

## **Election Methods**

### **Introduction**

You've already received the full report on Election Methods from the state League. The committee thought it would be helpful to have a summary of the material for the consensus discussion at unit meetings.

The League of Women Voters of Oregon (LWVOR) hopes to achieve a consensus position to allow us to advocate for or against proposed changes in election methods at the state, regional, and local level in Oregon. The League, as a trusted source of information, should be able to advise on issues that are basic to our democracy

This report builds on the work of the LWVOR 2008 Election Methods Committee to present and evaluate voting methods and election systems that are currently in use in the U.S. or around the world and that could be considered for adoption in Oregon.

As election methods—good, bad, and ugly—continue to be proposed, the League should help Oregonians evaluate their merits.

### **Single-Winner Election Systems**

There are multiple options for electing a single winner. A single-winner election could be for a single position, such as a Mayor or Governor, or for a single legislator from a certain geographic area, such as the one congressperson representing a particular district, or a councilor representing the whole city. Oregon currently uses plurality voting, but there are other possibilities.

- Plurality is the American status quo, majority-wins contest. It's easy to use and understand, but it discourages citizens from voting on how they actually feel about the candidate (called sincere voting). It can promote negative schemes by candidates or parties to discredit the other candidates. Due to the majority rule concept, more than two candidates in a race can discourage voters from voting for the candidate they really want for fear of electing someone they do not want. Compared to other methods, plurality is less effective at electing the candidate who is most representative of the people. See the sample plurality ballot on page 6.
- Delayed runoff is an improvement on plurality in electing representative candidates. It requires two elections, one to narrow the field to two candidates and a separate one to select between the two. If a candidate gets a majority they win the election, however, if not, a second separate election occurs with the top two vote receivers. This is called a "conditional delayed runoff," which is used by the city of Eugene.
- "Unconditional" delayed runoff election occurs in races such as top-two systems. It takes place automatically between the top two candidates regardless of the first round outcome. Conditional delayed runoffs with a second separate election typically have a much lower voter turn out. A candidate, therefore, can be elected by a minority of voters.
- Range voting requires voters to rate each candidate on a scale, say from 1 to 5. The candidate with the highest average rating wins. If all voters vote sincerely, range voting is extremely good at selecting the most representative candidate. It is, unfortunately, very susceptible to strategic voting as opposed to sincere voting. See the sample range voting ballot on page 6.

- Approval voting enables voters to indicate whether or not they approve of each candidate for the position. The candidate with the most approvals wins. Approval voting is second best to range voting in electing the most representative candidate and second worst to range voting in encouraging strategic voting. Oregonians used approval voting when the legislature referred five advisory questions on different tax options to the May 1990 ballot. Voters could vote “yes” or “no” on any or all options. Another instance is when the Oregon Independent Party used approval voting to determine which candidate from other parties it would support on the November, 2016 ballot. See the sample approval ballot on page 6.
- Ranked choice voting is known as instant runoff voting (IRV) when used to select a single candidate. Studies show it to be nearly as good as range voting in selecting the most representative candidate and best of all systems considered in encouraging sincere voting.

A ranked choice ballot lists all candidates for an office and asks voters to assign an order to them. Ballots are tabulated by first counting the first place vote on each ballot. If any candidate receives a majority of first place votes cast (50%+1), she is declared the winner. If no candidate has a majority, the candidate with the fewest number of first place votes is eliminated and redistributed to the voter’s second choice. The elimination continues until one candidate has the majority of votes. Several examples where ranked choice has been used for mayor and city council elections are Cambridge, Massachusetts; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Takoma Park, Md; and Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco, California. See the sample ranked voting ballot on page 6.

## **Multiple Winner Election Systems**

Because each district is politically diverse, electing just one representative per district will not yield a legislative body that is exactly representative of the people at large. Most western democracies elect multiple candidates from each district so that legislators can represent the different political views within each district. There are several election systems for electing multiple legislators per district.

