

TESTIMONY

The Hon. Members of the Pennsylvania Legislature:

I first wish to thank each of you for considering my testimony.

I love the United States. I feel so very lucky to have been born in this country. The Constitution was signed on Sept. 17, 1787, and was subsequently ratified by the 13 states. Congress formally convened in March 1789 and George Washington was inaugurated as our first President on April 30, 1789.

The Constitution is a great document that has served as the foundation for our governing process. It nonetheless contains serious flaws.

I have long been concerned about the system for choosing a President as authorized by the Constitution. Why do I phrase it that way? Yes, it's a mouthful. Wouldn't it be simpler to call it the presidential election? This process is not an election.

Your proposal to seek an alternative to the winner-takes-all method has its merits and drawbacks. However, any process administered in the framework of the Electoral College is inequitable and insults the intelligence of the average voter.

There is only one fair and just means of selecting the people who run our government - the direct vote. Every time each of you runs for office, you trust the judgment of your constituents. You accept that. Otherwise, you would not remain part of the system.

The direct vote must also be the means for choosing our Presidents. Especially, successful presidential candidates have assumed the Presidency four times without winning

the popular vote. The last time this occurred was only 11 years ago.

I respectfully request that you abandon this course and direct your energies and resources to replace the electoral college with the popular vote. I confess that until recently I thought we had only one avenue available - the amendment process. Any amendment approved by Congress must be ratified by three-fourths of the 50 states. Theoretically, 14 million citizens can block an amendment. That is the collective population of the 13 or 14 least populous states. Our current population is estimated at 308 million people.

The amendment process is an arduous obstacle course. To my delight, I learned that Gov. Jerry Brown of California signed legislation on Aug. 8, 2011, to participate in an initiative which would effectively sideline the electoral vote without struggling through the amendment process. This initiative, called the National Popular Vote, has been lobbying officials in the 50 states to agree to an interstate compact. Each state would agree to release its electoral votes to the presidential candidate who wins the vote nationwide.

To succeed, this system requires the participation of states with a combined 270 electoral votes, the majority currently required for a candidate to win.

Gov. Brown's signature added 55 electoral votes to the initiative, the largest collection of votes from America's most populous state. This step raised the total from 77 to 132 votes.

You now have an historic opportunity to build on the foundation of our system, the Constitution. You can

contribute to providing the United States with the direct vote for President. You can start the process now to consider participating in this initiative.

Pennsylvania would add 20 electoral votes. The popular vote would provide all of us with a direct measure of power in selecting our president. It would expand upon our freedoms and enliven the political process.

The framers of our Constitution did not create the electoral system in a vacuum. Historians cite a number of interrelated factors. Among them, communications were sparse. No e-mails, no Action News, newspapers were just starting to evolve. The average citizen had no realistic means of being informed of the qualifications of the candidates.

Because of our technological advances and the range of today's news media, voters today can readily access the qualifications of the presidential candidates. For that matter, we often get too much information about them. It is hardly news to you that the majority party has been accused of proposing this plan to obtain political advantage. Practically speaking, the popular vote will likely benefit Democrats because Democratic-leaning voters are clustered more in metropolitan areas, and Republicans tend to be scattered more in the suburbs and rural areas. For the record, I am a registered Democrat.

My prime concern is good government in order to better serve the public. The popular vote can only facilitate good government. I can think of reforms that Democratic Party leaders may not be anxious to embrace.

Again, I ask you to abandon this proposal for awarding electoral votes. Forgive the cliché, but that plan

accomplishes nothing more than rearranging the deck chairs. Please focus your attention on ending the impact of the electoral college.

Thank you for your attention.

Bruce S. Ticker