebellion: A Study in American Radicalism 1833–1849*. New York, NY: Random House. Page 105.

8.3.12 Pre-Election Challenges Versus Post-Election Litigation

The use of the citizen-initiative process to enact the proposed interstate compact can be challenged either before or after the statewide vote on the statute proposed by a petition.

Both state and federal courts have been reluctant, as a general principle, to intervene in the citizen-initiative process prior to enactment of a proposition by the voters. In “Pre-Election Judicial Review of Initiatives and Referendums,” James Gordon and David Magleby wrote:

“Most courts will not entertain a challenge to a measure’s substantive validity before the election. A minority of courts, however, are willing to conduct such review. Arguably, pre-election review of a measure’s substantive validity involves issuing an advisory opinion, violates ripeness requirements and the policy of avoiding unnecessary constitutional questions, and is an unwarranted judicial intrusion into a legislative process.”¹²⁰

The numerous practical difficulties with pre-election judicial challenges to ballot propositions partly explain judicial reluctance to such challenges. As Justice William O. Douglas wrote in his concurring opinion in *Ely v. Klahr* in 1971:

“We are plagued with election cases coming here on the eve of election, with the remaining time so short we do not have the days needed for oral argument and for reflection on the serious problems that are usually presented.”¹²¹

The practical difficulties associated with pre-election challenges have been compounded in recent years by the increasing use of absentee voting and early voting (where walk-in polling places are operated at designated locations, such as government buildings, for several weeks prior to election day).

The general reluctance of courts to prevent a vote on ballot measures proposed by the citizen-initiative process is illustrated by the efforts in the early 1990s to enact state constitutional amendments imposing term

¹²⁰ Gordon, James D. and Magleby, David B. 1989. Pre-Election Judicial Review of Initiatives and Referendums. 64 *Notre Dame Law Review* 298–320 at 303.

¹²¹ *Ely v. Klahr*. 403 U.S. 103 at 120–121. 1971.

limits on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate. Many questioned whether the proposed state constitutional amendments were consistent with the specific federal constitutional provisions establishing qualifications for these federal offices. Despite pre-election legal challenges to the initiative petitions in some states, in no instance did the courts prevent a vote by the people on the grounds that congressional term limits violated the U.S. Constitution. It was only after these propositions had been enacted by the voters in a number of states that the courts examined the constitutional validity of the ballot propositions. In 1995, the U.S. Supreme Court held that term limits on members of the U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate could not be imposed at the state level.¹²²

More recently, the California Supreme Court refused, on July 26, 2005, to remove an initiated proposition from the ballot in California's November 8, 2005, statewide election. The court order stated:

“The stay issued by the Court of Appeal as part of its July 22, 2005, decision, restraining the Secretary of State from taking any steps, pending the finality of the Court of Appeal’s decision, to place Proposition 80 in the ballot pamphlet or on the ballot of the special election to be held on November 8, 2005, is vacated. As the Court of Appeal recognized, California authorities establish that

‘it is usually more appropriate to review constitutional and other challenges to ballot propositions or initiative measures after an election rather than to disrupt the electoral process by preventing the exercise of the people’s franchise, in the absence of some clear showing of invalidity.’ (*Brosnahan v. Eu* (1982) 31 Cal.3d 1, 4.)

“Because, unlike the Court of Appeal, at this point we cannot say that it is clear that article XII, section 5, of the California Constitution precludes the enactment of Proposition 80 as an initiative measure, we conclude that the validity of Proposition 80 need not and should not be determined prior to the November 8, 2005 election. Accordingly, the Secretary

¹²² *U.S. Term Limits v. Thornton*. 514 U.S. 779. 1995.

of State and other public officials are directed to proceed with all the required steps to place Proposition 80 in the ballot pamphlet and on the ballot of the special election to be held on November 8, 2005. After that election, we shall determine whether to retain jurisdiction in this matter and resolve the issues raised in the petition.”¹²³

8.3.13 Curability of the Potential Invalidity of Popular Voting

Were a court decision to invalidate a popular vote in favor of the proposed interstate compact on state constitutional grounds applicable to one particular state or on federal constitutional grounds applicable to all states, the fact would remain that the people would have spoken in favor of nationwide popular election of the President in those states where the people had voted on the invalidated ballot measures. The favorable public vote would remain as a political fact. In that event, practical political considerations suggest that legislators in any affected state would probably be willing to correct the technical defect concerning the method of enactment of the compact in their state by re-enacting the compact in the legislature. The proposed compact is not inherently adverse to the interests of state legislators, and there is no reason that state legislators are, as a group, any less likely to favor the concept of nationwide popular election of the President than the public at large. It should, therefore, be possible to re-enact the proposed compact in the legislatures of many or all states where the voters spoke in favor of the compact. Regardless of the extent to which the citizen-initiative process may be used to spotlight the issue of the nationwide popular election of the President, state legislatures must necessarily provide most of the support needed to bring the proposed compact into effect.

