

FOREWORD

By Dean Murray

Playwright Tom Stoppard once said, “It’s not the voting that’s democracy, it’s the counting.” That’s the case when it comes to electing a President in our country—thanks to the Electoral College.

In school, we were all taught about the democratic principal of “one man, one vote.” That’s the case in every election we have here in New York—for school boards, state legislators, and even our governor and U.S. Senators. The only exception to this, however, is for our President.

When it comes to presidential elections, New York is usually completely ignored by candidates from both parties—except for fundraising stops in New York City and the Hamptons. Why? For the simple reason that rarely, if ever, is the Empire State considered a “battleground” or “swing” state.

The Tea Party is the most powerful movement to hit this country in years. We have successfully transformed politics as usual and given voice to the concerns and issues of ordinary taxpayers and working people.

However, the long-term impact of the Tea Party is threatened by a presidential election process that systematically silences voters throughout the country.

The 2012 presidential election will leave fully two-thirds of the voters in the country wondering what is happening. When the general election campaign rolls around in the summer and fall of 2012, the presidential candidates, whoever they are, will ignore voters as they focus their campaigns exclusively on the swing states. Whether you align yourself with the Tea Party, Republicans, Democrats, Libertarians, or Greens, whether you are conservative, liberal, or moderate, the candidates and the campaign will pass you by unless you live in one of a handful of states.

In both 2004 and 2008, candidates spent 98% of their resources in just 15 closely divided battleground states. They concentrated over two-thirds of their resources in just six states. Simply put, the millions and millions of dollars spent advertising and polling and visiting and organizing in this small group of states means that their votes are more important than those of us who live in fly-over country.

This marginalization of the majority of our country is why I support and have sponsored the National Popular Vote legislation in New York. This proposal, once enacted, will guarantee the Presidency to the candidate receiving the most popular votes in all 50 states.

A vote should be a vote regardless of where it was cast. A voter in Ohio shouldn’t be more important than a voter in Kansas. Miami shouldn’t trump Main Street. Every voter should be heard, and every vote should count equally.

America can make this happen.

The National Popular Vote bill preserves the Electoral College and the intent of the Constitution. It recognizes that it is the exclusive right of the states, not Congress, the President, or anyone else, to decide how to award their electoral votes. The Constitution makes this perfectly clear under Article II, Section 1.

The current system that allows vast areas of the country to be completely disregarded during the general election was not one that was envisioned by the Founding Fathers. Forty-eight of the 50 states use the winner-take-all rule for allocating their electoral votes (as opposed to just three states in the first election). Under this rule, the candidate who wins the most popular votes in a given state receives all the electoral votes. As a result, the overwhelming majority of Americans are rendered irrelevant when electing their President because they live in a “safe state” where the Republican or Democrat candidate for President is comfortably ahead or hopelessly behind.

The National Popular Vote bill would take effect only when enacted by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a president. When the bill is in effect, all the electoral votes from the states that enacted the bill would be awarded, as a bloc, to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states.

A national popular vote based on the candidate receiving the most votes in the country would encourage candidates to court voters of every party, in every state, and to reach out across our great nation. Candidates would be forced to listen to the concerns of Americans everywhere, not just where it counts politically under today’s system.

The Tea Party movement is about many things. Perhaps the most important is that our voices and our values be heard by our government.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower said, “The future of this republic is in the hands of the American voter.” The best way to make that happen in the long term is to make every vote count. A national popular vote for President, where every vote counts and every vote counts equally, ensures that no one will be marginalized or overlooked in the future.