We affirm the resolution.

Our only contention is getting out the vote.

Replacing the Electoral College with a national popular vote would increase voter turnout in two ways.

First, campaigns would see greater incentives to mobilize voters.

Under the Electoral College, most states are considered safe for one party, whose candidate will win all the state’s electoral votes regardless of turnout. As a result, candidates see no reason to invest in mobilizing voters in most states.

Cann 2007 of the University of Georgia explains the result, writing that

Certainly, though, the question of voter turnout is more complicated than this. In some states, the electoral college system boosts turnout. **Competitive states** (particularly battleground, but also some leaning states) **receive a great deal more campaign activity,** asdo states with more electoral college votes, **which translates into higher turnout. However, this** boost in a few states **leaves** smaller and **less** **competitive states—the bulk of states in number—with lower turnout**. It is important to note, though, that more research is necessary to determine whether alternatives to the Electoral College, each with their own set of accompanying optimal strategies for allocating resources, would produce a more equitable outcome in terms of voter turnout. The results of the model, however, suggest that these inequalities result from asymmetries in the allocation of resources rather than voter perceptions of closeness.

McDonald 2008 of the Brookings Institution confirms that

The winner-take-all and balkanized dynamics of the Electoral College have a negative impact on voter turnout. Campaigns have no incentive to spend resources in a state that is either securely in their grasp or out of their reach when those resources could be better spent in a state where the outcome is unknown. The number of safe states has increased in the last four elections while the number of swing states has declined, with more and more voters left feeling irrelevant. In 2008, 132 million or three out of five citizen eligible voters lived in a non-battleground state where campaigns rarely visited, spent little to no money and did little organizing. The civic loss to the 132 million eligible voters in the non-swing states can’t be quantified. Non-swing state voters must leave their state to impact the election. People in non-swing states miss the meaningful opportunity to contact their neighbors or hold events – unless it’s to call voters in swing states! They will not have a major candidate visit and will see less news coverage and fewer ads (like them or not). Even in battleground states, all are not equal. In all but two states, the presidential election is winner- take-all. That means that, even though mobilizing the base in a state is important, campaigns often end up spending disproportionate resources on a small group of swing, undecided voters. **When 95% of campaign dollars go to 15 states** and most of those dollars are spent on a small group of undecided voters in those states, **tens of millions of voters are left out.**

This would change under a popular vote, where the candidate who receives the most individual votes nationwide would win, so campaigns would boost their numbers by reaching out to potential voters in places they once ignored. Chang 2007 of Harvard explains

Under the NPV legislation, **candidates who currently ignore states in which they have comfortable majorities would have a new incentive to maximize their supporters’ turnout.** Every candidate would also have an incentive to pursue every possible vote, even in states that are heavily tilted toward another party. Candidates would probably advertise on national television networks instead of on local stations,124 so campaigns would reach even voters in sparsely populated areas, most likely increasing the total national turnout. Under the NPV legislation, candidates who currently ignore states in which they have comfortable majorities would have a new incentive to maximize their supporters’ turnout. **Every candidate would** also have an incentive to **pursue every possible vote, even in states that are heavily tilted toward another party**. Candidates would probably advertise on national television networks instead of on local stations,124 so campaigns would reach even voters in sparsely populated areas, most likely **increasing the total national turnout.**

Hill 2005 of Valdosta State University confirms the result that if we eliminated the Electoral College and saw battleground-level campaigning across the entire country,

States did not receive only spending or visits, but, rather, citizens in battleground states were exposed to both types of campaigning. Therefore,if all states had received the mean level of spending and visits for battleground states, **turnout would** have **be**en **approximately 1.6% higher** (57.92%) than the baseline rate. Six of the 12 battle- ground states, however, received higher than the mean level of spend- ing and visits for battleground states. Thus, if all states received spending levels one standard-deviation (438.81 GRPs) above the mean for battleground states, turnout would have increased to roughly 57.80%. If all states received visits one standard-deviation above the battleground state mean (44.62 visits), turnout would have increased to 58.38%. If every state received these levels of spending and visits, turnout would have been roughly 59.92%, which is a 3.6% increase over the predicted baseline turnout of 56.26%.

