



A call to preserve the Electoral College

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In the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election, opponents of the Electoral College are calling for the system to be abolished or reformed to reflect the "popular vote." In addition, those who were upset with Republican Donald Trump's victory were hoping that some electors would switch their vote and support the Democratic candidate, Hillary Clinton. Before undermining the Electoral College, it is prudent for every citizen to understand why this unique system designed by our Founding Fathers is essential to our constitutional government.

As Dr. Larry Arnn, President of Hillsdale College, explained in *The Wall Street Journal*: "On December 19 [2016], the electors of every state and the District of Columbia will meet. Each state has the same number of electors as it does U.S. Senators and Representatives combined. The state legislature decides how the electors are selected. The chosen electors are bound by custom everywhere and by law in many states to support the presidential candidate who won their state's popular vote. If they fail to vote this way, they will be 'faithless electors.' This has happened but rarely in the history of the presidency."

The Founding Fathers considered a direct election of the President, but they rejected this idea. Even though the Electoral College is one of the most misunderstood elements of American government, it does play a central role. As Dr. Arnn explained, "Although it is odd, it is also a plain expression of the Constitution, part of the structure that has made America's founding document [the Constitution] the best and longest lived in history."

When the Founding Fathers met in Philadelphia in 1787, they designed a republican form of government based upon a written Constitution that limited the power of the federal government. The Constitution is a document that contains the separation of powers, checks and balances, and federalism. John Samples, Vice President of Cato Institute, wrote: "James Madison's famous *Federalist No. 10* makes clear that the Founders fashioned a republic, not a pure democracy. To be sure, they knew that the consent of the governed was the ultimate basis of government, but the

Founders denied that such consent could be reduced to simple majority or plurality rule. In fact, nothing could be more alien to the spirit of American constitutionalism than equating democracy with the direct, unrefined will of the people."

The term "democracy" is overused in our political language, and it confuses people to the truth that the Founding Fathers created a republic and not a democracy. It also must be understood that, just as with representation to Congress, the Electoral College provides equal representation. The Founders solved the problem of representation by stipulating that the House of Representatives would be based upon population (favoring large states) and the Senate would have equal representation, with each state getting two Senators (favoring small states). Individual states also have a role to play in our constitutional system, as stated in the Tenth Amendment.

In other words, the states have a role to play in our constitutional republic in regard to both elections and policy. The United States Senate works similarly to the Electoral College because it provides equal representation. As stated above, not all states are represented equally in the House of Representatives. For example, Wyoming is not equal to large states like California in the House of Representatives, but the citizens of Wyoming still have equal representation because each state gets two Senators.

The same is true for the Electoral College. Like the Senate, the Electoral College provides equal representation to smaller states. Iowa would not have been a swing state in this recent election if we had had a direct popular vote. A direct popular vote would mean that candidates would campaign only in large urban areas. As the election results demonstrate, Donald Trump won a majority of the United States, but, as The Wall Street Journal reported, "Mrs. Clinton's advantage in California alone - more than 2.7 million votes - accounts for more than her projected margin of victory of about 2 million."

The Electoral College does not just work to preserve our republican form of government. In addition to providing equal representation, it also makes elections more secure from election fraud and brings stability to elections by forcing candidates to moderate and build coalitions.

Abolishing the Electoral College would be dangerous for both Iowa and the nation. Historically, even in close elections, the Electoral College system has worked. Even in the 2016 election, it demonstrates that citizens across America, especially in rural areas, are equally represented.

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