

Selection of the President

The League's History

A League study of the presidential electoral process culminated in a 1970 position supporting direct election of the President by popular vote as essential to representative government. The League testified and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with direct election of the President, including provisions for a national runoff election in the event no candidates (President or VicePresident) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure, which passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971, has been revived in each Congress without success.

In 1997, the LWVUS again called for abolition of the Electoral College and for direct election of the President and Vice-President in testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Constitution.

The League has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to facilitate the electoral process.

In February 2001, a memo was sent to the state and local Leagues outlining the League's position on the Electoral College under the LWVUS position on Selection of the President.

The League believes strongly that the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely "reformed." One "reform" which the League specifically rejects is the voting by electors based on proportional representation in lieu of the present "winner-takes-all" method. Such a system would apportion the electoral votes of a state based on the popular vote in that state. Instead of making the Electoral College more representative, such proportional voting would increase the chance that no candidate would receive a majority in the Electoral College, thereby sending the election of the President to the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, would receive only one vote. Election of the President by the House further removes the decision from the people and is contrary to the "one person, one vote" principle. The League also does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because the League believes there should be uniformity across the nation in the systems used to elect the President.

The 2002 Convention voted to expand and update the position. The League came to concurrence on a new position in June 2004, which takes into account the entire presidential selection process and supports a process that produces the best possible candidates, informed voters and optimum voter participation.

The 2008 Convention voted to conduct a study of the National Popular Vote proposal, which would establish the popular election of the President through a compact among the states governing how they would cast their votes in the Electoral College. The 2010 Convention adopted a concurrence to support the National Popular Vote compact as another method of selecting the President until such time as the Electoral College is abolished

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Selection of the President, as Announced by National Board, January 1970, Revised March 1982, Updated June 2004 and Revised by the 2010 Convention:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

From LWVCT 2013-14 Impact on Issues

Electoral College/National Popular Vote

During the 2007 session, two “bills” were introduced that would have provided for election of the president by popular vote rather than by the Electoral College. Neither bill passed. In 2008 and 2009, bills were introduced to make Connecticut a signatory to “The Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote.” The LWVCT did not testify on these bills at that time due to a lack of position at the national level. At the 2008 LWVUS Convention, delegates adopted a study of the National Popular Vote Compact, which was completed in 2009. The LWVUS Board determined that no consensus was reached. At the 2010 LWVUS Convention, the delegates adopted a position supporting the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of direct popular vote for the election of the president. In 2011, a bill making Connecticut a signatory to the national Popular Vote Compact was again introduced. The LWVCT submitted testimony in favor of the bill, submitted a letter to the editor on NPV and urged legislators to take up the bill prior to the end of the session. The bill was successfully voted out of the GAE Committee, but died on the House calendar despite heavy lobbying by the LWVCT and its coalition partners.

Bills to make Connecticut a signatory to the National Popular Vote Compact were introduced again in 2013 and 2014. The League submitted written testimony in support of the bills and sent out member action alerts and E-News asking members to encourage their legislators to take up the bill and vote in favor of it. The 2013 bill was successfully voted out of the GAE Committee, but died at the end of the session when the Senate re-committed it to the committee. The 2014 bill again was voted out of the GAE Committee but died on the House Calendar.