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The Electoral College shortchanges Colorado

GUEST
OPINION



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Imagine a world in which the winner of the U.S. presidential election depended on a simple majority of votes.

Instead of anxiously focusing on electoral outcomes in Arizona, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania, we'd be discussing how Joe

Biden managed to secure nearly 4 million more votes than his opponent.

Last Tuesday, Colorado voters moved us a little closer to that world by passing Proposition 113, which solidified the state's participation in the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact or the NPV. Colorado joined the NPV in 2019, when the state legislature approved Senate Bill 19-042, which was signed into law by Gov. Jared Polis. The NPV is an effort to reform the Electoral College by bridging the allocation of electoral votes within states with the national popular vote.

Currently, the majority of states award their electoral votes to the candidate who wins the popular vote within their state. However, states that sign onto the NPV agree to award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who wins the most popular votes nationwide. In order to be binding, the NPV would need enough states to sign on to hit the 270 electoral vote threshold, which is the minimum votes required to win a presidential election in the U.S.

Proponents of the NPV argue that the reform would level the playing field by ensuring that everyone's vote has the same influence in presidential elections. Opponents of the measure contend the NPV is really nothing more than a shortsighted attempt to abolish the Electoral College, which they argue, balances power between rural and urban areas in the U.S.

So, what's in it for Colorado? Currently, Colorado is severely underrepresented within the Electoral College system, and this has been true for decades. Our state has a population of 5.7 million, but is only allowed to cast 9 electoral votes. In other words, every 1 electoral vote corresponds to 633,000 people. In comparison, in Wyoming every 1



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electoral vote corresponds to 187,000 people. Thus, if you were to move from Wyoming to Colorado your vote in presidential elections would lose 70.5% of its value!

Colorado is also a fly-over state. That is, unlike key battleground states like Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Florida, presidential candidates pay very little attention to our state in general elections. In the 2020 presidential campaign 98% of major general-election campaigning has taken place in 12 closely divided battleground states. And 80% of these events have been carried out in only seven states: Florida, Penn-

sylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, Wisconsin, Nevada, and Arizona. Most notably, neither Trump nor Biden visited Colorado during the general election.

In this sense, the Electoral College doesn't level the playing field, it distorts it. Politics is about representation, and the distribution of resources. And in states like Colorado, where our voters are seen as a sure thing by major-ticket candidates, we not only receive less attention during elections, but we are also less likely to receive federal funds for disaster relief, infrastructure projects, education and healthcare investments, and

farm subsidies.

The NPV, which is constitutionally grounded in states' rights to form interstate compacts, overcomes these barriers to representation by making every American vote equal. If states were to allocate their electoral college votes to the winner of the popular vote, presidential candidates would be encouraged to campaign across the entire country instead of in a handful of closely contested states. Furthermore, once in office, first-term presidents would have much more incentive to pay attention to issues across the entire nation as oppose to only the states they need to win to be reelected.

In a nation gridlocked by political polarization, the NPV offers a viable path forward in which everyone's vote has equal weight, and the outcome of elections is as simple as counting every vote.

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