



NEWS from U.S. Senator Bob Dole

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STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

DIRECT ELECTION

Press Conference

Tuesday, March 13, 1979

I am pleased to have the opportunity this morning to focus once again on the topic of direct election of the President and Vice-President of the United States. As the 1976 Republican vice presidential candidate, I have the dubious distinction of receiving one more electoral vote than my running mate, President Ford, because an elector from the state of Washington voted for Ronald Reagan. While it is an amusing anecdote, it points out one of the problems with the electoral college.

It is my firm belief that the candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes should win the election. In the '76 election, a shift of fewer than 10,000 votes would have given the Ford-Dole ticket an electoral college victory despite Carter's 1.7 million vote plurality. I feel certain I could have adjusted to this, but realistically, I believe it would have been viewed as a betrayal of the American system of democracy. Direct election would prevent this potential nightmare from occurring.

For many years I have supported the idea that the electoral vote system should be abolished and replaced with some more equitable system. As a member of the House of Representatives, I advocated changes, and as a member of the Senate, I have testified before the Judiciary Committee several times on reforming our electoral system. In my view, the electoral college was once a young country's answer to selecting the President, but now that system needs to be updated.

What we now propose may not be perfect—perhaps changes in our proposal can be justified, but I believe it is time for Congress to act. Even now it is probably too late for the 1980 election, but the states should have an opportunity to consider an appropriate Constitutional amendment.