



SIERRA CLUB

MAINE CHAPTER

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To: Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs
From: Patricia Rubert-Nason, Sierra Club Maine
Date: May 10, 2021
Re: Testimony in Support of L.D. 1330 and 1384

Senator Luchini, Representative Caiazzo, and Members of the Veterans and Legal Affairs. I am Patricia Rubert-Nason, and I write on behalf of Sierra Club Maine's over 20,000 members and supporters. Founded in 1892, Sierra Club is one of our nation's oldest and largest environmental organizations. We work diligently to amplify the power of our 3.8 million members nationwide. We believe every vote should count equally and that the more citizens who participate, the stronger our Republic. Implementing the National Popular Vote Compact would forward these goals so we encourage you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1330 and/or LD 1384.

The electoral college is undemocratic. It privileges the voice of some voters over others and disempowers and ignores voters from non-competitive states. Competitive states currently receive the vast majority of the attention from presidential candidates. For at least the last 3 presidential election cycles, around 95% of all campaign visits have focused on the 12 most closely contested states. Many states saw no events at all, while just a handful (4-6) states received two-thirds of all campaign visits.¹

Despite conventional wisdom, the electoral college does not, in fact, advantage small² and rural states.³ If we do not consider New Hampshire, which is a battleground state, the twelve remaining smallest states account for 3.4% of the US population. But, in the last 3 presidential elections, they received only 0.06% of campaign events. All but one of those events were, in fact, in Maine. Because Maine allocates some of its electoral votes by congressional district and because the 2nd congressional district is competitive, we received more than our fair share of resources in these elections, but only modestly so. Assuming that attention would be proportional to population under a national popular vote, we could expect the level of attention here to remain about the same.

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<https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/map-general-election-campaign-events-and-tv-ad-spending-2020-presidential-candidates>

² <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/small-states-are-not-helped-current-system>

³ <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/rural-states-are-almost-entirely-ignored-under-current-state-state-system>

Within competitive states, presidential campaigns distribute their time and resources in a manner which is roughly proportional to populations.⁴ If we extrapolate this data to the national level, we might anticipate that campaigns would spend more time and resources in small and rural states under a national popular vote than they do now.

Selecting the president based on the national popular vote would increase voter turnout and voter participation. If the president were selected by national popular vote, the influence of states would be proportional to their voting population. This would incentivize states to encourage voter turnout and disincentivize voter suppression.

A national popular vote would also incentivize individuals to participate. Right now if you are a Democrat in a solidly red state or a Republican in a solidly blue state (or just lean that way in a particular election) you know that your vote for President likely won't make any difference. So why bother? (This logic is exactly why I did not vote for when I was in college.)

The impact of competitive races on turnout is borne out in the data. Voter turnout was 11% higher in 2016, and 16% higher in 2012, in the dozen closely divided presidential battleground states, compared to the rest of the country.⁵ However, if the President is selected based on the national popular vote, every individual's vote will count equally, regardless of where they live. We may reasonably anticipate that this will increase turnout in states which are not currently competitive (both Democratic and Republican).

To summarize, a national popular vote would distribute politicians' attention more evenly across the country and encourage higher levels of citizen participation. We are all better off when everyone is represented and paid attention to. To build a stronger, more inclusive democracy, we encourage you to vote "ought-to-pass" on LD 1330 and/or LD 1384.

Respectfully,

Patricia Rubert-Nason
Legislative Team
Sierra Club Maine

⁴ <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/how-nationwide-campaign-president-would-be-conducted>

⁵ <https://www.nationalpopularvote.com/voter-turnout-substantially-higher-battleground-states-spectator-states>