

## **LWVMC ALTERNATIVE ELECTION STUDY**

### **COUNTING VOTES SO EVERY VOTE COUNTS Part 1**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Here in Montgomery County, Maryland, the winner of an election between two candidates is the one who receives the most votes. If there is more than one seat to be filled, it's the four top vote-getters (as in at-large County Council positions) or the three top vote-getters (as in electing delegates to the General Assembly from a particular legislative district). Determining a winner in this way is a plurality system. It is sometimes referred to as "winner takes all" or "first past the post." But there are others ways to format ballots and tabulate votes to determine who wins an election. Some folks think these ways are better -- the person elected has the support of a majority of the voters. Others find these methods confusing and too costly. At our annual meeting last spring, LWVMC adopted a study to look at some of the Alternative Election Methods and determine whether we think they would be a good idea for Montgomery County.

#### **BACKGROUND**

How did members develop an interest in this topic? Leagues in Minnesota, Washington state, Florida, Arizona, Vermont, New York, Ohio and California have studied and endorsed at least one alternative election method. Alternative election methods have been a frequent topic of discussion at recent LWVUS conventions. Local governments in San Francisco CA, Burlington VT and Cary NC have implemented instant runoff voting, which is one alternative election method. In our own back yard, Takoma Park adopted a charter amendment in 2005 (by a margin of 84%) to elect the city's mayor and city council members using instant runoff voting. The state of Louisiana has been using instant runoff voting for some overseas absentee ballots for federal and state elections since at least the early 1990s. Arkansas and North and South Carolina have recently implemented this option for their overseas voters.

In its 2005 testimony before the Montgomery County Charter Review Commission, Fair Vote - The Center for Voting in Democracy urged the Commission to "move beyond the false dichotomy of single member districts versus at-large, winner-take-all districts" and consider adopting a "proportional voting solution." In October of 2007 Council member Marc Elrich also suggested that the Charter Review Commission look at alternate voting methods.

#### **STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY**

Our study committee decided that the best way to introduce the topic to LWVMC members is to have them actually experience voting with some of these alternative election methods. Therefore, Unit meetings on the topic will be presented in two parts. This month demonstrations or simulations of Instant Runoff Voting, Cumulative/Weighted Voting, Limited Voting and Single Transferable Voting will be presented. In the spring, members will receive a more comprehensive Fact Sheet that describes the history, benefits and drawbacks and current implementation of various systems. After discussion at Unit meetings, members will be presented with questions about alternative voting methods and asked to come to consensus.

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Because there are numerous systems to choose from, the committee used the following criteria to select the ones to demonstrate and propose for review in the study. These criteria will also be used by League members in their discussions in the spring, when they will be asked to determine which, if any, of the alternative election methods have value to the election process in Montgomery County.

## **CRITERIA FOR EVALUATION OF AN ELECTION METHOD**

The system should:

- Produce representation that fairly reflects community sentiment.
- Maximize the power of each voter's vote.
- Ensure minority views and interests have some influence in selecting elected officials.
- Promote openness and responsiveness between candidates and constituents.
- Raise the level of political campaigns by encouraging a focus on the issues and discouraging negative campaigning.
- Increase voter participation by providing a broader range of candidates and more civil campaigns.

The system should be:

- Easy for the voter to understand and use.
- Feasible to implement.

## **VOTING SYSTEMS**

The systems that will be presented at the December Unit meetings are listed below.

### **Instant Runoff Voting**

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) can be used when electing a single candidate for a particular office such as County Executive. It is an alternate way of obtaining a majority of support for a candidate without holding an additional election. On a ballot for an IRV election, voters will be asked to rank the candidates according to preference. If no candidate obtains a majority of votes (more than 50% of the votes cast), the candidate receiving the least number of votes is eliminated from the race. The second choice votes on the ballots of the voters who voted for the last place candidate are then distributed to the remaining candidates. If no candidate has garnered more than 50% of the votes after receiving those second choice votes, the process is repeated. The candidate with the least number of votes is eliminated and their second choice votes are distributed to the remaining candidates. If their second choice candidate is no longer in the race, their third choices are distributed. The process is repeated until a majority of the voters have selected a winner.

### **Single Transferable Voting**

This method is used when voters are electing more than one candidate to a legislative body such as the County Council or General Assembly. The steps for completing the Single Transferable Vote (STV) ballot are the same as in Instant Runoff Voting. The main difference is that instead of 51% as the threshold for winning a race, the winning percentage is based on the number of seats to be filled. For example, in a contest where four seats are to be filled, a candidate would need to have one vote more than one-fifth or 20% of all the votes to be declared a winner; this is the minimum number that four, and not five, candidates can achieve.

