



310 SW 4th Ave. Suite 413
Portland, OR 97204
503/283-1922
503/283-1877
www.commoncause.org/oregon

To: Senate Rules Committee
From: Kate Titus, Common Cause Oregon
Re: SB 1512 Referral of National Popular Vote - Oppose
Date: February 6, 2018

Common Cause Oregon opposes SB 1512, which fails to authorize Oregon's support for the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.

Common Cause is a nonpartisan organization that works for open, honest and accountable government, helping to strengthen public participation and faith in our institutions of self-government, and to ensure that government serves the public interest.

Common Cause strongly supports National Popular Vote

Common Cause has worked for a decade to pass National Popular Vote, because it addresses such a fundamental principal of democracy – the candidate with the most votes should win. Moreover, National Popular Vote provides a simple way to incentivize a full 50-state presidential race, in which political campaigns invest time and money to engage with *all* voters, ensuring that policy discussions are more broadly representative, and not skewed by marginal concerns of relatively small groups in swing states.

Common Cause strongly opposes SB 1512

If members of the committee support National Popular Vote – if you feel that you can best represent your constituents by ensuring that the majority rules and that every vote in every state matters – then I encourage you to pass a clean bill, as has passed four times in the House.

The normal legislative process provides a path for challenging legislation, with the onus on the opponents to use the referendum process to overturn it. Sending the issue to the ballot puts the burden on the proponents, signaling to voters a lack of legislative resolve, and leaving it to good government organizations that operate with very little funding to lead a ballot measure campaign likely to cost at minimum, several million dollars.

Moreover, since there is some question as to the legality of deciding this issue at the ballot, why pursue this path except to further obstruct this reform? Your own legislative council has advised that referring this issue to the ballot raises legal questions. While a referral may well be upheld in court, it will still take time and taxpayer dollars to defend it. Why go that route when you could simply pass this legislatively?

Since political polarization is exceptionally high right now, and political donors are investing heavily in campaigns to motivate their bases and drive turnout, it is likely that taking this issue to the ballot will draw money from political donors of both major parties, and will motivate political campaigning that frames this in partisan terms. That would be a shame. National Popular Vote should be an issue that unites us across party lines. Most every Oregonian supports the underlying principal of the popular vote, and we would all benefit from having our non-swing-state votes in play during presidential elections. However, if we want to reduce this issue to red and blue – where Democrats become vehement supporters as an expression of their anti-Trump sentiments, and Republicans in turn become more suspicious and reticent to support this – then we all lose. I urge you not to encourage this.

Thank you for considering these comments. I urge you to pass a clean National Popular Vote bill without referral.