

State Study of Election Methods: A Continuation

A Summary of Graphics Used in the Committee's Presentations



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**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF SEATTLE EDUCATION FUND**

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*Study provided by the League of Women Voters
of Washington Education Fund*

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The following pages are designed to supplement the League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund (LWVWA-EF) study *An Evaluation of Major Election Methods and Selected State Election Laws* which was distributed to all Washington State League members in Fall 2000. Additional copies may be obtained by calling the State League office at (206) 622-8961; It may also be downloaded by directing your internet browser to:
www.lwvwa.org/election_study

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Three General Election Ballots

*Help elect your favorite ice creams using three different voting methods.
Your vote will be counted at your Unit Meeting.*

Ballot #1 — Choice Voting

(This can produce proportional representation in multi-winner elections, or a majority winner in single winner elections at which time it is called an *Instant Runoff Vote* or *IRV*.)

- Fill in the circle of your first choice candidate.
- Fill in the circle of your second choice.
- Continue to indicate your choices through six.

Candidate	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice
Mocha Almond Fudge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Vanilla Swiss Almond	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Green Tea	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jalapeno	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strawberry Cheesecake	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pistachio Maple Nut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ballot #2 — Plurality, Single Member Districts

- Select your favorite candidate within each pair of choices. Be consistent. Your first choice above should also be one of your choices below, to the extent possible.
- Use an "X" or check mark.

Flavor	Vote for One
Mocha Almond Fudge	
Vanilla Swiss Almond	

Flavor	Vote for One
Green Tea	
Jalapeno	

Flavor	Vote for One
Strawberry Cheesecake	
Pistachio Maple Nut	

Ballot #3 — Cumulative

(Be consistent with earlier choices)

- You may cast up to three (3) votes. They may be distributed all for one candidate or divided among two or three.

Candidates	Cast Total of Three (3) Votes
Mocha Almond Fudge	
Vanilla Swiss Almond	
Green Tea	
Jalapeno	
Strawberry Cheesecake	
Pistachio Maple Nut	

Common Election Terminology

1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	1	1

Figure 1.

Single Member Districts
(One Winner Per District)

5 Members
5 Members
5 Members
5 Members
5 Members
5 Members
5 Members

Figure 2.

Multi-Member Districts
(Five Winners Per District)

35 Members

Figure 3.

Members Elected At Large
(One Large District)

Single Member Plurality Elections (Also known as *First Past the Post* and *Winner Take All*): The most common voting system used in the United States, Canada, and India. This system is depicted in the figure shown directly above (far left). One winner is elected per district. The winning candidate receives the most votes, not necessarily a majority of the votes.

Choice Voting (Also known as the *Single Transferable Vote* and *Preference Voting*): One of several voting systems which produce proportional representation. Voters rank their candidates on the ballot putting a “1” next to their first choice, a “2” next to their second choice and so on. This system requires multi-member districts (see figures 2 and 3 above). The number of votes necessary to win is determined by a formula which produces a fraction comprised of the number of seats to be filled, divided by the number of people voting. That winning number is called the *threshold*. Votes beyond those necessary to win a seat are reallocated to those voter’s second or third choices. This transfer of votes assures the majority group of winning the majority of seats. Finally, the votes for candidates with the fewest votes are reallocated to those voters’ second and subsequent choices.

Proportional Representation (PR): The concept that parties and political groups are entitled to seats in legislative bodies which reflect their share of the vote. A group receiving 30% of the vote should have the ability to elect 30% of the legislative seats of a representative governing body. Several different election methods can accomplish this goal.

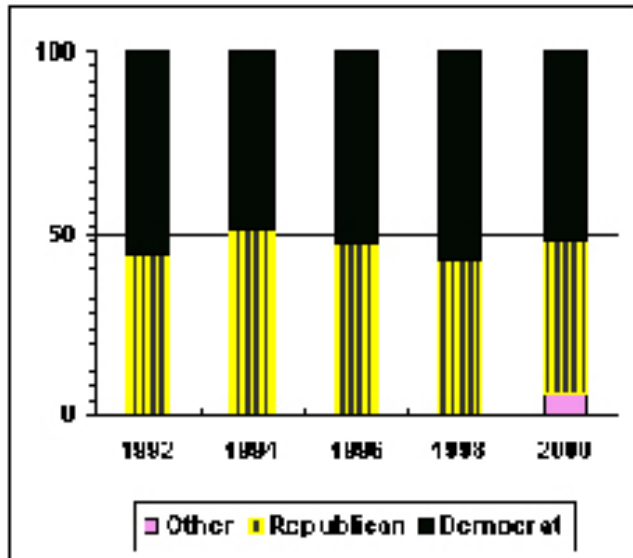
Cumulative Voting: A system that uses multi-member districts and in which voters have the same number of votes as there are seats being contested. Voters may allocate their votes among the various candidates in any way they see fit—including giving more than one vote to a particular candidate. In a three-seat district, a voter may give two votes to one candidate and one to another, one vote to each of three candidates or all three votes to one candidate. It is categorized as a semi-proportional system because the results may or may not be proportional to the political make-up of the electorate. If a group nominates too many candidates—more than their proportionate share of the electorate—they risk splitting their votes among too many and not winning their proportional share of seats. If they nominate too few, they risk not electing as many as their voting strength might allow.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV): A majority voting system used in single-member district systems and single-office elections. Voters mark their preferences on the ballot by putting a “1” next to their first choice, a “2” next to their second choice, and so on. A candidate who receives over 50% of the first-preference votes is declared the winner. Otherwise, the weakest candidate is eliminated and his or her votes are reallocated to the voters’ second choices. This reallocation process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the votes.

