

League Position on the Electoral College

The League firmly believes in the one (wo)man/one vote concept for a democratic government. The League's position on the Presidential electoral process came when the nation was not in the throes of discussion of popular votes winning over electoral votes. Instead, it came in 1970 after a careful, nationwide League study. The position was based on the concept that the direct election of the President by popular vote was essential to representative government.

In 1968, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey by approximately 500,000 votes which was less than 1% of the national total. However, Nixon garnered 56% (301) of the electors as opposed to Humphrey's 35%. (191). The rest went to Governor Wallace. This lopsidedness caused national concern.

The League testified for and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with the direct election of the President, including provision for a national runoff election in the event no candidate (President or Vice President) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971 and has been revived in each Congress without success.

The League believes the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely reformed. The League does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because there should be uniformity across the nation when electing the President. The League rejects any system that increases the likelihood of pushing the Presidential election into the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, receives only one vote.

The League's position was revised in 1982, updated in 2004, and revised in 2010. It states the following:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

Note: The National Vote Interstate Compact is one of a number of solutions to allow the President and Vice President to be elected by the winner of the national popular vote. States who join the compact agree to pledge their electors to the winner of the popular vote. The League supports this system only until the Electoral College is abolished.

~Mary Ann Reeves