



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OREGON

The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 97-year-old grassroots nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. We envision informed Oregonians participating in a fully accessible, responsive, and transparent government to achieve the common good. LWVOR Legislative Action is based on advocacy positions formed through studies and member consensus. The League never supports or opposes any candidate or political party.

March 13, 2017

To: House Committee on Rules
Rep. Jennifer Williamson, Chair

Re: HB 2927, Enacts Interstate Compact to Elect the President by National Popular Vote – **Support**

Throughout its nearly 100-year history the League of Women Voters has been guided by core principles, and one of its most cherished is the belief that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote. Today we continue that fight, to ensure that every vote matters when electing a US President, the highest office in the land. We strongly support HB 2927, which would allow Oregon to join the National Popular Vote (NPV) Interstate Compact, an agreement among the states to guarantee the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most votes in all 50 states and D.C.

NPV has already been enacted into law in 10 states and D.C., representing 165 electoral votes, and will become effective when the total electoral votes of the compacting states reach 270, the minimum required to win the presidency. Because the compact does not abolish the Electoral College, a Constitutional Amendment is not needed. Electors in participating states remain in place, but all electoral votes must go to the winner of the nationwide vote. NPV can withstand legal challenges, because the Constitution clearly stipulates that each state has the right to choose its method of selecting presidential electors. Unlike the current system, no state or region is favored, since all votes (and all voters) count the same.

The inequities in the current Electoral College system have been well documented and exist largely because of state winner-take-all laws enacted in all but two states. These laws require a state to award all its electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes within that state. The result is that only a handful of states are truly competitive, so campaigns tend to ignore the rest. The winner-take-all aspect also allows candidates to win the presidency without winning the most votes nationwide, which has happened five times in our nation's history, most recently in 2016.

League support for NPV is not a recent decision. In fact, we have been deeply concerned about the flaws in our current presidential electoral process for over 45 years. The Electoral College itself is a vestige of a time when uneducated and widely scattered citizens were not trusted to select the President directly, so a compromise was crafted to assign electors the role of intermediaries in the election process. As time went on, slave states were eager to maintain a system that allowed them to include slaves in their population counts, using the two-fifths rule. The Electoral College persists until the present day, not because it is a superior system, but because it suits entrenched partisan interests to maintain an unequal distribution of power. It serves no purpose in a modern democratic society.

In 1970, after a national League study of the presidential electoral process, members concurred that the Electoral College in its current form is an impediment to a representative government and should be abolished. We lobbied hard each congressional session in support of legislation that would amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with direct election of the President. Yet, despite overwhelming public support, year after year the legislation failed to pass, and it became clear a new strategy was needed. Finally, in 2002, the League decided to expand our position and examined ways to improve the entire presidential selection process. In 2008, as part of that effort, we began a study of

NPV, and in 2010 amended our position to support NPV as an acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the President.

The NPV bill passed the Oregon House in 2009, 2013, and 2015. The League asks that this committee send HB 2927 to the House floor with a due pass recommendation. It is past time that Oregon, a leader in election reform, joins the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.



Norman Turrill
LWVOR President



Marge Easley
LWVOR National Popular Vote Portfolio