

Chapter 1 : The Electoral College - Reform Options

Electoral reform in the United States refers to efforts to change American elections and the electoral system used in the United States.. Most elections in the U.S. select one person; elections with multiple candidates selected by proportional representation are relatively rare.

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The cost of getting elected, especially to any national office in the US, has been growing. The magazine Mother Jones said that this money was used "to influence races up and down the ballot", noting further that the cost of elections has continued to escalate. This is small relative to what the major campaign contributors, crony capitalists whether allegedly "liberal" or "conservative" , receive for their money. It does not include indirect subsidies like tax breaks , [6] trade barriers , distorting copyright law beyond the "limited time" and other restrictions mentioned in the U. Constitution , and other distortions of U. To obtain the money needed for their next election campaign, incumbent politicians spend a substantial portion of their time soliciting money from large donors, who often donate to competing candidates, thereby buying access with the one that wins. The Supreme Court ruling in Citizens United and related decisions would require a constitutional amendment to permanently change, and several have been proposed. However, many other reforms can seemingly be achieved without a constitutional amendment. These include various forms of public financing of political campaigns, disclosure requirements and instant-runoff voting. Supreme Court has received substantial notoriety, pushing many people to work for a constitutional amendment to overturn it. Key provisions of that decision assert in essence that money is speech and subject to first amendment protections. Move to Amend began organizing to oppose that decision in September By June , they had at least local affiliates in 36 states plus the District of Columbia. They had obtained roughly , individual signatures for their Motion to Amend and had secured the passage of local resolutions and ordinances. Campaign finance reform in the United States Lawrence Lessig said, "On January 20, , the day before Citizens United was decided, our democracy was already broken. Citizens United may have shot the body, but the body was already cold. And any response to Citizens United must also respond to that more fundamental corruption. Following Bruce Ackerman , Lessig recommends giving each eligible voter a "Democracy voucher" worth, e. The amount would be fixed at roughly double the amount of private money spent in the previous election cycle. Unlike the current Presidential election campaign fund checkoff , the decisions regarding who gets that money would be made by individual citizens. Vouchers, tax rebates, and small dollar matching are called "citizen funding" as opposed to more traditional "public funding", which tasks a public agency with deciding how much money each candidate receives from the government. While the Supreme Court of the United States has already struck down many forms of public funding of political campaigns, there are forms of public and especially citizen financing that seem consistent with the constitution as so far interpreted by the courts and could therefore be secured by standard legislative processes not requiring amending the constitution. One bill that proposes such a system for U. It was introduced 14, , by U. Representative John Sarbanes as H. Clean elections typically refers to systems where candidates receive a fixed sum of money from the government to run their campaigns after qualifying by collecting small dollar contributions e. Systems of this nature have been tried in Maine, Arizona, North Carolina, New Mexico, Vermont, Wisconsin, Massachusetts, Connecticut and elsewhere; some of these have been disqualified at least in part by the courts. Congress seeks "to prohibit foreign influence in Federal elections, to prohibit government contractors from making expenditures with respect to such elections, and to establish additional disclosure requirements with respect to spending in such elections, and for other purposes. The California bill would strengthen disclosure requirements for political advertisements. Among other provisions, it requires the top three contributors for any political ad to be identified by name on the ad. This system would require that all campaign contributions be anonymously given through a government agency. Their system would give donors a few days to change their minds and withdraw or change the recipient of a donation; it would also add a random time delay to ensure that the recipients of donations could never know for sure the source of the funds

they receive. The candidate with the highest approval score is. In elections with three or more candidates, voters may indicate approval of more than one candidate. In 2000, the Colorado legislature considered approval voting. If the bill had passed, Colorado would have been the first state to approve approval voting legislation, [23] but the bill was postponed indefinitely. Each voter would rank all or at least some of the available options. If one option is ranked first by a majority of voters, it wins. Otherwise, the options obtaining the least number of votes are eliminated, and the options ranked second by those voters get those votes. IRV is being promoted in the U.S. Representatives, policy analyst Michael E. Arth, the Green, Libertarian, and Socialist parties, a dozen state chapters of the League of Women Voters, four state chapters of the Democratic Party, the Republican party of Alaska, and many others.

Abolishing the Electoral College[edit] There have long been concerns about problems with the Electoral College method of selecting the President and Vice President. In Maine and Nebraska, the plurality rule applies by congressional district. Modern polling has allowed the presidential campaigns to divide the nation into "Swing" or "Battleground" states and states with near-certain victories for either the Republican or Democratic candidates: The campaigns then increase their chances of winning by focusing primarily on swing states. This effectively disfranchises voters in other states to the extent that their concerns differ from swing states. Officially abolishing the Electoral College would require amending the U.S. Constitution. However, the same effect could be achieved if the Electoral College representatives from states with a majority of the electoral votes were all committed to vote for the presidential slate that achieved a plurality or the majority after Instant-runoff voting: Presidential candidates would then have to compete for votes in all 50 states, not just the swing states, typically less than a dozen of the. Between 2000 and 2008, eleven states with electoral votes totaling 133 had approved the compact. To take effect it must be approved by states with electoral votes totaling 270, just over half of the current total electoral votes.