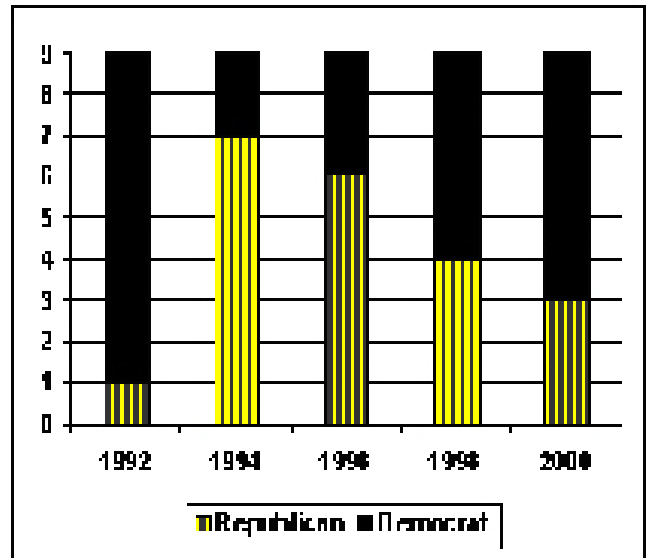
A Decade of Washington Elections to the U.S. House of Representatives



State Vote by Party



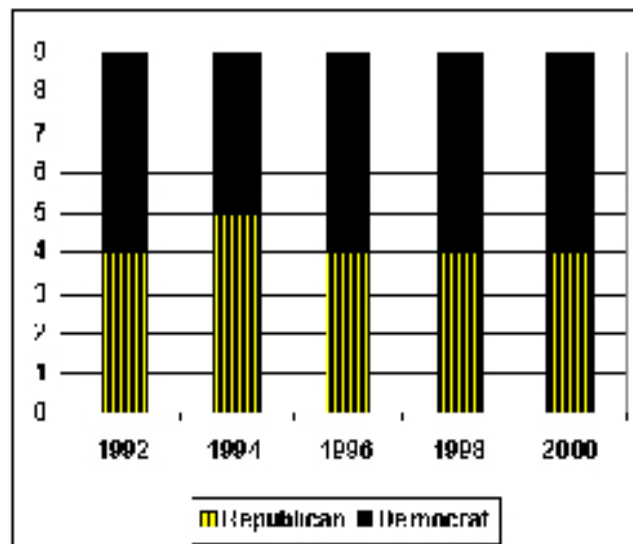
Representatives Elected



The chart above on the left shows the percentage of the statewide vote that the largest political parties have gathered in the last five elections to the U.S. House of Representatives. When these votes were translated into the seats won, the chart on the right shows considerable distortion. For example in 1992 the Democrats won eight of the nine seats. Two years later, the Republicans won seven of the nine seats. A popular vote shift of 7% caused a 67% change in party

