

**Testimony of Sean Parnell**

**to the**

**Rhode Island House of Representatives  
State Government and Elections Committee**

**March 25, 2025**

**Re: H 5520 (Creating Elector Districts)**

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Chairman Shanley, Members of the Committee, thank you for allowing me to testify. I am Sean Parnell and I represent Save Our States Action, an organization focused on defending the Electoral College and educating legislators and the public on the dangers of the National Popular Vote interstate compact (NPV).

I am here today to testify in favor of H 5520, a bill that would change the way Rhode Island selects presidential electors by creating as many elector districts as the state has presidential electors and then allowing the people of your state to elect them by district. Districts would be created by grouping municipalities, with a goal of having each district nearly as equal in population as is practicable.

The primary effect of this change would be to end Rhode Island's use of the "winner take all" system to award presidential electors and end its status as a so-called "safe state" that does not receive significant attention during the presidential election process. Based on a brief review of Rhode Island's political geography as well as conversations with political and policy leaders in the state, it is likely that at least one and possibly two of the state's four electors would be competitive, thus drawing the attention of both presidential campaigns – the Republican hoping to pick up one or two additional electors, and the Democrat attempting to hang on to those same two electors.

This change would give Rhode Island the benefit that both Maine and Nebraska have enjoyed as a result of their Congressional district method. The elector district method is superior to the Congressional district method, at least for Rhode Island, because it will remain in place if, as is expected, the state loses one U.S. House seat following the 2030 Census – the Congressional district method does not work in states with only a single House member, but the elector district method would mean the state would still have three distinct districts.

It is also the case that the elector district method proposed by H 5520 would allow more granularity in candidates' attention and more influence for each Rhode Island voter. In a

competitive district candidates would be required to engage and work to connect with voters on issues that are important to them but that may not rise to the national level.

And because Rhode Island is such a small state geographically, it would be in the interest of campaigns to consider issues and concerns of a non-competitive district as well, as many Rhode Islanders that live in a competitive district would still work in and otherwise be closely connected to the interests of the a non-competitive district. To cite just one example, and elector district with a major port located in it not be competitive, but many of the people working there will live in the competitive districts.

Using presidential elector districts is not a new idea and raises no questions about its constitutionality. A handful of states used elector districts in the early years of the Republic, and it is fully within your power to adopt this reform today and see it implemented before the next presidential election. I encourage you to carefully consider this legislation and support it as a way to make Rhode Island's voice in the presidential election process even more powerful than it already is. Thank you.