

Alternatives to the Electoral College – LWV Monthly Program – March 14, 2018

Why was the Electoral College started? You see, the founding fathers were afraid of direct election to the Presidency. They feared a tyrant could manipulate public opinion and come to power.

According to A. Hamilton in the Federalist Papers *“It was also peculiarly desirable to afford as little opportunity as possible to tumult and disorder. This evil was not least to be dreaded in the election of a magistrate, who was to have so important an agency in the administration of the government as the President of the United States. But the precautions which have been so happily concerted in the system under consideration, promise an effectual security against this mischief.”*

The founding fathers believed that electors were the only way to prevent an unqualified person from becoming president. They believed that the Electoral College would be a check against a population that could be duped.

While this may or may not have been the case during revolutionary times, the LWV has had a position since 1970 which was updated in 2010 that the Electoral College no longer works in favor of fair elections. The current recommendation for LWVUS is to continue with the campaign of “Making Democracy Work” with the concentration on gerrymandering, voter suppression, money in politics, and ease of elections.

The LWV-Illinois believes that the existing position on the abolition of the Electoral College fits right under that umbrella and are asking that the LWVUS make it an action focus as well. This is not asking for a new study as there is already an existing position. Rather, they are just asking that the LWVUS elevate this to a position equal to the others that they have decided fit under “Making Democracy Work”. This is why we are having this special meeting rather than asking for consensus.

Today we will be reviewing a power point presentation that has been put together by the LWV-Illinois to educate us on the history of the Electoral College, whether the concerns of the founding fathers still apply today as well as the LWV position and options for voters in dealing with this.

As a League, we agree with continuing the program and action focus to include “Making Democracy Work”. This would include among other issues gerrymandering, voter suppression, money in politics, and ease of elections, all of which are very important to us in Wisconsin. We also believe that the existing position on the abolition of the Electoral College fits right under that umbrella. There is no need for a new study since there is an existing position.

We also agree that the League of Women Voters needs to “undertake a transformational journey” and believe that elevating the issue of abolition of the Electoral College would fit into this. Many people are dismayed that the person who wins the popular vote does not become president. It does not seem fair or right and fairness is a theme that is important to most

voters. The lack of fairness or belief that their vote doesn't count is a reason given by many non-voters for why they don't vote. We believe that focusing on the issue of fairness which includes a primary focus of Making Democracy Work (including the abolition of the Electoral College) is a way to not only continue our work on our core League issues, but also a way to make the League appear more relevant to a larger group of people.

As a League, we have worked on a variety of issues of under the focus of Making Democracy Work. We have teamed with the ACLU, a local diversity group and the local AAUW to develop a program to help people either attain a photo ID or assist with problems they have at the polls regarding their ID. We have teamed with local high schools as well as a student marketing team to register young voters and increase interest in voting in local and state elections among young voters. We have provided programs on redistricting and voter registration among disenfranchised communities. We have increased our presence with a diverse population by having voter registration tables at local events.