

I was 13 years old when former Vice President Al Gore lost the 2000 Presidential election. He had won the popular vote, but still lost the election. Though I didn't quite understand exactly why he lost, I knew it wasn't right. Twenty years later, and armed with both a formal and informal education, I understand exactly what wasn't right: the Electoral College.

The Founding Fathers wrote the Electoral College into the Constitution because they couldn't trust the judgement of the people. The Electoral college would determine who became the President, not the popular vote. The Constitution provides a number of electoral votes by taking a state's number of representatives in the House and adding two (for the number of Senators), giving each state will have at least three electoral votes. The higher the population, the more votes the state receives. The numbers change after every census along with the number of representatives each state has in the House. While that may seem like a balanced system, it causes some votes to count more than others. For example, California has 55 electoral votes and 40 million people. One electoral vote in California serves a little over 727,000 people. Ohio has 18 electoral votes and 12 million people. One electoral vote in Ohio serves almost 667,000 people. A vote from someone in Ohio counts more than a vote from someone in California. A vote from someone in Montana counts more than both. This contradicts the democratic idea of "one person, one vote."

Removing the Electoral College would require a Constitutional Amendment (needing 2/3rds of the House and Senate and 3/4s of the states to be ratified), but there are actions we can take today to make voting more equitable.

First would be removing Winner Take All from the electoral process. Forty-Eight states in the Union currently use Winner Take All to distribute their electoral votes. Winner Take All means all of a state's votes go to whoever has the most the votes in their election. If Candidate A gets 51% of the votes and Candidate B gets 49% of the vote, Candidate A gets 100% of the state's electoral votes. This erases the voices of all the people who didn't vote for the winner. Fortunately, Winner Take All was

not written into the Constitution. Since it was done on a state-by-state basis, it would only take changing state laws to remove it.

The next step would be implementing Ranked-Choice Voting in every state. Ranked choice voting allows voters to pick a few candidates, if they so choose, and rank them in order of whoever they prefer the most. When the votes are tallied, if one person has the majority, they win. If no one has a majority, then the person with the lowest percentage of the votes is eliminated and their votes will go to the voters' second choice. This continues until there is only one candidate left. This will allow people to vote for third party candidates as their first choice while selecting the Democrat or Republican candidate as their second choice. We don't have to guess on how well this will be implemented. Maine has already used this method for state elections and used it for the Presidential election this month.

Along with changing how we vote, we need to make voting more accessible. More specifically, we need to eliminate all forms of voter suppression. Voter ID laws, closing of polling places, and purging of voters are all ways state legislatures and governors ensure that only the people they want voting have their voices heard.

Voter ID laws were introduced to prevent the virtually nonexistent crime of voter fraud, but they primarily just make it far more difficult for the poor and elderly to vote. States with these laws claim they provide a free ID for those who don't have one, but this "free" ID doesn't account for paying to travel and hours lost taking off work. Factoring this in, the cost of obtaining a state ID for voting is at least \$50. Not free at all!

While the Constitution makes it illegal to prevent certain people from voting based on their gender or the color of their skin, there are no laws that prevent politicians from making it harder for certain people to vote. One way politicians do this is by closing polling places in counties where the population is less likely to vote the way they want. For example, predominantly white counties will have dozens of

polling places open while predominantly black counties of similar size and populations will only have one or two.

The purging of voters makes voting a “use it or lose it” right. Inactive voters are removed from the registration database, and are often either uninformed or poorly informed of their removal, and only find out when they try to vote.

There are multiple ways we can resolve these problems.

The first step would be fully reinstating the Voting Rights Act. In 2013, the Supreme Court struck down the part of the law requiring states to have their voting laws reviewed at the federal level before they were passed, preventing them from passing unfair voting laws. Since its removal, we have seen hundreds of thousands of black voters be disenfranchised in conservative states like Georgia and Ohio. Stacy Abrams, who was running for governor in Georgia, lost because her conservative opponent was also in control of handling voting in the state. Even though John Kasich was given a speaking role at the DNC in 2020, his voter suppression efforts as Governor of Ohio were the reason Trump won the state in the first place.

Next would be automatic voter registration and making sure every state gives people the option to vote by mail. Automatic voter registration assures that everyone who is legally able to vote is eligible as soon as they turn 18. They don't need to take time off work or pay for transportation to the DMV just to register. Allowing everyone to vote by mail means people can vote at their convenience rather than taking time off work and arranging for transportation just to vote. And speaking of mail-in voting, let's do something about California's exact signature matching that causes people to have their votes discounted.

Last but not least, make Election Day a federal holiday. People shouldn't have to risk wages just to do their civic duty. Voting is essential to the function of our democracy and people shouldn't be punished for being willing to contribute to its survival.

Ironically, the Electoral College doesn't represent the country. Because of the Electoral College, our country is divided up into Blue States and Red States. In reality, there are no blue states and red states, there is just one color: purple! When the service ends this morning, go online and look up "Purple America" and it shows the truth: no single political party has a majority in this country and while some places are "bluer" or "redder" than others, purple is the dominant color. Americans are a diverse group of people who are not bound by the "color" of the state where they reside. Shouldn't our voting be the same way?