

National Popular Vote Informational Meeting
April 24, 2025
ED LWVPA Remarks

Good morning Committee Chair Hill-Evans, Representative Roae, and the members of the House State Government Committee:

I am Dr. Amy Widestrom, the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of PA. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on the National Popular Vote this morning. I am here today representing the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania, a statewide, nonpartisan organization committed to empowering voters and defending democracy. On behalf of our members across the Commonwealth, I am here to offer strong support for Pennsylvania joining the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

The League of Women Voters has long championed a more equitable and representative democracy. The League has always fought to ensure our government reflects the will of the people—including how we elect our representatives and our President.

For more than 50 years, the League has called for replacing the Electoral College with a direct popular vote. We believe the candidate who earns the most votes should win—an idea that's both simple and foundational to public trust in democracy: every vote should count equally.

It is important to understand that the U.S. Constitution does not mandate the Electoral College as we know it today. The Constitution says electors shall meet in their states, cast ballots, and transmit the results—but it says nothing about how states must allocate their electors. Since the 1830s, most states have adopted the winner-take-all method by state law—not by constitutional requirement. And today, Maine and Nebraska use the congressional district method. This power has always rested with the states.

Let me underscore this again—how states allocate their electoral votes has always been up to the states. We reject the notion that this approach is “cheating the Constitution.” In fact, it is fully aligned with it. A National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is a lawful and deliberate use of state authority—rooted in the Elections Clause and reinforced by the 10th Amendment, which reserves to the states and the people all powers not delegated to the federal government.

Our position is clear. Pennsylvania should enact legislation that awards our electors to the candidate who wins the national popular vote.

One concern might be that Pennsylvania will lose its importance in the political landscape if we had a National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. But, let's talk candidly about Pennsylvania's place in the current system. Yes, we're considered a swing state today. Candidates campaign here, advertise here, and care deeply about what our voters think. But that wasn't always the case—and there is no guarantee it will remain this way.

Just look at Ohio and Florida, both once pivotal states that are now largely ignored in presidential campaigns. The truth is, the Electoral College gives power to a few states, but only for as long as they remain politically competitive.

The League believes we must look beyond short-term political advantage and focus on what truly strengthens our democracy. When candidates campaign in a state, voter engagement rises. In the last election, while national turnout declined, four of the seven swing states—including Pennsylvania—saw turnout increase. Why? Because that's where the attention was focused. If every state mattered, and candidates campaigned everywhere, we would see more voters energized and engaged. Awarding our electors to the national popular vote winner would ensure that Pennsylvania voters remain important to candidates and campaigns.

This is what makes the Compact so smart and lawful. It works within the constitutional framework. It keeps the Electoral College intact but makes it function more like a true democracy—where every vote, in every state, carries equal weight.

Moreover, history shows us that states have always had the power—and responsibility—to lead on electoral reforms. Before the ratification of the 19th Amendment, it was states that gave women the right to vote, with Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, and Washington among the early trailblazers, passing laws to enfranchise women long before it became national law.¹

This moment is no different. Through the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, states are again stepping forward to strengthen the voice of the people. The compact is a state-based solution that ensures every voter in every state is heard—regardless of party or geography.

Finally, let's be clear: this is what the people want. Since the 1940s—when national polling as we understand it today began—a majority of Americans have supported reforming or abolishing the Electoral College. Today, 63% of Americans favor a national popular vote, with even higher support among younger voters—the very people we are all working so hard to bring into the political process.

For over a century, the League of Women Voters has fought to expand access to the ballot, advance civil rights, and defend every American's voice in our democracy. We stood with suffragists who fought state by state for women's voting rights. We backed civil rights leaders pressing for reforms at every level. And now, we stand with the

¹ It is important to note that these Western states did this because their populations were small and they wanted to empower as many people as possible in their states – regardless of sex – to vote. By incorporating women into the electoral process, states expanded their political power. This proposal does the same – it makes “spectator states” more powerful by making their votes equal to those of “swing states.”

growing movement of states demanding that the will of the people decide our highest office. We have come close to reform before—let's not miss this moment.

I'll close with a story. During the last election, I was driving my 15-year-old daughter and her friend home from school when they asked me, "Why would I vote? It doesn't really matter because of the Electoral College." As a political scientist and former educator, I tried my best to talk with them about the importance of voting, how our votes are cast and counted, and the value of a republican form of government. But I'm not sure I convinced them.

For the millions of Americans who feel their vote doesn't count (including my own daughter)—who feel disconnected, disillusioned, or dismissed—a national popular vote offers something powerful: the promise that every vote, in every state, truly matters. And that is how we build a stronger, more inclusive democracy.

We urge Pennsylvania's lawmakers to join the growing number of states that have chosen to lead. It is time for us to act—not in pursuit of partisan advantage, but in defense of the most American of ideas: that the people should choose their representatives.

Thank you.