



Maine Conservation Voters

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Testimony of Maine Conservation Voters In support of LD 1578

*“An Act to Adopt an Interstate Compact to Elect the President of the United States
by National Popular Vote”*

Before the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee

January 8, 2024

Good morning Senator Hickman, Representative Supica and distinguished members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee. I am Beth Ahearn, Director of Government Affairs at Maine Conservation Voters, a statewide non-profit organization with 13,000 members and supporters building a just, thriving future for all by acting on the climate crisis, protecting the environment, and safeguarding our democracy. We support measures to make Maine’s democratic institutions more accessible, efficient and secure.

We support LD 1578, *“An Act to Adopt an Interstate Compact to Elect the President of the United States by National Popular Vote”*, which would allow Maine to participate in the National Popular Vote Compact.

The National Popular Vote Compact embodies the principle of “one person, one vote.” It provides that state election officials in all states participating in the plan would award their Electoral College votes to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. This compact would not go into effect until enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral vote, or 270 of the 538 electoral votes. National Popular Vote has been enacted by 16 states and the District of Columbia, including 4 small states (DE, HI, RI, VT), 9 medium-sized states (CO, CT, MD, MA, MN, NJ, NM, OR, WA), and 3 big states (CA, IL, NY). These jurisdictions have 205 of the 270 electoral votes needed to activate the law. Maine is one of 8 states considering the National Popular Vote Compact this legislative year, along with: Alaska (3), Kentucky (8), Michigan (15), Nevada (6), North Carolina (16), South Carolina (9), and Wisconsin (10).

It only makes sense, and is a tenet of our democracy, that the presidential candidate with the most votes actually becomes president. This compact would eliminate the circumstance that a candidate who received the most popular votes but did not receive the necessary 270 electoral votes to win could lose an election. In fact, this has occurred five times in US history: in 1824 (Adams-Jackson), 1876 (Hayes-Tilden), 1888 (Harrison-Cleveland), 2000 (Bush-Gore), and 2016 (Trump-Clinton).

The current state 'winner-take-all' laws encourage candidates to focus disproportionately on a limited set of swing states (and in the case of Maine and Nebraska, swing districts), as small changes in the popular vote in those areas produce large changes in the electoral college vote. A study by the organization FairVote reported that the 2004 candidates devoted three-quarters of their peak season campaign resources to just five states. It would be better if candidates were concerned about, and listened to voters in all 50 states.

Maine should join the National Popular Vote Compact. Please vote "Ought to Pass" on LD 1578 to make it possible.