Redistricting[edit] In the United States House of Representatives and many other legislative bodies such as city councils, members are elected from districts, whose boundaries are changed periodically through a process known as redistricting. When this process is manipulated to benefit a particular political party or incumbent, the result is known as Gerrymandering. The Open Our Democracy Act of 2011 is a bill designed to end gerrymandering which is currently awaiting scheduling for a vote in the US House of Representatives. Organizations promoting changes in redistricting include FairVote and.

Chapter 2 : Electoral College Reform

The politics of electoral college reform, (A Yale fastback, YF) [Lawrence D Longley] on calendrierdelascience.com
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The first triumph came in Colorado, where the state Senate passed the bill only for it to die in the House. Maryland became the first state to enter the Compact, in 1992, followed in by New Jersey, Illinois and Hawaii. Washington joined in 1994, then Massachusetts and D. In the decade since Maryland joined, supporters and opponents of the Compact have refined their arguments to debate its implications. One devastating critique is that it would just create a new imbalance, and a new set of swing states, as presidential campaigns focus all their attention on the biggest cities and the biggest states. After all, the United States has known nothing but the Electoral College; it is impossible to predict with any certainty the behaviors of candidates, campaigns, parties, interest groups and individual voters if confronted with a wholesale change to how we pick presidents. Somewhat more forecastable are the political ramifications of a direct national election—at least one might think so, based on typical partisan reactions. There are partisan dissidents, however. In deep-blue Oregon, where Democrats control both houses of the legislature, the Compact recently failed for a third consecutive time, having previously been thwarted in 1992 and 1994. It passed the House in May, but the Senate president—who has long voiced concerns about the Compact marginalizing small states—inserted a clause that effectively killed the bill in July. Meanwhile, on the Republican side, key lawmakers in ultraconservative Utah have been whipping support for the Compact, emphasizing one parochial point: It would level the playing field with neighboring Colorado, a key swing state that gets outsize attention from Washington. It can be no easy task convincing Republicans when their nominee lost by 2%, votes last November—and still won the White House. Intraparty dissent is often explicitly political: In New York, passage was delayed in part due to objections from liberal lawmakers who felt the party holds a clear edge in the Electoral College. They also feared, surely, that GOP voters accustomed to skipping elections in New York would suddenly mobilize, jeopardizing down-ballot Democrats. Many Republican endorsers of the Compact, it turns out, share the same concern about the Electoral College—that Democrats start with a structural advantage—and are eager to play under a different set of rules. Eighteen states totaling electoral votes went Democratic in every election from 1992 to 2000. Assuming they hold those states, Democrats need just 28 electoral votes to win the presidency; Florida alone has 27. Of course, Trump won the presidency by taking back three of those supposed Democratic locks—Pennsylvania, Michigan, Wisconsin—albeit by a combined 78, votes or so. For his part, Koza loathes talk of the Blue Wall and says those three states Trump won should never have been considered safe for Clinton. Koza says he wishes the Compact debate revolved exclusively around policy instead of political jockeying. But he knows better. If his campaign is ever to hit the mark, it will happen on the strength of conservative legislators in red states. And it can be no easy task convincing them, never mind their constituents, that Republicans are better off under the Compact when their nominee lost by 2%, votes last November—and still won the White House. The neighboring booth was occupied by National Popular Vote. Both organizations were passing out literature to state lawmakers attending the American Legislative Exchange Council conference in late July. DeMint offered a dazed half-smile and walked away. He laughs, breaking into a robot voice: In the exhibition hall, they encounter Republicans who are mystified, irritated, curious, frazzled, fascinated or some combination thereof. Anuzis and Haynes are in Denver to educate, but they find plenty of attendees already know the issue well. It died in committee on a party-line vote. Their colloquy was like a short symposium on the complexities of changing an institution as foundational as the Electoral College—even if that institution seems obsolete. Or that Oregon is predictably Democratic? I think we have ethanol because of Iowa. I think we have Medicare Part D because of Florida. I think we have steel tariffs because of Pennsylvania. We would change the way we campaign. Anuzis has heard these criticisms before, and he says eight out of 10 people walk away from a thorough debate convinced by his counterarguments. That estimate seems a tad inflated. He told me not a single Republican senator in his state supported it. We have a limited number of voters, and it would decrease our influence. It once seemed

realistic, even imminent: GOP-controlled chambers in Arizona and Georgia, two safe for now Republican states, flirted with entering the Compact last year. The bill passed the Arizona House, “among Republicans, it was 20 yeas and 14 nays” before dying in the Senate. This year, Idaho, Indiana, Missouri and Montana considered the legislation and then crushed it.

Chapter 3 : Electoral college reform (fifty states with equal population) / Fake is the new real

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Direct Election with Instant Runoff Voting: With a direct vote, voters would rank their preferences rather than marking only one candidate. Then, when the votes are counted, if no single candidate has a majority, the candidate with the lowest number of votes is eliminated. The ballots are then counted again, this time tallying the second choice votes from those ballots indicating the eliminated candidate as the first choice. The process is repeated until a candidate receives a majority, reducing time and money wasted in a normal runoff election. Instant runoff voting on a national scale has the potential to solve many of the current dilemmas introduced by the Electoral College as well as the problems introduced by some of the other alternatives. It would end the spoiler dynamic of third party and independent candidates and consistently produce a majority, nationwide winner. It also allows voters to select their favorite candidate without ensuring a vote for their least favorite as often happens when the spoiler dynamic is a factor and a voter prefers a third candidate the most. Individual states can also adopt instant runoffs without a Constitutional amendment. Unlike proportional allocation, which could be unfair if only used in some states, IRV would not have negative consequences if only adopted by a few states. IRV would be best instituted without the Electoral College though, so that the winner would not just enjoy a majority within any state, but within the entire country. The Center for Voting and Democracy strongly supports abolishing the Electoral College and replacing it with direct elections and instant runoff voting. See our web page on Instant Runoff Voting for more descriptions and visual examples and our page refuting arguments against direct election with IRV.