8.4 DOES THE PROPOSED COMPACT ENCROACH ON THE POWERS OF NON-MEMBER STATES?

An interstate compact may potentially affect non-member states. For example, upstream states in a river basin might enter into a compact to use water to the extreme disadvantage of downstream states that do not belong to the compact.

¹²³ *Independent Energy Producers Association et al., Petitioners, v. Bruce McPherson, as Secretary of State, etc., Respondent; Robert Finkelstein et al., Real Parties in Interest*. Case number S135819. July 26, 2005.

Justice White’s dissent in *U.S. Steel Corp. v. Multistate Tax Commission* in 1978 raises the possibility that a court would consider the question of whether a particular interstate compact adversely encroaches on the powers of non-member states.

“A proper understanding of what would encroach upon federal authority, however, must also incorporate encroachments on the authority and power of non-Compact States.”¹²⁴

The U.S. Supreme Court has twice considered, but rejected, arguments that an interstate compact was unconstitutional because it impaired the sovereign rights of non-member states or enhanced the political power of the member states at the expense of other states. For example, in *U.S. Steel Corp. v. Multistate Tax Commission*, the Supreme Court wrote in 1978:

“Appellants’ final Compact Clause argument charges that the Compact impairs the sovereign rights of nonmember States. Appellants declare, without explanation, that if the use of the unitary business and combination methods continues to spread among the Western States, unfairness in taxation—presumably the risks of multiple taxation—will be avoidable only through the efforts of some coordinating body. Appellants cite the belief of the Commission’s Executive Director that the Commission represents the only available vehicle for effective coordination, and conclude that **the Compact exerts undue pressure to join upon nonmember States in violation of their “sovereign right” to refuse.**

“We find no support for this conclusion. It has not been shown that any unfair taxation of multistate business resulting from the disparate use of combination and other methods will redound to the benefit of any particular group of States or to the harm of others. Even if the existence of such a situation were demonstrated, it could not be ascribed to the existence of the Compact. **Each member State is free to adopt**

¹²⁴ *U.S. Steel Corp. v. Multistate Tax Commission*. 434 U.S. at 494. 1978.

the auditing procedures it thinks best, just as it could if the Compact did not exist. Risks of unfairness and double taxation, then, are independent of the Compact.

“Moreover, **it is not explained how any economic pressure that does exist is an affront to the sovereignty of nonmember States.** Any time a State adopts a fiscal or administrative policy that affects the programs of a sister State, pressure to modify those programs may result. Unless that pressure transgresses the bounds of the Commerce Clause or the Privileges and Immunities Clause of Art. IV, 2, see, e.g., *Austin v. New Hampshire*, 420 U.S. 656 (1975), it is not clear how our federal structure is implicated. Appellants do not argue that an individual State’s decision to apportion nonbusiness income—or to define business income broadly, as the regulations of the Commission actually do—touches upon constitutional strictures. This being so, we are not persuaded that the same decision becomes a threat to the sovereignty of other States if a member State makes this decision upon the Commission’s recommendation.”¹²⁵ [Emphasis added]

In *Northeast Bancorp, Inc. v. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*, the U.S. Supreme Court wrote in 1985 that it

“do[es] not see how the statutes in question ... enhance the *political* power of the New England states at the expense of other States....”¹²⁶

Justice White’s criterion has never been embraced to invalidate any compact. In any event, it is unlikely that the courts would apply his criterion to the proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” because both member and non-member states would be treated equally in that the popular votes of all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be added together to obtain a nationwide popular vote total for each presidential slate.

¹²⁵ *Id.* at 477–478.

¹²⁶ *Northeast Bancorp, Inc. v. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*. 472 U.S. 159 at 176. 1985.

8.5 DOES THE PROPOSED COMPACT IMPERMISSIBLY DELEGATE A STATE'S SOVEREIGN POWER?

No court has invalidated an interstate compact on the grounds that the compact impermissibly has delegated a state's sovereign power. Indeed, the purpose of almost every interstate compact¹²⁷ is, as Marian Ridgeway put it in *Interstate Compacts: A Question of Federalism*,

“[to] shift a part of a state's authority to another state or states.”¹²⁸

Nonetheless, the question arises as to whether the proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” would be an impermissible delegation of a state's sovereign power. In particular, the following question might be raised:

May a state delegate, under the auspices of an interstate compact, the choice of its presidential electors to the collective choice of the voters of a group of states?

This inquiry requires an examination of whether the appointment of a state's presidential electors is one of its sovereign powers and, if so, whether that power can be shared with voters throughout the United States.

8.5.1 A State's “Sovereign Powers” May Be Delegated by an Interstate Compact

The sovereign authority of a state is not easily defined. The federal courts have not defined sovereignty, although they have attempted to describe it on various occasions. In *Hinderlider v. La Plata River and Cherry Creek Ditch Co.* in 1938, the U.S. Supreme Court traced the history of compacts during the colonial period and immediately thereafter and viewed compacts as a corollary to the ability of independent nations to enter into treaties with one another.

