P.S. to the NEWS
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ELECTORAL COLLEGE

Senators Edward Kennedy and Birch Bayh are trying to eliminate the Electoral College and replace it with the direct popular election of U.S. Presidents. Their proposed constitutional amendment has been in committee for years, but is receiving an extra push this year.

The first defect of the proposed constitutional amendment is that it would give us minority Presidents with an inadequate basis of support. The proposed amendment permits Presidents to be elected with only 40 percent of the vote.

The present Electoral College is the only occasion in our political process when 50 percent of the entire nation must agree on something or someone. This provides a basis for the leadership our country needs in times of crisis.

The second major defect would be the instability and loss of public confidence caused by close elections. When a candidate wins a lopsided victory, no one demands a vote recount. It is the close elections which cause the problems and for which our system must provide. The Electoral College reduces these problems to a minimum.

Imagine the disarray that would result under the proposed constitutional amendment if we had a very close election combined with widespread charges of vote fraud. Where a shift of a few hundred votes anywhere in the country would be enough to reverse the results, such demands would arise in almost every close election.

The Senate was engaged for months during 1975 in trying to resolve the disputed election for a New Hampshire Senate seat. Just imagine the confusion if we were faced with vote recounts in all 50 states at the same time in order to determine if a presidential candidate got 39.999 percent of the vote or 40 percent.

Under the present Electoral College system, this is not possible because a recount affects only that state's vote in the Electoral College, and seldom does the entire election hang on the vote of one or two states. The Electoral College promotes

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stability and public confidence because it prevents frivolous contests.

The third major defect of the proposed constitutional amendment is that it would effectively transfer control over the election of the President from the states and the people to the U.S. Congress, which is the exact opposite of our Constitution's intent. This would replace our present separation of powers with the European parliamentary system of government.

If the plurality required for the election of a President were reduced from 50 percent to only 40 percent, the system would provide a built-in incentive for many candidates to try for the 40 percent and, conversely, an incentive to field straw candidates in order to prevent your opponent from achieving the 40 percent.

With many candidates in the race, the frequent result would be that no candidate would receive 40 percent, and the final decision would usually be thrown into the hands of Congress. One of the principal good effects of our unique Electoral College is to keep Congress' meddling fingers out of the election process.

The Electoral College is the only function of our national government that is performed outside of Washington, D.C. The President is elected by electors chosen in their states according to state election laws, who meet and cast their ballots in their own state capitals. No Senator, Congressman, or federal official is permitted to be an elector in the Electoral College.

The fourth major defect of the proposed constitutional amendment is that it would encourage Presidential candidates to gear their time, money, and policies toward our half dozen most populous states where big city machines could roll up extra millions of votes. The temptation would become irresistible for Presidential candidates to offer the moon wrapped in federal dollars to the handout hunters in the large cities. In a close election, such a candidate could win by carrying New York while losing all the other 49 states.

The Electoral College has served us well for 200 years, and there is every reason to believe it can continue to serve us for the next 200 years. It is certainly far better than any proposed substitute.

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for ELECTORAL COLLEGE, dated July 20

SUBSTITUTE:

It was a great victory for honest elections when the U.S. Senate voted 51 to 48 to defeat the constitutional amendment sponsored by Senators Edward Kennedy and Birch Bayh to eliminate the Electoral College and replace it with the direct popular election of Presidents.