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### The Electoral College

I am 25 years old, and I have never voted. This piece of information makes my subject all the more interesting. The first time I found out about the Electoral College process in elementary school, I remember being very confused. As the innocent thoughts of a child can often be wiser than those of an adult, I simply felt, "If one person votes, why shouldn't that one vote count?" Today I am asking myself the very same question, followed by a slue of others: why does America use the Electoral College instead of a popular vote system, how did the Electoral College even come into existence, and am I the only one who thinks about this? Quite frankly, I do not see any reason America does not abolish the use of the Electoral College, because it seems like an unfair and confusing way to run elections.

In order to elect the President, each state is allowed a certain number of electoral votes, based on the number of members it has in Congress. If the majority of a state's population votes for a candidate, that state casts it's vote for said candidate. For example, if 67% of California's citizens vote for Candidate A then the remaining 33% of the votes, divided amongst Candidate B and Candidate C, are ignored and California's 55 electoral votes are put in for Candidate A. This system was originally conceived by the founding fathers of this country, as a means to keep power from any one person's hands, even the American public (Longley). These men felt that giving complete power to even just one misinformed voter would be unwise, so they developed

our current system (Longley). The United States is a representative form of democracy, and the founding fathers believed giving complete democratic control to the people, without the check and balance system of representation, could easily erupt into tyrannical rule by the populace in mob form. Opponents of the Electoral College system will point out that in small states, Ohio for example, the ratio of voters to Electoral College votes is smaller, therefore winning votes in that state is more important than in a state like California, where the margin is wider and the amount of popular votes it takes to win an electoral vote is much higher (Jost).

There are, however, a number of different ideas to remedy the situation. One such idea follows my original contention, which is to allow presidential elections to be won by the popular vote – where every single vote would individually count on its own. The problem with this, though, is that this is not how the Constitution is set up. The founding fathers gave the right to elect our president to the states, not the people. In order to amend this article in the Constitution two-thirds of both houses of Congress and three-fourths of the state legislatures must pass the bill, but that will more than likely never happen because a smaller amount of states still hold the majority of power, and why would they want to give up their elective powers (Jost)? Since this is not a feasible solution, there are alternative ideas to get around the Electoral College.

Individual states are allowed to allocate their electoral votes however they choose, which means that any state could pass legislation to apply its electoral votes to whoever wins the popular vote nationwide (Richman). The problem with this method, critics say, is that it will not solve the problem – because it will still cause the candidates to ignore lesser populated areas. Since the states would be allocating their votes based on the national average, only the most populated areas, New York City or Los Angeles for example, would be visited, leaving middle America to watch their candidates visiting the big cities on TV.

A second idea opponents of the Electoral College have had, is another system that looks

to modify, not eradicate, the current Electoral College process. Already employed by both Maine and Nebraska, this “district plan” is one in which the winner of the popular vote in each congressional district would be awarded one electoral vote, with the statewide popular vote winner being awarded a bonus two electoral votes (Jost). While this may be a step closer to having every individual vote count, the plan's opponents point out that it still leaves an unbalanced level of power in the hands of the same states that have the power under the current system.

The ultimate problem boils down to one simple fact – do we stick with the Electoral College system, which has served near perfectly since its inception, or do we find an alternative? In all these years, the Electoral College system has only chosen a candidate that didn't win the popular vote a few times (Longley), but is that a few times too many? We also must ask the question, what about those voters from the losing party in any given state? California is known as a “blue” state, meaning that there are more votes for the Democratic Party than the Republican Party, so the electoral votes of this state generally will go to the Democratic candidate. In this case, though, if I were to vote for a Republican or, heaven forbid, an independent candidate, my vote would mean nothing under our current win-all electoral system. I am well aware of the intentions of the original Constitution, that it meant to keep this a representative country where no one group has complete power, but even as I've now learned much more about the Electoral College than I knew before, I can't say that I support it. I have never felt a compelling need to vote, because I have never had any reason to believe in any one candidate so strongly over another, but under the Electoral College system I'm tempted to ask myself, “What's the point, anyways?” The supporters of the Electoral College have no solid arguments that don't basically come down to the notions of “tradition” and “speed and simplicity”, and I can't really get behind the idea of staying with a system simply because we're lazy. The only true answer, in my mind,

is to abolish the system completely and convert to direct voting, where every vote will truly count. Sure, this direct count may be slower in achieving results, and it will definitely be harder work, but since when should this country be afraid of getting it's elbows dirty – when it means it's the right and fair thing to do.

Works Cited

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