

The Boulder County Voter

League of Women Voters of Boulder County * August 2018



RCV: Two Better Ways to Vote

by Celeste Landry, Voting Methods Team Leader (with assistance from members of the Voting Methods team)

RCV. RCV. Everywhere you go in the voting reform world, you hear about RCV.

What the heck is Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)? Good question! To start with, RCV refers to a voting method (or two).

Vote for one option	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Joe Smith
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	John Citizen
<input type="checkbox"/>	Jane Doe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fred Rubble

The voting method used in most US elections is a form of plurality voting, where you vote for as many candidates as are to be elected – 1 for a single-winner contest, n for an n -winner contest. Plurality voting restricts a voter’s expressiveness, often encouraging people to vote for the “lesser of two evils” in order not to “split the vote.”

In ranked voting methods such as RCV, the voter can express an opinion about multiple candidates, limited only by the number of rankings allowed on the ballot. In Minneapolis voters are limited to 3 rankings. In Cambridge, MA, the number of rankings equals the number of candidates – 26 in the 2017 city council election! Voters give different rankings to different candidates starting with 1 for the

first choice, 2 for the second choice and so on. *(continued on page 8)*

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August Events Calendar

- Aug 4: Voter Registration Drive, Boulder
- Aug 11: Voter Registration Drive, Longmont
- Aug 13: Follow The Money In Our Elections
- Aug 16: Voter Registration Drive, Erie
- Aug 26: Art @River Bend Festival in Lyons

President's Letter

By Peggy Leech, LWVBC President

The election season is fast approaching, and some candidate forums are already being planned. LWVBC is collaborating with the Broomfield Chamber of Commerce on two forums in August:

- August 22, Broomfield City Council Chambers, Colorado House District 33 candidates
- August 29, Broomfield Auditorium, US Congressional District 2 candidates

A candidate forum for the Superior Board of Trustees will be held in September – details to be announced.



Postcard display featured at some of LWVBC's voter registration drives

We will also be focusing on Amendments Y and Z (redistricting), and we are supporting the effort to increase the Board of County Commissioners from three to five (see letter elsewhere in this newsletter). LWVBC is planning to appear in the Louisville Labor Day Parade on September 3, and many voter registration drives are going on around the county. We will need to start work on ballot issues soon, and I am sure that Susan Saunders can use help for many of the Voter Service activities this election season.

Strategic Planning efforts have been going on at the state and national level, and LWVBC will work on Year 4 of our Strategic Plan on August 25. If you have ideas about where we should be headed, please let me know. Feedback is welcome.

We have also started planning the Fall Kickoff Meeting, which will be held on Saturday morning, September 22. Mark your calendars!

Recent board decisions:

- Louisa Young (Fund Development) was selected as 1st Vice President, and Elizabeth Crowe (Communications) will be 2nd Vice President.
- The Nominating Committee (Carolyn Elliott, Marion Read, and Hugh Haskell) will be joined by board members Susan Saunders and Kay Palmer Marsh.
- The board voted to endorse the Colorado Blueprint to End Hunger.
- The board encourages our members to individually endorse the People's Resolution. We support the goal, and it has been endorsed by CIRC.

- In an effort to make our board meetings more transparent and open to members, we will hold our meetings in public places instead of homes. We will update our website to show the locations when they become known.
- The board approved a name change for the Campaign Finance Reform Team. It will now be the Money in Politics Team.



Finally, I would like to make one small challenge to our members this month, in an effort to get everyone thinking about the LWVUS focus on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). Recognize and accept that you have bias (we all do!). Consider what in your background and identity is informing the biases you hold. (I will have another challenge next month.)

To reach LWVBC President **Peggy Leech**, you can email her at president@lwvbc.org



Colorado (and Wyoming) delegation to LWVUS Convention – highlights on Page 5

Grocery Cards

Did you know? You can use your grocery gift card to buy gas at affiliated gas stations. Every time you reload, the League gets a cut.

To get your card call or email **Louisa Young** (303-444-6429 or Louisa.Young@Colorado.EDU).

Volunteers Needed for LWVCO Fund Development Task Force

LWVCO's Fund Development Task Force is work on refreshing and changing LWVCO's fund raising strategies to ensure LWVCO has the funds needed for its critical work – and volunteer members who have fund development backgrounds/expertise are needed!

