Two Shortcomings of Many Multi-Member Board Elections

In most US multi-winner elections when there are two or more seats to fill on a council or board and many candidates vying for those seats, a voter may only give a single vote to each favored candidate up to the number of seats to fill. This <u>limited choice</u> often causes

- **Tactical Voting** instead of Expressive Voting
- **Underrepresentation** of sizable groups or ideas
  A lack of diverse viewpoints can lead to distrust, disgust and apathy among the underrepresented part of the electorate.

Members of some boards are elected via <u>single-winner district elections</u>. However, geographic location does not always determine voter interests. Changing from single-winner to multi-winner elections helps eliminate

- **Gerrymandering**
- **Uncontested and Uncompetitive Elections**

Multi-winner elections can promote proportional representation.

Proportional representation is the concept that one or more characteristics of a population are proportionally reflected in an elected body.

Proportional voting methods enable sizable communities-of-interest to elect candidates who better represent their views.

How Expressive Multi-Winner Voting Methods Achieve Proportional Representation

- Voters weight candidates differently.

- The tabulation process weights each vote according to a prescribed formula.

> *"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. …*
>
> *Multi-winner voting methods can promote proportional representation which fosters diversity of our elected officials."*
>
> *- Excerpt from the LWV of Colorado position on Voting Methods*

MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK®

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lwvbc.org → Teams at Work → Voting Methods**

Interested in better <u>single-winner</u> voting methods? See our single-winner voting methods pamphlet.

Does your locally elected board or council represent your community?

Do you live in a gerrymandered district?

Better
Multi-Winner
Voting Methods

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF BOULDER COUNTY

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Cumulative Voting

For a five-winner contest, you have five votes to distribute among candidates, including the option of giving all five to one candidate. The five candidates with the most votes win.

Two versions of cumulative voting ballots:

Points *(Used in local elections in more than 5 states)*
Fill in up to 5 ovals.
[An actual ballot lists each candidate 5 times.]

●○○○○   lemon bar
○●●○○   chocolate cake
○○○○○   lemon meringue pie
○○○○○   chocolate chip cookie
○○○●●   vanilla custard
○○○○○   chocolate malt
○○○○○   vanilla ice cream
Result: lemon bar = 1, chocolate cake = 2, vanilla custard = 2

Even and Equal *(Used for Peoria, IL city council)*
Fill in up to 5 ovals.

●   lemon bar
●   chocolate cake
○   lemon meringue pie
○   chocolate chip cookie
●   vanilla custard
○   chocolate malt
○   vanilla ice cream
Result: lemon bar = chocolate cake = vanilla custard = $5/3 = 1\,2/3$

Single Transferable Vote (STV)

You rank the candidates: 1 for your first choice, 2 for your second choice and so on. Any candidate receiving the threshold number of votes is elected. (The threshold depends on the number of seats to fill – if 5 seats, then the threshold is about 17% of the vote.)

One or more candidates may win outright in the first round. Otherwise, candidates may receive transferred votes from ballots whose first choice received the fewest number of votes and was therefore eliminated or from ballots whose first choice received surplus votes over the threshold. The elimination-and-transfer process continues in sequential rounds until all seats are filled.

STV is one version of multi-winner Ranked Choice Voting. In the 1900s more than 20 US cities used STV. Cambridge, Minneapolis, and Eastpointe (MI) now use STV. The Fair Representation Act *proposes multi-member congressional districts with STV.*

STV Ballot
Rank the candidates in order of preference.

1 2 ● 4 5 6 7   lemon bar
1 ● 3 4 5 6 7   chocolate cake
1 2 3 ● 5 6 7   lemon meringue pie
1 2 3 4 5 6 ●   chocolate chip cookie
● 2 3 4 5 6 7   vanilla custard
1 2 3 4 ● 6 7   chocolate malt
1 2 3 4 5 ● 7   vanilla ice cream
Result: Vanilla custard receives this ballot's vote. During the tabulation, if custard receives the fewest votes, then this ballot's vote goes to chocolate cake, or if cake has been eliminated, then to lemon bar.

Mixed-Member Proportional Representation (MMP)

You get two ballots – choose a candidate for the single-winner district seat and choose a political party for overall representation. After the district candidates are elected, the at-large seats are allocated to parties in a compensatory manner to achieve more proportional representation.

Forms of MMP are used in countries in 5 continents.

Sample District MMP Ballot
Vote for one CANDIDATE.   Vote for one PARTY.
○   lemon bar   ●   Lemon
○   chocolate cake   ○   Chocolate
●   vanilla custard   ○   Vanilla
Result: This voter wants the Lemon Party to have more representation but is supporting vanilla custard as the district representative.

Multi-Winner Approval Voting
Vote for ALL the candidates you support regardless of the number of seats to fill. Proportional Approval Voting, Sequential Proportional Approval Voting (SPAV) and Satisfaction Approval Voting use weights in different ways to maximize satisfaction among voters. A fourth version, Approval Block Voting, is similar to the most common US multi-winner voting method and does not promote proportional representation.

SPAV was used in the early 1900s in Sweden. The other proportional versions were developed in this century.