Proportional Allocation of Electoral Votes: This system has been proposed with a number of variations, most recently in Colorado. This system would greatly increase voter turnout and the representation of all parties in a state. It would also encourage candidates to campaign in all states rather than just those that are competitive. One problem with this system is the question of how to allocate electors proportionally. Percentages will seldom be equal to a whole elector after being proportioned, and a single elector could not be evenly divided among two or more candidates. Some suggest that one way to patch this problem of uneven electors would be to increase the number of electoral votes by a factor of 10 or more to reduce the margin of error. Others suggest rounding to whole votes, tenth votes, and a whole variety of decimal places beyond this. However, each of these, though reducing the amount of error, would still permit error and not succeed as thoroughly in making each vote count equally. This would be difficult to pass on a nationwide basis and would most likely have to pass state-by-state. During this process, or even in the end if some states do not adopt the process, one party might gain an unfair advantage. This could happen if some states were dividing up their electoral votes while others were still giving all of their votes to the majority party. For instance, imagine California switching to a proportional allocation while Texas sticks with winner-take-all. FairVote supports this method of reform, though it is not our preferred choice. However, we still have in mind that giving states different numbers of electoral votes in the first place provides imbalance and misrepresentation. Read a well-informed and descriptive article of proportional allocation here.

Direct Vote with Plurality Rule: This method would abolish the Electoral College and require each person to cast one vote for the candidate of their choice. The candidate who receives the most votes nationwide would win the election, with or without a majority of the votes. This method of voting would more accurately reflect the popular will of the nation at large. Statistics have shown that more people vote when they know that their vote has a better chance at making a difference. In a close race, voting for a candidate from a minor party could reinforce the same spoiler dynamic as exists within the current system. There is a possibility that with multiple candidates, a winner could be declared with just a small plurality of votes instead of a strong majority. Also, a close election would require a nation-wide recount rather than just recounting the states in question, which would make the process in such a situation much longer. FairVote does believe that direct election is an appropriate goal for our electoral system. However, we also believe that it only comprises one-half of the best

kind of system reform, direct election with Instant Runoff Voting which would ensure a majority, not just a plurality, outcome. This method divides electoral votes by district, allocating one vote to each district and using the remaining two as a bonus for the statewide popular vote winner. This method of distribution has been used in Maine since and Nebraska since , though neither state has had a statewide winner that has not swept all of the Congressional districts as well. Consequently, neither state has ever split its electoral votes. This system does not address the disproportional aspects of the Electoral College. Using Congressional districts to determine each elector would also draw more attention to the way districts are drawn, already a hot-topic in politics today. For this reason, basing electoral vote allocation on Congressional districts as well would raise the stakes of redistricting considerably and make gerrymandering even more tempting. For more information see our page on the controversial process of redistricting. Also, while the current system causes the candidates to pay the most attention to just a handful of states, the Congressional District method would actually make their attention even more tunneled. There are normally anywhere from competitive swing states in any given election. However, with this method, candidates would rather shift their focuses to competitive districts, the number of which would be small enough to further reduce the reach of presidential campaigns, promises and attention. Although we can see how this method might benefit some states individually, it is actually quite detrimental on a national scale. Because the spoiler dynamic, gerrymandering and very few competitive districts would be so decisive in the outcome of an election using the Congressional District format, FairVote does not support this reform method. This idea, proposed by historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. The amount suggested by Schlesinger in his National Bonus Plan is extra electoral votes two for every state and two for Washington, DC. The extra boost of electoral votes would almost always be able to guarantee that the popular vote winner would also be the electoral college winner. While technically maintaining the institution, this option compensates for the uneven power given to the states by the Electoral College. This method does not eliminate the spoiler dynamic of third party participation, but it would encourage people to campaign and vote in non-competitive states in an attempt to win the popular vote. However, the Democratic voters living in Texas would have had more incentive to go to the polls if the popular vote affected the election. This situation is the same for the second place party in every state. FairVote admires the attempt of this plan, but ultimately does not support it. Its bonus total is randomly derived and does not always ensure that the popular vote winner will also be the Electoral College winner, as IRV does. It also does not deal with non-majority winners, and maintains the imbalance created by allocating a different number of electoral votes to each state. Binding Proposal Professor and author, Judith A. Best also has a proposal to amend the Constitution, although in a drastically different way than those we have explored so far. Her amendment would also enshrine the winner-take-all unit rule into the Constitution. Although it goes without saying, FairVote does not agree with this amendment proposal. Although federally binding electors would prevent future faithless electors, and electors like Richie Robb, enshrining the winner-take-all allocation into the Constitution would only confirm the unrepresentative nature of the Electoral College system.

Chapter 4 : Los Angeles Times - We are currently unavailable in your region

The Electoral College is a problem in American democracy. Democratize U.S. Democracy. The Electoral College is a problem in American democracy. I saved the third reform, of the Electoral.

