Multi-Winner Elections:

Working Toward
Proportional Representation

Celeste Landry

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF BOULDER COUNTY

Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- **Eliminate gerrymandering**

- **Increase competitiveness**

- **Use a voting method that promotes proportional representation**
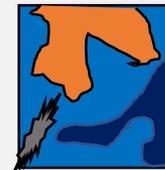
I Voted

Definitions

Single-Winner Election: governor, ward member, member of Congress

Versus

Multi-Winner Election: 2 or more seats filled in one contest

Example: 2019 Denver

Single Winner

Clerk and Recorder

Vote for one (1)

- Peg Perl
- Paul D. Lopez
- Sarah O. McCarthy

Two Winners

Councilmembers At-Large

Vote for not more than two (2)

- Jesse Lashawn Parris
- Johnny Hayes
- Deborah "Debbie" Ortega
- Tony Pigford
- Lynne Langdon
- Robin Kniech

Appropriate Use

Single-Winner Contests

Appropriate for **unitary** executive offices, such as governor, treasurer, and mayor

Multi-Winner Contests

Appropriate for **multi-member** legislative or executive bodies, such as the US House of Representatives, city council, and school boards
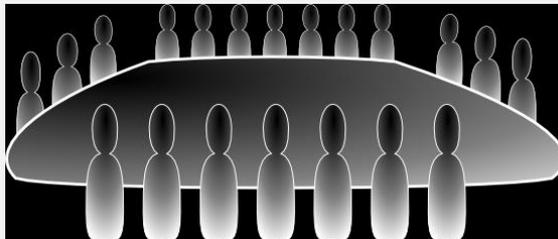
# Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- **Eliminate gerrymandering**
- Increase competitiveness
- Use a voting method that promotes PR
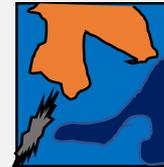
Conditions for Gerrymandering

- **Elected multi-member body**
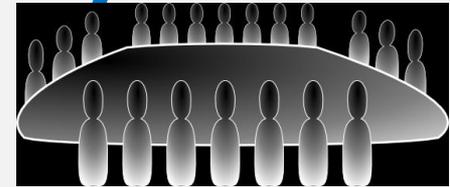
- **Elections by geographic district** where different district boundaries are possible.
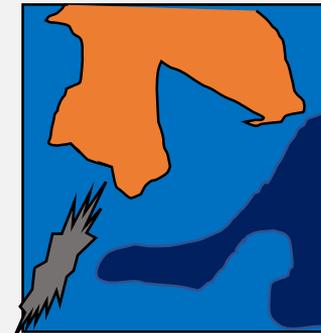
Solve Gerrymandering!

Gerrymandering is <u>manipulating</u> the boundaries of an electoral district.

To eliminate gerrymandering, get rid of districts!

Solve Gerrymandering!

Gerrymandering is <u>manipulating</u> the boundaries of an electoral district.

To eliminate gerrymandering, get rid of districts!

Eliminating all districts may be unreasonable; California has 53 congressional districts.

Solve Gerrymandering!

Gerrymandering is <u>manipulating</u> the boundaries of an electoral district.

To eliminate gerrymandering, get rid of districts!

Eliminating all districts may be unreasonable; California has 53 congressional districts.

★ **Solution: Create multi-member districts (and conduct multi-winner elections).** ★

Fair Representation Act

- HR 4000 – Create multi-member congressional districts, usually 3 to 5 members/district

