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## A deceptive pitch for an anti-Electoral College scheme | Guest column



By Jasper Hendricks | January 27, 2026

Democrats won big in Virginia last year and now look forward to advancing an agenda that's been stalled for several years. As a Democrat, I see plenty of good ideas, but one very bad one also in the mix: trying to manipulate the Electoral College with something called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC), which has been introduced as House Bill 965 and Senate Bill 322.

At first glance, the NPVIC may seem like a well-intentioned effort to modernize how we elect the president. It tries to redirect state electoral votes to the national popular vote winner, without regard to the results in any particular state. But a recent display by National Popular Vote's lobbyists at the annual convention of the American Legislative Exchange Council shows the deception used to sell the compact.

The display boasted that the NPVIC would have given Donald Trump a landslide win in 2024. With the same tiny popular vote win, Trump would have received 520 electoral votes (he really had 312). Under the NPVIC, Vice President Kamala Harris would have only received 18 electoral votes. This is because the compact, despite its name, is not national and does not create a real national popular vote. It still works state by state, trying to manipulate the Electoral College to do something it was never designed to do.

Lobbyists for NPVIC avoid talking about the details, just like they avoided talking about their Trump landslide result just a few weeks after the ALEC convention, while at the National Conference of State Legislatures annual meeting. Their Trump banner was absent — apparently lobbyists for the compact are less eager to share with Democratic state legislators that the NPVIC would have forced states like California, Minnesota and Virginia to ignore their own voters and give all their electoral votes to Donald Trump.



Saying one thing to Republicans and another to Democrats is reflective of just what the NPVIC is attempting to do: manipulate the Electoral College, not modernize it. The compact's organizers promise a system that ensures every vote across the country counts equally, bypassing the current Electoral College structure in favor of the national popular vote. But in truth, it undermines constitutional norms, sows confusion, and elevates raw partisanship over democratic integrity.

The National Popular Vote interstate compact is not a constitutional amendment. It is a legislative workaround crafted in backrooms and sold to the public as progress. It depends on states agreeing to ignore their own voters if the national tally favors a different candidate. To me, that looks more like disenfranchisement than fairness.

I come to this perspective not just as an advocate for fair process but through lived experience. I grew up in Prince Edward County, Virginia – home of *Davis v. Prince Edward County*, one of the landmark cases that became part of *Brown v. Board of Education*. My community carries a deep history of what it means to fight for representation, fairness and an equal voice in our democracy. That history informs my belief that reforms should expand trust in our system, not create new avenues for confusion and manipulation.

In 2016, I represented Virginia as one of the commonwealth's presidential electors, casting my ballot for Hillary Clinton. Did I like the election outcome? No, not at all. But as a Democrat who grew up in rural America, I still see the value in the constitutional compromise that shaped how we elect the president. The Electoral College exists not just to balance population size, but to preserve the voice of states in the federal process. Under NPVIC, smaller or rural states would be made politically irrelevant. Campaigns would focus only on the biggest metropolitan areas, creating a new class of ignored Americans. Is that what reform looks like?

The constitutional structure of the United States protects the interests of both the majority and the minority. The NPVIC erodes that balance by centralizing power in a way our framers never intended. It would play right into Donald Trump's claims that states are merely "agents" of the national government that must obey him. It's the Electoral College that ensures this misreading of our constitutional order doesn't come to pass.

If advocates of a national popular vote believe in their cause, they should seek a constitutional amendment, the legitimate path for such reform. The NPVIC is a shortcut with questionable legal footing that hopes to bypass the American people instead of persuading them. Its lobbyists tell different stories to different legislators and hope they don't get caught.

We don't need more gimmicks. We need open, honest dialogue about how best to represent the will of the people while protecting minority voices and smaller states. Until then, the NPVIC is a wolf in sheep's clothing, and Virginians deserve to see its true face.

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