With 92 percent of the national vote counted as of 1 p. Eastern time Thursday, Mrs. Yet if Michigan is included many news outlets have not yet called the state , Mr. Trump won the Electoral College vote, to It would be the fifth time a president-elect has won a presidential election while losing the popular vote, and the second time in the past 16 years. And it again raises the question of what value the Electoral College is supposed to bring. Enshrining the College in the Constitution in , the Founding Fathers had a dual purpose. First, by counting the vote by state instead of collectively, the Electoral College was a compromise in favor of small states “ ensuring that they would have a voice in selecting the president. The Politics of US series: National reconciliation But it was also seen as creating a buffer between the general population and the selection of the president. These electors are chosen by rules laid out by each state legislature, and the number of electors in each state is equal to the number of US senators and representatives that state has in Congress. Traditionally, the electors select whichever candidate wins the popular vote in their state or, in the case of Maine and Nebraska, their specific congressional district. But that is not constitutionally mandated. Describing the function of the electors in the Federalist Papers , Alexander Hamilton wrote: Trump capitalized on this by generating big rural voter turnout. The Electoral College also helps avoid contentious recounts and runoff elections, and it requires candidates to appeal across regions, writes Richard Posner, a judge on the US Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit and a senior lecturer at the University of Chicago Law School, on Slate. Anuzis now advocates for a national popular vote system. Under this plan, jurisdictions possessing at least of the available electoral votes would change their rules to force electors to support the candidate who wins the national popular vote. Anuzis also believes it would force presidential candidates to make their case to voters around the country. As in , when George W. Do we have the ability to change it? And the answer is probably not.

Chapter 5 : Democrats Push For Electoral College Reform After Hillary Clinton's Popular Vote Victory

Reform Options for the Electoral College Reform Options for the Electoral College and the Election of the US President (also, be sure to visit our page of frequently asked questions about reform).

He observes a disturbing trend where the average citizen is disenfranchised, and fears that we are losing what makes America great – our system of democracy. What do we do? We need to work together to fix our government. Bernie believes we can do so: This country belongs to us. This government belongs to us. Public Funding of Elections: Bernie wants to move towards public funding of elections to promote a more even playing field where all Americans can participate. Bernie wants to curb redistricting as well as reinforce the Voting Rights Acts by making it easy for anyone to cast a vote, including former felons who have served their time. He has supported legislation to introduce Instant Runoff Voting in order to give third parties a fair shot at competing in our elections. While there is a lot of nuance to this complicated issue, the Supreme Court blog summarizes the decision this way: Political spending is a form of protected speech under the First Amendment, and the government may not keep corporations or unions from spending money to support or denounce individual candidates in elections. While corporations or unions may not give money directly to campaigns, they may seek to persuade the voting public through other means, including ads, especially where these ads were not broadcast. Learn how Citizens United allows the super-rich and corporations to effectively influence and manipulate elections in this video: Sure, but there are plenty of ways to get around it. The results of this court case, in conjunction with another one, known as SpeechNow. This includes making advertisements, organizing rallies, and producing and distributing paraphernalia. Furthermore, multiple corporations can pool these independent expenditures together to provide a huge amount of independent support to one particular candidate. Attempts at reforming our prison system may be met with resistance from the private prison industry. Trying to raise taxes on the rich to fund important programs will see resistance from the rich themselves. So, wealthy individuals and corporations are able to spend unlimited amounts of money to influence the political process. This sounds like an oligarchy. This cartoon does a good job of satirizing the situation: And Bernie feels the same way: No, in fact, when he announced his candidacy in May , he pledged not to take any money from Super PACs. His message around building a grassroots campaign – and of course, his stances on other issues – seems to be resonating. In fact, Bernie has raised more money from individuals – i. But the dollar amount Bernie has raised is actually less impressive than the number of people who have gotten involved in his campaign. How do we address Citizens United? Bernie believes a new amendment is a necessary in addition to all other election reform efforts see Public Financing, below because it would firmly strike down the Citizens United Supreme Court decision and make it clear in the Constitution that only human beings, not corporate entities or unions, have the right to vote and to contribute to campaigns. Here he discusses this proposal in the Senate back in Bernie introduced the Democracy is for People amendment in The DISCLOSE Act Bernie believes we need more transparency around the funding of our elections and has supported legislation that would lead to more visibility into electoral donations. How has he addressed this? Bernie voted for the DISCLOSE Act to prohibit foreign influence in federal elections, prevent government contractors from making expenditures for elections, and establish disclosure requirements for contributions. Public Funding of Elections Bernie wants to move toward public funding of elections to promote a more even playing field where all Americans can participate. Bernie believes that public funding of campaigns would counteract the Citizens United decision. We already have some public financing of elections. The federal government has a maximum amount they will match if a candidate raises enough money from campaign contributions. Furthermore, public funding of elections often increases voter participation, helps lower the influence of outside money, and lowers the amount of time politicians spend fundraising, allowing them to govern as they were elected to do. Check out this viral video by Professor Lawrence Lessig on the corrupting influence of our current funding system and the need for public financing: Who else agrees with Bernie on this? From a Christian point of view, the fact that the voice of the wealthy is the voice that is most clearly and forcefully heard is an upside-down state of affairs. And Rabbi Adina Allen has written