“The compact—the legislative means [for resolving conflicting claims]—adapts to our Union of sovereign States the age-old treaty making power of sovereign nations.”¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Except for purely advisory compacts.

¹²⁸ Ridgeway, Marian E. 1971. *Interstate Compacts: A Question of Federalism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. Page 300.

¹²⁹ *Hinderlider v. La Plata River & Cherry Creek Ditch Co.* 304 U.S. 92 at 104. 1938.

In the 1992 case of *Texas Learning Technology Group v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, the Fifth Circuit wrote:

“The power to tax, the power of eminent domain, and the police power are the generally acknowledged sovereign powers.”¹³⁰

The appropriation power is another example of a power that is viewed as fundamental to a state.

The filling of public positions that are central to the operation of state government (including legislative, executive, or judicial positions and the position of delegate to a state constitutional convention) is regarded as a sovereign state power.^{131,132}

The historical practice of the states, the long history of approvals of interstate compacts by Congress, and court decisions all support the view that a state’s sovereign powers may be granted to a group of states acting through an interstate compact. For example, New York and New Jersey delegated certain sovereign powers to the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, including the power of eminent domain and the power to exempt property from taxation. New York and New Jersey granted the power to tax to the commission created by the 1953 New York–New Jersey Waterfront Compact. Such delegation was upheld in 1944 in *Commissioner of Internal Revenue v. Shamberg’s Estate*.¹³³

The Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Compact provided:

“The signatory states agree to appropriate for the salaries, office and other administrative expenses, their proper proportion of the annual budget as determined by the Commission and approved by the governors of the signatory states....”

¹³⁰ *Texas Learning Technology Group v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*. 958 F.2d 122 at 124 (5th Cir. 1992).

¹³¹ See, e.g., *Kingston Associates Inc. v. LaGuardia*, 281 N.Y.S. 390, 398 (S.Ct. 1935) (the exercise of public offices within the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government); *People v. Brady*, 135 N.E. 87, 89 (Ill. 1922) (same); *People v. Hardin*, 356 N.E.2d 4 (Ill. 1976) (the power to appoint officials to commissions or agencies within the three branches of state government); *State v. Schorr*, 65 A.2d 810, 813 (Del. 1948) (same); and *Forty-Second Legislative Assembly v. Lennon*, 481 P.2d 330, 330 (Mont. 1971) (the role of a delegate to a state constitutional convention).

¹³² Engdahl. 1965. Characterization of Interstate Arrangements: When Is a Compact Not a Compact? 64 *Michigan Law Review* 63 at 64–66.

¹³³ *Commissioner of Internal Revenue v. Shamberg’s Estate* 144 F.2d 998 at 1005–1006. (2nd Cir. 1944).

In *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims* (discussed at greater length in section 8.6.2), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the delegation of West Virginia's appropriation power and wrote in 1950:

“The issue before us is whether the West Virginia Legislature had authority, under her Constitution, to enter into a compact which involves delegation of power to an interstate agency and an agreement to appropriate funds for the administrative expenses of the agency.

“That a legislature may delegate to an administrative body the power to make rules and decide particular cases is one of the axioms of modern government. The West Virginia court does not challenge the general proposition but objects to the delegation here involved because it is to a body outside the State and because its Legislature may not be free, at any time, to withdraw the power delegated.... **What is involved is the conventional grant of legislative power. We find nothing in that to indicate that West Virginia may not solve a problem such as the control of river pollution by compact and by the delegation, if such it be, necessary to effectuate such solution by compact....** Here, the State has bound itself to control pollution by the more effective means of an agreement with other States. The Compact involves a reasonable and carefully limited delegation of power to an interstate agency.”¹³⁴ [Emphasis added]

In the 1970 U.S. Supreme Court case of *Oregon v. Mitchell*, Justice Potter Stewart (concurring in part and dissenting in part) pointed out that if Congress had not acted to bring about uniformity among state durational residency requirements for voters casting ballots in presidential elections, then the states could have adopted an interstate compact to do so.¹³⁵ The right to vote for a presidential elector is not beyond the reach of an interstate compact.

In short, there is nothing about the nature of an interstate compact that fundamentally prevents the delegation of a state's sovereign power to a group of compacting states.

¹³⁴ *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims*. 341 U.S. 22 at 30–31. 1950.

¹³⁵ *Oregon v. Mitchell*. 400 U.S. 112 at 286–287.