The second way a popular vote would boost turnout is by improving voter attitudes.

Many Americans see no reason to vote because one candidate is guaranteed to win their state regardless.

Nivola 2005 of the Brookings institution explains

Further, the electoral college can depress voter participation in much of the nation. Overall, the percentage of voters who participated in last fall’s election was almost 5 percent higher than the turnout in 2000. Yet, most of the increase was limited to the battleground states. **Because the electoral college has** effectively **narrowed elections** like the last one **to** **a** quadrennial **contest for the votes of a** relatively **small number of states, people elsewhere are likely to feel that their votes don’t matter**.

These feelings would go away under a national popular vote, since the entire country would be a single battleground, and no vote would appear to be wasted in an uncompetitive state.

Amar 2016 of Yale confirms a popular vote would encourage turnout because

It would encourage greater turnout in a couple of ways. First, **it makes every state a swing state in that the margin of victory matters, and so every voter can make a difference.** Second, it creates incentives for states seeking to maximize their clout to facilitate voting. Today, if a state makes it hard for people to vote, it pays no Electoral College penalty. It gets the same number of electoral votes whether it makes it easy or hard for citizens to participate**.**In a direct election world, states that facilitate and encourage voting loom larger in the final count. So that gives states an incentive to experiment in ways that promote democracy.

Edwards 2012 of Texas A&M explains the result that

Under any system, candidates try to spend their time in places where they can reach the most voters. But in a direct election, with every vote counting equally, candidates would have an incentive to appeal to voters everywhere, not just those in swing states. Because the price of advertising is mainly a function of market size, it does not cost more to reach 10,000 voters in Wyoming than it does to reach 10,000 voters in New York or Los Angeles. It’s the electoral college that shortchanges voters. Because it makes no sense for candidates to spend time or money in states they either cannot win or are certain to win, thriving cities such as Atlanta, San Francisco and El Paso get no love from White House hopefuls. **Making every vote count in every state would** have other benefits. It would stimulate party-building efforts and **increase turnout. People are more likely to cast a ballot if they think their vote matters.**

The first impact of turnout is renewed trust in national government.

Shineman 2013 of Princeton explains that

Theory – Why Participation Increases Efficacy and Trust: There are several potential mechanisms through which engaging in the act of participation could affect different dimensions of political efficacy and political trust. Engaging in the act of **participation makes the political world seem less foreign, and causes the individual to feel more included** in the democratic process. **This inclusion can increase approval of democratic institutions, and** increase **the perceived legitimacy of the electoral process.** Engaging in the act of participation might also motivate an individual to develop a belief that participation is worthwhile, in order to justify one’s behavior to oneself: “those who vote or engage in campaign activities will justify their behaviour by strengthening their belief that the political system responds to citizen involvement” (Clarke and Acock 1989, p. 553). Some argue 6 that the mere act of participation might cause people to be more likely to passively accept a political regime. As people engage a system, they become more likely to consider the process of that system as legitimate and appropriate (Ginsberg 1982). Regardless of whether individuals have political power, engaging in participation might lead citizens “to believe they are ultimately controlling the government… and keeping them committed to the existing system” (Olson 1982, p.

And empirically,

Political Trust: Table 4 presents the results from all models estimating the effects of mobilized participation on the four estimates of political trust. Models 5A and 5B estimate the effects of mobilization on faith and confidence in ranked choice voting as an electoral institution. Model 5A estimates that **subjects who were mobilized to vote reported** RCV approval scores**[levels of political trust] that were 10.7 [percentage] points higher** p < 0.05). There is also evidence that mobilization produced heterogeneous effects. Model 5B finds that the effect of being mobilized increases as the number of electoral outcomes that a subject approved increases. Table 5 displays the estimated marginal effect of being mobilized to vote, controlling for the percent of electoral outcomes that a subject found favorable. The estimated effect of mobilization is always positive, even when subjects disapproved of 100% of electoral outcomes. The estimated effect among subjects who were neutral toward the outcome is + 9.7 points. Among subjects who approved of 100% of the electoral outcomes, the estimated effect of being mobilized to vote is a 17.9 point increase in trust of the voting system, again on a 100-point scale.

