

To: Chairwoman Burdick, Vice-Chairwoman Winters, and other members of the Senate Rules Committee

I would like to encourage you to vote “no” on senate bill 1512 coming up for consideration on February 6th. There are multiple reasons for a “no” vote. First, this is a short session and I thought the legislature was supposed to only deal with bills to clean up budget issues and clarify laws that couldn’t wait until the full session. If the proponents waited till the next full session, you would still have time to put this on the ballot before the next presidential election.

However, if you insist on addressing this bill now, please remember we are a small state and a popular vote for president would totally disenfranchise us. I know you hear Republicans complain how at the state level in Oregon that the population center of the Portland metro area can dictate policy of the entire state. Democrats have a huge advantage in campaigning since the Republicans must travel all over the state to excite their potential voters. Democrats only have to campaign aggressively in a few spots, mainly in the Portland area.

If you are a Democrat, I know you might think, “Great! This helps us in the Presidential election.” However, you will change how presidential candidates campaign and what their priorities will be. This will just concentrate the national debate on topics important to New York, Los Angeles, Houston, and maybe one or two other large cities. Portland, much less the entire state of Oregon, will be even less likely to have state specific issues addressed in the Presidential election (Rhetorical Question: Do Democrats and Republicans in Oregon have the exact same political priorities as their counterparts in other parts of the country?) . Do you really want to see the presidential candidates talking primarily about infrastructure to deal with hurricanes in Houston, fires or water problems in Los Angeles, and terrorism prevention in New York (or whatever else these big cities are struggling with)? Earthquake and tsunami damage prevention in the Pacific Northwest will be an afterthought. Infrastructure dollars will be prioritized for the top four largest cities before we can consider getting any back in Oregon. Policy agenda items will be tailored with preferences for those high population regions. Bottom line, switching to the popular vote is not a “pro-Democrat” issue, it is a “pro-big city” issue; the chance Oregon will be part of the Presidential discussion will go from slim to zero. Keeping the electoral college is a much better way to gain attention for our state during the presidential election.

If you do want to do something with the presidential election process, I would encourage you to look at the rotating regional primary system (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rotating_Regional_Primary_System). If you could work with the other states to get that going, at least every 4th election cycle, we would be one of the first to vote and would have a bigger say in who become the candidates for President.

Thanks for your time.

Michael Holman
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