

Pro/Con: Should the Electoral College be abolished?

By Jon Wilcox

Victoria Advocate, Texas
(TNS)

Many Americans might say they live and love their democratic government without a second thought.

But how effective is the election process in the United States?

Since the controversial presidential election of 2000, when George W. Bush won the presidency over Al Gore, the Electoral College has come under increasing criticism.

In that election, Gore won a majority of the popular vote but not electoral votes.

According to Article II, section one, clause two of the Constitution, each state appoints a number of electors equal to the sum of their senators and representatives.

Everyday citizens, in turn, cast their votes for their presidential choice, and electors cast their votes to represent the choice of their state's majority.

But when Bush was named president after the 2000 election, some Americans began to wonder: should the Electoral College be abolished?

PRO: The Electoral College is undemocratic and obsolete.

Goliad County Democratic Chairman Charles Clapsaddle thinks Electoral College needs to go.

He thinks history has proven the system is defunct.

"The Electoral College leads to situations like Gore and Bush where Gore had the popular vote but lost the Electoral College," he said. "I think direct election would be superior."

Clapsaddle said he thinks when a president wins in the Electoral College but does not garner a majority of the voters, Americans are not represented democratically.

"(It's) one person, one vote," he said.

He also disagrees with those who argue the college balances the representation of issues relevant to states with small populations and those with large populations.

"You have large states like Texas where you have both rural and urban areas," Clapsaddle said. "Encompassed within Texas is the same amount of diversity as between states."

And the Electoral College allows for overrepresentation in some states.

Delaware, which is the size of many Texas counties, is one example of overrepresentation, he said.

"It makes their vote worth more - way more," he said.

He said representation should not take into account state lines.

"There are rural Texas counties like, say, Brewster County in West Texas that have a very low population density, so why should those people have less representation than Montantans or Wyomans?" he said.

Clapsaddle said he would like to see the system done away as soon as possible.

"I think it's time to make a change," he said. "People are used to it, but we have a fairly recent incident where the Electoral College ended up with a decision different than what the popular vote would have had."

He said a popular vote is a fundamentally better system for electing presidents.

"I think it's a simpler, fairer system to have a popular vote," he said.

CON: The Electoral College is democratic and effective.

Although the Electoral College may be old, it allows for better representation, a Victoria College professor says.

Joseph Sekul, VC government professor, said because most Americans are concentrated along the coasts where liberal issues and sentiments prevail, a popular vote would shift the nation's attention to the left.

The Electoral College requires those seeking the office of the president to pay attention to voters in states with smaller populations, he said. The result is a more representational balance of conservative and liberal issues in the political arena, he said.

Wyoming, which ranks 50th in population, lacks the voters to significantly sway a presidential election, Sekul said. Without

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the Electoral College, issues pertinent to Wyomans would not likely make it to the national conversation during presidential campaign season, he said.

“They will be much more educated about what Americans want,” he said.

The 2012 election is an example of the Electoral College’s success, Sekul said.

In that election, Republican nominees focused on a key issue in South Carolina and Florida: military bases.

Sekul said without the localizing characteristics of the college presidential candidates would not have had reason to talk about that issue.

“They were very well-informed at what was at stake,” he said.

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Jon Wilcox is a reporter at the Victoria Advocate.