

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA'S PARTICIPATION IN THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE INITIATIVE BY THE FAIRFAX COUNTY DEMOCRATIC COMMITTEE

The civic culture of our nation generally embraces majority rule in most aspects of our electoral, political, and social activities where or when issues are to be decided or leadership chosen for representation whether in government, clubs, associations, fraternal organizations, etc. While, at the same time, we cherish our national Constitution, it has become necessary and required from time to time to adopt amendments to further the principle to "form a more perfect union" as prefaced in its introduction.

Amendments have been deemed worthwhile goals in; abolishing the barrier to voting based upon race [15th]; creating the popular election of US Senators [17th]; establishing women's voting [19th] although the Constitution did not prohibit it; prohibiting poll taxes [24th] as a requirement to vote; establishing a national voting age of eighteen years old [26th]. Each of these advanced voter participation and resulted in many changes to state laws and regulations to increase that objective [e.g. absentee and early balloting]. In 1790, about 90,000 individuals were eligible to vote in Virginia representing some 12.0% of the Commonwealth's total population. Of that number of qualifying individuals, none were female, black, over 21 years of age, and property owners. By contrast, in 2016, in Fairfax County alone, 563,729 citizens voted of 683,171 active registered voters for a participation rate of 82.5%. At a total population of 1,142,234, 59.8% are registered to vote. The rate of registered voters to voting age population [VAP = 866,804] is over 80%.

In 1790, the 10 elected representatives to the House and the two Senators each represented some 62,300 residents of the Commonwealth including 292,627 slaves, 215,046 women, and approximately 125,000 free white males under the age of 18. The comparable statistics in 2015 show that the state's 13 elected federal officials each represent over 644,846 individuals and 496,706 each of VAP. Fairfax County has an estimated population of 1,137,538 of which 866,804 are within VAP. Active registered voters are 683,171 or about 78.8% of the VAP and in the 2016 Presidential election 82.5% or 563,729 participated.

While gifted of great wisdom, the Founding Fathers were also pragmatists and cautious about the balance of power among the states. To this end, they established the present electoral system [commonly referred to as the Electoral College but not named in the Constitution] to insure energetic participation by all states regardless of population in the mechanism of the selection of the President and Vice President. The centuries of population growth, immigration, and economic expansion have produced a country far beyond the imaginations of the men at the Constitutional Congress in Philadelphia, one of 300+ million people capable of receiving and evaluating information concerning candidates and issues with incredible facility.

Nor could the participants in the Continental Congress foresee that the "mischief of faction" [Federalist No. 10, James Madison] sought to be averted has effectively been created by the Electoral College system. In most dramatic result is that a President and Vice President may be elected with less than a majority of votes. This has led to campaigning in selected states [10-15] to target the necessary number of 270 electoral votes for a majority. A recent study demonstrates that based upon the receipt of federal funds by state compared to the electoral votes in each that New Jersey is the most "shortchanged" while Wyoming the least. Virginia ranks 29th.

It is essential to keep in mind that, while the Constitution requires a decennial census to apportion representatives and taxes, states with millions of people have the same number of Senators as those where the population supports only 1 member for the House of Representatives, magnifying the voting power of less populous states at the expense of more populous ones and further exacerbating imbalance in the federal system and frustrating the sense of voters in participating in the electoral process. These two phenomena have been keenly demonstrated in the results of the 2016 Presidential election and seriously roiled the nation in the 2000 election.

There exists a ready and reasonable method to correct the imbalance and satisfy the civic culture's need for democracy – The National Popular Vote Initiative. In brief, NPVI requires a state to allocate all of its electoral votes to the candidate who secures the majority of the national popular vote. For example, had the Republican candidate won the popular vote of New York (as it did not happen) but lost the national popular vote (as it did happen) New York's 29 electoral votes are cast for the Democrat. The present electoral system has contorted voting where one candidate wins 65+ million votes, 2.8 million more than the opposition, but not the Presidency. The Democratic margin of victory in Virginia was 212,000 with 197,000 in Fairfax County alone. Based upon this information,

BE IT RESOLVED, that

The Fairfax County Democratic Committee urges the Legislature of the Commonwealth of Virginia to adopt legislation authorizing the state to participate in NPVI by 2017.