The Subversive Plan To Ditch The Electoral College

by Phyllis Schlafly May 10, 2006

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A plot is afoot to change our constitutional form of government by ditching the Electoral College. John Anderson, Birch Bayh and John Buchanan, three losers who were defeated in the 1980 Reagan landslide, are scheming to change our Constitution without complying with the amendment process.

Our Constitution requires that a president be elected by a majority of votes in the Electoral College, with each state's vote weighted based on its population. But some who took an oath to defend our Constitution are plotting to undermine its essential structure by a compact among as few as eleven of the most populous states.

The plan of this Campaign for the National Popular Vote (NPV) is to get states with at least 270 votes in the Electoral College to enact identical bills requiring their own electors to ignore the winner of their state's election and cast all their state's ballots for the candidate who the state believes received more popular votes than the other candidates nationwide, even if he fails to win a majority of the popular vote.

The NPV gang of frustrated liberals has lined up sponsors for bills in California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana and Missouri. They have already persuaded the Colorado Senate to approve their proposal.

It's ridiculous and un-American to try to force electors to vote against their constituents. Yet NPV wants to require a state like Louisiana to vote for the candidate who won in other states such as New York.

The U.S. Constitution established our method of electing presidents and it has served us well for more than two centuries. It ain't broke and doesn't need fixing.

The Electoral College represents the inspired genius of our Founding Fathers. It was part of the great compromise which transformed us from thirteen rival colonies into a constitutional republic.

This great compromise gave us a Congress consisting of the Senate based on equal representation of the states and the House based on population. The Electoral College is the mirror image of this brilliant compromise and allows all states to be players in the process of electing our President.

The Electoral College is the successful vehicle by which a presidential candidate achieves a majority in a functioning political process. NPV is an outrageous proposal to construct a fake majority by stealing votes away from some candidates and transferring them to another candidate.

Because of third parties, we've had many elections (including three of the last four) when no presidential candidate received a popular-vote majority. Abraham Lincoln won less than 40 percent of the popular vote and relied on his Electoral College majority for his authority.

Basing the election on a plurality of the popular vote while ignoring the states would be like the New York Yankees claiming they won the 1960 World Series because they outscored the Pirates in runs 55-27 and in hits 91-60. No one challenges the fact that the Pirates fairly won that Series, 4 games to 3.

The fact that most elections are very close makes the Electoral College particularly advantageous. With our loose election procedures (that need to be reformed in several ways), it's easy to make credible charges of election fraud. We remember the Florida recount in 2000 and the attempt to recount Ohio in 2004.

If the popular vote were controlling, chaos would be the predictable result in any close election. An allegation of voter fraud in one state would begin a fatal chain reaction of challenges and recounts as campaign managers try to scrape up additional hundreds of votes in many states at once.

The elimination of the Electoral College would overnight make irrelevant the votes of Americans in about 25 states because candidates would zero in on piling up votes in large-population states. Big-city machines would take over, and candidates from California or New York would enjoy a built-in advantage.

The Electoral College provides an essential safeguard against the democratic factionalism decried by James Madison in Federalist 10. The Electoral College ensures that no single faction or issue can elect a president because he must win many diverse states to be elected.

The NPV slogan "Every Vote Equal" is stunningly dishonest because the NPV proposal is based on legalizing vote-stealing and on changing the rules of presidential elections by a compact of as few as eleven states instead of the 38 states needed to amend the Constitution. NPV should be repudiated before it goes any further.

The NPV proposal would also eliminate the constitutional role of Congress in dealing with the occasional happenstance of a candidate failing to get a majority of Electoral College votes. The Constitution dealt adequately with this problem in 1824.

The NPV plan has been editorially endorsed by the New York Times, which called the Electoral College "an anti-democratic relic." The New York Times could demonstrate its devotion to democracy by adopting a democratic one-share-one-vote system of control of its own newspaper instead of its current system that locks in a preferential voting category for the Sulzberger family holdings.