

## Problems with Some 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 limited choice often causes:

- **Tactical Voting** instead of Expressive Voting
- **Underrepresentation** - Sizeable communities can have no representation.

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 single-winner district elections. However, geographic location does not always determine voter interests. Changing from single-winner to multi-winner elections helps eliminate

- **Gerrymandering** which also leads to lack of representation.

Multi-winner elections can promote proportional representation.

**PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR)**  
is the concept that one or more characteristics of a population are proportionally reflected in an elected body.

**PR voting methods enable a sizable community group to elect candidates who better represent the group's views.**

Some voting methods are much better at empowering voters and letting voters be heard. The following pages give examples of some better multi-winner voting methods.

## Using Expressive Multi-Winner Voting Methods to Achieve Proportional Representation (PR)

- Voters may score or rank candidates in some voting methods to achieve PR.
- In other methods the tabulation process results in better community representation.

*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

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**Interested in better single-winner 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?**

Discover ...

**Better**  
**Multi-Winner**  
**Voting Methods**

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF BOULDER COUNTY

## 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 ballots:

#### Points (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

Results: lemon bar = 1, chocolate cake = 2, vanilla custard = 2

#### Even and Equal (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

Results: lemon bar = chocolate cake = vanilla custard =  $\frac{5}{3}$  or  $1\frac{2}{3}$

## 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 the seats are filled.

*STV is also known as multi-winner Ranked Choice Voting. In the 1900s more than 20 US cities used STV. Cambridge and Minneapolis now use STV. The 2017 Fair Representation Act proposed 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

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   |

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 (PR).

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