

CHAPTER FOUR: ABOLISH THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE

By Joe Venuti

When the Electoral College was established, there were good reasons to create it. Representatives were elected from a District, and most voters (all men) were probably familiar with the persons running for Representative in their district, so they could make an informed judgment as to for which they would vote. Senators were elected by the state legislature. They were not elected by popular vote until the 17th amendment was ratified in 1913 (just 100 years ago). By then, communication was improving, people could travel greater distances, and voters had a chance of getting to know the candidates for the senate. However, when it came to the presidency, communication around the country was not sufficient for most voters to get to know, see, or even hear the people who would appear on the ballot for the presidency and vp. Therefore the Electoral College principle caused local voters to elect a local person, called an elector, whom they trusted to represent their interests, to learn about the candidates and their positions on the issues. Such electors would cast their vote for the person they thought would be the choice of the folks back home. Remember also, that for many years, the person with the most electoral votes became the president, and the person with the second most became vice president.

Ever since the time when most Americans had access to a radio (By 1939 about 80 *percent* of the population owned *radio* sets), the Electoral College started losing its reason to exist. Most people were able to hear radio broadcasts from the candidates in the election of 1940, and virtually everyone knew the voices of the candidates in the 1944 election. That fact alone should have been enough for the country to clamor for the elimination of the Electoral College and move to direct election of the president by popular vote. The advent of TV in all homes, and subsequently the Internet in homes and on cell phones, should have caused a mass movement. The records show that two presidents were elected by the Electoral College, while their opponents received more popular votes than the “winner” did.

The president/vp is the only elected position at any level of government that is not elected by popular vote. Local boards of education, city councils, boards and commissions of all kinds, state representatives, state senators, governors, US congressmen, all elected by popular vote. But ... not the president. WHY? Why does it remain? Who benefits from it? Who refuses to change it? Can it be changed?

Maintaining the Electoral College allows the ability to affect the outcome of elections to remain in the hands of the politicians, and keeps it out of the hands of the people. The politicians have the chutzpa to stand up and say that the Electoral College helps the voters in the small states from being overpowered by the large states with big cities. NOTHING COULD BE FURTHER FROM THE TRUTH! The Electoral

College virtually ignores the voters in all of the smaller states, and allows large states with many electoral votes to determine the outcome of the election. In particular, the large states which might possibly go either way in the presidential election, the so-called “swing states”. I live in Florida; my vote counts; my vote could be the one that determines who wins the election. If you live in any of the states with 3 electoral votes, your vote virtually means nothing. It would take the almost impossible situation of all of the other 49 states to evenly split the electoral votes right down the middle before your vote would have any possible influence on the outcome. That is not ever going to happen.

If we went to direct popular vote election of the president, then every voter in every state, large and small, would have an EQUAL voice in the election. It would not matter whether you live in a “red state” or a “blue state” because the “color of your state” would be irrelevant. The only thing that would matter would be each individual’s vote, and which candidate received the most of those would become the president.

If you do not believe what I am saying, then see if you can think of the last time that a presidential candidate spent time campaigning in the states with the 3 electoral votes? Do a little exploring, and expose the “campaign trail” of the candidates from both parties. See how many times each went to the eleven “swing states” as defined on Politico.com. They both spent most of their time campaigning in those states? They don’t even bother to campaign in the “blue coastal states” nor the “red deep southern states” because they concede the foregone outcome of the votes in those states. If you vote Dem in Texas, Alabama, Nebraska, South Carolina, you might as well stay home, because you are wasting your time. Likewise a Rep voter in New York, New Jersey, California, Oregon and Washington will have no bearing on the outcome.

In the last several presidential elections, the portion of the voting-age population which was registered to vote was only 75 percent, and the portion of the voting-age population that voted was about 50 percent. The answers which I personally have heard as to why people do not vote is that, “It doesn’t matter. My vote doesn’t count”. I suggest that if the electoral college were eliminated, more people would register and vote. Maybe that is one of the reasons why the system has not been changed.

It’s time for the American voters to take back their voting rights from the politicians. We need to demand a constitutional convention to eliminate the Electoral College, and amend the 14th amendment to plug that leak in our immigration system.