



## **Opinion: Stop the Misguided Effort to Allocate Electoral Votes by Congressional District**

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Way back in 1800, Thomas Jefferson spoke out to cite the political disadvantage for states that divided electoral votes in a district approach, while all others used the winner-take-all approach. He knew the dangers even back then. And yet, Pennsylvania is talking about using a district approach in 2012.

In California in 2007, politicians initiated a petition to divide the state's electoral votes by congressional district on the June 2008 ballot, but it failed to obtain the required signatures. The Cato Institute pointed out to Californians at that time that the district approach would extend the effects of gerrymandering of congressional districts to the highest office in the land.

The Pennsylvania bill, SB 1282, which would allocate electoral votes by congressional district, is so unclearly written that should it pass, it would be subject to litigation. Further, it would be a detour from the laudable goal of meeting the requirements to join the National Popular Vote Compact.

The National Popular Vote Compact is a more sensible solution to the problem. Under this system, states would allocate their electoral votes to the candidates that get the most votes nationwide, thus eliminating the electoral college system. Under the National Popular Vote proposal, the candidate who garners the most votes nationally would be president, period.

Our current flawed electoral college system creates "safe" and "swing" states, which means that candidates only campaign in the few swing states that might have the most effect. Citizens in safe states have little incentive to vote.

One strange byproduct of the electoral college system was seen in 2000 when "Nader Trader" websites were set up. On these sites, a supporter of Ralph Nader in a swing state agreed to vote for Al Gore if another voter in a safe state agreed to another vote for Nader. The idea behind this bizarre vote trading is that the Nader supporter gets to show his or her (largely symbolic) support for Nader without harming Gore's chances in a battleground state.

A National Popular Vote Compact would eliminate such nonsense. In order for the National Popular Vote proposal to take effect, states representing at least 270 electoral votes need to approve the proposal.

All Pennsylvanians should support the effort to get Pennsylvania to sign on to the Compact. Everyone should be working to raise enough votes to make the changes. If enough states join the National Popular Vote Compact by July 20 in the presidential election year, the new system would take effect that November.

All Pennsylvanians should write or call your state officials with two clear messages: Stop SB1282's misguided idea to allocate electoral votes by congressional district and instead support the National Popular Vote Compact.