**Cumulative/Weighted Voting**

This method is also used for electing more than one candidate to a legislative body. In cumulative voting, voters cast as many votes as there are seats. But unlike winner-take-all systems, voters are not limited to giving only one vote to a candidate. Instead, they can put multiple votes on one or more candidates. For instance, in an election for a five-seat body, voters could choose to give one vote each to five candidates, two votes to one candidate and three to another, or all five votes to a single candidate. If members of a minority group work together and get behind a single candidate, "plumping" all of their votes on him or her, they can hope to get someone elected, even if they only make up a small share of the population.

**Limited Voting**

This is another way to elect multiple members to a legislative body. In limited voting, voters cast fewer votes than there are seats to be elected. The purpose is to ensure that a majority group can control the majority of seats, but not all seats. The greater the difference between the number of seats to be filled and the number of votes each voter may cast, the greater the opportunities for more diverse representation.

**CONCLUSION**

There are a number of other election methods that the committee chose not to include in the study because they did not meet our criteria, or they were more applicable to electing legislative bodies where multiple parties are vying for power. In our two-party dominated system, such election methods as open and closed Party List Systems and Mixed-Members Systems don't make much sense. The committee also chose to leave the Approval System out of this study. In the Approval System, voters may say *Yay* or *Nay* to as many candidates on the ballot as they like. For example, if 11 candidates are running for four at-large County Council seats, a voter could say *Yay* to seven of the candidates. The results are counted the same as in a plurality election.

Because the League of Women Voters has a strong commitment to representative democracy, we owe it to ourselves to become more familiar with these alternate voting methods. Whether or not we believe they will be an improvement to our current system will be determined in Unit meetings in the spring. In order to fully understand how these systems work from the perspective of the voter, you are strongly encouraged to attend a December Unit meeting and cast your votes.

This Fact Sheet was prepared by the Alternative Election Method Study and Making Democracy Work Committee members Nancy Soreng and Barbara Sander.

## COUNTING VOTES SO EVERY VOTE COUNTS – PART II

### INTRODUCTION

At our annual meeting last spring, the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County, MD adopted a study to look at some of the “Alternative Election Methods” and determine whether we think they would be a good idea for Montgomery County. These methods change the ways that voters fill out their ballots and the ways that the votes are tabulated. As mentioned in the December 2007 Fact Sheet (available at [lwvmd.org/mont](http://lwvmd.org/mont)) Leagues in Minnesota, Washington State, Florida, Arizona, Vermont, New York, Ohio and California have studied and endorsed at least one alternative election method. Alternative election methods have been a frequent topic of discussion at recent LWVUS conventions, and caucuses are being scheduled for the June 2008 convention in Portland, OR.

Alternative election systems have growing support because they are seen by some as a way to make every person’s vote more meaningful and as a way to give minority opinions a greater say in legislative bodies. Others feel that they are too complicated and they like our current system. Fair Vote, also known as the Center for Voting and Democracy, promotes alternative voting systems nationwide. The center has presented testimony to the Montgomery County Charter Review Commission on the value of using an alternative voting system to elect the County Council, but at this time little interest has been generated at the county level. However, as mentioned in the December 2007 Fact Sheet, Takoma Park, MD adopted a charter amendment in 2005 (by a margin of 84%) to elect the city’s mayor and city council members using instant runoff voting.

At our December 2007 Unit meetings, members filled out ballots and watched how the results changed when voters cast their preferences for candidates using some of these alternative voting methods. The Instant Runoff Voting simulation showed how a candidate, under our current “winner take all” system, could be elected or nominated by a minority of the voters participating in the election. By transferring second and third choice votes, the original “minority” winner sometimes gained sufficient additional votes to win a majority of voters. Other times, someone new took over first place because the majority of the voters supported the previous second place candidate. The Cumulative/Weighted Voting simulation showed how a group of voters, who may be in the minority but have a strong preference for representation by a particular candidate, could have a better chance of getting that candidate elected to a multiple-position contest such as the County Council at-large race. The Limited Voting simulation also focuses votes on the candidates for whom voters have the strongest preferences. The Single Transferable Voting simulation gives voters the chance to rank their choices so that at the end of the counting, at least one of their chosen candidates may be a winner.

This Fact Sheet will describe those four systems in more detail and add one more, Approval Voting. At the end are consensus questions that we will be discussing at the May Unit meetings. The results of those discussions will shape the LWVMC position on alternative election methods to the Winner Take All method now in place.

### CRITERIA

As you are reading about these methods, please keep in mind the following criteria the committee used for evaluating them. An election system should:

- Produce representation that fairly reflects community sentiment.
- Maximize the power of each voter’s vote.

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- Ensure minority views and interests have some influence in selecting elected officials.
- Promote openness and responsiveness between candidates and constituents.
- Raise the level of political campaigns by encouraging a focus on the issues and discouraging negative campaigning.
- Increase voter participation by providing a broader range of candidates and more civil campaigns.

