

Voter Assistance Advisory Committee Meeting Speech, 12/6/16

Good evening everyone. I am Brendan Birth. I am currently an intern for Gotham Gazette, a news publication some of you may be familiar with. Before my remarks, I want to be clear that what I am about to say are my personal views, not the views of Gotham Gazette or Citizens Union Foundation, the nonprofit that publishes Gotham Gazette.

In terms of what my views actually are, they will focus on how the current election process—the process of having an Electoral College instead of the Popular Vote—influences my participation.

Personally, I will always vote, whether we have our current system or a different one. But the Electoral College definitely put a damper on how enthusiastic I was on exercising my right to vote.

I wasn't enthusiastic about exercising my right to vote because I knew that, no matter who I voted for, Hillary Clinton would've received all 29 Electoral College votes in New York. It didn't matter whether I voted for Clinton, Trump, Johnson, Stein, or wrote in perennial candidate Jimmy McMillan from the Rent is Too Damn High Party—the result would've been the same regardless.

I know that I am not alone in feeling like my vote makes no difference in the end result. I think such sentiments are a part of why New York, and other non-battleground states, tend to have much lower turnout than battlegrounds like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Iowa.

So I guess my feeling about where we should go from here is that we should advocate for a system where your vote actually means something. We should advocate for a system centered around the popular vote. If we can't get a system centered around the popular vote, we should at least have a system where we award Electoral College votes proportionally based on what percentage of votes each candidate gets in each state. With both of the systems I suggest, a vote for a Republican in New York, or a Democrat in Idaho, actually means something.

If we have a system where people generally feel that their votes count, voter turnout will likely increase. A popular vote system, or a system which awards Electoral College votes proportionally in each state, will accomplish exactly that, in my humble opinion.

Thank you, and have a good evening.