



April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Dear Representatives and Senators,

I am writing in regard to the National Popular Vote bill, introduced recently in the Senate as S2112 and in the House as H7707.

This innovative legislation would guarantee that the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia will win the Electoral College and the Presidency. The plan would only come into effect when enough states have enacted the bill so as to achieve an Electoral College majority. The National Popular Vote Compact would ensure that our votes are all counted equally, and I urge you to consider and support it.

Rhode Island is ignored by both parties in the Presidential contest because the results in Rhode Island are a foregone conclusion. Candidates don't come here or familiarize themselves with our issues, and campaigns don't spend money here. The result is that we are essentially shut out of presidential election politics.

In contrast, witness the recent Rhode Island presidential primary: With only a handful of delegates at stake, major candidates campaigned in the Ocean State, courting our votes and pumping hundreds of thousands of dollars into our economy.

Most states are spectator states in the general election – and not just large states like New York, California and Texas. The current system is arguably most disempowering to small states: of the thirteen smallest, only one – New Hampshire – is a “battleground state.”

By ensuring that the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states wins in the Electoral College, we ensure that every vote is equally important in presidential elections. On election night, we could know that a vote in Rhode Island counted as much as a vote in a battleground state such as Ohio, and we would see our direct contribution to democracy in the national popular vote total.

Such a change in the nature of presidential campaigns would benefit both parties, and all voters. With our electoral votes out of play, we are equally disenfranchised: Supporters of the winner have nothing to add with their votes, and supporters of the loser know that their ballots will not count at all toward the presidential contest.

The power to enter into the National Popular Vote compact flows directly from the Constitution, which grants the states exclusive, plenary power to determine how their electors are assigned. The compact doesn't “get rid” of the Electoral College. Instead, it

ensures that an Electoral College majority goes to the winner of the national popular vote, with states pledging their electoral votes to the national popular vote winner. Rather than being written off as red or blue, the margin, the turnout, the actual votes cast by Rhode Islanders would be the crucial factor.

The current system of state-by-state winner-take-all electoral vote apportionment is seriously flawed. Democrats get angry just thinking about the 2000 election, but Republicans were close to the same scenario in 2004: A swing of 60,000 votes in Ohio could have given Senator Kerry an Electoral College victory, despite the President's popular vote margin of over 3 million votes.

The state-by state system can result in winners who lose the popular vote, and it can result in ties, which throw the presidency to an arcane election-by-congress. It exacerbates the threat of mandate-less "faithless electors" and turns Americans off to democracy.

Maryland, New Jersey and now Illinois have signed the National Popular Vote compact into law. It has passed in 16 different legislative houses across the country in just over two years, including both houses of the Hawaii Legislature, the Vermont Senate and the Maine Senate, all within the last month. The bill was just voted out of committee in Massachusetts. Now it is time for Rhode Island to join this growing chorus.

By entering the National Popular Vote compact, Rhode Island can ensure the benefits of democracy for itself and its citizens. I urge you, again, to consider and support this plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "L. Chafee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lincoln Chafee