



Straight Talk

By Muriel Sluyter

The Electoral College: Should We Scrap It?

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Bonus Column

Greetings, Gentle Reader,

When our founding fathers set up our form of government, they didn't want any citizens to be disenfranchised, because of where they lived or how sparsely their state was populated. What they came up with guaranteed that voters from states with small populations would have clout in presidential elections. For instance, a Wyoming vote is worth almost as much as four California votes. Why? Because the Electoral College is deliberately weighted so low-population states can have a real say in these elections.

How does it work? It's not only brilliant, it's easy: Each state gets one electoral vote for each senator (always two) and one for each representative (varies according to population).

Let's go back to Wyoming: This state has less than half a million voters, which earns them only one representative, and as a result, only one electoral vote. Fortunately, because of the Electoral College, each senator earns them an additional vote, so they end up with three votes.

Low-population states, at least the rural ones, tend to be conservative. They have little anonymity, so they think and behave differently than people in cities, who, because they can easily get lost in a crowd, have a great deal of anonymity. Because rural voters are different, they vote differently. As a result, with a few of these low-population states all voting alike, the Electoral College allows them to add up a fairly good tally.

High population states usually have several – or even many – big cities, and city people vote differently than country people. They tend to be liberal, because their lifestyle is a world away from that of farmers, ranchers, and even most small town dwellers. Why is that so? Aside from their convenient anonymity, that is?

City people have a sense of entitlement. They are entitled to the availability of food, clean tap water, natural gas, a sewer system, street lights, etc. In addition, they have no understanding of the level of labor required to produce the food they eat. If they think of the labor at all, they think of the stockers who put it on the grocery store shelves, the truckers who deliver it, and the warehouses in which it is kept. And they think of the unions which rigidly control each of those laborers, because unions are a very real part of their world.

Farmers and ranchers, on the other hand, have to work at a city job to pay their taxes, mortgage and the payments on roughly a million dollars worth of the equipment it takes to produce the food city people eat. They farm and ranch at night and on weekends, while the people they feed rest and play. They know the "Law of the Farm" by heart. They know they will reap only what they sow, and then, only if they labor long hours to bring it about and the weather and nature in general cooperate.

These two widely different lifestyles produce two widely divergent ways of thinking and acting, but without the Electoral College, only one of these lifestyles would be represented at the polls. Our founders knew this, and they had to find a way to balance the value of city and country votes.

Some insist the Electoral College was put in place solely because of lack of communication in the olden days. Wrong. Some say it's time to get rid of it. Wrong, again. We need it now more than ever, because, without it, New York, Los Angeles, Miami, Chicago, etc, would elect our presidents for us, whether we liked it or not. And, no, we wouldn't like it.