

COMMENT & ANALYSIS

Virginia's electoral self-sabotage

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact is no win for democracy

Similar to the partisan gerrymandering that passed on the ballot, Gov. Abigail Spanberger's signing of Virginia's entry into the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact was characterized as a win for democracy.

Democrats at least had a logical self-interest in the absurdly drawn congressional maps. The national popular vote legislation, by contrast, harms the entire state regardless of party.

It was a self-inflicted loss of political influence at a time when the commonwealth was regaining national relevance.

In 2020, Virginia voted for Democratic nominee Joseph R. Biden by about 10 percentage points. By 2024, that margin had narrowed to about 5 points for Kamala Harris. Preelection polling even showed the contest to be as close as 2 points, enough to prompt Donald Trump to stump in Virginia.

For Republicans to halve the Democrat advantage is not a rounding error. It is a signal that Virginia could drift back toward battleground status after years of leaning comfortably blue.

Competitive states attract campaign visits, advertising dollars, a flood of national media, policy attention and turnout operations that energize voters and elevate local concerns. Not to mention that all those visitors bring more money into Virginia's coffers, which leaders across the political spectrum should support.

The compact threatens to erase that potential advantage.

Under its terms, Virginia would be required to award all 13 of its electoral votes to the national popular vote winner — regardless of how Virginians themselves vote — once participating states reach 270 electoral votes. With Virginia's addition, the compact now sits at 222 electoral votes.

Now consider what that would mean in practice. If it had been in effect in the last election, then the commonwealth would have been compelled to hand its electoral votes to Mr. Trump. Extend that scenario to other compact states, and the result becomes even more jarring. Places such as California, New York and Massachusetts could be awarding their electoral votes to a Republican nominee despite overwhelming Democratic majorities at home.

In some ways, Trump supporters might love it, but broadly speaking, a national popular vote election undermines federalism and the states' checks on the federal government.

That is not a hypothetical designed to shock. It is the logical consequence of the compact's design.

The debate over the Electoral College versus the popular vote has gone on for decades. Virginia's decision should be judged on Virginia's interests, not on abstract theories of electoral

reform. On that score, the move is hard to defend.

Competitive states matter. Candidates spend time there because they must. They tailor policies, build local coalitions and respond to regional concerns. Virginians benefit from that attention.

Northern Virginia's economic priorities, Hampton Roads' military presence, rural concerns in the southwest — these issues get heard if Virginia is in play again.

The compact, if it ever takes effect, would change that calculus.

If presidential elections are effectively nationalized, then campaigns will chase marginal votes in population centers rather than invest in persuading voters in states such as Virginia. The commonwealth's distinct political voice would be diluted into a national tally. The incentive to engage Virginia voters as Virginians diminishes.

Other Democratic governors have recognized this trade-off. In 2019, Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak, a Democrat, vetoed a similar measure, warning that his state would lose its leverage as a battleground.

In 2024, Maine Gov. Janet Mills, a Democrat, expressed reservations about surrendering state-level influence in presidential elections, as one of two states (with Nebraska) that award electors based on congressional districts. Seeing the political winds in her party, she let the legislation become law without her signature.

Mr. Sisolak and Ms. Mills were not conservatives defending the Electoral College on principle, but rather Democrats recognizing the practical benefits of political competitiveness.

Ms. Spanberger chose a different path. That decision is especially puzzling given her political brand. She has long presented herself as a pragmatic moderate willing to break with her party.

A veto here would have reinforced that image while protecting Virginia's interests. Instead, she aligned with a policy that supposedly advances a national Democratic agenda at the expense of her own state's clout. The partisan advantage is even questionable.

Even if the compact never reaches 270 electoral votes, Virginia has signaled its willingness to give up influence for a reform that may never materialize. That is a poor bargain. If it does reach the threshold, then the consequences will arrive all at once with no easy exit and no guarantee that the new system will deliver the clarity its advocates promise.

The debate over the Electoral College isn't going away, but Virginia did not need to volunteer itself as a test case for a sweeping change that diminishes its own role in presidential politics.



Wagon ho!

Israel's war against Hezbollah is the West's fight against Iran

A battle for the soul of the West

By Anath Hartmann

Before the Trump administration's rejection of Iran's latest peace plan response, the joint U.S.-Israeli war against the regime in Tehran had begun to recede from public memory.

So had Israel's ongoing fight against Iran's terrorist proxy in Lebanon.

Yet we allow these conflicts to fade from the collective consciousness at our peril, because the fight in Lebanon is the fight against Iran — and the fight against Iran is a battle for the very soul of the West.

Although a shaky monthlong "ceasefire" between Iran and the U.S. is holding (for now), Washington appears to be on the verge of issuing another ultimatum to the Islamic republic, which reportedly refused to discuss its nuclear program in its latest response to the U.S.

Meanwhile, in southern Lebanon, Israel wages a defensive war against Hezbollah, the Shiite Muslim terrorist group formed in 1982 with Iranian cash.

Despite a U.S.-brokered ceasefire last month, Hezbollah has continued its attacks on Israeli forces. (Terrorists do not respect or abide by diplomatic agreements. Why this continues to come as a surprise to the West is one of the world's mysteries.)

Since its inception, Hezbollah has killed hundreds of Americans. The Lebanese government's attempts to disarm the organization have been unmitigated failures. For decades, Lebanon has allowed the terrorist group to fester and embed itself into Lebanese politics and society.

