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Senator, District 28

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

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Testimony of Senator Rachel Talbot Ross in opposition to
LD 252, "An Act to Withdraw from the National Popular Vote Compact,"
And
LD 1373, "An Act to Repeal the National Popular Vote Compact,"
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
April 14, 2025

Senator Hickman, Representative Supica, and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs, I am Senator Rachel Talbot Ross. I represent Senate District 28, which includes part of my hometown of Portland and Peaks Island. I am here today to speak in opposition to LD 252, "An Act to Withdraw from the National Popular Vote Compact," and LD 1373, "An Act to Repeal the National Popular Vote Compact." I want to thank Rep. Art Bell for his tireless leadership in achieving what many previous attempts could not: getting it passed into Maine law.

As Speaker of the House, last session, I was a proud co-sponsor of LD 1578 and worked hard to get National Popular Vote into law. I am here to oppose LD 252 & LD 1373, which would repeal our progress.

The Electoral College is part of America's original sin of slavery. As my friend and former head of the national NAACP, Ben Jealous, wrote in an op-ed last year:

"Conceived by slaveholders as a way to protect their interests, the Electoral College baked injustice into our democracy's highest office from the beginning. It inflated the electoral power of slave states by counting the number of enslaved people among those states' populations even though they had no vote and no rights. It enshrined an assault on human dignity in a system supposedly meant to uphold democratic principles."

And the impact continues today. Outside the battleground states, Black voters heavily concentrated in the South and in urban centers in safely red or blue states find themselves disregarded, their concerns relegated to the periphery of political discourse.

In a February 2024 Pan-Atlantic Research¹ poll, 72% of Maine voters support nationwide election of the President. Voters were asked:

¹ <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/sites/default/files/202410/maine-poll-pan-atlantic-feb-2024.pdf>

Thinking about the way in which the president is elected in this country, which would you prefer?

- Change the current system, so the candidate who receives the most total votes nationwide wins the election
- Keep the current system, in which the candidate who wins the most votes in the Electoral College wins the election

The Maine poll had 791 respondents. In the Maine poll, 88% of the Democrats, 75% of the independents, and 51% of the Republicans supported changing the current system, so the candidate who receives the most total votes nationwide wins the election. By congressional district, 74% of first district residents and 70% of second district supported the change. Moreover, 80% of the women, and 64% of the men supported the change. Among voters who call themselves "Very conservative" or "Conservative," support was 49%-51% in favor of the change. Among "Moderates," it was 71%-29%. Among Liberals, it was 91%-9%. Among "Very Liberals," it was 95%-5%. The question in the Maine poll was identical to the question used in the recent Pew national poll.²

Many wish we could undo the Electoral College by Constitutional amendment. Maybe one day. However, reforms in our democracy that we think of as coming through amendments to the Constitution actually started with states taking action. It's the only path that's worked.

Women's suffrage, for example. Over 30 states gave women the vote before the 19th Amendment was adopted.

The direct election of US Senators is another. Most states held "advisory" elections, and the legislatures rubber-stamped those winners until the 17th Amendment passed.

State action is the only politically viable path to electing the president by popular vote.

This brings me to LD252 and LD1373 - bills to repeal the progress we made last year. We should protect the national popular vote, not repeal it. We should strengthen our democracy, not weaken it, especially now.

People are losing faith. Losing faith in our institutions, in our elections, and our democracy. We can play into that, or we can push back and say we are going to fight.

People know the system is rigged. They watch big money buying elections. They watch while a few people seem to have all the power, and they feel powerless.

² <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/65-support-national-popular-vote-president-pew-poll>

Let's decide today to fight back. Let's empower American voters here in Maine and everywhere else to hold up their voices and fight for our country.

Last year, Maine joined other states to fix our broken electoral college because we believe every American, in every single state, deserves one vote, the same as everybody else. Let's answer the charge that the system is rigged by explaining what we are doing to un-rig it! National Popular Vote is one of the ways we can earn trust from voters young and old, black and white, urban and rural.

If we turn our backs on the notion that we should have a popular vote for president, then we are giving in to cynicism. Just when people are starting to stand up, we will be telling them not to bother.

I hope we can protect Maine's leadership and keep us in league with the other states that are working together to build a stronger democracy so that everyone gets heard and recognizes the power in their own vote.

Please defeat these repeal bills.

Sincerely,

Rachel Talbot Ross

State Senator, District 28

Representing part of Portland and Peaks Island