



OPINION COLUMNS

A Democrat's View: Minnesota DFLers, oppose the national popular vote compact

From the column: "The NPV compact is a proposed cure that is worse than the disease. ... (It) threatens to make some voices harder to hear."



Bob Englehart / Cagle Cartoons

Opinion by Jasper Hendricks

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I was honored to cast an electoral vote for Hillary Clinton. I represented my fellow Democrats, and all residents of my state, when I cast one of our electoral votes. Unfortunately, some of my fellow Democrats were so frustrated with the 2016 election result they are now pushing a flawed proposal called the National Popular Vote interstate compact, or NPV.

The Minnesota Legislature is considering NPV bills in both chambers this session. As written, the plan would use state legislative power to manipulate the Electoral College, and it relies on the same theory some supporters of President Donald Trump had after the 2020 election that legislators can ignore the will of the people in their state, take control of their presidential electoral votes, and — in the case of NPV — force them to agree with the nationwide popular vote.

Democrats, and all Americans, should be committed to a presidential election process that is fair, inclusive, and stable — and one that preserves the best of our history of representative democracy. The NPV compact puts all these things at risk. I urge my fellow Democrats, in particular, to oppose it.

Each state's electoral votes represent the voice of its voters in a presidential election. The voters of each state decide what to say with that voice, and they have a right to be heard along with the voters in every other state. NPV tries to unravel all this in a way that threatens to make some voices harder to hear.

The current state-by-state process pushes presidential campaigns to reach out to more broad and diverse groups of people across the country. This was on display over the course of the 20th century, as the Electoral College forced the Democratic Party to become more diverse and inclusive. NPV would push things the other way, allowing presidential campaigns to focus on their strongholds and on the biggest media markets while ignoring voters in other areas.

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The NPV compact is also dangerously unstable. It can take effect without a majority of states participating, but it relies on cooperation from all states. It could be activated or deactivated for the entire country based on the actions of just one state legislature or court. It also fails to address recounts, election contests, or how to deal with states like Alaska and Maine that use ranked-choice voting.

As a proud presidential elector for Hillary Clinton in 2016, I recognize the concerns some of my fellow Democrats have about our presidential election process. The NPV compact is a proposed cure that is worse than the disease, however. It would make current election problems harder to solve while adding even more uncertainty and tension into our democracy.

Political parties should focus on winning support from voters in states like Minnesota. No one should try to manipulate election rules for a perceived short-term advantage. As an American, I know our nation is stronger when there is widespread confidence in election outcomes. As a Democrat, I believe our party is stronger when we have support from a diverse coalition across the entire nation.

Democrats should oppose the National Popular Vote interstate compact and preserve the power of voters in Minnesota, and every other state, to decide which candidate for president has earned their support and their electoral votes.

Jasper Hendricks of Nashville is director of Democrats for the Electoral College, director of the Black Legislative Leaders Network, and vice chair of the Metropolitan Nashville Fair Board of Commissioners. Previously, he served as national director of youth- and college-voter empowerment for the NAACP and as national director of field and political programs at the National Black Justice Coalition. He wrote this for the News Tribune.

Jasper Hendricks

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