

FOREWORD

By John B. Anderson

I believe the occupant of the nation's highest office should be determined by a nationwide popular vote by legally registered voters.

The current system of allocating electoral votes on a statewide winner-take-all basis divides us on regional lines, undercuts accountability, dampens voter participation, and can trump the national popular vote. The system is not based on majority rule, and it fails to provide political equality.

The anti-democratic nature of the Electoral College is deeply grounded in our history. The Framers distrusted democracy and saw the Electoral College as a deliberative body that would pick the best candidate. However, the lofty view of the Founding Fathers was based on a wildly mistaken understanding of the way our political system would evolve.

Many believe that the Electoral College was included in the Constitution to satisfy the last-ditch efforts of the "states' righters" of 1787 to preserve as much of the Articles of Confederation as possible. This group was intent on denying direct popular election of the President and preserving the power of the states. Just as they had succeeded in establishing a provision allowing state legislatures to elect the members of the U.S. Senate, they wanted the primary power to elect a President to be lodged in the states—not in a mass electorate of individual voters.

The initial impact was to give slave states additional weight. The infamous constitutional provision counting slaves as three-fifths of a person for the purpose of apportioning Representatives in Congress (and apportioning electoral votes) was designed to favor Southern states. Slaves could not vote, but they could give their owners extra power in both congressional and presidential elections. It is no accident that slave-owning Virginians served as President for 32 of the nation's first 36 years.

The rule for apportioning electoral votes according to the number of each state's members of Congress is anti-democratic because it makes electoral power in the presidential race dependent on the population of a state, rather than on its number of voters. For this reason, there is no national incentive to spur turnout in a state and expand the franchise.

Majority rule and political equality are fundamental tenets of democracy. The power of one's vote should be equal, no matter where one lives. Candidates for our most important national office should have incentives to speak to everyone. In the past century, we have amended the Constitution to elect Senators directly, to guarantee women's right to vote, and to lower the voting age to 18. We have passed the Voting

Rights Act to provide access to the ballot regardless of race or ethnicity. The Electoral College has escaped the move to greater democracy only because of institutional inertia and misguided, parochial considerations.

A large majority of Americans have consistently supported direct election of the President for many years, and it is time to listen to them. This book describes the “Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote,” an innovative approach that is a politically practical way to achieve the goal of nationwide popular election of the President. It has my enthusiastic support.