Task Force Chair: **Barbara Mattison** (303-322-4878 or mattisonleague@gmail.com)

March the Decades

Celebrate Labor Day and LWVBC, "March the Decades!" in the Louisville Parade

Calling all LWVBC members!! We need you to be part of 20+ volunteers who will march in the Louisville Labor Day Parade on Monday morning, September 3. It's only about 8 blocks of walking or riding. We will gather at 8:30 at a place to be determined near the center of downtown Louisville. You can bring friends or family who aren't League members who will identify with the League. The more marchers the better!

sign up to join us on the [volunteer page for the event](#) or contact **Jeanine**

Pow: powpc@hotmail.com or 303-915-8915.



The theme of our participation is "March the Decades of LWV." We need at least 9-18 volunteers who will dress in clothing representing the various decades which we will help obtain. They will also carry signs identifying important accomplishments supported by the League in each decade. We hope to have at least 2 volunteers per decade and 2 or more to carry a banner plus as many other supporters as we can.

We need to identify those wearing costumes as soon as possible to match up costumes with sizes. Some of the costumes looking for models to wear them are pictured at left.

Since we want to have sashes or armbands or other insignia for all others taking part, please let us know if you might participate even without being in costume so we can have all items ready for you. Also, we need to know if you want to ride rather than walk, so we have enough open-air vehicles on hand. Tell Jeanine if you know of a convertible we can use!

Let's have a grand time celebrating Labor Day and the League's accomplishments!!

Submitted by the LWVBC Labor Day Parade Committee

Highlights from State and National Gatherings

For those of you who missed the Post-Convention Coffee on July 7, some of the highlights from the state Council in Denver and the national convention in Chicago are listed below:

LWVCO Council:

- There is a new local League being formed in San Luis Valley
- We heard from 14 local Leagues who were in attendance
- 6 ballot issues have been referred to the 2018 ballot by the legislature, including the 2 on redistricting (congressional and legislative)
- More ballot issues are possible through the citizen initiative process
- LWVCO board has adopted new policy on “Empty Chair” candidate forums
- Strategic Plan—several task forces are continuing work (communications, access management system, fund development, local League support, collaborations/partnerships, executive director)



LWVUS Convention:

- New CEO hired: Virginia Kase, from CASA
- LWVUS allowed time during Convention to allow participation in the Chicago “Families Belong Together” march on June 30
- A surplus of \$5.1 million was generated during the 2016-2018 biennium
- No increase in Per Member Payment (PMP) to LWVUS
- Transformation Journey is the national Strategic Planning effort
- \$3 million will be invested in the Transformation Journey over 2018-2020 biennium
- Big emphasis on changing League culture, including major efforts in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training
- Significant investment in technology; new IT Director hired recently
- Several good speakers and panels during the convention
- Many workshops/caucuses on different topics (including one on Voting Methods by our Voting Methods Team)
- LWVBC had 9 members attending (5 were delegates)

Letter to Editors in the County Regarding County Commissioner Reforms

By Peggy Leech

Recently, there has been media coverage about a citizens' initiative that would increase the number of Boulder County Commissioners from three to five. The ballot language would also offer two choices for how those five commissioners would be elected.

Option one is for each of the five commissioners to be a resident of a specific district and be elected only by the voters living in that district. Option two would be for three of the commissioners to be a resident of a specific district and to be elected only by the voters living in that district, and the other two commissioners to be elected at-large by all Boulder County voters. (Currently, the three commissioners are residents of a specific district, but are elected by all Boulder County voters, regardless of which district the voters live in.)

The League of Women Voters of Boulder County (LWVBC) supports increasing the number of County Commissioners from three to five, and the League would support option two-

Five commissioners would broaden the input into complex decisions by our County government and would allow for more voices to be part of the decision-making process when a commissioner is absent. In addition, expanded representation could help to reflect the diversity of interests and opinions within the county. By having three commissioners elected by district, voters in each district can choose their own representative. The two commissioners elected at-large could provide a county-wide view on the commission as well.

Looking further into the future, the League would like to see enabling legislation to allow county elections to use a voting method that promotes proportional representation rather than only geographical representation. Meanwhile, LWVBC strongly endorses this issue for the 2018 ballot, whether through petition signatures or by the Boulder County Commissioners referring this to the ballot.