extensively about the importance of giving average people more say in elections: Democracy Day Voter turnout in America is very low, and Bernie believes we should encourage more people to participate in our democracy by making it easier for them to get to polling stations. How bad is voter turnout in the United States? Turnout is particularly low during midterm elections. In the last midterms, in , only 37 percent of Americans cast a vote: What does Bernie want to do about this? Bernie co-sponsored a bill in November to make Election Day a federal holiday called Democracy Day. He wants to encourage voter turnout and increase the amount of people participating in the democratic process. Of this effort, he has stated: Election Day should be a national holiday so that everyone has the time and opportunity to vote. Gerrymandering has caused Democrats to be underrepresented by about 18 seats in the House relative to their vote share in the election. Bernie favors using the federal government to rein in gerrymandering. What are other voter suppression issues America faces? In , the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of , a landmark bill passed to combat voter suppression at the ballot box, particularly against people of color. This change allowed nine states to change election laws without federal approval. Deeply displeased , to say the least. The landmark civil rights law that Congress passed almost five decades ago, and reauthorized with overwhelming bipartisan support only seven years ago, has been an important tool to protect voters in places with a history of discrimination. The law is as necessary today as it was in the era of Jim Crow laws. We must act immediately to rewrite this vital law. Every American citizen should have the right to vote! Agreed, but some citizens are actually explicitly denied those rights by law. And due to racial disparities in the criminal justice system, this disproportionately affects people of color. In fact, one of 13 blacks do not have the right to vote because of this. This directly threatens the notion of universal suffrage, limits free speech, and contradicts the representation right inherent in our Constitution. Essentially, voting rights are one of the ways to keep inmates connected to civic life and have a better foundation for rejoining society once they serve their time. So, taken in the context of the fact that people of color are disproportionately over-represented in our prison system , one can argue that they are disproportionately underrepresented in our political system. Where does Bernie stand on this? Bernie has long been a supporter of universal suffrage and proudly represents Vermont, one of two states that do not restrict voting rights of anyone convicted of felonies. In March , Bernie co-sponsored the Democracy Restoration Act , which seeks to reinstate voting rights to people who have served their time and been freed from prison. Finally, and importantly, Bernie speaks often about how institutionalized racism has led to over-incarceration of people of color, and wants to reform our criminal justice system and sentencing laws to address this. Learn more at the Criminal Justice category page and also at the Racial Justice issue page. He thinks that low voter turnout is indicative of this: They rejected a political system and a Congress which spends more time representing the wealthy and the powerful than ordinary Americans. Prior to being elected to the Senate for the first time in , Bernie represented Vermont in the House of Representatives, also as an Independent. His time in the House and Senate combined make him the longest-serving Independent in the history of Congress. In doing that, you would be taking votes away from the Democratic candidate and making it easier for some right-wing Republican to get electedâ€”the [Ralph] Nader dilemma. The bolder, more radical approach is obviously running outside of the two-party system. Do people believe at this particular point that there is the capability of starting a third-party movement? Or is that an idea that is simply not realistic at this particular moment in history? Learn more about what this in this video: Much better to vote for something than against something, right?

Chapter 6 : An easy way to reform the Electoral College - calendrierdelascience.com

"I think it is intolerable for democracy," said George C. Edwards III, a political science professor at Texas A&M University and the author of a book on the Electoral College.

The debate about the necessity of getting the current Electoral College arrangement reformed has become the matter of primary concern for the U. Indeed, despite the great variety of respective opinions, there is clear evidence that the current state of affairs has to be changed in some way. As a matter of fact, the most reasonable decision on the matter appears to be the adoption of the institutional reform which would abolish the Electoral College as such and thus let American people participate in truly democratic presidential elections. Generally speaking, the Electoral College is a specific political institution which operates exclusively during presidential elections. The main function of this institution is to ultimately decide which of the candidates is to obtain the presidential post. Both alternatives had their own disadvantages: In this context the establishment of the Electoral College was considered to be the most appropriate decision which would assure that the president is elected in a democratic and at the same time effectively weighed manner. In a general sense, such mechanism of electing the president is expected to favour the candidate who manages to gain support of the broad public and the group of honorary politicians and civil leaders that cast their votes in the capacity of the members of the Electoral College. Theoretically, the elaboration of such mechanism has to result in the election of the most skilled and respectable candidate out of those who participate in the presidential elections. However, in practice the situation appears to be slightly different, and the impact that the Electoral College exerts on the outcome of the presidential elections in no way can be regarded as completely immaculate and unambiguously beneficial for American people. On the one hand, such misrepresentation appears to be related to the winner-take-all principle that dictates the way in which distribution of the electoral votes is accomplished. As a matter of fact, the current framework presupposes that the procedure of presidential elections is to be activated by the popular voting for one of the competing candidates. In this respect, each eligible citizen of the U. However, those results are not ultimate since the members of the Electoral College have not yet cast their respective votes. However, those electoral votes cannot be distributed between the candidates in a way that would correspond to the actual distribution of popular votes. In fact, if distribution of the popular votes between the candidates is rather equable and one of the candidates acquires just a minimal advantage over the other, it is actually that contestable winner who is going to be then supported by the whole of the electoral votes allocated to that particular state. In this case it remains insignificant that the other candidate managed to acquire support of just slightly smaller number of people who manifested their own political position in such manner of voting. Position of that minority group is completely neglected regardless of the factual number of its representatives, and it is only the majority, however marginal it might be, that gains the privilege of deciding the way in which the electoral votes of that state are to be cast. Even though the founders of the political system of the U. Basically, the electors are delegated to the Electoral College by respective institutions of each state. However, the premises on which electors are appointed in the particular state might vary to some extent. The most popular option presupposes the composition of separate groups of potential electors that are gathered on the basis of the identical political party affiliation. Should the candidate from the particular political party gain the majority of popular votes in that state, the state authorities delegate the electors from the same party to cast their electoral votes. Another option presupposes the appointment of electors directly by the state authorities which choose the potential electors among the respectable citizens of that state. Generally, in both cases electors are supposed to cast their electoral votes for the candidate who gained the majority of popular votes in the state they represent. However, they are supposed but not obliged to do so, and this peculiarity occasionally leads to the situation when electors prefer not to vote for the candidate that has been the winner of the popular elections in that state. Such arrangement factually diminishes significance of the popular elections since their result might easily be neglected by the elector and thus not taken into account during the count of electoral votes, which actually decides the outcome of the presidential elections. The most peculiar feature of this situation is that American

