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The Electoral College Has No Place in Modern U.S. Democracy

Merriam-Webster's Dictionary defines democracy as "government by the people; *especially* : rule of the majority." Yet, under the United States' current electoral college system, the majority of the nation's population does not actually rule.

In 2016, Hillary Clinton received 2.8 million more votes from the American people than her opponent, Donald Trump. Yet it was Trump who was elected President of the United States (POTUS). Similarly, in 2000, over 500,000 more Americans voted for Al Gore than for George W. Bush to be POTUS before Bush was awarded the office. This same situation occurred three additional times in earlier American history, during the elections of 1888, 1876 and 1824.

Because of this outdated electoral system, candidates for President and Vice President of this powerful nation are able to win the top offices in the country without actually earning the most votes from constituents. In fact, an American who votes for a different candidate than the majority of their state will not see their vote reflected anywhere when the final vote is taken by the electoral college (except in Maine and Nebraska, where electoral votes can be split).

BBC News demonstrates this concept with a great example: "if a candidate wins 50.1% of the vote in Texas, they are awarded all of the state's 38 electoral votes. Alternatively, a candidate could win by a landslide and still pick up the same number of electoral votes." In the first example, 49.9% of Texans' votes would be disregarded when the electoral college casts its vote. It's no wonder, then, that an overwhelming majority of the American people – 75% as of 1981 – support abolishing the electoral college system.

Given the number of Americans in favor of eliminating this system, it may seem surprising that the nation has not done so already. A look into the creation of the electoral college and the various failed attempts to dismantle it shines light on an unfavorable but monumental piece of

American history – slavery and the lengths to which certain politicians went to maintain it. This understanding also makes it difficult, if not impossible, to justify the continuation of this system in our modern society.

After the party system was established, which was made an official part of the election process in 1803 through the 12th amendment, the determination of leaders in the South to keep their slaves was the main factor keeping the electoral college system alive. In the late 1700s and early 1800s, after the Three-fifths compromised was reached in 1787, slaves were included as part of the population to determine the number of electors that would represent each state in the electoral college. Although only 3/5 of the population of slaves was counted, the number of slaves owned in the South added enough electors to southern states to give them a majority over the North, which was largely anti-slavery by this time. The Southern politicians knew that a direct national election, which would not include slaves who had no voting rights at the time, would allow the North to control the majority of the vote. They also knew that the North planned to elect someone who would push to abolish slavery nationally if that should happen.

Over 700 proposals for the reformation or elimination of the electoral college have been introduced in Congress throughout the past 200 years, but none have been passed. Although the American public widely favors abolishing the system, surveys have shown that most political scientists do not. This could explain why Congress has not passed any of these proposals. The electoral college system also plays a major role in maintaining the current two-party system in the United States, which may be a factor for many people who support its abolition.

It is well past time to eliminate the electoral college. It is an outdated system rooted in slavery that serves no real purpose in our current democracy. It stifles the voices of a large number of American voters and makes it nearly impossible for any third-party candidate to be elected. Members of the United States Congress need to put their own political agendas aside and uphold the will of the American people.