

(50-15)

ADDRESS BY SENATOR STROM THURMOND (D-SC) IN THE UNITED STATES
SENATE ON THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE REFORM, MARCH 20, 1956.

Mr. President:

I shall not dwell at any length on the technical aspects of the substitute being proposed here today in lieu of the original version of Senate Joint Resolution 31. However, I do want to make a few comments on the proposal as a whole and state my strong support of this resolution, on which the distinguished Junior Senator from Texas (Mr. Daniel), the distinguished Senior Senator from South Dakota (Mr. Mundt), and I were able to reach a compromise agreement.

I would like to commend the Senator from Texas and the Senator from South Dakota for the fine work they have done on this substitute amendment. They have made a great contribution to the American system of Government in agreeing on this substitute proposal which combines salient points of our separate plans. I have been happy to have worked with them on this plan for the past several months, through a number of conferences and redrafting of combination plans.

Most important in this plan is the fact that its adoption would result in more exactly translating the will of the people into electoral votes. The proposed amendment would provide a much more exact register of their will than the present winner-take-all system of allocating the electoral votes of the States.

I believe that many citizens who now take little interest in an election of President would be given an incentive to vote under the compromise amendment being considered. In many States where one political party or the other has a vast majority, the individual voter who belongs to the minority party has no incentive to vote

because he knows his ballot will in no way affect the outcome of the election.

Under the proposed plan, the individual voter could vote with the knowledge that his effort would carry equal weight to the extent his vote compared with the total votes cast in his State.

From the standpoint of a State, the will of people will be more exactly registered in the division of electoral votes. From the standpoint of the Nation, Presidents elected after adoption of this amendment will be more nearly the candidate who has won the greatest popular vote.

There is another important feature of this plan, Mr. President, which I believe to be highly desirable in maintaining a strong and stable government. The plan limits the electoral votes of any State to the top three candidates, thus discouraging the creation of numerous splinter parties which have caused weak and unstable governments in some foreign countries.

An additional safeguard to the will of the voters is contained in this plan in that candidates for elector, in States where the district system is adopted, would be bound legally to support the Presidential candidate to whom they were pledged.

I believe the optional system of choosing electors, as provided in this plan, makes it acceptable in every State. Some States prefer the preservation of the electors, as such. Others want to discard the electors because they believe they have long since stopped serving any good purpose.

Whether a State wants to maintain the buffer of electors, who are State officers, between the State and Federal Government, or

whether another State wants to translate the popular vote into electoral votes directly, cannot cause reasonable argument over this plan because it permits the States, individually, to adopt either course for the choosing of electors.

I hope that every member of this Senate who wants our system of election for the President and Vice President improved will join in supporting the substitute for Senate Joint Resolution 31. While many of us disagree politically, I am convinced that the result of passing this resolution would be consistent with the wishes of a majority of the members of both major political parties because it would give each of the members a greater voice in his Government.

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