Still, Israel has been making steady and impressive progress in rooting out the cancer that is Hezbollah.

Since March, when Hezbollah began firing thousands of rockets toward Israel as retribution for the killing of Iranian megaterrorist Ali Khamenei, Israel has eliminated several thousand Hezbollah operatives and created a

6-mile buffer zone in southern Lebanon to protect its citizens.

This weekend alone, the Israel Defense Forces hit more than 85 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, including an underground weapons production site in the Bekaa Valley and a drone launch position, and killed more than 100 Hezbollah terrorists.

With legacy media outlets focused on the hantavirus, tariffs and the price of gas, the West seems to be forgetting that just months ago in the Middle East, America and Israel pulled off one of the most successful military operations in recent history. Together, the allies eliminated an evil tyrant with

the blood of hundreds of thousands of people on his hands.

Israel's effort to do what the Lebanese government either could not or would not do has been pushed to even more remote recesses of the West's mind.

Make no mistake: The war in Iran and the Jewish state's sustained efforts in Lebanon are part and parcel of the same critical campaign. It is a struggle for the continuation of the American way of life, one that is so very nearly replicated in tiny Israel and nowhere else in the vast Middle East.

It is no coincidence that Iran's (and by extension, Hezbollah's) "Big Satan" and "Little Satan" are the same nations that now fight for the freedom of the Iranian people and remain firmly in the crosshairs of the ayatollahs' deadly, Dark Ages government.

We cannot afford to allow the valiant efforts of either country to fall to

the back sections of newspapers, to the bottoms of homepages. Whether Iran agrees to the terms of any U.S. peace offering is irrelevant. No overture from the regime is worth the paper it is printed on.

The fight with Iran has come to a head, and it may well be the fight of our lives.

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Anath Hartmann is deputy commentary editor for The Washington Times.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Repatriating Afghans sends the wrong message

Thousands of Afghans were mission-critical in our 20-year attempt to defeat the Taliban. They served in support capacities, especially as guides and interpreters.

Some were transported here to escape Taliban reprisals for assisting America.

Whatever one's views of America's misadventure in Afghanistan, our

military depended on these Temporary Protected Status Afghans to accomplish its mission.

For America to now return these allies to their homeland, as the Trump administration is now reportedly planning to do, is to send many to their deaths, certain torture and severe punishment.

America will inevitably send troops

overseas to fight in future conflicts, where the support of the local population is needed for our success. After learning how America abandoned its Afghan allies, though, how many locals in these zones of conflict will risk everything to help?

PAUL L. NEWMAN
Merion Station, Pennsylvania

At midterms, let's have our cake and eat it too

For many conservatives, there is a sense that we have a singular choice in the upcoming midterms.

On the one hand, many believe, we can keep the socialist-infested Democratic Party from winning by backing off the war with Iran, keeping the popular vote. On the other, we can fully support President Trump, stay in the war to win it and guarantee that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon.

This means continued inflationary

pressures from oil and other imported goods and putting the outcome of the midterms in jeopardy. Still, I believe it is time to realize that we have a huge fight on two fronts, and we must win both battles to preserve our constitutional republic and ensure prosperity around the world.

We did it once before when we fought in the Pacific against the Japanese and against the Germans in North Africa and Europe. We fought those simultaneously and won.

Our republic faces no less a threat of annihilation today than it did during World War II. It's an ugly decision to have to choose between a python (squeezing you to death over a long period of time: Democrats) and an alligator (destroying you with one bite: the Iranian regime), so we shouldn't. Freedom-loving Americans aren't going to tolerate either threat.

H.S. ROBINSON
Columbia, South Carolina

Trump's National Sabbath is a beacon of hope

As the daughter of a prominent Orthodox rabbi who served as the spiritual leader of the largest synagogue in Brighton Beach, Brooklyn (the site of the filming of the Nicolas Cage film "Lord of War"), I was heartened to learn of President Trump's recent national Sabbath proclamation, "Shabbat 250."

The proclamation aims to encourage all American Jews to observe Shabbat this weekend, from sundown Friday to nightfall Saturday.

One might say that "Shabbat 250," which is part of the administration's faith-based "Rededicate 250," sets the stage for the National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise, and Thanksgiving scheduled for Sunday on the National Mall. The

Sabbath, a symbol of quintessential harmony and peace, creates an ambiance that augurs well for everyone.

By preceding the exhilarating spiritual exuberance of the jubilee with the National Sabbath, Mr. Trump shows that he understands the complementarity of Christianity and Judaism and its power in encouraging patriotism. By proclaiming a universal day for all Jews to observe the Sabbath, Mr. Trump has affirmed the American Jewish community's worth. It's an act that has been applauded by the Coalition for Jewish Values, Agudath Israel of America, Aish and other groups.

It's a balm to the collective spirit, especially at a time when the Jewish community has witnessed a

significant increase in antisemitic attacks.

"Shabbat 250" serves another purpose in addition to showing parity of religion: By publicly proclaiming a national Sabbath, a day on which all Jews should cease prohibited activity, we are given an opportune moment to share the beauty of the Sabbath.

President Trump's call for a national Sabbath honors Jewish heritage and allows Americans of all faiths to come together for the shared purpose of restoring hope, faith and trust in our nation.

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