As Ridgeway wrote:

“If the state chooses to inaugurate some new pattern of local government [by means of an interstate compact] that is not in conflict with the state’s constitution, it can do so, as long as the people lose none of their **ultimate power to control the state itself.**”¹³⁶ [Emphasis added]

This statement reflects various court decisions that emphasize the ability of a sovereign entity to operate independently of any other.¹³⁷

8.5.2 The Proposed Compact Does Not Delegate a Sovereign State Power

There is no authority from any court regarding whether presidential electors exercise a sovereign power of their state. Given the temporary nature of the function of presidential electors, it is doubtful that a court would rule that presidential electors exercise inherent governmental authority. In contrast to members of the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of state government or members of a state constitutional convention, the function that presidential electors perform is not one that addresses the sovereign governance of the state. Instead, presidential electors decide the identity of the chief executive of the federal government. That is, the selection of electors is not in any way a manifestation of the way in which the state itself is governed.

If the power to determine a state’s electors is deemed not to be a sovereign power of the state, then the ability to delegate it is unquestioned. No court has invalidated an interstate compact for delegating a power that is not central to the organic ability of a state to operate independently as a political and legal entity, no matter how broad the delegation. In *Hinderlider v. La Plata River and Cherry Creek Ditch Co.*, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that a compact to administer an interstate stream was

“binding upon the citizens of each State and all water claimants, even where the State had granted the water rights before it entered into the compact.”¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ridgeway, Marian E. 1971. *Interstate Compacts: A Question of Federalism*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

¹³⁷ See, for example, the 1793 case of *Chisholm v. Georgia* for a discussion of the historic origins of state sovereignty.

¹³⁸ *Hinderlider v. La Plata River and Cherry Creek Ditch Company*. 304 U.S. 92 at 106. 1938.

Given the states' exclusive role under the Constitution to determine the manner of appointing its presidential electors,¹³⁹ if the determination of a state's electors is a sovereign power and its delegation would shift political power to the group of compacting states, the proposed compact will not be deemed to compromise federal supremacy.¹⁴⁰ The fact of the delegation would not, in and of itself, violate the U.S. Constitution.

8.6 IS THE SIX-MONTH BLACKOUT PERIOD FOR WITHDRAWALS FROM THE COMPACT ENFORCEABLE?

This section begins by discussing the importance of the withdrawal provisions of the proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” and then considers the

- withdrawal provisions of typical interstate compacts (section 8.6.1),
- legal enforceability of withdrawal provisions of the proposed compact (section 8.6.2), and
- additional state and federal limitations on withdrawals from the proposed compact (section 8.3.3).

The proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” permits any member state to withdraw, subject to the limitation that a withdrawal cannot take effect during a six-month period between July 20 of a presidential election year and January 20 of the following year. This blackout period contains the following six events relating to presidential elections:

- (1) national nominating conventions,¹⁴¹
- (2) the fall campaign period,
- (3) election day in early November,
- (4) the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December,
- (5) the counting of the electoral votes by Congress on January 6, and
- (6) the inauguration of the President and Vice President for the new term on January 20.

The blackout period in the proposed compact is aimed at preventing a withdrawal, for partisan political reasons, in the midst of the

¹³⁹ *McPherson v. Blacker*: 146 U.S. 1. 1892.

¹⁴⁰ See *Northeast Bancorp, Inc. v. Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System*. 472 U.S. 159 at 176. 1985.

¹⁴¹ All recent national nominating conventions of the major parties have occurred after July 20 of the presidential election year.

presidential election process and, in particular, during the especially sensitive 35-day period between election day in early November and the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December.

Withdrawal from the proposed compact requires passage of legislation to repeal the compact. Because most state legislatures are not in session in November and December, it would be necessary to call the legislature into special session for this purpose. Governors generally have the power to call their state legislatures into special session. In some cases, legislative leaders have an independent power to convene a special session. All Governors have the power to veto legislative bills.¹⁴² Thus, unless the legislative leadership possesses the power to convene a special session and has a veto-proof majority, the Governor's support would, as a practical matter, be required for any politically motivated effort to repeal the compact. An additional obstacle to a politically motivated repeal of the compact arises from the fact that most state constitutions specify that new state laws do not take immediate effect—that is, the effective date for new legislation is automatically delayed by a designated amount of time. Immediate effect would be required for a politically motivated withdrawal from the compact because such an effort would necessarily occur during the 35-day window between election day in early November and the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December. Most constitutions require a super-majority (typically two-thirds) in both houses of the legislature to give immediate effect to new legislation. In addition, many state constitutions impose significant state-specific constitutional limitations applicable to the repeal or amendment of legislation enacted by the citizen-initiative process (section 8.6.3).

Having said all that, at any given time, a certain small number of states would inevitably have the lopsided political control that could, in theory, permit the proposed compact to be repealed during the 35-day period between election day in early November and the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December. Even then, such a repeal would be politically relevant only if

- the number of electoral votes cast in favor of the nationwide popular vote winner by the compacting states remain-

¹⁴² In North Carolina, a gubernatorial veto can be overridden by a majority vote of both houses. In other states, a super-majority vote of both houses is necessary to override a veto.

ing after the withdrawal, when added to the electoral votes cast in favor of the nationwide winner by all non-compacting states, were less than 270; and

- the winner of the nationwide popular vote is different from the winner of the electoral vote (computed using the statewide winner-take-all rule).

