

### Against the Tyranny of the Majority

Donald J. Trump was elected President of the United States not by the popular vote but rather by reaching the required number of electoral votes on November 8th, 2016. Before that day few were concerned about the electoral system, but by November 9th, the electoral college was one of the most reviled political structures of all time. This is no coincidence. Recent talk of abolishing the electoral college has not come from breakthroughs from political theorists. We are not just now discovering that the electoral vote does not always align with the popular vote—this has happened before. These sentiments are the political arguments of those who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the election. Upon initial consideration it seems reasonable that the popular vote should elect the nation’s leader in a democratic society, but more careful consideration reveals it would be a grave mistake to abolish the electoral college in the United States now more than ever..

In the early years of the United States, when the electoral college was established, technology did not allow officials to tally votes from citizens across thousands of miles. It was significantly more appropriate and convenient to establish regional representatives to vote based on the will of their constituents. This is clearly not necessary today given that advances in technology allow us to count votes and send information almost instantaneously. However, the political significance of the electoral college still remains. Politics, people, and opinions vary significantly by region, and ignoring these details would be toxic for democracy..

The large concentration of like-minded people in urban centers has led to increased political division between those living in the city and those living in rural areas. UW-Madison professor and political scientist Katherine Cramer has observed the effects of this division and noted the “politics of resentment” that arise from rural people who feel neglected by a government focused on those living in the city. This urban focus rose naturally from a large federal government focused on reaching the most people and addressing the most visible needs.

It is logical for legislators and bureaucrats to focus their efforts on city centers which are more accessible and where resources can be concentrated. However, this practice leaves those outside of the city feeling abandoned, neglected, and ignored. History has shown that there is nothing more dangerous than a group of people who feel their voices are consistently not being heard, and this is the greatest enemy to a stable government—especially when those who feel ignored are statistically most able to organize and revolt.

Abolishing the electoral college would be the constitutionalization of city-centric sentiments in the executive branch. Electing representatives based solely on the popular vote would exclude the opinions and needs of those in rural areas. Bureaucrats would have no reason to visit voters outside of the city or be concerned with their interests. Presidential elections and cabinet picks would not reflect the will of all citizens—they would reflect the will of the *urbanites*. Eliminating the electoral college would take away the power of all rural votes and guarantee that most of the policy enacted by the federal government is contrary to the values and interests of most rural people. It would make rural votes irrelevant compared to the votes of more dense urban areas and eliminate the ability of a large portion of the country to advocate for themselves. The result of this would be that the individual needs of unique communities across the United States would not be met. Instead, solutions intended to help the inner-city poor, for example, would either be ineffectively and irrelevantly applied to the rural poor or they would simply not receive support at all. Rural people would be neglected and ignored even further.

Additionally, the electoral college is very important to the maintenance of a federalist system. Without the college, less populous states such as Montana, would have no influence over the federal executive despite that it has influence over them. The state and local governments of more rural states would consistently be in opposition to the federal government. We would find that local, state, and federal governments would not be working together and complementing each other but rather they would be in stark opposition. This would further delegitimize the federal government and very possibly lead toward efforts to secede from the union. Rural states that could be economically viable on their own—like Texas—would no longer have any incentive to be a part of the United States.

The electoral college is practical and essential to democracy as it is necessary to keep the government stable, to ward off revolution, and to maintain the legitimacy of a centralized government. However, there are also important philosophical and traditional reasons for maintaining the electoral college. It reflects the diversity of the nation. The needs of rust-belt manufacturers are incredibly different from Silicon Valley technology hubs, and policies crafted and enacted by the federal government will affect these areas differently. With the abolition of the electoral college, the diversity heralded as one of the foundations of America's greatness would be swept away by majority rule. The majority would become a tyrant that diminishes the wants and the needs of those that disagree or have opposing values.

Therefore, I am a proponent of a uniform electoral college system. It is an important constitutional arrangement that ensures all people are heard and valued. It would be inaccurate to call the electoral college an issue of states' rights. The electoral college goes far beyond such simplicities. It is an issue of equitable representation, stable government, and the voice of the people. Just like the federal government, states should not be allowed to use majority rule as a way to block out the voices of rural people. Electoral college reform should provide a uniform system across the nation in which all regions are respected and have power. If "every vote counts," we should not allow any nation *or* state to take away the power of casting a vote.