

OPINION

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Abolish the Electoral College, Empower the People

Candidate with most votes should win

BY ROBERT P. ALVAREZ
Senator Elizabeth Warren is hell-bent on dismantling the systems that feed inequality in this country, including the Electoral College.



“Every vote matters,” she said at a recent CNN town hall. That’s why we should “get rid of the Electoral College” and institute “national voting.”

Americans don’t directly elect their president — states do. In most cases, states award all of their “electoral votes” to the candidate who wins the popular vote in those states. Whoever gets 270 electoral votes wins the election.

Because electoral votes aren’t awarded in perfect proportion to population, small states get more influence over the outcome. Which means you can win the electoral vote even while getting

fewer popular votes than your opponent.

Abolishing the Electoral College would level the playing field. It would ensure that people, not parties or mechanisms, determine who leads the country.

Is that so bad? If you’re a Republican, yes.

The Electoral College helped the two most recent Republican presidents — Donald Trump and George W. Bush — win office despite losing the popular vote. Bush lost the popular vote by over half a million, Trump by nearly 3 million.

No wonder Republicans are now up in arms about protecting their advantage. After all, the Electoral College gives disproportionate power to smaller, rural states, which tend to vote for them.

For instance, red Wyoming gets one Electoral College vote per 195,000 people. Blue California gets just one per 712,000 people. In other words, your vote counts nearly 4 times more if you

live in Wyoming.

“Swing states” that don’t vote the same way each election also wield disproportionate power, since even a narrow winner will get all of their electoral votes. That’s why candidates spend so much time at diners in small-town Iowa and Ohio, rather than New York or Alabama, which vote more predictably for one party.

Seems to me all Senator Warren is calling for is a country that respects its citizens enough to let them choose their own leader — and to do so without some centuries-old electoral mechanism initially designed to inflate the political influence of slaveholders.

Perhaps the most insincere response to Warren’s proposal was National Review editor Rich Lowry’s.

If the Electoral College “is tantamount to disenfranchisement,” he wrote, “California could immediately mitigate the problem by splitting its electoral votes by congressional district the way Nebraska and Maine do... Of

course, California is loath to give up any of its solidly Democratic electoral votes.”

I’m sure California would gladly split electoral votes by congressional district the way Nebraska and Maine do, on two conditions.

First, the Supreme Court would have to vanquish partisan gerrymandering to prevent presidential elections from being infected with the same dysfunction currently befalling congressional elections.

And second, the rest of the country would have to agree to divide their electoral votes by the same methodology.

But Lowry doesn’t suggest that, because it would spell doom for Republican second place finishers. Were the roles reversed, you can bet your bottom dollar Republicans would be clamoring for an end to this deeply flawed system.

Abolishing the Electoral College is unlikely in the short term. But that doesn’t mean Americans have given up on the idea of a direct popular vote.

Fourteen states and D.C. have

joined the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC), agreeing to give their Electoral College votes to whoever wins the national popular vote. Colorado, Delaware, and New Mexico are the latest to join the compact, bringing their collective electoral vote total to 189.

Similar legislation has passed one legislative chamber in eight more states, including Oregon, comprising 72 Electoral College votes, and has been unanimously approved at the committee level in two states, comprising 27 more.

They’ll need 270 votes to ensure the winner of the national popular election wins the presidency. Right now that’s more likely than a constitutional amendment requiring overwhelming bipartisan support.

Still, there’s no getting around the real solution: Abolish the Electoral College so the candidate with the most votes wins.

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Minimum Wage Hike Would Help 40 Million Workers

It’s time for \$15 and a union

BY NEGIN OWLIAEI

Last month, McDonald’s announced a dramatic about-face in its political priorities. After years of strikes and protests from labor activists, the burger giant has decided to end its involvement in lobbying campaigns against increasing America’s pal-



try \$7.25 federal minimum wage. It’s a big victory for the Fight for \$15.

It’s been less than a decade since a few hundred fast-food employees walked off the job to demand a \$15 wage and a union. Now, they’re a global movement that’s fundamentally changed the conversation on the rights of low-wage workers.

For the most part, federal lawmakers have watched idly while cities and states have boosted

their minimum wages up to \$15. Just last month, Maryland became the sixth state — and the third just this year — to phase in a \$15 minimum wage after lawmakers overrode Republican Gov. Larry Hogan’s veto.

But the idea now has more traction in Congress thanks to the recently introduced Raise the Wage Act, which would set a national minimum pay of \$15 an hour by 2024. The legislation would lift pay for almost 40 million workers, the Economic Policy Institute has found.

As the push for higher wages continues to gain steam across the country, the movement promises to keep fighting: Workers greeted the new announcement from Mc-

Donald’s with more protests.

It’s not enough to decide, they say, that you “wish to advance, not impede” the discussion on a livable wage by simply ending your campaign against an enormously popular policy.

Employees are still calling on the fast food franchise pay \$15 an hour and respect their right to unionize. That’s a pretty fair demand, considering their CEO made nearly \$22 million in 2017 — over 3,100 times what the typical McDonald’s employee took home that year. They’re also continuing their fight to make the company take workplace harassment seriously.

McDonald’s is often — and rightfully — portrayed as a villain in the fight for fair wages and workplace protections. But it’s also only one player in an economy that continues to tighten its chokehold on anyone who works for a living.

Raising the federal minimum wage is one necessary change we can make to a system that throws endless amounts of money towards the rich while balking at workers’ demands to be able to live off their earnings.

How can we begin to imagine the inequity baked into that system?

Take a look at Wall Street’s bonus culture to see just how warped our economy has become. Last year, Wall Street employees took home \$27.5 billion in bonuses alone. That pool of money could pay all of the United States’ full-time minimum wage workers more than three times over, a new report from the Institute for Policy Studies has found.

Those bonuses mean the average Wall Street employee added \$153,700 to their base pay in 2018 — a truly mind-boggling sum of money that’s increased by 1,000 percent since 1985. If the minimum wage had grown at that rate, McDonald’s workers would be making over \$33 an hour today.

These staggering numbers go a long way toward illuminating how stark the concentration of wealth and power has become in this country. They also highlight the enormity of the task of remaking our economic system so that it works for everyone, not just CEOs and Wall Street bankers.

But, thanks to Fight for \$15, we’ve been given a clear place to start: \$15 and a union.

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