If all of the above conditions were to converge, then it would be possible—absent the compact’s six-month blackout period—for a state to escape its obligation to award its electoral votes to the nationwide popular vote winner at the very moment when it would matter. Such a result would be unfair to voters, candidates, political parties, and the states that entered the compact in reliance on each member state fulfilling its obligations under the compact.

The question therefore arises as to the enforceability of the blackout period for withdrawals contained in the proposed compact.

8.6.1 Withdrawal Provisions of Typical Interstate Compacts

An interstate compact is, first of all, a contract. Consequently, the general principles of contract law apply to interstate compacts. Unless a contract provides otherwise, a contract may be amended or terminated only by unanimous consent of its signatories. In particular, unless a contract provides otherwise, a party cannot unilaterally renounce a contract.

With the exception of compacts that are presumed to be permanent (for example, those settling boundary disputes), almost all interstate compacts permit a party state to withdraw. Moreover, almost all compacts specify the procedures that a party state must follow in order to withdraw.

A small number of interstate compacts permit any party state to withdraw instantaneously. For example, the Boating Offense Compact provides:

“Any party state may withdraw from this compact by enacting a statute repealing the same.”

The Interstate Compact on Licensure of Participants in Horse Racing with Parimutuel Wagering permits instantaneous withdrawal as soon as the Governor of the withdrawing state performs the task of notifying the other compacting states.

“Any party state may withdraw from this compact by enacting a statute repealing this compact, but no such withdrawal shall become effective until the head of the executive branch of the withdrawing state has given notice in writing of such withdrawal to the head of the executive branch of all other party states.”

In contrast, the vast majority of interstate compacts impose both a notification requirement for withdrawal and a delay before a withdrawal becomes effective. The length of the delay is typically calibrated based on the nature of the compact. Compacts frequently specify that a withdrawal does not interrupt, in midstream, any process that began while the withdrawing state was part of the compact and that a withdrawal does not cancel obligations that a withdrawing state incurred while it was part of the compact.

For example, the compact on the Interstate Taxation of Motor Fuels Consumed by Interstate Buses permits withdrawal after one year’s notice.

“This compact shall enter into force when enacted into law by any 2 states. Thereafter it shall enter into force and become binding upon any state subsequently joining when such state has enacted the compact into law. Withdrawal from the compact shall be by act of the legislature of a party state, but shall not take effect until one year after the governor of the withdrawing state has notified the governor of each other party state, in writing, of the withdrawal.”

The Interstate Mining Compact contains similar provisions.

The delay is generally based on the subject matter of the compact. The delay is typically lengthy when the compact’s remaining parties may need time to make alternative arrangements or to adjust economically to a withdrawal. For example, the Rhode Island–Massachusetts Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Compact requires that a withdrawing state give notice five years in advance.

“Any party state may withdraw from this compact by repealing its authorizing legislation, and such rights of access to regional facilities enjoyed by generators in that party state shall thereby terminate. However, no such withdrawal shall

take effect until five years after the governor of the withdrawing state has given notice in writing of such withdrawal to the Commission and to the governor of each party state.”

Some compacts impose a longer withdrawal period for a member having a special obligations under the compact. For example, the Southwestern Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact imposes a five-year delay for withdrawal on the state that receives and stores the radioactive waste (California in this case), but only a two-year delay on the non-host states (Arizona, North Dakota, and South Dakota). A host state withdrawal would require that all of the non-host states scramble to find an alternative place to store their radioactive waste, whereas a withdrawal by a non-host state would merely necessitate economic readjustment at the facility operated by the host state.

“A party state, other than the host state, may withdraw from the compact by repealing the enactment of this compact, but this withdrawal shall not become effective until two years after the effective date of the repealing legislation....

“If the host state withdraws from the compact, the withdrawal shall not become effective until five years after the effective date of the repealing legislation.”

The Texas Low-Level Radioactive Waste Disposal Compact similarly imposes a longer time delay for withdrawal by hosts than non-hosts.

The Delaware River Basin Compact requires advance notice of at least 20 years for withdrawal, with such notice being allowed only during a five-year window every 100 years.

“The duration of this compact shall be for an initial period of 100 years from its effective date, and it shall be continued for additional periods of 100 years if not later than 20 years nor sooner than 25 years prior to the termination of the initial period or any succeeding period none of the signatory States, by authority of an act of its Legislature, notifies the commission of intention to terminate the compact at the end of the then current 100-year period.”

Some compacts provide that a state’s withdrawal will not affect any legal action or process that was undertaken while the withdrawing party

was still part of the compact. For example, the Agreement on Detainers provides:

“This agreement shall enter into full force and effect as to a party state when such state has enacted the same into law. A state party to this agreement may withdraw herefrom by enacting a statute repealing the same. However, the withdrawal of any state shall not affect the status of any proceedings already initiated by inmates or by state officers at the time such withdrawal takes effect, nor shall it affect their rights in respect thereof.”

