

MAKING
DEMOCRACY WORK®



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF COLORADO

Better Single-Winner Voting Methods

Vote
for
ONE!



Vote
on
ALL!



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Assisted by Diana Haskell

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Plurality Voting

The most prevalent voting method in the US

Also known as

- Winner-take-all
- First-past-the-post (FPTP)
- Choose-one voting

Vote for one option.

Joe Smith

John Citizen

Jane Doe

Fred Rubble

Mary Hill

Attribution: [Rspeer](#) at the [English language Wikipedia](#)

What is a Voting Method?

A **voting method** defines

- 1) the **form of the ballot**,
- 2) what constitutes a **valid vote**,
- 3) how to count or **tabulate** votes, and
- 4) an algorithm for **determining the outcome** of the election.

A voting method is not to be confused with an **election system**, which is concerned with whether or not to have early voting, all-mail elections, electronic or paper ballots, etc.

Plurality – “Clone” Example

2018 Indiana – GOP Primary for US Senator

Mike Braun 41.2% Wins!

Todd Rokita 30.0%

Luke Messer 28.8%



Cropped image from Braun campaign ad --
Image appeared on various media websites

Vote Splitting / Spoiler Effect



Chocolate Cake
19%



Brownie
36%



Lemon Cake
38%



Truffle
5%

2010 Maine Governor's Race



Libby Mitchell
Democratic



19%



Eliot Cutler
Independent



36%



Paul LePage
Republican



38%



Shawn Moody
Independent



5%

NPR's "The Math Guy" on Voting

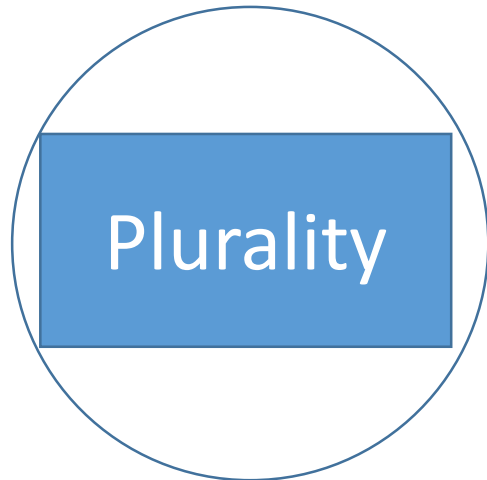
Keith Devlin, a Stanford University mathematician:

“Voting is not like physics or engineering where we have to do what the math tells us. Rather, it is one of those cases where **we can make the math work for us**—to use it to achieve our own ends as a society. The voters will make the selection, but **the math we choose can shape the kind of government we get.**”

3 Main Ways to Vote ... & Examples

Option: add a later runoff, possibly with a different voting method

Plurality



Rank Order



Rating



Candidates

Brownie



Chocolate Chip Cookie



Lemon Bar



Plurality Ballot

Vote for ONE.

brownie

chocolate chip cookie

lemon bar

Approval Voting Ballot

Vote for ONE OR MORE.

brownie

chocolate chip cookie

lemon bar

Score (or Range) Voting Ballot

Rate EACH candidate.

No support = 0. Maximum support = 3.

brownie	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>
chocolate chip cookie	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>
lemon bar	<input type="text" value="0"/>	<input type="text" value="1"/>	<input type="text" value="2"/>	<input type="text" value="3"/>

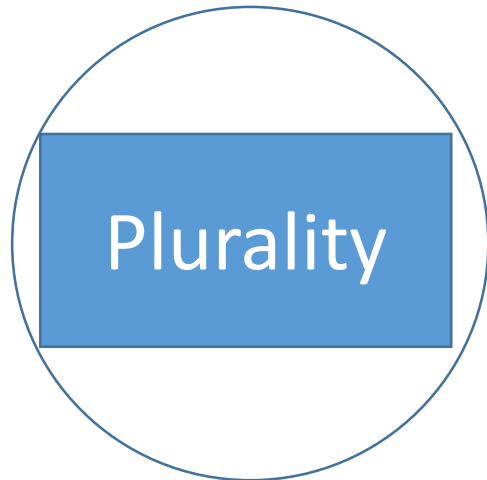
Instant-Runoff (or Single-Winner RCV) Ballot

Rank EACH candidate.

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
brownie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
chocolate chip cookie	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
lemon bar	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Questions?

