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Two-Thirds Favor President to Be Chosen Based on National Popular Vote

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Two-thirds of American voters prefer for the US president to be chosen based on the national popular vote, according to a new survey by the [Program for Public Consultation](#) at the University of Maryland and released today by the nonpartisan [Voice of the People](#). However, two-thirds of Republicans (65%) would like to keep the current system for selecting the president.

Half (48%) favor a proposal known as the National Popular Vote Compact. The essential idea is that states would agree to select electors who have been chosen by the party of the presidential candidate who wins the most votes in the whole country rather than in their state.

The agreement would not, however, go into effect until states with more than half of all electors adopt this compact on a legally binding basis. This would, in theory, result in the president being elected based on the national popular vote without having to pass a Constitutional amendment, which requires two-thirds of the House and Senate as well as three fourths of the states. Again, there was a partisan division with 72% of Democrats favoring the Compact, but only 23% of Republicans.

Asked in a separate question how acceptable they would find the Compact proposal, over six in ten (61%) find it at least just tolerable (Republicans 38%, Democrats 81%).

This Compact has already been adopted in 15 states plus the District of Columbia, which brings the total of electoral votes currently to 196. It has also passed in one legislative chamber in eight states with a total of 75 electoral votes. If all of these eight states were to adopt the Compact, it would go into effect.

Another 16% of survey respondents did not favor the Compact, but prefer to simply abolish the Electoral College and have the president directly elected by a national popular vote.

This means that 64% favor the president being chosen by the national popular vote either through the Compact (48%) or by abolishing the Electoral College (16%). This was true of 89% of Democrats, but only 34% of Republicans.

Overall, 35% think the current Electoral College system is better, including 65% of Republicans and just 9% of Democrats.

“A clear majority of voters would like to see the president chosen by the popular vote, but advocates of the National Popular Vote Compact have yet to convince the majority that their method is the way to make that happen,” commented Steven Kull, director of PPC.

The survey of 2,410 registered voters was unique in that respondents were given a briefing on how the current Electoral College system for electing Presidents works, and then presented the National Popular Vote Compact proposal. They evaluated pro and con arguments about that proposal before making their final recommendations. The content was reviewed by experts who are in favor of keeping the current system as well as those that support the National Popular Vote Compact, to assure that the briefings were accurate and balanced and that the strongest arguments were being made on both sides.

The argument in favor of having a system based on the national popular vote, which emphasized that, “A basic principle of democracy is that every citizen should have a vote and every vote should have equal influence,” was found convincing by 66% of people, including 88% of Democrats but just 41% of Republicans. The counter argument centered on how our electoral system was designed to ensure that the states would be making important decisions, and how this proposal, “would undermine the whole notion that the electors should represent the state.” Half (51%) found this convincing, including two-thirds of Republicans and just over one-third of Democrats.

The argument in favor of keeping the current system explained how it forces candidates to consider all parts of the country, because “candidates need electoral votes from different regions and therefore they build campaigns that address the needs of those different communities.” Roughly two-thirds (65%) found this convincing, including 83% of Republicans but just 47% of Democrats. The counter argument laid out how the current system actually forces candidates to ignore most of the country and focus all their attention on a few “battleground states”, and within those, just the big cities. Sixty-three percent found that convincing, including 82% of Democrats, but just 41% of Republicans.

The survey was conducted online from September 19 through October 1, 2019 among 2,410 registered voters with a margin of error of +/- 2.0%. The sample was provided by Nielsen Scarborough from Nielsen Scarborough’s sample of respondents, who were recruited by mail and telephone using a random sample of households.

Download Survey Questionnaire: http://www.publicconsultation.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/NPV_Quaire_0919.pdf

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