- Overturn a 1967 law mandating single-member districts

9 Gerrymandered Congressional Districts

Congressional Districts Under FRA

5-member District
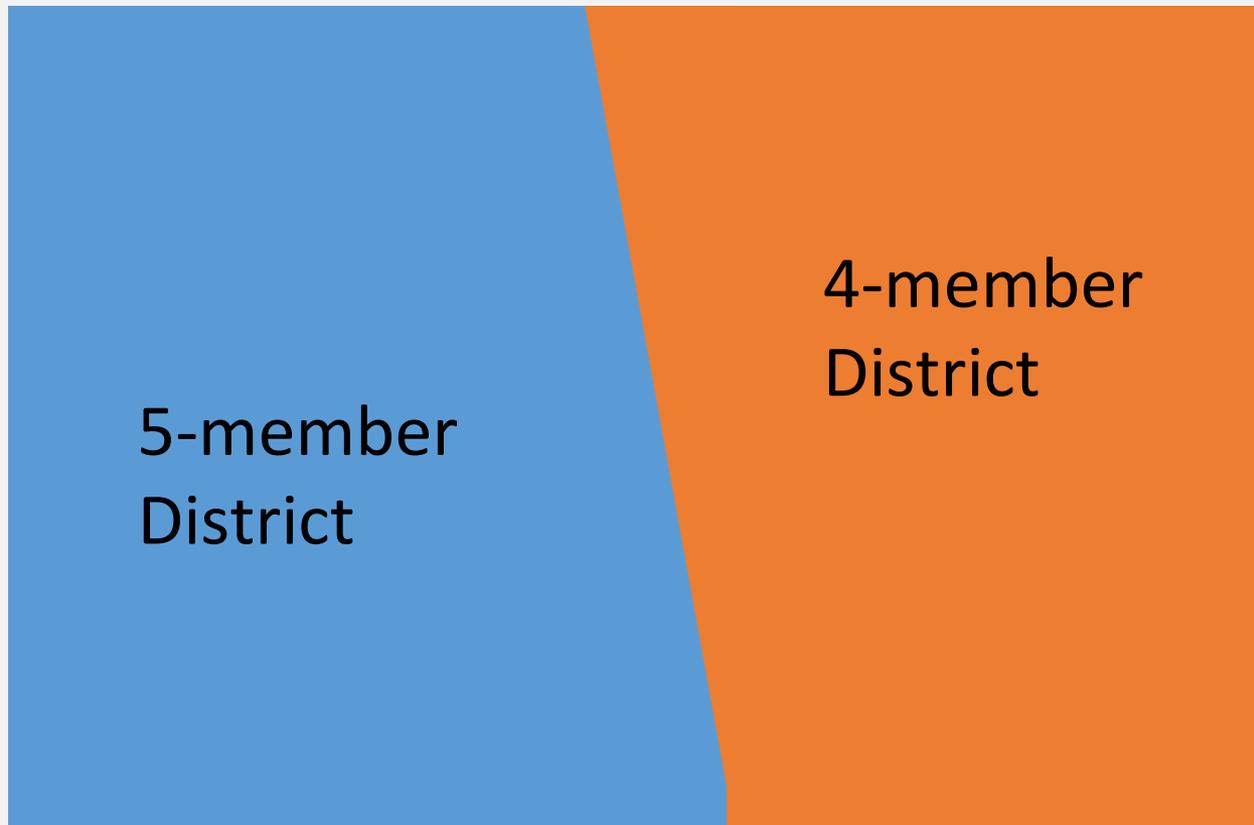
4-member District

Local Gerrymandering

Blatant gerrymandering less likely but still possible at the local level

Solutions – same as for federal/state

- One at-large district
- Multi-member wards with multi-winner elections

Easier to make changes locally

City Council

Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- Eliminate gerrymandering
- **Increase competitiveness** I Voted
- Use a voting method that promotes PR

Got Competitive Elections?

Multi-Member District: 2 or more members elected from one district

Multi-Winner (MW) Election: 2 or more seats filled in one contest

Got Competitive Elections?

Multi-Member District: 2 or more members elected from one district

Multi-Winner (MW) Election: 2 or more seats filled in one contest

Multi-member districts do not always hold multi-winner elections!

Every State is a "Multi-Member" District

Each state elects 2 US senators –

in staggered years.

Every State is a "Multi-Member" District

Each state elects 2 US senators – in staggered years.

US Senate elections are not MW and most are not competitive.

Competitiveness Problems in SW Districts

Problem #1 - Many district elections are **uncontested**, especially in one-party communities. Voters have no voice.

Competitiveness Problems in SW Districts

Problem #1 - Many district elections are **uncontested**, especially in one-party communities. Voters have no voice.

Problem #2 - **Two good candidates** vie for one district seat. Only one of the good candidates can win.

MW Elections Increase Competitiveness

#1 Solved - Larger MW districts have a **bigger pool of candidates.** A candidate doesn't win because of geography.

MW Elections Increase Competitiveness

#1 Solved - Larger MW districts have a **bigger pool of candidates.** A candidate doesn't win because of geography.

#2 Solved - **Two popular candidates** from the same neighborhood can run "against" each other and both win.

Competitive Elections → Higher Voter Turnout

- If something is at stake in an election…
- If voters feel like their voice matters…

-- Voters Turn Out!

I Voted

Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- Eliminate gerrymandering

- Increase competitiveness

- **Use a voting method that promotes proportional representation (PR)**
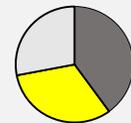
Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- Eliminate gerrymandering

- Increase competitiveness

- **Use a voting method that promotes proportional representation (PR)**

?

