



*The League of Women Voters of Oregon is a 99-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.*

April 2, 2019

To: Senate Committee on Rules  
Senator Ginny Burdick, Chair

Re: **SB 870** – Enacts National Popular Vote Interstate Compact – **Support**

The League of Women Voters' founding principle is the right to vote, and that right comes with the conviction that our votes matter. However, the Electoral College system as it currently exists does not ensure that every vote counts equally when electing the President of the United States, the highest office in the land. This is why League members have been working for nearly fifty years to fix our flawed Electoral College system and why we testify today in support of SB 870, which allows Oregon to join the National Popular Voter (NPV) Compact.

NPV is not a radical concept. In simple terms, it guarantees the Presidency to the candidate who receives the most votes in all 50 states and D.C. A bill identical to the one before you today has already been enacted into law in 13 states and D.C., representing 184 electoral votes, and will become effective when the total electoral votes of the states in the Compact reaches 270, the minimum required to win the presidency. Because the compact does not abolish or replace the Electoral College, a Constitutional Amendment is not needed. And because the Constitution clearly stipulates that each state has the right to choose its method of selecting presidential electors, it is entirely legal.

Why is the Electoral College system so unfair? The main reason is that 48 of the states long ago passed winner-take-all laws that 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, while the rest swing to one party or the other as a foregone conclusion. Campaigns only pay attention to the handful of battleground states and 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.

NPV allows all votes to be counted equally, no matter where they are in the country. There is a common misperception that under NPV, urban areas or more populous states would control the outcome of an election, but this is not true. The combined population of the 100 biggest cities is about one-sixth of the population, roughly the same as the population of rural America. It's also important to keep in mind that populous states have many voters whose votes simply don't matter, because they belong to the minority party. NPV would at last make their votes relevant. Oregon is not a large state in population, but here's why the Electoral College has been unfair to a large segment of the rural population in our state. Over the last eight presidential elections over a half million Oregonians cast their votes for the Republican candidate, but because of the winner-take-all law, none of those votes really mattered. The Democratic candidate won more than half of the votes, so all Oregon's electoral votes went for the Democratic candidate.

As you know, the bill before you today has passed the Oregon House four times. Four states have passed this same bill within the past year, and it is now Oregon's turn. It is unacceptable that the U.S. is the only practicing democracy where the candidate with the most votes is not assured of being chosen the national leader. A modern society deserves a modern voting system. The League asks that this committee send SB 870 to the Senate floor with a do pass recommendation.

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss this legislation.

Handwritten signature of Norman Turrill in black ink.

Norman Turrill  
LWVOR President

Handwritten signature of Marge Easley in black ink.

Marge Easley  
LWVOR National Popular Vote Portfolio