

My name is Randall Lane. I am the editor of Forbes Magazine, but I testify today as a private citizen and someone who has studied and written about ways to improve the Electoral College. I want to thank the committee for inviting me, and I applaud your willingness to look at Electoral College reform.

I have been eligible to vote for exactly one quarter-century, and have cast my ballot in every presidential election during that time. Voting remains an essential civic duty for informed citizens, a sign of respect to those who founded and defended representative democracy, the greatest form of government in the history of humanity.

But that sense of duty, realistically, provides the only motivation. Due to my residence in the state of New York, which has not been competitive in many years, my presidential vote has been taken for granted for my entire adult life. No campaign visits, or candidate discussions of our local issues, or even semi-slandorous TV ads.

And the vast majority of Americans experience presidential elections the way I do. For citizens in the 40 states, plus the District of Columbia, deemed “safe,” we sit around and watch candidates curry favor with the other 10, the swing states who by dint of balanced political leanings and the winner-take-all process of nominating electors, effectively get to choose the president.

Frustrated, I developed something that I call the Ballot Buddy System, which I revealed in 2008 in an op-ed in The New York Times. Nebraska and Maine are the only two states that apportion some of their electoral votes by Congressional district rather than give them all to the statewide winner. President Obama, in fact, earned a single electoral vote in Nebraska in 2008, despite the fact that John McCain carried the state by 15 percentage points— the first time since 1892 that any state had chosen to split its slate.

In order to sidestep any political maneuvering, my Ballot Buddy System holds that red and blue states of similar size should pair up and pass state laws, in lockstep, to apportion their electoral votes by district, effectively neutralizing each other – while making both states politically relevant again. Washington State could make its 12 electoral votes count, in tandem with Tennessee’s 11. Voters in Louisiana (eight electoral votes) and Mississippi (six) could focus the candidates’ views on the Gulf spill cleanup if they buddy with New Jersey, which has 14 electoral votes and a need to discuss transportation issues.

After the Times op-ed, the proposal attracted a bunch of attention, and then went dormant until the return of the presidential election cycle. Which brings us to the topic at hand: the proposal to adopt the Maine/Nebraska system here in Pennsylvania.

While I grew up in New York State and reside in New York City, I had the distinct honor of attending and graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, and I still serve on two Penn-related boards. Between 1992 to 2008, my stepmother served as president of one of the jewels of the commonwealth higher education system, West Chester University,

bringing me down to Chester County several times a year. So while, technically, I am not a native son of the Keystone State, I sit here, at the very least, as a favorite nephew.

Given my background, I've been following your discussions on Electoral College reform closely. And I admit that I am a bit confused. Pennsylvania is a swing state, one of the 10 states that actually matter, a state where national candidates flock, promising favors and spending millions locally. Someday, I *dream* of voting in Pennsylvania. Here, the winner-take-all system is a boon: Every vote in Pennsylvania counts equally, and presidential campaigns must scour every nook and cranny. The Ballot Buddy System was designed to give a voice, albeit imperfect, to states otherwise ignored.

I also believe strongly that government integrity depends on making decisions on how we choose our commander-in-chief in a bipartisan or non-partisan way. In 2004, Colorado Democrats tried to unilaterally force that state into a Maine/Nebraska system after years of voting for GOP nominees – it was widely, and wisely, condemned for what it was, a power play, roundly defeated by voters.

I've heard several senators here endorse the idea of a national popular vote. For them, there's momentum behind the National Popular Vote movement, in which states controlling the majority of electors bind themselves to whoever gets the most votes. States from California to Massachusetts have already passed it—a Pennsylvania endorsement would provide a huge push.

I remain convinced that there remain ways to instead reform the Electoral College -- but for it to have credibility, it must be done nationally, or at the very least, in stages, budding with states that have an opposite track record. If Pennsylvania reached out to Missouri or North Carolina, swing states which tends to lean Republican, and decided in tandem to allocate proportionally, I would endorse it, even though it would surely undermine the clout you all currently have.

Again thank you for your time. I am happy to answer any questions.