The system should be:

- Easy for the voter to understand and use.
- Feasible to implement.

### **OPTION A. INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING**

Instant Run-off Voting (IRV) is used to reach a single winner with support of a majority of the voters.

#### **How does it work?**

- Each voter may rank a candidate by preference: 1, 2, 3, etc.
- A computer scans and tabulates all ballots.
- If no candidate has a majority of votes on the first count, the candidate with the lowest number of first-choice votes is eliminated and the votes are transferred to the voters' second choices.
- The counting proceeds by sequentially eliminating candidates with the least number of votes and redistributing the votes to that voter's next choice.
- This process continues until one candidate has a winning majority.

**When was it conceived?** It has been used in various forms around the world since 1850.

**Where is it used?** Takoma Park municipal elections, San Francisco CA, Burlington VT, Cambridge MA, Vancouver WA, Aspen CO, Cary NC, Minneapolis MN, City of London U.K., Australia, Ireland, New South Wales, Bosnia, Fiji, overseas and military voters from Louisiana, Arkansas and South Carolina.

#### **What are the advantages of this system?**

- It ensures that a minority of voters can never defeat a candidate supported by a majority.
- It enables citizens to vote honestly according to their preferences and not because they view a candidate as more likely to win.
- It has the potential to maximize voter participation and available choices of candidates.
- It assures a more fair and accurate representation of the voters.
- It could reduce campaign costs and can eliminate the cost of a primary.
- It may lead to more informative and positive campaigns and promote issue-based campaigns.
- Third party candidates are more likely to get votes if the voter may cast a follow-up vote for another candidate; therefore, their first choice does not "spoil" the chances of their second choice.

**What are the drawbacks of this system?** This system is complex. Voter education is key to understanding this new method of voting. Ballot design would be quite different from what voters are accustomed to. The City of Takoma Park prepared voters with two separate mailings and had a video available on line for a cost of about \$3,500. This effort seemed to work because, according to a sample of voters questioned after the election, 88% of the voters knew this system would be implemented and ranked it as easy or very easy to use. However, Takoma Park is a small jurisdiction and educating the voters in the entire county would be more challenging.

The current touch screen voting machines used in Montgomery County are not compatible with this method of voting. Computer assisted optical scanning devices which have been mandated for elections in 2010 would have to be programmed with the correct tabulation software but could more easily be adapted to accommodate the Instant Run-off voting process.

## **OPTION B. APPROVAL VOTING**

Approval Voting can be used in multi-seat or single seat races.

### **How does it work?**

- Voters may vote yes or no (approve or disapprove) on as many candidates in a particular race as they wish.
- If there are seven candidates running for four seats, a voter may vote yes for all seven if they approve of them all, or yes on only one if just one is acceptable, or any number in between.
- It works the same for single seat or multiple seat races.
- In a multiple-seat race, such as County Council at large, the top four vote-getters would win (or three or two, depending on the number of seats on the ballot).
- In a single-seat race, whoever gets the most votes wins.

**When was it conceived?** It is a relatively new voting system that was independently conceived of by at least five different scholars in the 1970s. The name was coined by Robert J. Weber, Professor of Decision Sciences at Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University.

**Where is it used?** It is used to select the Secretary-General of the United Nations. It has also been used by many colleges and universities as well the National Academy of Sciences and other scientific and engineering societies.

### **What are the advantages of this system?**

- It ensures that the candidate or candidates who win are the most acceptable to the most voters and, therefore, the system has the potential to more strongly reflect community sentiment.
- It discourages negative campaigning because candidates will not want to alienate voters who may find them acceptable even though they are not the voter's favorite candidate. Attacking another candidate could result in not being included as one who is "acceptable" to voters that support the "attacked" candidate.
- It gives minority candidates a better chance to garner support.
- It is easy to administer, explain and tabulate.
- In primary elections where multiple candidates are acceptable to voters, they can vote according to their preferences rather than feeling compelled to vote strategically by voting for the person who can win in the general election.
- It may improve voter turnout if voters feel that election results more truly represent public sentiment.
- Our current touch screen system for voting and tabulation could allow this option. It would also be compatible with any software that counts votes for plurality races such as the software that will likely be purchased for the 2010 elections, when an optical scan system will be in use.

### **What are the drawbacks of this system?**

- It does not necessarily allow the majority to rule.
- It does not allow the voters to rank their choices, so it does not guarantee that every voter will have a vote that counts.

- It can be confused with “yea” or “nay” voting that is done in retention elections for judges, even though in retention elections the judges are unopposed.
- Voters would have to be educated about the process in order to understand why they are being allowed to vote for more candidates than can possibly win.

### **OPTION C. SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTING or PROPORTIONAL VOTING**

Single Transferable Voting (STV) is a form of preferential voting used when electing multiple candidates, i.e. County Council at Large, House of Delegates.