- Bloc types exist in Oregon. In this system, the entire electorate elects multiple candidates to a legislative body, electing each candidate in separate races. For example, all residents of the City of Portland elect four councilors, plus a mayor. Each council candidate runs for a numbered council seat against other candidates who filed for that numbered seat. This system has been shown to be less representative than dividing the area into districts and electing a candidate from each district, because the majority opinion of the entire area determines the outcome of all the races. It was this effect that led to the change in the Lane County charter in the 1970’s to provide for commissioners elected by and from districts, instead of at large. The three-member commission previously in existence was dominated by residents of Eugene, leaving Springfield and rural residents feeling left out.
- Semi-proportional systems, including cumulative and limited voting, allow voters multiple votes in the same race. The highest vote-getters win. In cumulative voting, candidates run in multi-member districts, and voters have as many votes as seats available. However, voters can give multiple votes to a single candidate or split their vote as they wish. Cumulative voting is often used for corporate stockholders’ voting. Councils, homeowners associations and boards in some areas use it to help elect more minority group members.

Limited voting is a multi-member system that is generally considered to achieve results similar to some winner-take-all voting. Candidates run in multi-member districts, and voters have more than

one vote but fewer votes than there are candidates. For example, in a five-member district, voters might be able to cast votes for their favorite three candidates. It is used in several cities and school boards across the county and in the country of Gibraltar. These systems can lead to more representation for all groups if minority political groups carefully coordinate their voting strategy and focus all their votes on a single candidate to ensure a candidate representing them wins one of the positions.

- Proportional representation systems are favored by most political scholars as the most representative systems. Most western democracies use a form of proportional representation voting to elect legislative bodies. A pool of candidates contends for the available seats in a district. There are several ways to elect representatives that reflect the political opinions of the district:
  - Party list voting is the most commonly used voting method for proportional representation. Eighty countries use it exclusively, and another three use it in combination with other systems. Of the top 20 nations with the best representation of women, 15 use list voting proportional representation. It allows voters to choose a candidate from a party list (open list voting, the most common form of voting in developed democracies) or simply to choose a party (closed list voting). In both forms, parties present candidate lists running in multi-member districts. In open list voting, a vote counts for that candidate and for the candidate's party. The party wins seats in proportion to the number of votes for candidates on its list, with candidates given the party's seats in proportion to their number of votes they receive. In closed list voting the party's ordered list of candidates win positions in proportion to the number of votes for that party, with the ordering of candidates determined by the party. One potential benefit of party list voting is eliminating primaries, saving taxpayer money and reducing voter fatigue. See a sample open list ballot on page 7.
  - Mixed-member proportional voting, a newer system, is the one most election experts favor. It retains a local representative while allowing for overall proportionality of the legislature. Voters get two votes: one for a local representative from a single-winner local district, and one for a party. Parties win seats in proportion to the number of votes each party receives. Mixed-member proportional retains a local representative while allowing for overall proportionality. Two countries, Germany and New Zealand, use this type of ballot, and it has increased the representation of women and people of color. Parties appeal for their votes by including members of those groups among their list candidates if too few are likely to win district seats. In Germany, 50% of seats are list seats, and they currently have 36% women members of the national legislature. New Zealand has 42% list seats and 31% women members in parliament. See a sample mixed-member proportional ballot on page 7.
  - Single-transferrable vote systems are the second choice of election experts. This system uses multi-member districts and a ranked choice ballot, see page 6. Candidates run in a pool for a number of seats. For example, all candidates for Portland City Council would run together for any of the four council seats, rather than splitting up into different races for individually numbered seats, as they do now. Voters rank the candidates and any candidate who passes a certain threshold of support wins a seat. A common way of determining a threshold is to divide the total number of valid votes by the number of seats plus one, and then adding one to that result. For example, in a three-seat district the threshold would be 26 percent of the valid votes  $((100\%/3+1))$

+1.) For American voters, this proportional system has the added attraction of allowing voters to vote for individual candidates, not for parties.

The minimum level of the threshold, to avoid electing representatives with very small support groups, and the size of the district are important design considerations for proportional systems.

### **Political Parties and Oregon Reforms**

In Oregon, a candidate can list up to three parties on the ballot, assuming all three have nominated the candidate. This aggregated fusion voting gives voters more information about the candidate. A full fusion voting system would list each candidate as many times on the ballot as there are parties nominating her. By choosing which place on the ballot to vote for the candidate, voters indicate support for that party. Full fusion would give candidates more information about the sources of their support.

