

FOREWORD

By Thomas L. Pearce

In 2008, the state of Michigan had 17 electoral votes. As a state with nearly twice the population of the average state, not to mention twice the problems, Michigan should have had a strong voice in the presidential election. You would have expected both candidates to fight long and hard for our vote.

Not so. In fact, John McCain pulled out of Michigan four weeks before the election, ceding Michigan's electoral votes to Barack Obama. As a Republican I was disappointed, of course. But as a citizen of this great state, I was outraged.

Of course, Michigan was the victim of a policy that actually rewards presidential candidates for ignoring the majority of states. The winner-take-all system of awarding electoral votes treats election results in more than thirty states as a foregone conclusion.

The result? No campaign stops, no campaign dollars, and no incentive to represent the needs of Michigan voters at a national level.

If every single voter in Michigan had cast his or her vote for Barack Obama, the outcome would have been exactly the same. The winner-take-all system of awarding electoral votes effectively disenfranchises every voter beyond those needed to establish a plurality. In 2008, the people of Michigan spoke, and nobody listened.

When I think of blue states or red states, Michigan doesn't exactly come to mind. Our presidential vote totals are typically close. We recently flipped the state House, and the Governor's office. Michigan isn't a one-party state like Utah or Massachusetts. Even moderate states like Michigan are being cast aside as the list of battleground states continues to shorten.

This is a high-school civics lesson gone wrong.

We see the impact of this political calculus at a national level. Compare the response to hurricane Katrina (in Louisiana, a "safe" state) to the federal response to hurricanes in Florida (a "swing" state) under Presidents of both parties. President Obama only became angry about the BP oil spill once it reached Florida's shores.

Thankfully, hurricanes and oil spills aren't a problem here in Michigan. We have an equally urgent disaster, however, in the form of unemployment. Our people need jobs, and deserve respect from the executive branch in accordance with our population. This is no time to be taken for granted.

Fortunately, the U.S. Constitution gives the states the means to remedy the shortcomings of the present system, and restore a voice to voters in states like Michigan. The winner-take-all rule, which may have once made sense, can be continued or dis-

continued at our, or any, state's discretion. It is not mentioned anywhere in the Constitution, much less mandated.

The National Popular Vote compact leverages the power accorded to the states by the Constitution to ensure that every vote counts equally. Under this system, states agree to award their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the most votes in all 50 states. This would give Michigan a voice commensurate with its population.

When states like Michigan are getting lost in our electoral system, it's time for a change. The National Popular Vote initiative is long overdue, and it has my full support.