citizens seem to falsely believe that by casting their vote in presidential elections they choose the future president but not the group of electors that are going to actually choose the president in a fully arbitrary and unrestricted manner. Indeed, there is a real chance that under such arrangement the presidential post might be granted to the candidate who has actually received less popular votes in comparison with his competitor. Taking into consideration all mentioned above, it needs to be stated that the current institutional mechanism of presidential elections has to be modified so as to become more transparent and genuinely democratic. As the proponents of such reform emphasize, direct election plan would give every vote the equal weight, no matter in which state it was actually cast Koza et al. Even though the opponents of such reform would argue that the current institutional framework is deeply historically rooted in the American political culture Whitaker and Neale , such reverence for political tradition cannot compensate the constant presence of the possibility that the constitutional right of American people to elect their president might be neglected in favour of the arbitrary will of the narrow group of the members of the Electoral College. The maintenance of such state of affairs is inadmissible for the truly democratic state, and in this respect the adoption of the institutional reform that would abolish the Electoral College appears to be sufficiently reasonable and justified. In conclusion, it should be highlighted that the Electoral College Reform seems to be essential for support of the democratic rule of people in the U. In this respect, the adoption of the reform that would get the Electoral College abolished appears to be a sort of decision that is unconditionally beneficial for American people.

Chapter 7 : How to Reform the Electoral College | Brennan Center for Justice

The Electoral College has survived more efforts to reform or abolish it than any other American political institution. "There have been more proposals for Constitutional amendments on changing the Electoral College than on any other subject," according to the National Archives.

Electoral college reform fifty states with equal population Neil Freeman, map format and dimensions vary The electoral college is a time-honored, logical system for picking the chief executive of the United States. However, the American body politic has also grown accustomed to paying close attention to the popular vote. This is only rarely a problem, since the electoral college and the popular vote have only disagreed three times in years. The fundamental problem of the electoral college is that the states of the United States are too disparate in size and influence. The largest state is 66 times as populous as the smallest and has 18 times as many electoral votes. To remedy this issue, the Electoral Reform Map redivides the fifty United States into 50 states of equal population. The Census records a population of 309,000,000 for the United States, which this map divides into 50 states, each with a population of about 6,180,000. The poster has much more detail than the map here, including hundreds of smaller cities, an inset for the New York area and better elevation shading. Consult the shop for more about shipping. Advantages of this proposal Preserves the historic structure and function of the Electoral College. Ends the over-representation of small states and under-representation of large states in presidential voting and in the US Senate by eliminating small and large states. Political boundaries more closely follow economic patterns, since many states are more centered on one or two metro areas. Ends varying representation in the House. Currently, the population of House districts ranges from 400,000 to 700,000. After this reform, every House seat would represent districts of the same size. States could be redistricted after each census - just like House seats are distributed now. Disadvantages Some county names are duplicated in new states. Some local governments would experience a shift in state laws and procedures. Methodology The map began with an algorithm that grouped counties based on proximity, urban area, and commuting patterns. The algorithm was seeded with the fifty largest cities. After that, manual changes took into account compact shapes, equal populations, metro areas divided by state lines, and drainage basins. In certain areas, divisions are based on census tract lines. The District of Columbia is included into the state of Washington, with the Mall, major monuments and Federal buildings set off as the seat of the federal government. The capitals of the states are existing states capitals where possible, otherwise large or central cities have been chosen. The suggested names of the new states are taken mainly from geographical features:

Chapter 8 : NPR Choice page

Book Reviews MURRAY CLARK HAVENS, EDITOR The Politics of Electoral College Reform. By LAWRENCE D. LONGLEY and ALAN G. BRAUN. (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press,

