

From: Bernie Grofman bgtravel@uci.edu
Subject: Fwd: Re: Fwd: Perspectives on Politics - Decision (POP-D-17-00102)
Date: July 8, 2017 at 9:23 AM
To: Jonathan Robert Cervas jcervas@uci.edu

BG

There are three other criteria that are relevant, but I am not sure how much we can say about each. But maybe if we do a thought piece, we can argue that the EC ain't so bad relative to the alternatives in terms of the three criteria identified in my previous e-mail and it actually looks better than most of its alternatives when we consider the three criteria below.

(1) having potential recount controversies in multiple places in the event of a relatively close election.

(2) encouraging minor party candidacies, with the potential for no party to have an EC majority, and the further potential for minor parties to seek concessions from one of the major parties in return for turning over to that party's nominee the EC pledged electors of the minor party so as to avoid having the election being decided by a vote of Congress.

(3) focusing campaigning on a handful of states. (Here, under some alternative EC rules it will again be a handful of states, but not necessarily the same states as under the present EC). In this context, identifying the battleground states over time with the present EC rules, and showing that they have changed historically, but tend to be the same in the short run, would be a useful contribution.

I am actually reasonably happy with this negative review because it reveals weaknesses that we can directly address!

//Bernie

----- Forwarded Message -----

Subject:Re: Fwd: Perspectives on Politics - Decision (POP-D-17-00102)
Date:Sat, 8 Jul 2017 14:03:52 +0200
From:Bernie Grofman bgtravel@uci.edu
To:Jonathan R. Cervas jcervas@uci.edu

Well, even I found this part of our work pretty boring, and I do agree that we could say more about models for reforms: the rows would be (a) requiring state action only, (b) requiring agreement by a majority of the states (e.g. the "compact"), (c) requiring a constitutional amendment; and the columns would be (1) only modifying the "federal bonus" provision, (2) moving toward national proportionality via state level proportionality, (3) (supposedly) moving toward national proportionality via congressional district based allocations, and (4) requiring concordance with the popular vote outcome directly. Of course some of these cells would be empty. This would give us a "universal" framework for fitting in proposed changes, and allow us also to assess plans empirically in three ways (a) how close to pop vote allocations are they (b) how often do they yield reversals, and (c) are they systematically biased towards one party.

Now we would start off the paper with this analytic framework.

//Bernie

On 7/7/2017 6:27 PM, Jonathan R. Cervas wrote:

FYI, decision from Perspectives. Where to send this to next? Should we make revision before sending off again? The reviewer did not like this paper, but I'm not sure that that belief is widespread because the editor seemed determined to get it in if possible. Seems like the reviewer simply doesn't like the EC, so fundamentally disagreed with our premise that other systems wouldn't be better (since he/she only thinks the popular vote is legitimate).

Jonathan R. Cervas (Twitter: @cervasj)
University of California Irvine
Department of Political Science

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Perspectives on Politics" em@editorialmanager.com
Subject: Perspectives on Politics - Decision (POP-D-17-00102)
Date: July 7, 2017 at 12:21:34 PM EDT
To: "Jonathan Robert Cervas" jcervas@uci.edu
Reply-To: "Perspectives on Politics" perspectives@apsanet.org

Ref.: Ms. No. POP-D-17-00102
THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE ELECTORAL COLLEGE RULES ON PRESIDENTIAL OUTCOMES: 1868-2016
Perspectives on Politics

Dear Mr. Cervas,

Thank you for sharing your paper "THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE ELECTORAL COLLEGE RULES ON PRESIDENTIAL

Thank you for sharing your paper, "THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVE ELECTORAL COLLEGE RULES ON PRESIDENTIAL OUTCOMES: 1868-2016". It is a well written and interesting paper, and I enjoyed reading it, and learned from it.

At the same time, our internal processes of review and deliberation have determined that the piece isn't a good match for our journal. I am thus sorry to report that I have decided to refrain from sending the piece out for external review. (A statement of philosophy and guidelines for authors appears at <http://www.apsanet.org/perspectives>.)

In going through the piece we had concerns that it was simply too technical or narrow for our audience. Still I found the amount of work you did, and upshot of your analysis impressive. I hoped that perhaps we could turn your piece into a reflection on the state of affairs in US presidential elections and then sent it out to a senior Americanist very familiar with the journal to see if they thought it could be turned into a reflection piece. This reader was unconvinced, thus our decision. I include the comments I commissioned in the hope that they may be of some use to you.

Thank you very much for sending your work to Perspectives on Politics for our consideration. We appreciate your interest and wish you all the best with your academic pursuits.

Sincerely,

Michael Bernhard
Editor in Chief
Perspectives on Politics

Comments from Reviewer:

I would welcome a strong analysis of serious proposals to change the Electoral College in PoP, as a reflection piece, but at present this one in my opinion does not fit the bill. The paper compares four different schemes for changing the EC and compares their outcomes using elections from 1868 to 2016. Outcomes are assessed relative to the national popular vote and changes from the current EC arrangement.

That's it. No analysis as to the ideas behind each of these proposals—they might or might not be relevant to the current debate. No analysis of their theoretical strengths or weaknesses relative to any particular standard. Is this the whole set of proposals? If not, why these? Nor is there any distinction between those schemes that could be altered by states and those that would require a Constitutional amendment. Most of these schemes would.

The data analysis is interesting—a reconstruction of past elections based on current proposals. But I wonder if a series of simulations compared to the data series could make the piece stronger. Simple analyses show already that there is no partisan benefit from the EC—it can go bad either way—and these should be cited—I did not note a discussion of this. Moreover, the data is presented in astoundingly boring format that is obsolete in today's political science journals, and especially a journal like PoP that seeks to draw a broader audience.

I wish I could be more positive, but I don't see an easy path to a more comprehensive paper for PoP. I'd look for a discussion of critiques of the electoral college, and why one should be concerned. I've heard lots of arguments on the EC, but I am old school on this: for our one national office, the popular vote should determine, and when outcomes deviate from that it will lead invariably to de-legitimation of the selection process. Pure and simple, 2016 and 2000 were undemocratic outcomes. But I am open-minded if other reviewers and the editor see a path to a stronger paper.