The purpose of partisan races in primary elections is to select major party candidates to run for partisan seats, like State Senator or Governor, in November general elections. Major parties in Oregon are the Democrat, Republican, and Independent parties. Voters not registered with one of these parties are excluded from partisan races in the primary. Proposed reforms include a limited open primary, in which unaffiliated voters can vote by choosing which party's ballot to receive, an open primary in which all voters choose which party's ballot to receive on election day (a consideration with Oregon's vote-by-mail system), and top-two primaries, in which all voters, regardless of party affiliation, vote on all candidates for each seat and the top two vote-getters, regardless of party, advance to the general election. See delayed runoff above.

Voters who have not chosen a party are known as "unaffiliated" not "independents." Independents are affiliated with the Independent Party and are not unaffiliated.

### **Administration of Alternate Methods**

Changes in election methods may also require changes in voting administration hardware and software, training and voter education campaigns, as well as updates to other aspects of election administration. The three Oregon county clerks interviewed as part of our research (from Lane, Jackson and Multnomah) all agreed that complexity and cost of equipment are important concerns and should be included along with other criteria when considering administering different voting methods

## Glossary of Terms

**Aggregated fusion** is a type of ballot that lists a candidate once and also names multiple parties or platforms supporting the candidate. (See the sample aggregated fusion ballot on page 7.)

**Full fusion** is a type of ballot that lists a candidate multiple times, once for each party nominating the candidate. (See the sample full fusion ballot on page 7.)

**Closed list** is the type of ballot in which voters only choose a party and the party chooses which candidates win seats.

**Cumulative voting** occurs when candidates run in multi-member districts and voters have as many votes as seats available. Voters can give multiple votes to a single candidate or split their votes.

**Limited voting** occurs when candidates run in multi-member districts and voters have more than one vote, but fewer votes than there are candidates.

**Multi-member district** means an area represented by more than one elected individual. An example of a multi-member district is a U.S. Senate district, where each person within a state votes for two Senate members. In contrast, each U.S. House district is a single member district, where a single person represents a given territory.

**Sincere voting** occurs when the voter casts a ballot for her/his actual preference.

**Strategic voting** occurs when an individual makes a tactical decision to select a candidate to improve the chances of a desirable outcome or decrease the chances of a less desirable outcome. In our typical plurality elections strategic voting is most common when voters who prefer a minor party candidate choose to vote instead for one of the major parties to avoid making their candidate a “spoiler” and causing their least favorite to win.

**Plurality** is the type of election in which the voter can only choose one candidate and the candidate with the most votes win.

**Gerrymandering** is the arranging of political divisions (a state, county, etc.) to give one political party an unfair advantage in elections.

[Material prepared by Sue Boyd, Barbara Carter, Linda Ferdowsian, Rhonda Livesay, Susan Tavakolian.]

# Single Winner Systems

## Pluarality

Vote for One	
<input type="radio"/>	Rosalind Franklin
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Marie Curry
<input type="radio"/>	Rachel Carson
<input type="radio"/>	Jane Goodall

## Approval Voting

Mark the box next to each candidate you approve for this position. You may mark as many boxes as you like.	
<input type="radio"/>	Serena Williams
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Jackie Joyner-Kersey
<input type="radio"/>	Mia Hamm
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Lisa Leslie

## Range Voting

Rate each candidate from 1 (worst) to 5 (best). If you do not know enough about a candidate or do not wish to rate them, indicating "No Opinion" will not affect the candidate's score						
1/Poor	2/Acceptable	3/Good	4/Very Good	5/Ellecent	No Opinion	
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Serene Williams
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Jackie Joyner-Kersey
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Mia Hamm
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Lisa Leslie

## Ranked Voting

Mark only one candidate per column. Vote only once for any candidate.				
1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Michelle Obama
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Lady Bird Johnson
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Hillary Clinton
<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Eleanor Roosevelt

# Multi-Winner Systems

## Open List

You have one vote. Indicate the candidate for whom you wish to vote.

Your vote counts for both the candidate and their party.

Classics Party		Non-Fiction Party		Fiction Party		Memoir Party	
<input type="radio"/>	Jane Austin	<input type="radio"/>	Anne Frank	<input type="radio"/>	J. K. Rowling	<input type="radio"/>	Azir Nafisi
<input type="radio"/>	Harper Lee	<input type="radio"/>	Naomi Klein	<input type="radio"/>	Sandra Cisneros	<input type="radio"/>	Cheryl Strayed
<input type="radio"/>	Charlotte Bronte	<input type="radio"/>	Simone de Beauvoir	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Toni Morrison	<input type="radio"/>	Elizabeth Gilbert
<input type="radio"/>	Emily Bronte	<input type="radio"/>	Rebecca Solnit	<input type="radio"/>	Jhumpa Lahiri	<input type="radio"/>	Marjane Satrapi

## Closed List

You have one vote. Indicate the party for whom you wish to vote.

