

## **R2017-04: Support of One Person, One Vote**

**Resolved**, that this 143rd Convention of the Diocese of Southern Ohio submit the following resolution to the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church:

**Resolved**, the House of \_\_\_\_\_ concurring, that the 79th General Convention of The Episcopal Church authorize The Episcopal Church to create a working group to study, define, and propose reforms by which civil government at all levels (local, state, and federal) may move closer toward making a reality of the principle of one person, one vote; *and be it further*

**Resolved**, that the General Convention budget allocate sufficient funds for the creation and operation of the One Person, One Vote working group, following an estimate of the cost by the CCB.

## **Explanation**

One person, one vote means more than that each person gets only one vote in any given election. It also means that the electoral process is designed fairly so that each person's vote has an equal impact on the outcome. In other words, no individual's vote carries greater weight than anyone else's. (Source: [www.law.cornell.edu/wex/one-person-one-vote-rule](http://www.law.cornell.edu/wex/one-person-one-vote-rule)). This is "a principle of political democracy that underpins universal suffrage and political equality."

(Source: [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/One man, one vote](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_man,_one_vote)).

As with most principles, continual effort is needed in its defense and in making sure that we as a country move ever closer to its full realization.

**Faith Mandates:** People of faith believe that all individuals are created equal and remain equal in the sight of God. This is a common theme in the holy books of various faith traditions. This idea operates at the spiritual level, but also has temporal, including political implications. Even though modern democratic governments require secular justification for their policies, we Episcopalians draw upon Christian teaching and the positive contributions that American Christians have made in the political evolution of the United States to affirm our own support for the principle of one person, one vote.

**Legal Precedents:** A series of U.S. Supreme Court decisions beginning in the 1960s established the principle of one person, one vote within American constitutional

law. *Baker v. Carr* (1962), *Gray v. Sanders* (1963), *Reynolds v. Sims* (1964), *Wesberry v. Sanders* (1964), and *Avery v. Midland County* (1968) held that the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment requires all districts in any given election — whether at the congressional, county, or local level — to contain approximately the same number of voters. (Source: [en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/One man, one vote](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/One_man,_one_vote)) Equalizing the number of voters within districts is one way to ensure that “as nearly as is practicable, one person’s vote...is to be worth as much as another’s.” (Source: *Wesberry v. Sanders*, pp. 7-8, 18).

**Work Remaining:** In spite of the progress that resulted from these court decisions, many impediments remain to the full realization of the underlying principle. Some impediments are as old as our nation and are embedded within the U.S. Constitution, such as the electoral college and the manner in which U.S. senators are elected. Other impediments are newer or have become increasingly problematic over recent decades, such as gerrymandering, variations in ballot access and in how votes are cast and counted across the country, certain aspects of campaign financing, and the increasingly sophisticated technology used in micro-targeting voters.

**Study Needed for Further Progress:** Any changes to our nation’s electoral processes should receive careful study and deliberation. Nevertheless, so essential is the principle of one person, one vote and so obvious is the fact that our nation falls far short of its full realization, the need is urgent for a new, concerted effort to identify and implement reforms to ensure that, “as nearly as is practicable, one person’s vote...is...worth as much as another’s.”

## Submitted by

Edward Joseph Lasseigne  
St. Stephen’s Episcopal Church, Columbus

The Rev. Denise Ray Mueller, Legislative Liaison  
St. John’s Episcopal Church, Worthington