

Problems with Plurality Voting

in Single-Winner Elections with 3 or More Candidates

Because you can only show your support for one candidate....

1) You can't express your preferences as clearly as in other voting methods.



2) You might be inclined to vote for a candidate who is not your favorite, or you might decide to just stay home.



3) Two good candidates can split the vote and result in the election of a third, less desirable candidate.



The plurality vote is pretty much the worst voting system there is. – UC-Irvine mathematician Donald Saari
<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/spoil-proofing-elections>

See Inside for Examples of 3 Better Voting Methods

Some Notable Plurality Elections with 3 or More Candidates over the Past 25 Years

- 2016 US President (Republican nominee)
Donald Trump, Ted Cruz, Marco Rubio, John Kasich, Ben Carson, Jeb Bush, Chris Christie, Rand Paul, Carly Fiorina, and other candidates
- 2008 CO: 2nd CD (Democratic nominee)
Jared Polis 42%
Joan Fitz-Gerald 38%
Will Shafroth 20%
- 2003 recall/replace CA governor Gray Davis
Arnold Schwarzenegger 48.6%
Cruz Bustamante 31.5%
Tom McClintock 13.4%
132 other candidates
- 2002 CO: 7th CD
Bob Beauprez (81,789 votes – 47%)
Mike Feeley (81,668 votes – 47%)
3 others: Chandler, Good, Martin
- 2000 US President
George W. Bush 47.9%
Al Gore 48.4%
others including Nader and Buchanan
- 1992 US President
Bill Clinton 43%
George H. W. Bush 37%
Ross Perot 19%



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Working Toward Better Voting Methods

Excerpt of the new LWV of Colorado position:

*The League supports authorizing and implementing **alternatives to plurality voting** that allow people to express their preferences more effectively. ... The League supports voting methods that can **improve the election experience**, that encourage honest voting rather than tactical voting, and that consider ease of implementation.*

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lwvbc.org, Teams at Work, Voting Methods

Approval Voting –

You can vote for more than one candidate even in a single-winner race. You don't have to choose between two candidates with similar ideologies who would split the vote in a plurality-voting election. The candidate with the most votes wins.

Approval voting is used in the CU – Boulder student government elections and has been recommended in Fargo, ND to elect the mayor and city commissioners.

- brownie
- banana split
- sugar cookie
- lemon bar

Score Voting –

You can rate every single candidate, much like Yelp or Amazon ratings. The range is declared on the ballot. The candidate with the highest total score wins.

On this ballot the ratings are from 0 (worst) to 3 (best). Only whole numbers are allowed.

- 3 brownie
- 0 banana split
- 1 sugar cookie
- 3 lemon bar

Instant-runoff voting (IRV) –

You rank the candidates: 1 for your first choice, 2 for your second choice and so on. If a candidate receives a majority of 1st-choice votes, that candidate wins. Otherwise, the candidate with the fewest 1st-choice votes is eliminated. If your first choice gets eliminated, your vote will be transferred to your next-higher choice that has not yet been eliminated. The elimination process continues in sequential rounds until one candidate remains.

IRV is the most widely used alternative voting method in the US. Telluride uses IRV and Aspen voters tried it (not entirely correctly) in 2009. In 2016 Maine voters adopted it for state elections.

- 1 brownie
- 4 banana split
- 3 sugar cookie
- 2 lemon bar