<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Classics Party	Non-Fiction Party	Fiction Party	Memoir Party
Jane Austin	Anne Frank	J.K. Rowling	Azar Nafisi
Harper Lee	Naomi Klein	Sandra Cisneros	Cheryl Strayed
Charlotte Bronte	Simone de Beauvoir	Toni Morrison	Elizabeth Gilbert
Emily Bronte	Rebecca Solnit	Jhumpa Lahiri	Marjane Satrapi

## Mixed-Member Proportional

Vote once in each column				
District Vote			Party Vote	
<input type="radio"/>	Jane Austin Classics		<input type="radio"/>	Classics Lee, C. Bronte, E. Bronte
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Anne Frank Non-fiction		<input type="radio"/>	Non-fiction Klein, de Beauvoir, Solnit
<input type="radio"/>	J.K. Rowling Fiction		<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Fiction Cisneros, Morrison, Lahiri
<input type="radio"/>	Azar Nafisi Memoir		<input type="radio"/>	Memoir Strayed, Gilbert, Satrapi

## Aggregated Fusion

Vote for One	
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Shakira The Columbians, The Spanish Speakers
<input type="radio"/>	Beyonce Knowles The Americans
<input type="radio"/>	Celine Dion The Canadians, The French Speakers

## Full Fusion

Vote for One	
<input type="radio"/>	Shakira The Columbians
<input checked="" type="radio"/>	Shakira The Spanish Speakers
<input type="radio"/>	Beyonce Knowles The Americans
<input type="radio"/>	Celine Dion The Canadians
<input type="radio"/>	Celine Dion The French Speakers

## Election Methods Study Update Consensus Questions

### INTRODUCTION

Alternatives to current election methods and voting systems exist in other states and the world and some are being proposed for Oregon.

Question 1. Do you agree that the League should have an actionable position on these alternatives? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

### SINGLE-WINNER SYSTEMS

When electing a single person to fill a position, voting methods include the current plurality, range voting, approval voting, and ranked-choice voting (aka instant runoff voting). These methods have different advantages and disadvantages.

**Question 2a.** On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is “not important,” 2 is “a little important,” 3 is “somewhat important,” 4 is “important,” and 5 is “very important”, rate the following criteria of voting methods in importance with respect to single-winner systems:

- 1 2 3 4 5 The system elects the candidate with the broadest support of the people although that person may not be the first choice of a plurality of voters.
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system elects the winner who is the first choice candidate of a majority (50%+1) of the electorate
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is easy to use and understand
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes sincere voting over strategic voting
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system encourages voter turnout and voter engagement
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system encourages those with minority opinions to vote
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system discourages negative campaigning
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is easy to administer by elections officials
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is not overly burdensome to taxpayers
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is resistant to Gerrymandering
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system provides for the greatest level of voter representation

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 2b.** Do you agree that alternative voting methods exist that can promote democratic choice better than our current plurality method under some circumstances? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided)

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_



**Question 2c.** Range voting allows voters to express their opinion about candidates on a scale, e.g., from 0 to 5. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a very representative outcome. It is very susceptible to strategic voting (which proponents often present as a benefit to knowledgeable voters), so it does not encourage sincere voting. It is relatively easy to understand and to administer. Would you approve of range voting in preference to the current plurality system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 2d.** Approval voting allows voters to say whether they approve of each candidate for the office. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a fairly representative outcome. It is very susceptible to strategic voting, so it does not encourage sincere voting. It is relatively easy to understand and to administer. Would you approve of approval voting in preference to the current plurality system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 2e.** Ranked-choice voting (aka instant runoff voting) allows voters to rank-order the candidates. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a very representative outcome. It is not susceptible to strategic voting, so it encourages sincere voting. It is somewhat more difficult than other systems to understand and to administer. Would you approve of ranked-choice voting in preference to the current plurality system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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## MULTIPLE WINNER SYSTEMS

When a legislative body has more than one member, the members can be elected individually, one per district, as we currently do for the Oregon House of Representatives, or they can be elected as a bloc, with each candidate competing for a single position, as we do for the U.S. Senate, or they can be elected in proportion to their support in the population they will govern. Proportional representation can be semi-proportional or fully proportional.