The Interstate Compact on the Placement of Children (one of the compacts to which all 50 states and the District of Columbia belong) provides:

“This compact shall be open to joinder by any state, territory or possession of the United States, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and, with the consent of Congress, the Government of Canada or any province thereof. It shall become effective with respect to any such jurisdiction when such jurisdiction has enacted the same into law. Withdrawal from this compact shall be by the enactment of a statute repealing the same, but shall not take effect until two years after the effective date of such statute and until written notice of the withdrawal has been given by the withdrawing state to the Governor of each other party jurisdiction. Withdrawal of a party state shall not affect the rights, duties and obligations under this compact of any sending agency therein with respect to a placement made prior to the effective date of withdrawal.”

The Interstate Compact on Juveniles (another compact to which all 50 states and the District of Columbia adhere) provides:

“That this compact shall continue in force and remain binding upon each executing state until renounced by it. Renunciation of this compact shall be by the same authority which executed it, by sending six months’ notice in writing of its intention to withdraw from the compact to the other states

party hereto. The duties and obligations of a renouncing state under Article VII hereof shall continue as to parolees and probationers residing therein at the time of withdrawal until retaken or finally discharged. Supplementary agreements entered into under Article X hereof shall be subject to renunciation as provided by such supplementary agreements, and shall not be subject to the six months' renunciation notice of the present Article."

The Multistate Tax Compact provides:

"Any party state may withdraw from this compact by enacting a statute repealing the same. No withdrawal shall affect any liability already incurred by or chargeable to a party state prior to the time of such withdrawal.

"No proceeding commenced before an arbitration board prior to the withdrawal of a state and to which the withdrawing state or any subdivision thereof is a party shall be discontinued or terminated by the withdrawal, nor shall the board thereby lose jurisdiction over any of the parties to the proceeding necessary to make a binding determination therein."

The Interstate Agreement Creating a Multistate Lottery (MUSL) delays return of the departing lottery's share of the prize reserve fund until the expiration of the period for winners to claim their lotto prizes.

"That MUSL shall continue in existence until this agreement is revoked by all of the party lotteries. The withdrawal of one or more party lotteries shall not terminate this agreement among the remaining lotteries....

"A party lottery wishing to withdraw from this agreement shall give the board a six months notice of its intention to withdraw....

"In the event that a party lottery terminates, voluntarily or involuntarily, or MUSL is terminated by agreement of the parties, the prize reserve fund share of the party lottery or lotteries shall not be returned to the party lottery or lotteries until the later of one year from and after the date of termina-

tion or final resolution of any pending unresolved liabilities arising from transactions processed during the tenure of the departing lottery or lotteries. The voluntary or involuntary termination of a party lottery or lotteries does not cancel any obligation to MUSL which the party lottery or lotteries incurred before the withdrawal date.”

Many compacts specifically provide that a state’s withdrawal will not affect any obligations that the withdrawing state incurred while it was part of the compact. For example, the Multistate Tax Compact provides:

“No withdrawal shall affect any liability already incurred by or chargeable to a party state prior to the time of such withdrawal.”

The Rhode Island–Massachusetts Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Management Compact and Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Compact have a similar provision.

Occasionally, a compact permits a member state to withdraw selectively from its obligations under the compact—that is, to withdraw from the compact with respect to some states, but to remain in the compact with respect to other states. For example, the Interpleader Compact provides:

“This compact shall continue in force and remain binding on a party state until such state shall withdraw therefrom. To be valid and effective, any withdrawal must be preceded by a formal notice in writing of one year from the appropriate authority of that state. Such notice shall be communicated to the same officer or agency in each party state with which the notice of adoption was deposited pursuant to Article VI. In the event that a state wishes to withdraw with respect to one or more states, but wishes to remain a party to this compact with other states party thereto, its notice of withdrawal shall be communicated only to those states with respect to which withdrawal is contemplated.”

Although withdrawals from interstate compacts are relatively rare, they do occur. For example, Florida withdrew from the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Compact in 1995. Maryland withdrew from the Interstate Bus Motor Fuel Tax Compact in 1967 and from the National Guard Mutual Assistance Compact in 1981.

8.6.2 Enforceability of Compact Provisions

The Impairments Clause of the U.S. Constitution restricts the action of all state legislatures concerning contracts:

“No State shall ... pass any ... Law impairing the Obligation of Contracts....”¹⁴³

The courts have long held that a state belonging to an interstate compact may not unilaterally renounce the agreement. The U.S. Supreme Court addressed this issue in a 1950 case involving the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Compact. The parties to this compact included eight states and the federal government. The compact established a commission consisting of representatives from each of the governmental units. It provided that each party state would pay a specified share of the operating expenses of the compact's commission.

“The signatory states agree to appropriate for the salaries, office and other administrative expenses, their proper proportion of the annual budget as determined by the Commission and approved by the governors of the signatory states, one half of such amount to be prorated among the several states in proportion of their population within the district at the last preceding federal census, the other half to be prorated in proportion to their land area within the district.”

