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*Maine  
Bicentennial*

# LET THE PEOPLE PICK THE PRESIDENT BOOK GROUP

NATIONAL  
POPULAR  
VOTE ★ ★ ★

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MAINE

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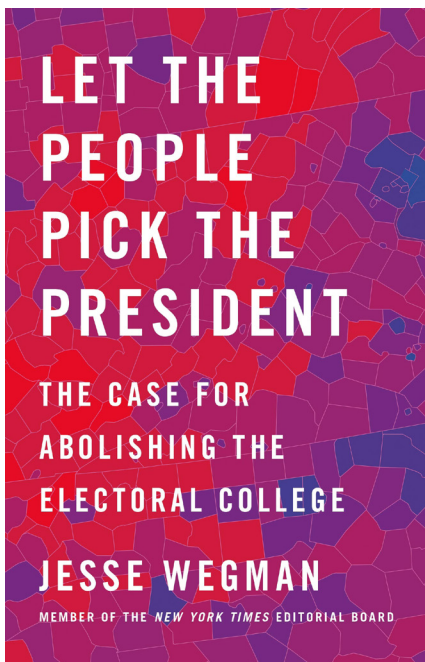
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## ABOUT THE BOOK:



*Let the People Pick the President: The Case for Abolishing the Electoral College*

By: Jesse Wegman

The book group is an educational tie-in to our National Popular Vote (NPV) efforts. Learn more about NPV here: [www.lwvme.org/NPV](http://www.lwvme.org/NPV).

The framers of the Constitution battled over it. Lawmakers have tried to amend or abolish it more than 700 times. To this day, millions of voters, and even members of Congress, misunderstand how it works. It deepens our national divide and distorts the core democratic principles of political equality and majority rule. How can we tolerate the Electoral College when every vote does not count the same, and the candidate who gets the most votes can lose?

## ABOUT LWVME:

The League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME) is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We never support or oppose any political party or candidate.

# SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATING THIS BOOK GROUP



## Plan out your group's structure



How many sessions do you want to do? How long will they be? We originally did 3 one-hour sessions, each discussing a portion of the book. Some participants suggested that a 4th session focused on what actions to take after reading would have been welcome.

Ways to structure the sessions:

3 sessions: Intro - ch 2, ch 3 - ch 5, ch 6 - 9

2 sessions: intro - ch 4, ch 5 - 9

1 session: whole book, but you might need more than an hour

Optional final “what next” conversation

## Role of the facilitator



As the facilitator, you decide the purpose & structure of your group. Not only how long each session will be and how many chapters you'll discuss at once, but also — how many people will you include? What will you do if the group is too large for a straightforward discussion?

Consider how you'll encourage participants to get to know and trust each other. Introductions, icebreakers, and potentially group expectations can help.

Choose the guiding questions you want to use and decide if you're going to give them to participants, and if so, when.

During the discussion, pick out interesting threads to follow up on, make suggestions, and connect the points people are making. Be prepared to nudge people back to the book. You guide the conversation; you don't control it.

## Wrapping it up / What Comes Next



Chances are good that at least some of your group will want to take action on this issue after reading this book. The League of Women Voters of Maine is working to get Maine to join the NVP Interstate Compact and has campaign events open.

You can find them at [www.lwvme.org/events](http://www.lwvme.org/events). Be prepared to make some concrete suggestions to your participants who want to get more involved.

If they found the book group useful, suggest that they could facilitate one themselves.



# QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR DISCUSSIONS



## Standing questions:

1. How did you feel about the section we just read? What stood out to you about it?
2. What is one thing you're taking away from this section?
3. What was the author's intention [in this section/on this page]? And did they achieve it? (This is a good question for individual chapters, as well as the whole book).
4. What do we do after reading this book?
5. How did the 2020 presidential election and related events play into how you felt while reading these chapters? (Suggestion: ask at the beginning and end of your group.)
6. What did you know about the Electoral College before you read this book?



Note: You might want to choose one or two of these to ask regularly as a way to frame your discussions; if you ask them every time, your participants will be expecting that and thinking about it while they read.

## Questions by chapter:

Introduction: A More Perfect Union

Show the maps from Mark Newman: <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~mein/election/2016/>. Wegman argues that the red-and-blue map isn't an accurate representation of who we are. Do you agree that it's harmful to see this image all the time? How so?

Chapter 1: Did the Founders Fear Democracy? The Radical Vision of James Wilson  
Chapter 2: The Fraught Origins of the Electoral College



Note: The following questions can be applied to both chapters one and two.

- Have you ever heard of James Wilson? What did you think of him?
- Did you know that how we should choose the president was such a contentious question? Did this surprise you?

Chapter 3: Did the Electoral College Ever Really Work?

- What do you think of the way Wegman writes about this period of history?
- Did it surprise you that people immediately started to game the system? How does that connect to other ideas you have about our government or Constitution?

#### Chapter 4: The Second Founding: Black People and Women Get the Vote

- Did you know that Black people voted in such numbers and there were so many Black elected officials in the years immediately following the Civil War?
- Did you learn in school about the widespread suppression of Black voters during the Reconstruction Era, or was this new to you?
- Beyond the 14th and 19th amendments, why is a conversation about who is allowed to vote relevant to a book about the National Popular Vote?

#### Chapter 5: One Person, One Vote: Four Words That Nearly Brought Down the Electoral College

- What do you think of Birch Bayh and his attempt to abolish the Electoral College? What were his motivations?
- After reading chapters 4 and 5, we could ask ourselves another version of Wegman's earlier question: How much did the institution of white supremacy determine the way we choose the president?

#### Chapter 6: Setting the Record Straight, Part Two: Common Popular Vote Myths

- In this chapter, Wegman answers questions from an imaginary skeptical reader. Do you think this format is effective?
- Maine is mentioned in this book a few times, including former governor Paul LePage's argument that, since Maine is a small state, it would be overlooked if the National Popular Vote were enacted (page 166). How do you feel about his argument?

#### Chapter 7: The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact: You Don't Need a Constitutional Amendment

- What, if anything, did you know about the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact before reading this chapter?
- Wegman mentions two arguments against the National Popular Vote for which there are no simple rejoinders: the "red-blue issue" and the constitutional question of interstate compacts (pages 208-210). What do you think of these two arguments?
- What do you think of the approaches that John Koza and others take to building support for the National Popular Vote?

## Chapter 8: Setting the Record Straight, Part Two: Common Popular Vote Myths

- Did any of these myths speak to you? And what did you learn? You can link to the [National Popular Vote website](#), which has an extensive list.
- Wegman employs a device of inserting questions from an imaginary skeptical reader. Do you think this is likely to be effective?
- Wegman refers to a term from Jamelle Bouie, folk civics: “stories we tell over and over because they sound logical and are easy to repeat” (pg. 164). What folk civics have you personally heard about the Electoral College? Where do you think these originate and how are they spread? How can we correct these folk civics or lessen their spread?

## Chapter 9: Imagining a National Popular Vote. The campaign experts speak.

- How has the Electoral College defined the current approach to campaigning?
- How are national polls considered in the current system?
- What benefits go to battleground states in the current system?
- How would a campaign be run, should NPV be in effect?
- Can you speak to voter participation, with NPV in effect?
- How would it help us if we felt that our president was legitimately elected? That is, had won the most votes nationwide?