



**TESTIMONY OF COMMON CAUSE
SUPPORTING THE ENACTMENT OF
THE COMPACT AMONG THE STATES
ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE OF THE PRESIDENT
AND URGING DEFEAT OF LEGISLATION
ALLOCATING ELECTORAL VOTES BY CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT**

**Senate State Government Committee
October 4, 2011 – Harrisburg, PA**

Good afternoon Chairman McIlhinney and members of the Senate State Government Committee. I am Bob Edgar, President and CEO of Common Cause.

Today's Electoral College is the product of a political compromise, a deal struck among our founders more than 200 years ago. You'll recall that some of them wanted the President chosen by a vote of the people; others thought the selection should be left to members of Congress. In the end, they found a third way.

I'm here today to suggest you embrace another compromise, one that guarantees that the candidate supported by a majority of the people – not just in Pennsylvania but across our country -- is the candidate who ultimately occupies the White House.

This compromise is the National Popular Vote Compact, a binding agreement among states that would cast Pennsylvania's electoral votes for the candidate who receives a majority of the popular votes cast nationwide. Eight states and the District of Columbia, with 132 electoral votes, already have joined the compact. It will take effect when adopted by states with a total of 270 votes, a majority.

The compact produces a more accurate result than either our current system or the alternative before the committee. Here's why.

The legislation proposed by the Republican leadership of the Pennsylvania Senate would apportion the state's 20 electoral votes based on the popular vote in each congressional district. The result, acknowledged by Republicans and Democrats alike, is that in most elections most of Pennsylvania's votes would be cast for the Republican candidate.

Because Democratic voters tend to be concentrated in urban areas, a candidate who carries as few as five or six of Pennsylvania's 18 congressional districts on Election Day -- or perhaps even fewer districts than that -- can roll up a statewide majority. Under the Republican plan, that candidate -- despite his or her popular majority -- would get less than half of our 20 electoral votes.

"All of a sudden, a Republican can win -- and would probably routinely win -- all but three or four congressional districts in Pennsylvania," former Sen. Rick Santorum, a Republican, told reporters in Washington last month. "It would turn it from a state Democrats rely on, as part of the base, to a state that they're gonna lose under almost any scenario."

The unfairness of this arrangement is clear. The vote of every Pennsylvanian, wherever cast, should have equal weight.

Current state law, of course, is equally unfair. Because electors are awarded on a winner-take-all basis, President Obama got all 21 of the state's electoral votes in 2008 while winning just 54 percent of the popular vote. The 44 percent of Pennsylvanians who supported John McCain were arguably disenfranchised.

Mr. Chairman, let's level with our fellow citizens. The dispute here between Republicans and Democrats is purely political; neither party has clean hands. It's worth noting that in Nebraska, where electoral votes already are apportioned by Congressional district, the Republicans are pressing for a winner-take-all system and the Democrats favor the status quo. That, of course, is because President Obama managed to carry one of Nebraska's districts in 2008, denying the Republicans their usual sweep there.

The National Popular Vote Compact gets us past all this and to a system that reflects -- every time -- the real will of the majority. It recognizes that the Presidential election is a national, not a state-by-state contest. It makes every vote count. By enacting the compact bill introduced by Senator Alloway and Representative Creighton you would be declaring Pennsylvanians recognize that we're one nation, and that our President should be the candidate who wins the most votes, regardless of where they're cast.

Thank you.