

FOREWORD

By Laura Brod

Like many conservatives, I view most “election reforms” through a skeptical eye. I share a reverence for the Constitution and our founding documents. I believe that the Founders not only got it right, but that they were visionary and creative in their approach.

In all truthfulness, when I first saw the National Popular Vote Plan, I defaulted to a “No” position on the concept. But I was curious enough to read the legislation, re-read the Constitution, and re-read some relevant Federalist Papers. After evaluating the pros and cons of the current winner-take-all approach and coming to a better understanding of the states’ exclusive right to award electors, I moved toward a position of support of both the concept and the legislation.

The concept has too often been referred to by opponents as a “partisan” or even “liberal” effort to eliminate the Electoral College in an attempt to tarnish the issue and scare away those of us on the right side of the political spectrum. But this description could not be further from the truth.

The National Popular Vote bill is not a Democratic bill or Republican bill. It is not even a liberal or conservative bill. The National Popular Vote bill is a bill for Americans interested in both preserving our Electoral College and reforming the shortcomings of our current state-by-state “winner-take-all” system that awards all the electors of one state to the candidate who wins in that particular state. In particular, the “winner-take-all” system has led to a concentration of campaign efforts and policy attention in a few states at the expense of many states. The idea that presidential candidates and campaigns should seek votes from a broad swath of our country—rather than only focusing on what might move a few voters in the few battleground states—is actually quite nonpartisan and has appeal across the political spectrum.

The National Popular Vote plan rightfully utilizes the states’ rights, as explicitly spelled out in Section 1, Article II of the United States Constitution. The Founders specifically gave authority to the states to award their electoral votes as they see fit and to achieve the best influence of the citizens of their state. This is an important states’ right designed by the Founders as one of the checks and balances within our republican form of government. It is this state power that the National Popular Vote Plan recognizes and this is a right that I support.

The National Popular Vote legislation is not the legislation of the past that many remember. This proposal does *not* abolish the Electoral College that is crucial to the stability of our republic. It preserves the Electoral College while at the same time preserving each state’s power to award its electors.

The National Popular Vote compact is an agreement among states that changes how the states award their own electoral votes.

I am one of a growing number of conservatives who support the National Popular Vote legislation because, contrary to what some folks suggest in rhetorical opposition, the many conservative supporters of the idea know that the National Popular Vote plan is not in conflict with the Constitution and is certainly not an end run around the Constitution. In actuality, the legislation is an exercise of power by the states that is explicitly granted by the Constitution.

Legislators across this great country—in red states and blue states, large states and small states—are supporting the National Popular Vote Plan because they are bound by one thing: the fact that their states are “fly-over” states. The great majority of states are effectively ignored in presidential elections. Legislators know this is not good for their state, their citizens, or their entire slate of candidates down the ballot. In fact, that is not good for our country generally. Policies important to the citizens of “flyover” states are not as highly prioritized as policies important to “battleground” states when it comes to governing.

Right now, battleground states enjoy political influence that is less related to the number of their electoral votes and more related to the closeness of the elections. In order to win electoral votes, candidates care what voters in the few battleground states think and want far more than they do voters in the many fly-over states. The hunt for electoral votes leads to an elevation of the importance and perceived immediacy of political and policy issues connected to battleground states. Meanwhile, policy issues more broadly appealing to citizens throughout the country get set aside. Why should the status of the economy or a volatile local issue in a battleground state have the potential to determine the presidency for the entire country? Why should issues important to the few battleground states get addressed, while other issues important to the many fly-over states are ignored?

Reforming our state-based system of elections through an agreement of the states for a National Popular Vote keeps the stability of our republican form of government by preserving our Electoral College, keeps the checks and balances in place to ensure the protection against so-called mob rule, ensures that voters in every state matter in every election, and keeps the states’ rights intended by the Founders securely intact.

The National Popular vote plan being discussed by legislatures across the country does exactly that.