This would be crucial for national policymaking, because currently high levels mistrust in the federal government are killing support for strong government action.

Hetherington 2001 of Princeton finds that

Progressivism in the U.S. has died, and declining political trust is the culprit. The pattern of results presented here suggests that political trust has moved in the correct direction over time, it affects the right variables, and it does not affect the wrong ones, which makes it an attractive explanation for why the political center seems to have shifted to the right since the 1960s. Conservatism has not increased, but declining trust makes it seem as though it has. While this study has concentrated on mass behavior, elites are certainly an important part of the equation as well. Declining trust on the mass level affects them 31 profoundly. When trust in government was high, liberals like John F. Kennedy, Robert F. Kennedy, and Lyndon Johnson were willing to lead public opinion on initiatives that benefited racial minorities and the poor. As Carmines and Stimson (1989) demonstrate, public support for civil rights did not increase until the Democratic Party signaled to its identifiers that this was the appropriate tack to take. Since most sources of public opinion do not change much over time, changes in elite behavior usually drive opinion change. The opinion environment after the 1960s is no longer conducive to opinion leadership in these areas. **When politicians know that people don’t trust the government, it is awfully hard** for another Bobby Kennedy **to tell Americans that government can solve the country’s problems**. In that sense, declining political trust has both a direct and an indirect effect onpublic support for redistributive spending. With good reason, elites **[politicians] do not have the courage to advocate aggressive** federal **involvement in social policy.** As long as people feel about the government as they do, advocacy of big government solutions is a losing strategy.

A 1998 paper by Heatherington explains the result of this distrust, finding

In sum, these results suggest that political leaders can take steps to increase trust. But will the increases be as fleeting as those of the Reagan years? The country continues to face fundamental problems on issues such as race, Social Security, Medicare, and health care that will likely require large-scale solutions. As the health care reform fiasco of 1993-94 suggests, however, a public no longer possessed of a core trust in its political system is easily frightened by negative campaigns against broad new initiatives. On the supply side, leaders concerned about public reprisals will be less likely to support such initiatives**. Without public support for solutions, problems will linger, will become more acute, and if not resolved will provide the foundation for renewed discontent**.

The second impact of higher turnout is downballot outcomes.

Low turnout in presidential elections translates to low turnout in the local elections held at the same time. Ballotpedia finds that elections for 86 state offices and 45 major localities were simultaneous with the 2016 presidential election.

Consequently, Eberhard 2016 of the Sightline Institute observes that increased turnout from a popular vote would end up

States encouraging—not suppressing—voter participation, and presidential candidates paying attention to all voters might create a new buzz of voter participation across the United States. Some new voters would also pay attention to all candidates and vote down the ticket, **increasing** civic **participation in state and local races.**

This is important, as Johnson 2008 of Creighton University explains that right now,

Why is low turnout in local elections a problem? A previous study by Hajnal and Trounstine (2005) examines the effects of low turnout on city governance. They concluded that **low turnout in** municipal **[local] elections leads to lower levels of** descriptive **representation in local politics**. They argue that this can be an even larger problem at the local level than at the federal level, since certain cities have minority populations at levels well above the national average.

Which is incredibly worrisome because

Political participation is a core principle of democracy. The United States Constitution was designed in a way to give the American people effective, elected representation at multiple levels. The system is designed to have democracy at the federal, state, and local level. State and **local governments are** in fact designed to **give the population more** democratic **representation than the national government. When only a small portion of the population [votes]** is bothering to fulfill their civic duty**, representation cannot reach a level** **of effectiveness that is satisfactory** to the democratic ideals put forth in the Constitution.