Current County Commissioners Deb Gardner, Elise Jones, and Cindy Domenico

Membership

Hooray!! Student Membership is Increasing



LWVBC Membership Team is very excited to announce that since beginning to offer free student memberships we have gotten six new student members. We now have a total of seven student members; one CU graduate student, two CU undergrads, one graduate of Front Range who is starting this Fall at CSU, two Boulder County high school students and one middle school student. We held our initial meeting with the students on June 18th and our second meeting will be August 6th. The students are deciding what they want to accomplish this year. They will be volunteering for the League in many different

roles. So look for them at future events. Please help us spread the word and recruit more students. They are the future of LWV!

Shiquita Yarbrough, Youth Engagement Director

Renewal Time

An Early Reminder: A large percentage of our LWVBC members have membership renewal coming up on Sept 30. You will receive two automatic email reminders through our website. This is a new way of doing things. Please consider renewing your membership online by paying with a credit card at your earliest convenience. It saves us many volunteer hours when we don't have to call and remind you. As always, you have the option of paying by check.

If you would like to check your renewal date, its easy! On the website click on the blue Member Login button and login to the website. Next to your name in the upper right hand corner hover over the "black arrow icon". Then select "Profile" from the menu. The expiration date of your membership is on this screen in the "Membership Summary".

Your membership is important to us! Thank you for your continued support. And thank you for helping us streamline this process. Please let us know if you have questions.

Ruth Stemler, Membership Director

Follow the Money in Our Elections

When: Monday, August 13, 2018, 5:30 PM until 6:30 PM

Where: St. Vrain Cidery
350 Terry St., Suite 130 (east side of building)
Longmont, CO 80501

Contact: **Amanda P Nuku**
lwvbouldercounty@gmail.com

Category: Drinks & Dialogue

Registration is recommended

Admission: No Fee

Our speaker **Sandra Fish** is a data journalist and freelance writer for the Colorado Independent. She also runs #COpolitics.



Join us for Drinks and Dialogue at St. Vrain Cidery. Grab one of their many delicious ciders and engage in a conversation on Campaign Finance with our Speaker Sandra Fish.

Food will be available to purchase from Volcán Azul Catering, Latino Inspired Cuisine. They offer blue corn quesadillas, tacos and sides.

#COpolitics is a nonpartisan, nonprofit news site offering data for the public to explore, content based on that data and plenty of explainers about how our elections and government work. Ultimately, #COpolitics will include data on lobbying in Colorado, elections, campaign finance and, perhaps most importantly, [Follow the Message](#). Follow the Message crowdsources campaign fliers, TV and radio ads, and other political messages, then explains who paid for the messages and where their money came from.

New Communications Team

LWVBC's Communications Team is excited to get important information and sharp policy analysis out to our members and others in our community. The Team is led by Elizabeth Crowe (former VOTER editor), and includes Jennifer Bales, Laura Coates, Deborah Hayes, Rionda Osman-Jouchoux, Mandy Nuku, Deborah Weidler and Jeanette Hillery.

At a kickoff meeting on July 16th, the team discussed our purpose, how to reach our audience, dividing roles and working together for greater efficiency and effective processes and materials. If you have any questions or bright ideas to share, please contact Elizabeth at crowe.elizabethann@gmail.com.

Ranked Choice Voting (continued from page 1)

“Ranked Choice Voting” (RCV) is the language advocated by FairVote, a 501(c)(3) organization that promotes various electoral reforms with a primary focus on adopting RCV for use in elections. The directions for voters on RCV ballots for a single-winner contest (such as governor) and a multi-winner contest (such as elect-5-to-city-council) are exactly the same. See the figure below of a sample ballot. If people describing RCV stopped at this point, there wouldn't be much confusion with the term RCV.

Ranked Choice Voting Example

To vote, RANK the desserts in order of preference.

Fill in the box in the 1st-choice column which is in the row of your preferred dessert.

You may also rank the other dessert candidates in order of preference.

Fill in no more than one box per candidate (row) or per ranking (column).

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice
• brownie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• banana split	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• sugar cookie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• lemon bar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Note: This could be a ballot for a single-winner (IRV) contest or a multi-winner (STV) contest.

The problem arises when people talk about tallying the results, *which we naturally want to do*. We wouldn't want to hold an election and not learn the results! How the results are tallied is an important part of a voting method.