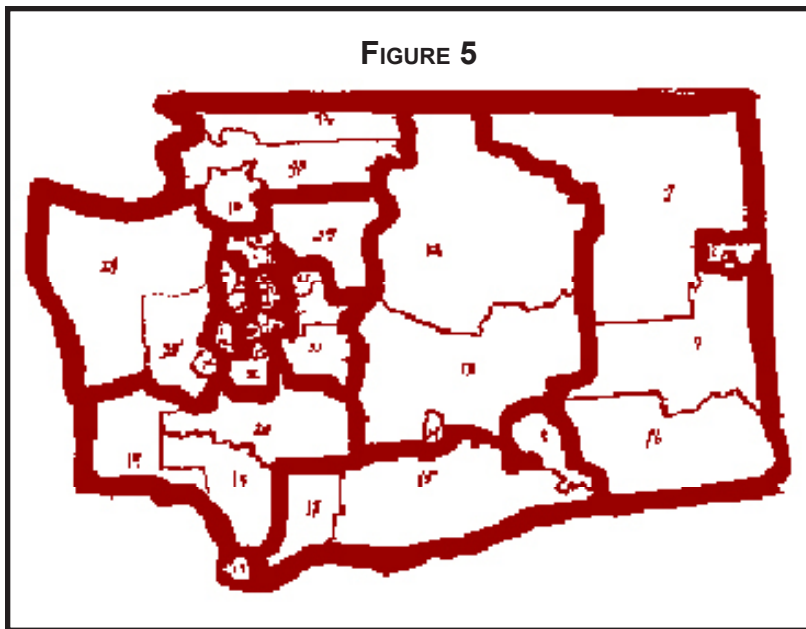
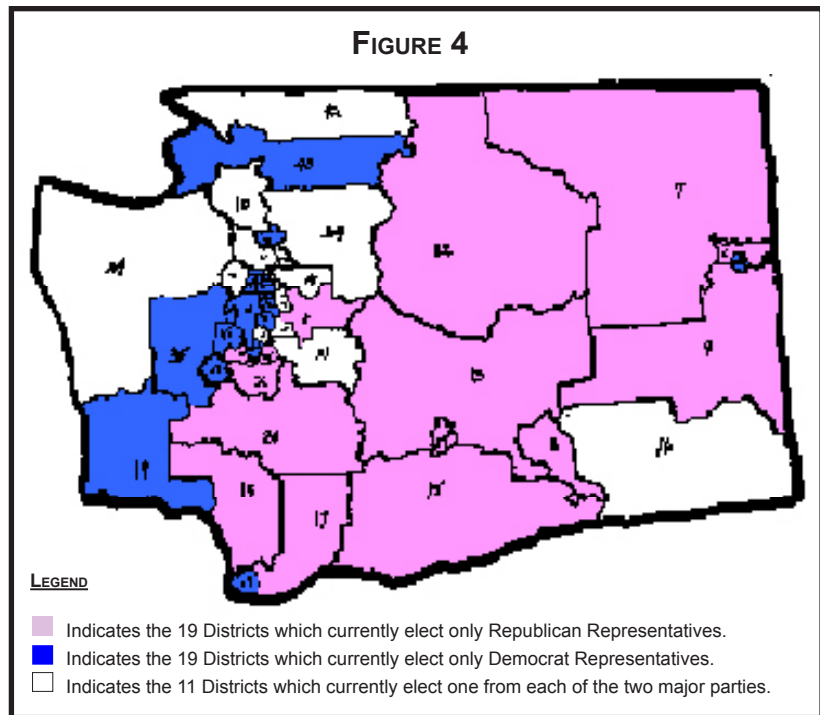
representation. This exaggerated relationship between votes and seats elected is not an unusual result in the election system most commonly used in American Elections. This kind of information is causing some people to more closely examine other election systems which may not distort the relationship between votes and representation. Such systems are said to produce proportional representation.

Representatives if Elected Proportionally



A Comparison of Voting Patterns: Washington State's 49 Representative Districts Vs. 16 Multi-Member "Super Districts"

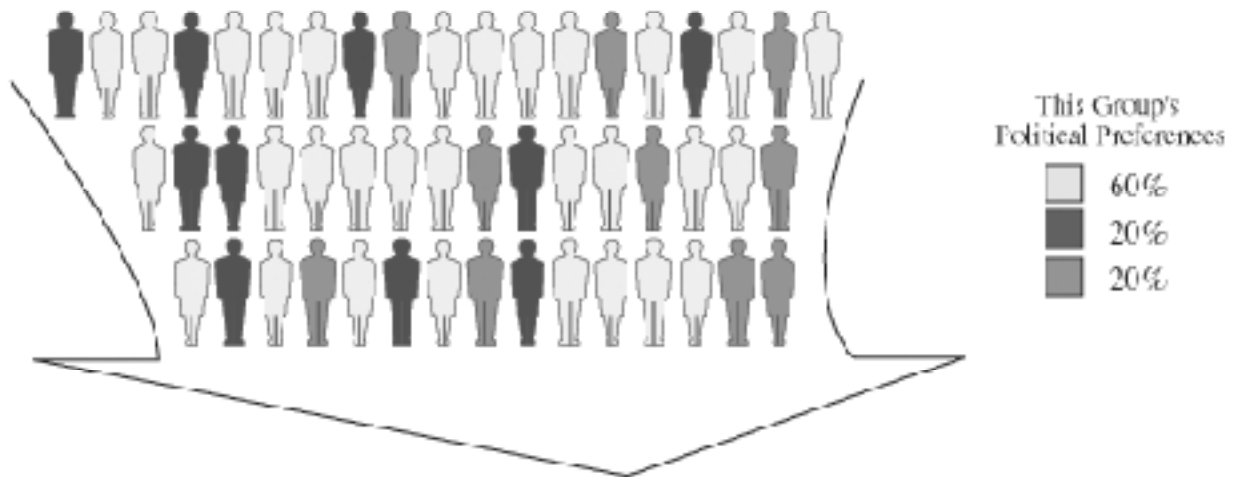
Choice Voting requires the use of multi-member districts—districts which elect several winners in unnumbered positions. Since Washington State does not have any "real life" examples of what multi-member districts might look like, the study committee did a "mock" redistricting of the State's 49 Representative districts. The maps presented on this page indicate the political make-up of the State's current Representative districts and, using the actual voting results from the 2000 General Election, shows what the political complexion of the State would look like if the same votes had been applied to 16 "super districts," each with 6 Representatives elected using *Choice Voting*.