There was considerable political division in West Virginia over the desirability of the compact. The legislature ratified the compact and, in 1949, appropriated \$12,250 as West Virginia's initial contribution to the expenses of the compact's commission. The state Auditor, however, refused to make the payment from the state treasury. He argued that the legislature's approval of the compact violated the state constitution in two respects. First, the Auditor argued that the compact was unconstitutional because it delegated the state's police power to an interstate agency involving other states and the federal government. Second, the Auditor argued that the compact was invalid because it bound the West Virginia Legislature to make appropriations for the state's share of the commission's operating expenses in violation of a general provision of

¹⁴³ U.S. Constitution. Article I, section 10, clause 3. See appendix C for the full wording of the Impairments Clause.

the state constitution concerning the incurring of “debts.” The West Virginia State Water Commission supported the compact and went to court requesting a mandamus order to compel the Auditor to make the payment from the state treasury. The Supreme Court of Appeals of West Virginia invalidated the legislature’s ratification of the compact on the grounds that the compact violated the state constitution.

In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court reversed the state ruling and prevented West Virginia from avoiding its obligations under the compact. The Court wrote in *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims*:

“But a compact is after all a legal document.... **It requires no elaborate argument to reject the suggestion that an agreement** solemnly entered into between States by those who alone have political authority to speak for a State **can be unilaterally nullified**, or given final meaning by an organ of one of the contracting States. **A State cannot be its own ultimate judge in a controversy with a sister State.**”¹⁴⁴ [Emphasis added]

The U.S. Supreme Court continued:

“That a legislature may delegate to an administrative body the power to make rules and decide particular cases is one of the axioms of modern government. The West Virginia court does not challenge the general proposition but objects to the delegation here involved **because it is to a body outside the State and because its Legislature may not be free, at any time, to withdraw the power delegated....** What is involved is the conventional grant of legislative power. We find nothing in that to indicate that West Virginia may not solve a problem such as the control of river pollution by compact and by the delegation, if such it be, necessary to effectuate such solution by compact.... Here, the State has bound itself to control pollution by the more effective means of an agreement with other States. **The Compact involves a reasonable and carefully limited delegation of power to an interstate agency.**”¹⁴⁵ [Emphasis added]

¹⁴⁴ *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims*. 341 U.S. 22 at 28. 1950.

¹⁴⁵ *Id.* at 30–31.

Justice Robert Jackson's concurring opinion set forth an additional justification for Court's decision. Justice Jackson suggested that the Supreme Court did not need to interpret the West Virginia state constitution in order to conclude that the compact bound West Virginia. Instead, he stated that West Virginia was estopped from changing its position after each of the other governmental entities relied upon, and changed their position because of, the compact.

“West Virginia assumed a contractual obligation with equals by permission of another government that is sovereign in its field (the federal government). After Congress and **sister states had been induced to alter their positions and bind themselves to terms of a covenant**, West Virginia should be estopped from repudiating her act. For this reason, I consider that whatever interpretation she put on the generalities of her Constitution, **she is bound by the Compact.**”¹⁴⁶
[Emphasis added]

The pre-ratification expectations of states joining a compact are especially important whenever there is a post-ratification dispute among compacting parties concerning voting rights within the compact. In one case, Nebraska (which was obligated to store radioactive waste under the terms of a compact) sought additional voting power on the compact's commission after the compact had gone into effect. A majority (but not all) of the compact's other members consented to Nebraska's request. Nebraska's request was, however, judicially voided in 1995 in *State of Nebraska v. Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission*

“because changes in ‘voting power’ substantially alter the original expectations of the majority of states which comprise the compact.”¹⁴⁷

Amplifying the principle of *West Virginia ex rel. Dyer v. Sims*, the courts have noted that a single state cannot obstruct the workings of a compact. In *Hess v. Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corp.*, the U.S. Supreme Court held in 1994 that a compact is

¹⁴⁶ *Id.* at 36.

¹⁴⁷ *State of Nebraska v. Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission*. 902 F.Supp. 1046, 1049 (D.Neb. 1995).

“... not subject to the unilateral control of any one of the States....”¹⁴⁸

Similarly, in *Lake Country Estates, Inc. v. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency*, the U.S. Supreme Court in 1979 held that a member state may not unilaterally veto the actions of a compact’s commission. Instead, the remedy of an aggrieved state consists of withdrawing from the compact in accordance with the compact’s terms for withdrawal.¹⁴⁹

In *Kansas City Area Transportation Authority v. Missouri*, the Eighth Circuit in 1981 held that a member state may not legislatively burden the other member states unless they concur.¹⁵⁰

Moreover, a compacting state, motivated by politics, may be prevented from undermining the workings of that compact. In the 1993 case of *Alcorn v. Wolfe*, the removal of an appointee to a compact commission, initiated by a Governor to inject his political influence into the operations of the commission, was invalidated because it

“clearly frustrate[d] one of the most important objectives of the compact.”¹⁵¹

In *State of Nebraska v. Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission*, Nebraska was estopped in 1993 from seeking equitable relief to prevent a compact, of which it was a member, from pursuing its central mission.¹⁵² In *New York v. United States*, the U.S. Supreme Court held that the estoppel doctrine was applicable only to the states that have adopted the interstate compact.¹⁵³

In short, a state may be estopped from withdrawing from a compact in any manner not permitted by the terms of the compact.

