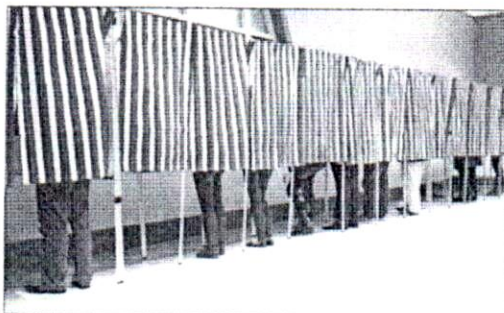


The Electoral College: Should it be abolished?

Democrats are finally getting serious about getting rid of “one of the most profoundly anti-democratic institutions in the U.S. political system—the Electoral College,” said Paul Waldman in *The Washington Post*. Our archaic method for selecting a chief executive contradicts the one-person, one-vote foundation of democracy, giving outsize influence to sparsely populated rural states. This system has given Republicans victories in two of the last five presidential contests in which their candidates won fewer votes overall—including Donald Trump in 2016, who lost the popular vote by 3 million votes. In a sharply polarized nation, the Electoral College compels candidates to ignore the deep-blue and deep-red states and “to campaign only in the tiny number of ‘battleground’ states where the vote is close.” Because of these inequities, a proposal to abolish the Electoral College has been adopted by many Democratic presidential candidates, including Elizabeth Warren, Pete Buttigieg, and Beto O’Rourke. “Naturally, Republicans are horrified at the thought.” That’s because the Electoral College “is rigged in their favor,” giving citizens in rural red states “four times the voting power than people in more urban blue states,” said Goldie Taylor in *TheDailyBeast.com*. Over our history, Americans have “continued perfecting this union” by eliminating grave injustices in our founding documents, eliminating slavery and legal segregation, and giving women the vote. In the interests of democracy, “a president should be elected by direct popular vote.”

The United States “isn’t a ‘democracy,’” said David Harsanyi in *TheFederalist.com*. The Framers of the Constitution worried that the unchecked passions of majorities in large states would run roughshod over the rights of political minorities in small states. The Electoral College, which gives states a voice in selecting presidents, is part of their solution. If we held a direct national vote, “politicians would be incentivized to rack up as many votes as they could” in big cities with huge media markets while ignoring smaller, more rural states. Democrats complain daily about Trump attacking norms, said Rich Lowry in *Politico.com*. But it’s liberals who want to change the Constitution because they think they can’t win elections under our long-established rules. Instead of trying to win back the Rust Belt and Upper Midwest voters they lost in 2016, they want to make populous, deep-blue California and New York “the kingmakers” in presidential elections. “This is exactly



In presidential elections, some votes count more

the approach that the Electoral College is meant to foreclose.”

A nationwide popular vote would actually not make most states irrelevant, said Jamelle Bouie in *The New York Times*. In fact, the opposite is true. The four biggest states—California, Texas, Florida, and New York—cast about a quarter of the nation’s 137 million ballots in 2016. “Even if you somehow won every single one of those ballots, you’d still have to

campaign elsewhere for tens of millions more votes.” Under our current system, the battleground states are the only ones that matter; the millions of conservative voters in New York and California and the millions of liberals in Texas and the Deep South cast ballots that are essentially meaningless, because all the electoral votes in those states go to the winner. A nationwide popular vote would mean a truly national campaign. Let’s not fetishize the Founders, said Eric Levitz in *NYMag.com*. Not long after ratifying the Constitution, they had to rewrite the rules that made the first- and second-place finishers in the Electoral College president and vice president, since those candidates naturally were bitter rivals. “As political theorists, these dudes were so foresighted, they assumed that America would never have political parties.”

Abolishing the Electoral College would change our politics in unpredictable ways, said Jonathan Bernstein in *Bloomberg.com*. Despite the 2016 result, there hasn’t been a consistent advantage for either party in the Electoral College going back decades. No campaign has ever had to plan for a truly nationwide race, so it’s not at all clear who would benefit. “My best guess is that candidates would be even more likely to focus on turnout (as opposed to persuasion) than they already are.” This whole argument is probably moot, said Robert Robb in *The Arizona Republic*. A constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College would require a two-thirds majority in both chambers of Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the states. Because each state gets the same number of electoral votes as their representation in Congress—and each state gets two senators no matter what—smaller states have a “slightly disproportionate say in who becomes president.” They aren’t likely to give that up. “Currently, calls for abolishing the Electoral College are futile and mostly partisan. So long as they remain mostly partisan, they will remain futile.”

Noted

■ The U.S. government posted its biggest monthly deficit ever in February—\$234 billion—and the deficit for fiscal year 2019 is up 40 percent so far. Monthly corporate tax revenue has plunged 32 percent since the Republican tax cut passed. *Bloomberg.com*

■ Twenty-five states could experience “major or moderate flooding” this spring, according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



■ The majority of young Americans are single. Fifty-one percent of Americans between the ages of 18 and 34 say they don’t have a steady romantic partner, compared with 45 percent in 2016 and 33 percent in 2004. *The Washington Post*

■ Counties that hosted campaign rallies for President Trump in 2016 have experi-