

# Electoral college system questioned

Smith College professor calls for voting revamp

To make Massachusetts matter in political elections, one Smith College professor is arguing the state should abandon its winner-take-all Electoral College practices for a proportionally based system in which multiple candidates would receive a share of the state's electoral votes.

"Massachusetts gets ignored in presidential elections, and this would make us important again," economics professor James Miller of Smith College said.

Under the state's current rule, all 12 electoral votes go to the candidate who wins the most votes in the general election. Smith proposes that electoral votes should be based on strict proportional representation, meaning if a candidate received 65 percent of the vote, they should get 65 percent of Massachusetts' 12 Electoral College

votes.

Jeffrey Sedwick, a political science professor at UMass says a proportionally based system is a familiar argument among academics that sounds good in theory, but creates problems when it comes to governing.

"It's an attempt to convey democracy in a multicandidate field," Sedwick said of a proportionally based system. "However, giving minority candidates votes just undermines democratic legitimacy of the winner."

Sedwick also believes that since Massachusetts has only 12 Electoral College votes, without winner-take-all, "Candidates could take a pass and skip our state for bigger states with more representatives."

Forty-seven states have the same winner-take-all rule. Maine and Nebraska use a proportionally based system,

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but it has never resulted in multiple candidates receiving some of the state's electoral votes.

David King, a Harvard Kennedy School of Business professor, agrees with Smith that moving to a proportionally based system would change the way candidates campaign in Massachusetts, but in the long run, the change would have little effect in making a big difference in the larger scheme of the election.

"Other states are not likely to follow," King said. "We'd be another footnote like Maine."  
Cindy J. Roth