The six-month blackout period for withdrawing from the proposed “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” is reasonable and appropriate in order to ensure that a politically

¹⁴⁸ *Hess v. Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corp.* 513 U.S. 30 at 42. 1994.

¹⁴⁹ *Lake Country Estates, Inc. v. Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.* 440 U.S. 391 at 399 and 402. 1979.

¹⁵⁰ *Kansas City Area Transportation Authority v. Missouri.* 640 F.2d 173 at 174 (8th Cir.). 1979.

¹⁵¹ *Alcorn v. Wolfe.* 827 F.Supp. 47, 53 (D.D.C. 1993).

¹⁵² *State of Nebraska v. Central Interstate Low-Level Radioactive Waste Commission.* 834 F.Supp. 1205 at 1215 (D.Neb. 1993).

¹⁵³ *New York v. United States.* 505 U.S. 144 at 183. 1992.

motivated member state does not change its position after the candidates, the political parties, the voters, and the other compacting states have proceeded through the presidential campaign and presidential election cycle in reliance on each compacting state fulfilling its obligations under the compact.

8.6.3 Additional State and Federal Constraints on Withdrawal

There are two additional potential constraints on a withdrawal from the “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote” that are applicable to the 35-day period between election day in November and the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December.

The first constraint is applicable if the compact were to be enacted in a particular state using the citizen-initiative process. In 11 states, there are state constitutional limitations concerning the repeal or amendment of a statute originally enacted by the voters by means of the citizen-initiative process.¹⁵⁴ In seven of these states, the constraint on the legislature runs for a specific period of time. In four of the 11 states, the constraint is permanent—that is, the voters must be consulted in a subsequent ref-

Table 8.4 STATE CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITATIONS ON THE REPEAL OR AMENDMENT OF STATUTES ORIGINALLY ENACTED BY THE VOTERS THROUGH THE CITIZEN-INITIATIVE PROCESS

STATE	LIMITATION
Alaska	No repeal within two years; amendment by majority vote anytime
Arizona	Three-quarters vote to amend; amending legislation must “further the purpose” of the measure
Arkansas	Two-thirds vote to amend or repeal
California	No amendment or repeal of an initiative statute by the legislature unless the initiative specifically permits it
Michigan	Three-quarters vote to amend or repeal
Nebraska	Two-thirds vote to amend or repeal
Nevada	No amendment or repeal within three years of enactment
North Dakota	Two-thirds vote to amend or repeal within seven years of effective date
Oregon	Two-thirds vote to amend or repeal within two years of enactment
Washington	Two-thirds vote to amend or repeal within two years of enactment
Wyoming	No repeal within two years of effective date; amendment by majority vote any time

¹⁵⁴ National Conference on State Legislatures.

erendum about any proposed repeal or amendment. Table 8.4 briefly describes these constitutional limitations. Appendix R contains the complete constitutional provisions.

In addition to the above constitutional limitations, public opinion acts as an inhibition against legislative repeal of, or substantive amendments to, a statute that the voters originally enacted by means of the citizen-initiative process. This political inhibition is particularly forceful in western states that have the citizen-initiative process.

Second, there is a federal law that would likely be interpreted to constrain repeal of the proposed compact withdrawal during the 35-day period between “the day fixed for the appointment of the electors” (that is, election day in early November) and the meeting of the Electoral College in mid-December. The federal “safe harbor” provision (quoted in full in section 8.3.6) gives preference to presidential election returns that are in accord with

“laws enacted prior to the day fixed for the appointment of the electors....”¹⁵⁵

In the 1960 presidential election, for example, John F. Kennedy won the nationwide popular vote by 114,673 votes. However, his electoral-vote majority depended on the fact that he had carried Illinois by 4,430 popular votes and South Carolina by 4,732 votes. Some members of the South Carolina legislature suggested that the legislature ignore the popular vote count in the state, change the rules for awarding the state’s electoral votes after election day, and appoint all the state’s presidential electors themselves. One reason that nothing came of this suggestion was that the “safe harbor” provision requires that an ascertainment of a state’s votes based on the laws that existed prior to election day be treated as “conclusive” in the national count of the electoral votes. Nothing came of similar post-election suggestions that the Florida Legislature appoint all of the state’s presidential electors in 2000.

¹⁵⁵ See section 8.3.6 for the complete wording of this provision (title 3, chapter 1, section 6 of the United States Code).