United States congressional apportionment State population per electoral vote for the 50 states and Washington D. Each representative represents on average , persons. The least populous state which is Wyoming , according to the census has three electors; thus, D. This is because each of these states is entitled to one representative and two senators. Nomination[edit] The custom of allowing recognized political parties to select a slate of prospective electors developed early. In contemporary practice, each presidential-vice presidential ticket has an associated slate of potential electors. Then on Election Day, the voters select a ticket and thereby select the associated electors. In some states, the electors are nominated by voters in primaries, the same way other presidential candidates are nominated. In some states, such as Oklahoma , Virginia and North Carolina , electors are nominated in party conventions. In Pennsylvania , the campaign committee of each candidate names their respective electoral college candidates an attempt to discourage faithless electors. Varying by state, electors may also be elected by state legislatures, or appointed by the parties themselves. However, the Congress may remove this disqualification by a two-thirds vote in each House. Since the Civil War , all states have chosen presidential electors by popular vote. This process has been normalized to the point the names of the electors appear on the ballot in only eight states: Maine and Nebraska use the "congressional district method", selecting one elector within each congressional district by popular vote and selecting the remaining two electors by a statewide popular vote. This method has been used in Maine since and in Nebraska since In most states, voters choose a slate of electors, and only a few states list on the ballot the names of proposed electors. In some states, if a voter wants to write in a candidate for president, the voter is also required to write in the names of proposed electors. After the election, each state prepares seven Certificates of Ascertainment, each listing the candidates for president and vice president, their pledged electors, and the total votes each candidacy received. The Certificates of Ascertainment are mandated to carry the State Seal, and the signature of the Governor in the case of the District of Columbia, the Certificate is signed by the Mayor of the District of Columbia. Hayes and William A. Wheeler for the State of Louisiana. The Electoral College never meets as one body. Electors meet in their respective state capitals electors for the District of Columbia meet within the District on the Monday after the second Wednesday in December, at which time they cast their electoral votes on separate ballots for president and vice president. This document sets forth who was chosen to cast the electoral votes. The attendance of the electors is taken and any vacancies are noted in writing. The next step is the selection of a president or chairman of the meeting, sometimes also with a vice chairman. The electors sometimes choose a secretary, often not himself an elector, to take the minutes of the meeting. In many states, political officials give short speeches at this point in the proceedings. When the time for balloting arrives, the electors choose one or two people to act as tellers. Some states provide for the placing in nomination of a candidate to receive the electoral votes the candidate for president of the political party of the electors. Each elector submits a written ballot with the name of a candidate for president. In New Jersey , the electors cast ballots by checking the name of the candidate on a pre-printed card; in North Carolina , the electors write the name of the candidate on a blank card. The tellers count the ballots and announce the result. The next step is the casting of the vote for vice president, which follows a similar pattern. Each Certificate of Vote must be signed by all of the electors and a Certificate of Ascertainment must be attached to each of the Certificates of Vote. Each Certificate of Vote must include the names of those who received an electoral vote for either the office of president or of vice president. The electors certify the Certificates of Vote and copies of the Certificates are then sent in the following fashion: A staff member of the President of the Senate collects the Certificates of Vote as they arrive and prepares them for the joint session of the Congress. The Certificates are arranged " unopened " in alphabetical order and placed in two special mahogany boxes. Alabama through Missouri including the District of Columbia are placed in one box and Montana through Wyoming are placed in the other box. Faithless elector An elector may vote for

whomever he or she wishes for each office provided that at least one of their votes president or vice president is for a person who is not a resident of the same state as themselves. Twenty-nine states plus the District of Columbia have passed laws to punish faithless electors, although none have ever been enforced. Many constitutional scholars claim that state restrictions would be struck down if challenged based on Article II and the Twelfth Amendment. Blair, U. Electors who break their pledge are called "faithless electors. Over the course of 58 presidential elections since 1789, only 0. As stated in the ruling, electors are acting as a functionary of the state, not the federal government. Therefore, states have the right to govern the process of choosing electors. The constitutionality of state laws punishing electors for actually casting a faithless vote, rather than refusing to pledge, has never been decided by the Supreme Court. However, in his dissent in *Ray v. Blair*, Justice Robert Jackson wrote: Faithless electors have never changed the outcome of any presidential election.

Contingent election The Twelfth Amendment mandates Congress assemble in joint session to count the electoral votes and declare the winners of the election. The vice president and the Speaker of the House sit at the podium, with the vice president in the seat of the Speaker of the House. Each house appoints two tellers to count the vote normally one member of each political party. Relevant portions of the Certificate of Vote are read for each state, in alphabetical order. An objection supported by at least one senator and one representative will be followed by the suspension of the joint session and by separate debates and votes in each House of Congress; after both Houses deliberate on the objection, the joint session is resumed. In that case, the votes from the State in question are simply ignored. The votes of Arkansas and Louisiana were rejected in the presidential election of Gore, who as vice president was required to preside over his own Electoral College defeat by five electoral votes, denied the objections, all of which were raised by only several representatives and would have favored his candidacy, after no senators would agree to jointly object. Objections were again raised in the vote count of the elections, and on that occasion the document was presented by one representative and one senator. Although the joint session was suspended, the objections were quickly disposed of and rejected by both Houses of Congress. After the certificates from all states are read and the respective votes are counted, the presiding officer simply announces the final result of the vote and, provided the required absolute majority of votes was achieved, declares the names of the persons elected president and vice president. This announcement concludes the joint session and formalizes the recognition of the president-elect and of the vice president-elect. The senators then depart from the House Chamber. The final tally is printed in the Senate and House journals.

