

Voting Methods Consensus Questions

Study – Part 1: LWVBC Voting Methods Research and Unit Presentations 2013

Study – Part 2: Updates for LWVCO League Day 2015

Study – Part 3: Hosting Voting Methods Experts at Public Events 2017

Study – Part 4: Updates for LWVBC Consensus Meetings 2017

Consensus Questions – Introduction

Our current plurality voting method works well when there are only two candidates for one position. However, when there are more candidates, plurality limits the voice of the voter. Various voting methods have been used around the world, across the span of history and via computer simulations, but plurality predominates at present in the United States, Colorado and Boulder County. LWVBC, LWVCO and LWVUS all lack a program position on voting methods.

There are two main categories of more expressive voting methods: **ranking** (such as instant-runoff voting) and **rating** (such as approval and score voting). In ranking, voters get to name their 1st, 2nd, and 3rd (and sometimes more) candidate choices. In rating, voters get to score all the candidates with a whole number within a certain range specified on the ballot; for approval voting the range is binary (1 for approve and 0 for disapprove) while for score voting the range consists of more options.

How votes are tallied in these different methods isn't necessarily a concern of the average voter but is of great interest to candidates and some citizens. Some ranking voting methods use scores (such as the Bucklin method) and some rating methods use a ranking system (such as 3-2-1 voting) to do the tallying. In any case, ideally the outcome of an election clearly reveals the expressed preference of the voters.

The purpose of these consensus questions is to gather direction from our members and, if a consensus is reached, to create a program position from which we can advocate for new laws and for implementation of voting methods other than plurality.

By the way, LWV uses a rating method for consensus questions ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” and includes a “no consensus” option.

VOTING METHODS CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Present question #1 at the outset of the meeting and then repeat it after the other questions have been answered.

1. Currently most jurisdictions use plurality voting. The League should actively support legalizing and implementing alternative voting methods that allow people to express their preferences more effectively. The League should actively support gaining on-the-ground experience with alternative voting methods in order to ascertain whether a voting method results in outcomes that match voters' preferences as recorded on their ballots.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

2. Some voting methods are intended for single-winner elections, others for multi-winner elections. How important is it for the intended use of a voting method to match its actual application?

Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

3. CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING ALTERNATIVE VOTING METHODS

A) Criteria

1) Method encourages honest voting rather than tactical voting - Specifics:

- (a) Favorite-safe: Voting for your favorite candidate won't help another candidate.
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (b) Clone-safe: In a race with 3 or more candidates where candidates A and B are "identical," there is no vote splitting between A and B and no incentive to push one clone to leave the race.
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (c) Monotonic: Voting for a candidate helps the candidate. Not voting for or voting against a candidate doesn't help the candidate.
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

2) Method improves the election experience - Specifics:

- (d) Allows for expressive voting
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (e) Conducive to positive campaigning
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (f) Nursery for third parties rather than two-party domination
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (g) Integrity and fairness of the voting method produce overall voter satisfaction
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

3) Method is easy to implement - Specifics:

- (h) Voting directions are easy to understand, resulting in fewer incidents of ballot spoilage
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (i) Can use existing machines and inexpensive software for voting and tallying
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus
- (j) Tallying of votes is transparent and easy for the voter to understand
 Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

B) Criteria Categories

Now please consider each broad category.

Method encourages honest voting rather than tactical voting

Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

Method improves the election experience

Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

Method is easy to implement

Very important Somewhat Important Not important No consensus

C) Analysis

Election officials should conduct post-election analysis in order to evaluate the voters' usage of the voting method and the election's reflection of voters' stated preferences.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus

4. (Question #1 presented again.) Currently most jurisdictions use plurality voting. The League should actively support legalizing and implementing alternative voting methods that allow people to express their preferences more effectively. The League should actively support gaining on-the-ground experience with alternative voting methods in order to ascertain whether a voting method results in outcomes that match voters' preferences as recorded on their ballots.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No consensus