By combining every three districts (which now elect two Representatives each) into one large "super district" (which elects six), all the larger districts would have both Republican and Democrat Representatives. The ratios would vary from 1-5, 2-4, and 3-3.

If every voter in the State had the ability to elect a Representative of their political persuasion, what kind of ramifications might there be for the major political parties? For third parties? Voter turnout at elections? Campaign strategies?

Election Results Differ Depending on the Election Method Chosen



Plurality Voting

**5 Votes At Large or
1 Vote - Single Member District**

The majority group has the power to win all seats, unless a minority group comprises the majority in one district.

Choice Voting

**At Large
1 Vote - Alternatives Listed
In Order Of Choice**

Produces Proportional Representation, winners will reflect the political make up of the community.

Single Winner Plurality Voting

**At Large
1 Vote**

The largest political group, not necessarily the majority, will always name the winner.

Cumulative Voting

**At Large
5 Votes
Divided Among 1-5 Candidates**

This is called a semi-proportional system. With strategic planning results can be proportional. Without strategic planning, either the majority or minority can achieve disproportionate representation by running too many or too few candidates.

Single Winner Instant Runoff Voting

**1 Vote - Alternatives Indicated
In Order Of Choice**

Using Choice Voting, allows a majority of voters to coalesce around a candidate. Eliminates the "spoiler" role of minority groups.

Some Pros and Cons of the Three Election Systems

Choice Voting— A Proportional Voting System

Disadvantages

- Some people think it's confusing and complicated.
- It requires larger geographic districts or an increase in the number of representatives to be elected.
- Larger districts may make it harder for candidates to campaign.
- Doorbelling may be impractical.
- Works best if election terms are not staggered—the more winners, the lower the threshold.
- Requires modern voting equipment to be practical.
- Voters will only have one vote counting for a winner.
- May heighten intra party competition.
- Too many choices on ballot.

Advantages

- Most voters have someone they identify with at the decision making table.
- The majority will hold the majority of seats, but substantial minorities will also have a voice.
- Because a broader cross section of voters is represented, there is greater incentive for more voters to participate in the election process.
- Voter participation is usually much higher than typical turnouts in the United States.
- Voters have more choices among candidates with genuine differences.
- Better representation of *all* voters.
- Slightly fewer votes necessary to win, and they can be gathered from broader geographic territory which is especially important to minority interest groups.
- More voters with a stake in government.
- Campaigning can actually be easier for candidates because they can target their campaign to their "natural" supporters.
- Less negative campaigning.

- Tends to reinforce a two party system. It can help one minority party, but seldom two or more.
- More wasted votes (votes that did not elect anyone).

Advantages

- Easy to understand.
- May offer minority representation.
- History of satisfying civil rights legal actions.
- May offer more proportional results than possible in single member districts.

Instant Runoff Voting

Disadvantages

- It is a confusing change for voters.
- It requires modern voting equipment to be practical.
- There are other systems that, although more complicated to explain, are better at choosing the candidate most acceptable to the most voters. (Borda, Condorcet and Approval are examples. We are not covering them in this study).
- Adoption of this voting reform may reduce the pressure to adopt a more important reform that would provide proportional representation.

Advantages

- Helps the majority to coalesce around their most popular candidate.

Cumulative Voting— A Semi-Proportional Voting Method

Disadvantages

- Requires strategic planning in order to achieve proportional results.
- Unless voters follow "the strategy," parties or special interest groups may have disproportional representation.