Contingent presidential election by House[edit] The Twelfth Amendment requires the House of Representatives to go into session immediately to vote for a president if no candidate for president receives a majority of the electoral votes since 1801, of the electoral votes. In this event, the House of Representatives is limited to choosing from among the three candidates who received the most electoral votes for president. Each state delegation votes en bloc—each delegation having a single vote; the District of Columbia does not receive a vote. A candidate must receive an absolute majority of state delegation votes i. Additionally, delegations from at least two thirds of all the states must be present for voting to take place. The House continues balloting until it elects a president. The House of Representatives has chosen the president only twice: **Contingent vice presidential election by Senate**[edit] In a contingent presidential election, the House of Representatives, voting by state, elects the president, choosing from among the three candidates who received the most electoral votes. In a contingent vice presidential election, the Senate elects the vice president, choosing between the two candidates who received the largest number of electoral votes. In this election, each senator casts an individual vote. In both elections, an absolute majority is required to win: The District of Columbia would not participate in a contingent election for president or vice president as it is not a state. The Senate is limited to choosing from the two candidates who received the most electoral votes for vice president. Normally this would mean two candidates, one less than the number of candidates available in the House vote. However, the text is written in such a way that all candidates with the most and second most electoral votes are eligible for the Senate election — this number could theoretically be larger than two. The Senate votes in the normal manner in this case i. However, two-thirds of the senators must be present for voting to take place. Additionally, the Twelfth Amendment states a "majority of the whole number" of senators currently 51 of is necessary for election. In that instance, the Senate adopted an alphabetical roll call

and voting aloud. The rules further stated, "[I]f a majority of the number of senators shall vote for either the said Richard M. Johnson or Francis Granger , he shall be declared by the presiding officer of the Senate constitutionally elected Vice President of the United States"; the Senate chose Johnson. Section 3 also specifies Congress may statutorily provide for who will be acting president if there is neither a president-elect nor a vice president-elect in time for the inauguration. Under the Presidential Succession Act of , the Speaker of the House would become acting president until either the House selects a president or the Senate selects a vice president. Neither of these situations has ever occurred. Current electoral vote distribution[edit] Electoral votes EV allocations for the , and presidential elections.

Chapter 9 : United States Electoral College - Wikipedia

Hillary Clinton is no fan of the Electoral College.

Writer, pundit, analyst and kibitzer. For more information visit lincolnmitchell.com. These two issues are, of course, the senate filibuster and the electoral college. At first glance these are clearly partisan, with Democrats seeking to change or abolish the senate filibuster to make it easier for President Obama to pass various bills, while Republicans are seeking to change the electoral college to overcome their perceived inability to win under the current rules. The partisan aspects of these discussions are significant, but it is at least equally significant that very substantial structural reforms to our system are now being proposed by both parties. These proposals are in part borne out of partisan frustration, Republicans are angry that they lost the last two presidential elections and are no longer competitive in many states; and Democrats are frustrated that 41 senators, largely from states with small populations, are able to stop any legislation from passing. The frustrations are also driven by a recognition that our political system may no longer be suited to meeting the challenges of policy and governance arising out of our current political and policy landscape. There also may be a growing recognition that institutions like the filibuster may have stopped being useful decades ago. The discussions around both of these issues are interesting because rather than address the issue directly and effectively by calling for the elimination of the electoral college or the filibuster, the reformers are seeking halfway measures that will further their current interests. The Republican electoral college proposal, which is being pursued in several states, is particularly glaring in this respect. This is so clearly an effort by the Republicans to improve their chances of winning that it cannot be taken too seriously. It is also unlikely to make much of a difference, because electoral systems and rules help form strategies which produce outcomes. Mitt Romney probably would not have won in under these new rules because both campaigns would have made changes and Barack Obama, as the better candidate with the more effective campaign, would have been able to adapt more easily. He would have picked up a few more congressional districts, possibly in states carried by Romney. These discussions create an atmosphere where institutional arrangements are no longer assumed to be unalterable and where reforms can be discussed more openly. This is probably a good development which could contribute to real change. For example, any debate around the electoral college will eventually become national. Despite the structural difficulties of reforming the electoral college at the national level, which would likely require amending the constitution, this national debate would almost certainly lead to real pressure to get rid of the electoral college, which would bring the country closer to real democracy. Similarly, a public debate about the filibuster will lead quickly to a growing awareness of other senate policies which make governance difficult and possibly to the unequal nature of representation in the senate. The senate filibuster and the electoral college have been around a long time and only occasionally have drawn attention. This is because we all know that the rules of American democracy have always been unfair. The electoral college and the U. Senate have always favored more sparsely populated, largely rural states. Committee structures and seniority rules for years ensured that southern Democrats held a disproportionate amount of power in congress, creating a major obstacle to civil rights legislation. It is worth noting that 22 years ago the Republicans had won five of the previous six presidential elections, due in some part to their electoral college advantage, and the senate, with its arcane rules of procedure, was one of the few ways to stop the conservative agenda. At that time the Republicans were supporters of the existing electoral college system while calls to change or get rid of the electoral college came primarily from the left. A goal for progressives should be to dislodge these debates around the electoral college and the filibuster from their partisan and temporary foundations and make them into broader discussions about American democracy and its future. In that discussion many different things should be considered in addition to the filibuster and the electoral college, including the role of money in politics, how legislative districts are drawn and limiting restrictions local officials can put on voting. The need for structural reforms in our system is substantial. Filibusters and the electoral college are just the beginning, but they may open the door to more ideas and perhaps even action. Do you have information you want to share with HuffPost?