**Question 3a.** John Adams famously said that legislative bodies should be “in miniature, an exact portrait of the people at large.” Do you agree that legislative bodies should proportionally reflect the people they represent? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided)

Comments:

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**Question 3b.** On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is “not important” 2 is “a little important,” 3 is “somewhat important,” 4 is “important,” and 5 is “very important”, rate the following criteria of voting methods in importance with respect to multiple-winner systems:

1 2 3 4 5 Allows voters to vote for a specific individual (instead of a party or platform)

1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes a stable government that does not have to be reorganized between elections

1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes a stable government by protecting the two-party system.

1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes stable policy outcomes that do not change abruptly when power changes hands

- 1 2 3 4 5 The system elects a legislature that proportionally reflects the overall electorate
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is easy to use and understand
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system encourages voter turnout and voter engagement
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system encourages those with minority opinions to vote
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system discourages negative campaigning
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is easy to administer by elections officials
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system encourages cooperation across party lines
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system enables voters to elect local representatives from their geographic area
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is not overly burdensome to taxpayers
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system is resistant to Gerrymandering
- 1 2 3 4 5 The system provides for the greatest level of voter representation

Comments:

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**Question 3c.** One voting method to achieve proportional representation is closed list, in which parties present a list of candidates, voters vote for the party of their choice, and the number of candidates elected from that party depends on the number of voters who chose it. Would you approve of closed list voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3d.** One voting method to achieve proportional representation system is open list, in which voters vote for individual candidates listed by party, and the vote counts for the candidate and for the candidate's party. The party wins seats in proportion to the number of votes for candidates in their list, and candidates with the most votes win. Would you approve of open list voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3e.** One voting method to achieve proportional representation system is mixed member proportional, in which voters vote for individual candidates in their local district and also for a party. The most popular local candidates win district seats, and each party wins party seats in proportion to the number of votes for the party. Would you approve of mixed member proportional voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3f.** One voting method for a proportional representation system is the single transferrable vote, in which voters rank candidates as in ranked-choice voting, and any candidate who passes a threshold wins a seat, with votes above the threshold for any candidate going to the voters' second choices. (This is the only proportional system that would apply to non-partisan offices.) Would you approve of the single transferrable vote in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 3g.** Semi-proportional systems use limited or cumulative voting methods, in which voters have a number of votes and can give all of them to one candidate or spread them between candidates.

If voters coordinate their voting strategy very carefully, minorities can achieve more representation than in single-winner systems. Would you approve of semi-proportional systems in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

## THE PARTY PROCESS IN OREGON

**Question 4a.** Oregon allows a form of fusion voting where candidates endorsed by multiple parties can list those parties by their names on the ballot. An alternative is full fusion, where a candidate is listed multiple times on the ballot, once for each party nominating her. Full fusion enhances information candidates receive about their supporters and helps small parties maintain ballot access in future elections. Would you approve of full fusion voting for Oregon? \_\_\_\_\_ (yes, no, undecided) Why or why not? \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 4b.** If proportional representation were chosen for Oregon, primary elections could be unnecessary. However, in the absence of proportional representation, there are several alternative types of primary elections, some of which allow more choice by unaffiliated voters. Indicate which of the following primary election types have your approval (you may choose as many as you like:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Closed. Voters only get their party's ballot. Voters not registered with one of the major parties do not vote. (This is our current system.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Limited open. Non-affiliated voters choose which party's ballot to receive. Voters registered with a party only receive their own party's ballot.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Open. Voters request whatever party's ballot they want on the day of the election.
- \_\_\_\_\_ Top-Two. Primaries are not party based. All voters receive the same ballot. The top two vote getters, regardless of party, advance to the general election.

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

## ADMINISTRATION OF ALTERNATE METHODS

Creating the ballots, educating voters, and counting the votes will require additional effort by our hard-working elections officers if alternative voting methods are chosen.

**Question 5.** Any new voting method should be instituted only after voters in the district affected agree to provide the financial support necessary to the appropriate elections administrators to make technical changes and to educate voters. \_\_\_\_\_ True \_\_\_\_\_ False

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_