Multi-Winner: PR or Not PR?

Voter-Expressed Preferences

- ■ Chocolate
- ■ Lemon
- □ Vanilla

28 · 40 · 32

A 3-Winner Block Plurality Result

☹

- ■ Chocolate

3

A 3-Winner PR Result

☺

- ■ Chocolate
- ■ Lemon
- □ Vanilla

1 · 1 · 1
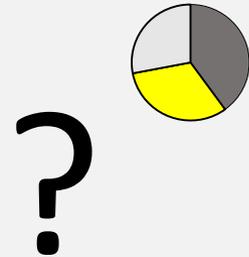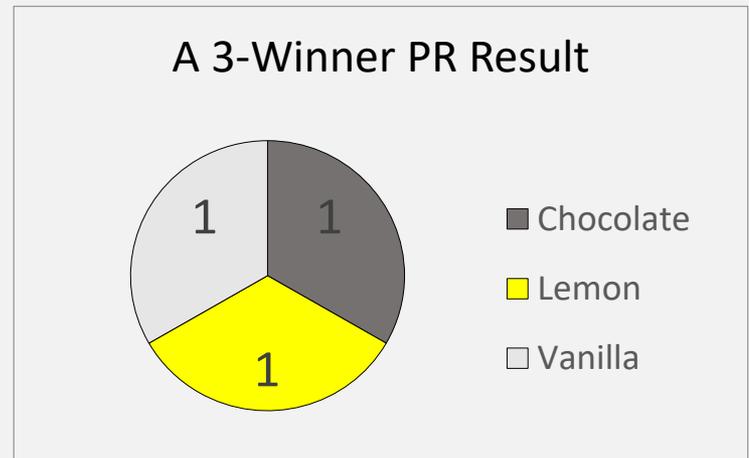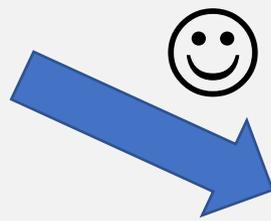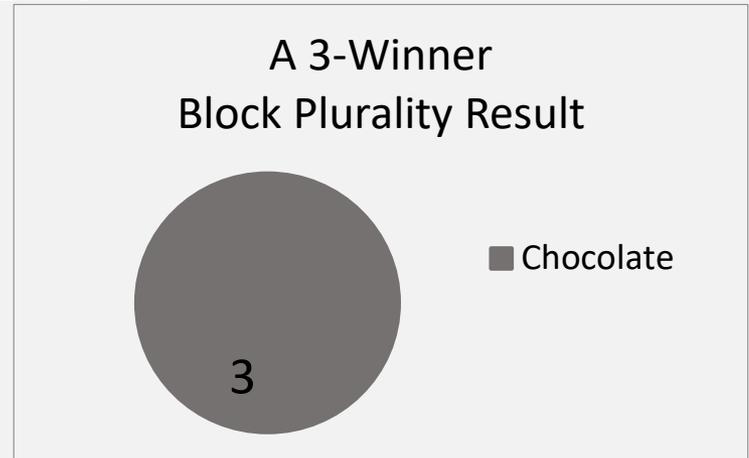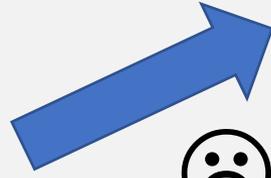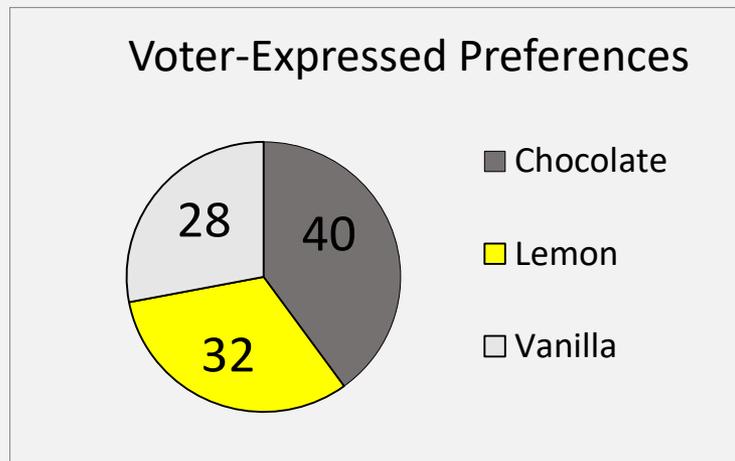
What is Proportional Representation?