Single-winner RCV = Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV)

Instant-runoff voting (IRV) is the best-known version of RCV. It was used in Maine's recent primary to choose party nominees for governor and a few other elected positions. If only two candidates competed in a single-winner contest, plurality was used rather than IRV.

How an IRV winner is determined: 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-and-transfer-to-next-ranking process continues in sequential rounds until one candidate remains and is declared the winner.

If all the choices on a ballot have been eliminated, we call the ballot an exhausted or non-transferable ballot. In the 2017 Minneapolis mayoral contest with 16 candidates but only 3 rankings allowed, over 20% of the ballots were exhausted by the time a winner was declared. Preferably, by the time there are two candidates remaining, one candidate has a majority of votes from the valid ballots cast, but sometimes the winning candidate only has a majority of the non-exhausted ballots, as in the 2017 Minneapolis mayoral contest.

IRV provides voters with more expressiveness but, since the winner is based on a majority of votes, minority parties or voices rarely achieve representation. Single-winner voting methods – not only IRV – tend to maintain the two-party lock on our political system.

Multi-winner RCV = Single Transferable Vote (STV)

The multi-winner version of RCV has the same added expressiveness as the single-winner version. Single transferable vote (STV) has been used in 25 US cities, including Cambridge since 1941 where it is called PR for proportional representation. The city of Boulder used STV from 1917 to 1947.

Voters in Minneapolis elect three Parks and Rec Board commissioners using STV. A candidate who receives just over $\frac{1}{4}$ of the vote wins a seat. For example, with 80,000 valid ballots, the quota to win a seat is 20,001 votes, much less than a majority.

The emphasis on the quota is a big feature of STV. If a candidate receives more votes than the quota, the surplus is transferred to the next-higher choices on the surplus ballots. There are different ways to do this transfer: this article won't discuss those options. If not enough candidates make quota with 1st-choice votes to fill all the seats, then the following cycle continues until the number of candidates remaining equals the number of seats: 1) transferring the surplus, 2) eliminating the candidate with the lowest vote total and transferring the votes on those ballots to the next-higher choice that has not been eliminated.

Under current plurality forms of voting, just over 50% of the electorate voting as a block can elect their preferred slate of candidates, preventing minority voices on a multi-member board. Alternatively, STV promotes proportional representation because a candidate can win

with a fraction of the votes. The more seats to be filled in the contest, the smaller the fraction of the vote needed to win a seat and the more chance that the elected board will be proportionally representative of the electorate.

House Resolution 3057 – The Fair Representation Act

Most efforts to adopt RCV focus on IRV, the single-winner version, but there is an effort at the national level to pass the Fair Representation Act (FRA) which would change the way we elect members of the US House of Representatives. FRA proposes using IRV for states with only one congressional representative and using STV with multi-member districts for states with two or more representatives. If FRA were applied to Colorado today, we would have two multi-member districts, one with 4 congressional representatives and the other with 3 representatives. FRA is a possible solution to gerrymandered districts! Consider asking your member of Congress to support FRA or, better yet, to co-sponsor FRA.

Confusion in the Media

Recently, as the media have tried to explain FRA, they insufficiently or incorrectly explain the tallying process, e.g., *The Economist*, July 14-20, and David Brooks, *NY Times*, June 1. As a League with a strong position on voting methods, it behooves us to get the details right, but keeping track of all the details of RCV is probably more than a regular Leaguer should be expected to do.

The main points for Leaguers to keep in mind are

1. The tallying of single-winner RCV (aka IRV) is different from that of multi-winner RCV (aka STV).
2. Multi-winner RCV promotes proportional representation and single-winner RCV does not.
3. Direct people to the Voting Methods Team webpage or to a Voting Methods Team member for more information.

RCV advocates across Colorado are pursuing citizen initiatives and referenda for municipalities to adopt RCV – primarily (or entirely?) IRV. As you engage in discussions on this topic, find out more about these efforts. In addition to more expressiveness via ranking candidates, would the advocates consider promoting proportional representation via STV for multi-member councils? Both IRV and STV are allowed in municipalities under Colorado House Bill 2008-1378.

Voting reform is a hot topic now and for the foreseeable future. The League is well positioned and has the expertise to be influential in voting reform efforts.

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