Turck 2015 of Macalester College explains the result, writing

Local governments decide on a wide range of issues that affect the daily lives of their residents. City, county, school board and other **local government elections often carry immediate consequences for constituents**. Among other things, local officials make decisions about schools, transportation, business development, zoning and housing, law enforcement and courts and taxes. Take schools: Neither the president nor Congress can have as much effect on local schools as the school board. Nearly 90 percent of elementary and secondary school funding comes from local and state taxes. School boards hire superintendents and set policy. Other locally determined policies include attendance zones, busing, discipline policy, textbook adoption, curriculum and funding. City, county and other local governments make decisions about public housing. Local officials decide when and whether to evict low-income residents and sell out to real estate developers. Community leaders’ decisions affect the viability of businesses and the livability of neighborhoods, including ordinances that establish commercial and residential zones. Local governments maintain streets and roads, patching potholes and plowing snow. They also make decisions about sidewalks, bike lanes and the safe co-existence of all kinds of traffic. The questions facing local governments vary from one jurisdiction to another. In Flint, Michigan, local government decides if the city should get water from the Flint River or Lake Huron. In Seminole County, Florida, local officials determine the fate of black bears in residential areas and whether to mandate use of bear-resistant trash cans. In Indiana the Delaware County Council is debating how much money it should allocate to rural fire departments. In Iowa the city of Des Moines is suing three counties to protect its water quality. Half a century ago, big cities such as Los Angeles and New York and Chicago reported much higher vote totals for local elections. In 1953, 93 percent of eligible voters in New York City went to the polls for the mayoral election. That was unusual, even by mid-20th-century standards, but back then, off-year local election turnouts of more than 60 percent were common. Ironically, local elections were moved to off years to focus attention on them after they began to get lost amid national politicking. That isn’t working today. Some municipalities have moved their elections back to even-numbered years to boost voter participation. More should do so. Studies show that low voter turnout reduces the representation of people of color in city councils and mayors’ offices. But important, high profile local issues can focus attention and increase voter participation. For example, in the aftermath of the 2014 police shooting death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, some 30 percent of residents voted in local elections last April — more than twice the 11.7 percent turnout rate in the previous municipal elections. The higher turnout in Ferguson is a result of prolonged and focused scrutiny on the nearly all-white city government and police force in a majority-black city. Unfortunately, most local issues and elections don’t attract that kind of attention. A voter looking for information on local issues today can find far more news coverage on the Syrian civil war or the World Series, even in local news media. On Oct. 16, Dave de Felice, a county supervisor in Madison, Wisconsin, launched the Golden Felice Awards, to call attention to questionable public spending and the lack of media coverage on local governments. (De Felice is rebranding the Golden Fleece Awards, which were started by late U.S. Sen. William Proxmire of Wisconsin to highlight wasteful government spending.) No local media covered de Felice’s initiative or the first award. The lack of media interest proved his bigger point: the failure of the local press to cover the county board, which spends about half a billion dollars a year. “It used to be that even our committee meetings were covered,” de Felice told The Columbia Journalism Review recently. “Well, that’s not happened in a long time. Then the gradual erosion started hitting board meetings. And so one by one, they started disappearing … There needs to be a presence there just to keep us on our best behavior, number one, and number two, to keep the public in touch with what’s going on.” Politics and government start at the local level. Working together, people can demand better lighting on their streets, increased library hours or an end to public subsidies for stadium construction. **Voters who succeed in affecting local government policy and electing their preferred candidates will feel more empowered to have a say on the direction of their state or country**.

Two steps can increase voter turnout for local elections. First, move local elections to even-numbered years, when other polls take place. Second, strengthen the local media’s capacity to cover local governments. Coverage has diminished because distant corporate owners interested in profits, not local issues, increasingly control local media outlets. Despite the challenges, increased media attention to local government and **higher voter turnout for local elections are essential to building better schools, better communities and better democracy**.