Plurality



Rank Order



Rating



Advantages for the Electorate

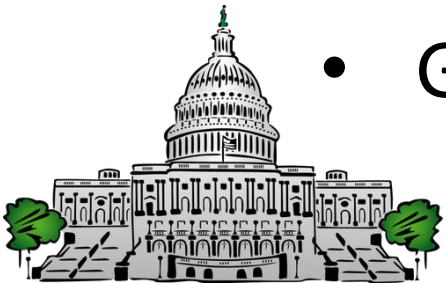
Feel freer to **vote sincerely** rather than tactically

- Avoid “throwing away” one’s vote
- Avoid splitting the vote between clone candidates

Express opinions better than choose-one plurality

- Government that reflects the voters’ preferences

Vote
on
ALL!

Voter, Candidate and Ballot Considerations



- More pressure on **voter** to research all the candidates
- May reduce the influence of dark money in **campaigns**
- Possible pressure on **candidates** to forego negative campaigning and/or form alliances
- “Complex” **ballots** may lead to more spoilage
- Process for auditing election results (**ballots**) may change



Change
is
Hard!



Which voting method is best for your elections?

What is your **goal**?

- Rating – preference data on all candidates, but no majority?
- Ranking – get a “majority,” but lower rankings not considered?

Ease of **implementation**

- Ballot redesign may require more text and new audit process
- Precinct countable? Extra time to tabulate ballots?

Cost **savings** – example: eliminate later run-off elections

Education efforts to ensure successful elections. Define “success.”

Should LWVUS Adopt a Voting Methods Position?

- Many states and local Leagues already have a Voting Methods position.
- Many jurisdictions (municipal, county, state and even federal) are considering changing from plurality. **The League advocates for change based on its positions.**

Additional question: If so ...

Should a LWVUS position specify a *particular* voting method?

Democracy works best ...

... when everyone is participating
and heard.

LWVCO Voting Methods Position

*The League supports authorizing and implementing **alternatives to plurality voting that allow people to express their preferences more effectively**. The League supports 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. 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.*

**A voting method encourages "honest" voting when it allows voters to meaningfully support all their preferred candidates, rather than leading them to either not support their favorite or "tactically" indicate a higher preference for a candidate who is not their favorite.*

LWVCO Voting Methods Position

(continued)

Considerations:

- ***Some voting methods are intended for single-winner elections, others for multi-winner elections. It is important that the intended use of a voting method match its actual application. Multi-winner voting methods can promote proportional representation which fosters diversity of our elected officials.***

Examples

Elect One

- *governor (Maine primary, 2018)*
- *judge (North Carolina, 2010)*
- *mayor (San Francisco)*
- *city council by ward (Santa Fe)*

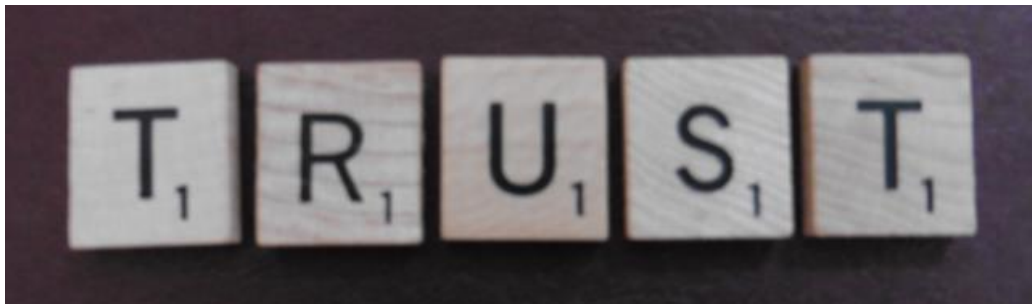
Elect 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or ...

- *Congress (Montana, 1916)*
- *state legislature (AZ, WV, others)*
- *city council at-large (Cambridge)*
- *city boards (Minneapolis)*

LWVCO Voting Methods Position

(continued)

- ***Election officials should conduct post-election analysis to evaluate the voters' usage of the voting method and the election's reflection of voters' stated preferences. There should be sufficient data transparency – for example, access to ballot records in anonymous form – for an independent analysis to be conducted by other interested groups.***



Action Kit and More Information

Website: lwvbc.org → Teams at Work → Voting Methods Team

Action Kit for “going out on the road” includes

**** poster***

**** tri-fold pamphlets***

**** ballots***

Other Resources

**** study packet leading to position***

**** FAQ video: Voting Methods 101***

**** slides from various presentations***

**** much more!***