Proportional representation (PR) is a feature of some voting methods in which **one* or more characteristics of an electorate are reflected proportionately in the elected body.**

Not a winner-take-all method!

*If only one, it's usually *political party affiliation.*
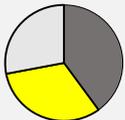
Non-Partisan PR

Non-partisan PR elections allow the voters to choose

the *characteristics which matter most* to them and/or which are the *important issues* of the campaign:

rural, renters, religion, youth, gender, racial/ethnic, positions on issues (fracking, guns), or, yes, political ideology or geography

SW | MW ← PR?
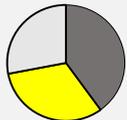
Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR   **Do Not Promote PR**

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests
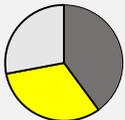
UK Parliament Debate

2017 Oct 30

SW | MW ← PR?
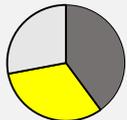
Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests
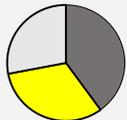
Block Plurality Election

5-winner election with 100 voters
Vote for up to 5 candidates

10 candidates: Alphas (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5)
                        Betas (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5)

- 60% of electorate supports a straight Alpha slate
- 40% of electorate supports a straight Beta slate

Each Alpha candidate gets 60 votes and is elected.
Alphas win 100% of the seats.
Not Proportional
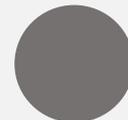
Proportional Election

5-winner election with 100 voters.
How to vote varies according to chosen PR voting method.

10 candidates: Alphas (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5)
Betas (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5)

- 60% of electorate supports only Alphas
- 40% of electorate supports only Betas

A proportional result is
3 Alpha candidates (60% of the winners)
2 Beta candidates (40% of the winners)
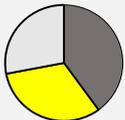
How to Increase Proportionality

- The **more seats** to fill, and

- The **smaller the threshold** needed to win a seat

  -- The more proportional the elected body!
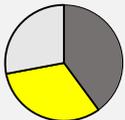
Examples of Proportionality Limits

- **Number of seats**
  - A 3-seat town council cannot represent all 4 "parties" in the electorate.
- **Threshold**
  - If winning a seat requires at least 15% of the vote, then a "party" which garners only 3% of the vote doesn't get a seat.
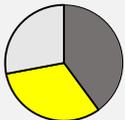
SW | MW ← PR?

Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Cumulative Voting
(TX school districts)

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests
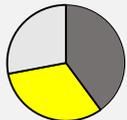
Use of Cumulative Voting

Most common PR method in US for governmental elections

Typically resulting from a judicial settlement to allow for more racial or ethnic minority representation

Sometimes Classified as "Semi-Proportional"
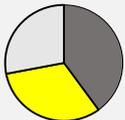
Cumulative (Points) Voting Mechanics

Simple to vote – Same instructions as plurality

- In a 5-winner election, a voter gets 5 votes

- **Each candidate is listed 5 times** – long ballot
  - 1 vote each to 5 different candidates or
  - 5 votes to 1 candidate or
  - Some other distribution of their 5 votes

Simple to tally – top 5 vote-getters win

Cumulative Voting

Chilton County, AL, 2016 – Vote for no more than Seven
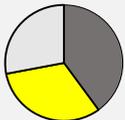
Cumulative Voting

Proportional Voting Mechanics

- Each voter has an <u>equal</u> number of votes

- Each voter can distribute the votes **unequally** to candidates
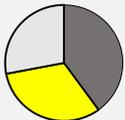
SW | MW ← PR?

Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Cumulative Voting
(TX school districts)

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests
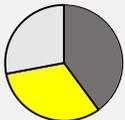
MW Ranked Voting Ballot Format

Rank candidates

- 1 for 1st choice, 2 for 2nd choice, etc.
  - Usually prohibited: same ranking to 2 candidates
- 1st choice is always counted

Single-winner ranked voting elections typically allow between 3 and 5 rankings,

but when filling more than 1 seat, voters want **more rankings** – different kind of long ballot

Cambridge 2017 Ballot

Elect 6 candidates

Cambridge 2017 Ballot

Elect 6 candidates

Cambridge 2017 Ballot

Elect 6 candidates

Cambridge 2017 Ballot

Elect 6 candidates

Cambridge 2017 Ballot

Elect 6 candidates

SW | **MW** ← PR?

Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Cumulative Voting
(TX school districts)

Single Transferable Vote
(Cambridge, MA)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Single Transferable Vote

One MW Ranking Method

5-winner election with 100 voters

10 candidates: Alphas (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5)
                          Betas (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5)

- 60% of electorate ranks ballot A1, A2, A3, A4, A5
- 40% of electorate ranks ballot B1, B2, B3, B4, B5

Threshold to win → >1/6 of votes = **17 votes**
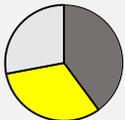
Single Transferable Vote
One MW Ranking Method

After Round 1:   A1 elected

A1, A2, A3, A4, A5   60 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

A1's election uses up **17 votes** out of 60
        60 – 17 = 43
43 votes are transferred to A2
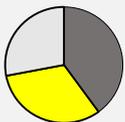
Single Transferable Vote
One MW Ranking Method

After Round 2:   A1, A2 elected

    A2, A3, A4, A5   43 votes
    B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

A2's election uses up **17 more Alpha votes**
    43 − 17 = 26
26 votes are transferred to A3

Single Transferable Vote
One MW Ranking Method

After Round 3:   A1, A2, B1 elected

A3, A4, A5   26 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

B1's election uses up **17 Beta votes**
        40 − 17 = 23
23 votes are transferred to B2

Single Transferable Vote

One MW Ranking Method

After Round 4:   A1, A2, B1, A3 elected

A3, A4, A5	26 votes
B2, B3, B4, B5	23 votes

A3's election uses up **17 more Alpha votes**

$$26 - 17 = 9$$

9 votes are transferred to A4
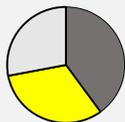
Single Transferable Vote
One MW Ranking Method

After Round 5: A1, A2, B1, A3, B2 elected

A4, A5	9 votes
B2, B3, B4, B5	23 votes

-- We have our 5 winners!
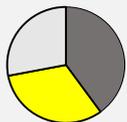
Single Transferable Vote
One MW Ranking Method

Final Results are **Proportional** to the electorate's voting preferences:

A1, A2, B1, A3, B2 elected

3 Alpha winners (60%)
2 Beta winners (40%)
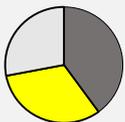
Single Transferable Vote

One MW Ranking Method

Proportional Voting Mechanics

- Surpassing a **threshold** guarantees a seat.
- Each voter has only **1 vote** but can rank the candidates. When a ballot's vote is for a candidate who is eliminated or is a surplus vote for a winning candidate, the single vote is **transferred** to the next ranking.
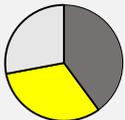
SW | MW ← PR?

Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Cumulative Voting
(TX school districts)

Single Transferable Vote
(Cambridge, MA)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Repeated Instant-Runoff
Ranked Choice Voting
(in 2019 Payson, Utah)
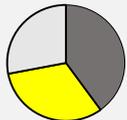
Compare and Contrast
Two Multi-Winner Ranking Methods

Repeated Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV) RCV

&

Single Transferable Vote (STV) RCV
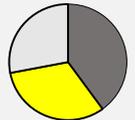
Voter's ballot experience is identical.
Tallying is very different.

SW | **MW** ← PR?

Both called (MW) RCV?

Promotes PR   **Doesn't Promote PR**

Single Transferable Vote
(since 1941 Cambridge)

Repeated Instant-Runoff
Ranked Choice Voting
(in 2019 Payson, Utah)

SW | **MW** ← PR?
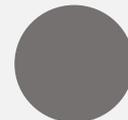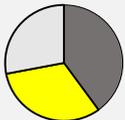
Both called (MW) RCV?

Promotes PR   **Doesn't Promote PR**

Single Transferable Vote
(since 1941 Cambridge)

Repeated Instant-Runoff
Ranked Choice Voting
(in 2019 Payson, Utah)

SUPER CONFUSING!
Let's call them by different names.
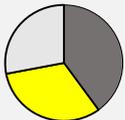
Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

5-winner election with 100 voters

10 candidates: Alphas (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5)
$\qquad\qquad\qquad$ Betas (B1, B2, B3, B4, B5)

- 60% of electorate ranks ballot A1, A2, A3, A4, A5
- 40% of electorate ranks ballot B1, B2, B3, B4, B5

Threshold to win → >1/2 of votes = **51 votes**
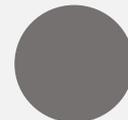
Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

After Round 1:   A1 elected

A1, A2, A3, A4, A5   60 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

If you voted for a winner, now your ballot counts toward your next highest ranking.
If you voted for A1, in the next round you get to vote for A2.
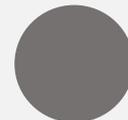
Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

After Round 2:   A1, A2 elected

A2, A3, A4, A5   60 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

So far, Alpha voters voted for 2 candidates.
Beta voters only voted for B1, a loser.
If you voted for A2, in the next round you get to vote for A3.

Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

After Round 3:   A1, A2, A3 elected

A3, A4, A5   60 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

Beta voters are stuck voting for B1.
We are seeing a repeating scenario.
If you voted for A3, in the next round you get to vote for A4. Guess who wins round 4?
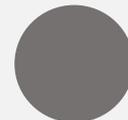
Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

After Round 4: A1, A2, A3, A4 elected

A4, A5   60 votes

B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

Beta voters will not elect any candidates, despite being 40% of the electorate.

If you voted for A4, in the next round you get to vote for A5.
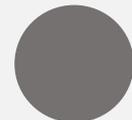
Repeated IRV RCV

Another MW Ranking Method

After Round 5: A1, A2, A3, A4, A5 elected

A5   60 votes
B1, B2, B3, B4, B5   40 votes

Clean sweep for Alpha voters!

Alphas win 100% of the seats.
Not Proportional
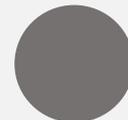
Compare and Contrast

Block Plurality

Simple to understand

Repeated IRV RCV

Feels more expressive but many voters actually have <u>less</u> of a voice

Compare and Contrast

Block Plurality

Simple to understand

Simple to vote

Repeated IRV RCV

Feels more expressive but many voters actually have <u>less</u> of a voice

Giving 2 candidates a #1 ranking spoils the ballot

Compare and Contrast

Block Plurality

Simple to understand

Simple to vote

All votes are counted

Repeated IRV RCV

Feels more expressive but many voters actually have <u>less</u> of a voice

Giving 2 candidates a #1 ranking spoils the ballot

Number of votes counted on a ballot ranges from 1 to the # of winners

Compare and Contrast

Block Plurality

Strategy: Voting for fewer candidates can help those candidates

Repeated IRV RCV

Strategy: To cast the most votes, vote for very popular candidates. To cast some votes, rank a very unpopular candidate #1 and a popular candidate #2. **To cast one repeated ineffective vote, rank a so-so popular candidate #1.**

Compare and Contrast

Block Plurality

Strategy: Voting for fewer candidates can help those candidates

Pending court case?
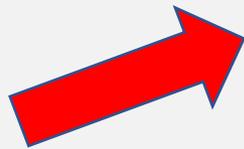
Repeated IRV RCV

Strategy: To cast the most votes, vote for very popular candidates. To cast some votes, rank a very unpopular candidate #1 and a popular candidate #2. **To cast one repeated ineffective vote, rank a so-so popular candidate #1.**

Repeated IRV RCV
Another MW Ranking Method

Strong argument to be made that

**Repeated IRV RCV
is worse than
Block Plurality Voting!**

Multi-Winner Elections

Promote PR

Cumulative Voting
(TX school districts)

Single Transferable Vote
(Cambridge, MA)

Mixed-Member PR*^
(New Zealand since '96)

Party List PR* (variations)
*Proportional by political party
^Includes some SW contests

Do Not Promote PR

Block Plurality Voting
(Denver, CO example)

Repeated Instant-Runoff
Ranked Choice Voting
(in 2019 Payson, Utah)

Bucklin Voting
(used in >60 cities in
early 20th century)
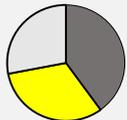
Multi-Winner Elections Deserve More Attention

Look for opportunities to hold multi-winner elections

- **Eliminate gerrymandering**

- **Increase competitiveness**

I Voted

- **Use a voting method that promotes proportional representation (PR)**
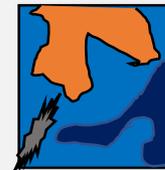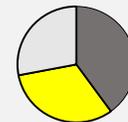
To Solve Gerrymandering and Have More Competitive Elections …

Create multi-member districts and conduct multi-winner elections

To have an Elected Multi-Member Body Better Represent the Diversity of the Electorate …

Use a voting method that promotes proportional representation

For more information
lwvbc.org > Teams at Work > Voting Methods

Thank you
for your interest!

Empowering Voters
Defending Democracy