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Electoral College is working just fine, so don't tinker with it

A new effort to destroy the Electoral College is under way. As Ronald Reagan might say, "There they go again!"

This newest anti-Electoral College effort calls itself the Campaign for the National Popular Vote (www.nationalpopularvote.com/npv/index.php). NPV supporters hope to convince a critical mass of states to enter into an interstate compact. Participating states would agree to allocate their entire slate of electors to the winner of the national popular vote.

The compact would go into effect when states representing 270 electoral votes (enough to win the presidency) have agreed to its terms. At least in theory, the 11 most populous states could make this change on their own, without consulting the small states, because the largest states now have 271 electoral votes among them.

The Electoral College could essentially be eliminated, without the bother of a constitutional amendment.

Changing the system, NPV proponents argue, comports with basic common sense. The person who wins the most votes should be president. It's all very logical.

If the logic is so clear-cut, then perhaps the rules of baseball should be reconsidered as well. The winner of the most World Series games should not be the champion. The team scoring the most runs throughout the course of seven games is clearly a better team.

Championship baseball teams must prove that they are the best overall team. One strong pitcher or batter or a home-field advantage should not solidify their win. The true championship team is the most well-rounded one. In the same way, presidential candidates must prove that they are good representatives for the nation as a whole.

The American presidential election system, conducted democratically state by state, ensures that the new president is a good American president. Conducting elections by popular individual votes instead risks the possibility of presidents who primarily represent isolated regions, states, or special-interest groups.

Historically speaking, American presidential campaigns are won by those candidates who do the best job of building national coalitions of voters. Moderation and compromise are necessary prerequisites to victory due to the winner-take-all allocation of electoral votes. Moreover, the current process works to uphold America's strong two-party system.

In America, the impact of third-party candidates is tempered. They may have an impact on the election, as Ross Perot did in 1992, but they do not win. The process prevents extremist third-party candidates from obtaining too much influence.

Now, admittedly, the two-party system has its frustrating moments, but it also promotes stability. Consider the alternative: The constant specter of multicandidate elections, fractured voting, runoffs, and recounts. Moderation and compromise become a thing of the past. With more candidates in play, extremist groups need fewer votes to sway an election.

The Electoral College is often trashed as "unfair" and "undemocratic," but in reality, it is just misunderstood. The rules of the presidential election game have an important purpose, in much the same way that the rules of sporting events do. Voters and elected officials should educate themselves on the history and justifications for this essential

constitutional protection before they casually — and foolishly — vote to do away with it altogether.

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