

JAMES H. DOUGLAS  
GOVERNOR



State of Vermont  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

May 16, 2008

The Honorable David A. Gibson  
Secretary of the Senate  
State House  
115 State Street, Drawer 33  
Montpelier, VT 05633

Dear Mr. Secretary:

Pursuant to Chapter II, Section 11 of the Vermont Constitution, I am returning S.270, *An Act Relating to the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote* without my signature because of my objections described herein.

S.270 would fundamentally alter the presidential election method prescribed in the U.S. Constitution by having Vermont join an interstate compact requiring our Electoral College votes be awarded to the candidate who wins the most support nationally, rather than the candidate who wins the most votes in Vermont. I am not willing to cede Vermont's voice in the election, and ultimately in the operations of our federal government, to the influence and interests of larger states that would most assuredly prevail in all but the rarest occasions. This is precisely the imbalance the framers of our U.S. Constitution sought to avoid.

The U.S. Constitution unified sovereign states of diverse interests, and different sizes, as a single great nation. This achievement was the product of great intellects and great compromise. Over the course of the Constitutional Convention of 1787, every state parted with some demands. The least populated states, however, succeeded in ensuring that the influences of the most populated were not left unchecked. S.270 would contribute to the undoing of the delicate balance that the Electoral College maintains among the states.

The framers recognized the political imperative of equality among states in the processes governing the selection of officers in each branch of the federal government. They settled on, for example, a bicameral legislative branch with each member of one chamber representing the same proportion of Americans while giving each state an equal voice in the other. They sought the same balance in election of the executive.

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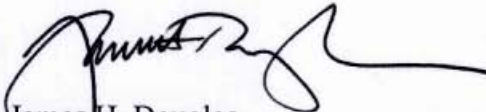
The Electoral College prevents the creation of a political aristocracy among states. The U.S. Constitution provides every state the sovereign power to determine how it selects its electors. It ensures that each state's point of view is accurately and fairly accounted for in a presidential election.

Presently, candidates seek popular support in every state, rather than just a simple national majority, and we are assured that campaigns will reach beyond states with the most voters. This bill would undermine the influence of small states and would inevitably focus the attention of candidates in only that combination of larger states where a majority of the national popular vote is virtually assured.

In addition, an interstate compact intended to circumvent the intentionally laborious process of amending the U.S. Constitution further undermines the world's most effective governing document.

Our nation is a coalition of states—each with a voice in the direction of the central government. The election of the president should be based on the decisions of each state. If we retreat from this system, federalism—the rights and influence of individual states—will erode and move America closer to a single, centralized government where Vermont's values are drowned out by the voices and influence of more heavily populated areas.

Sincerely,



James H. Douglas  
Governor

JHD/gkp

\*Note: Pocket Veto – The General Assembly adjourned May 3, 2003, 13 days before the veto message was received.