#### **How does it work?**

- Each voter may rank a candidate by preference: 1, 2, 3, etc.
- A computer scans and tabulates all ballots. If no candidate has a critical majority of votes on the first count, the candidate with the lowest number of first choice votes is eliminated and the votes are transferred to the voters' second choices. The counting proceeds by sequentially eliminating candidates with the least number of votes and redistributing them to that voter's next choice. Critical majority = (total # of votes) divided by (# of candidates+1), then add 1.
- This process continues until one candidate has a critical majority.

**When was it conceived?** It was first proposed in 1821, but wasn't used in an election until 1855 in Denmark. This voting system has seen a series of relatively modest periods of usage and disusage throughout the world; however, today it is seeing increasing popularity and proposed implementation as a method of electoral reform. STV has been used in many local, regional and national electoral systems, as well as in various other types of bodies around the world.

**Where is it used?** STV is used in local and regional elections in Australia, New Zealand, Scotland, Northern Ireland, Republic of Ireland, Tasmania and Malta. In the U.S. it is currently used in Cambridge, MA, Takoma Park, MD and for electing the New York City School Board.

STV enjoyed some popularity in the United States in the first half of the 20th century. Twenty-two American cities have used STV for local elections, including Cincinnati and Cleveland, OH and Sacramento, CA. New York City adopted STV in 1936 as a means of breaking the Tammany Hall corruption. It was used there for five elections in 1937 to 1945. Reform opponents regularly challenged STV after its successes. Only two of the first 24 repeal efforts in cities around the nation were successful. However, after World War II, harsh campaigns against STV were successfully carried out after African Americans and political minorities, such as Communists and urban Republicans, began winning seats, even though they only constituted a minority group in government.

#### **What are the advantages of this system?**

- It ensures that a minority of voters can never defeat a candidate supported by a majority because a candidate must reach a threshold of voter approval in order to be elected.
- STV is fair because it produces proportional results.
- It provides voters with more choice and more control.
- It strengthens local representation.
- STV is designed to make every vote count.
- It encourages third-party participation in elections.
- It may increase voter turnout

STV has long been advocated by political scientists as one of the most attractive electoral systems. It

enables citizens to honestly vote according to their consciences and not because they view a candidate as more likely to win. It also requires candidates to meet a numerical threshold in order to win. Minorities, in particular, can get a number of candidates elected, roughly proportional to their numbers in the electorate, if they rank these candidates at the tops of their lists. Also, if a person's vote does not help elect his or her first choice, it can still be counted, preserving that person's electoral power.

Third party/minority candidates are more likely to get first choice votes if the voter understands that if that candidate does not win, their next choice will be tallied. Therefore, their first choice does not "spoil" the chances of their second choice.

A voter can choose a "long shot" candidate as their first choice and still know that if that candidate is eliminated, his or her second, third or even fourth choice will be counted.

### **What are the drawbacks of this system?**

- Tabulating STV results is complicated.
- Voters do not always understand the transfer procedure.
- It would require public education to help voters understand how to mark ballots.
- The current touch screen voting machines used in Montgomery County are not compatible with this method of voting.

Computer assisted optical scanning devices which have been mandated for elections in 2010 would have to be programmed with the correct tabulation software, but could more easily be adapted to accommodate the STV voting process.

### **OPTION D. CUMULATIVE VOTING**

Cumulative voting may be used in districts that heavily favor one party or demographic group. It provides a means for a minority party/group to have a certain percentage of representation. Cumulative Voting can be used in a multi-seat election, such as the County Council at Large races.

### **How does it work?**

In cumulative voting, voters cast as many votes as there are open positions. Voters may "cumulate" their votes across candidates. So, voters are not restricted to a single vote per candidate. If there are five open positions, a voter receives five votes and may give all five votes to a single candidate or distribute those votes among multiple candidates.

### **When was it conceived?**

Several places in the US adopted cumulative voting in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Where is it used?**

Today, the town of Peoria, IL elects its city council via cumulative voting, as do multiple cities in Texas and Alabama. A number of Alabama, Texas and South Dakota school boards also use cumulative voting, as well as the West Virginia Charter Review Commission and Alabama County Commission.

### **What are the advantages of this system?**

- The cumulative voting system reflects more minority representation than a winner-take-all system and thus could elect a range of candidates that represent community sentiment.
- It could encourage a focus on issues and discourage negative campaigning.

- Because it gives more opportunity for electing persons who represent a minority opinion or group, it could encourage a broader range of candidates.
- It is an easy system for voters to understand.

**What are the drawbacks of this system?**

- For the system to work, communities have to be well organized and understand strategic voting.
- Such voting, in turn, may distort voters' true preferences, if they feel they must give more votes to one candidate rather than splitting them among two well-liked candidates.
- It may elect candidates who are not supported by a majority of voters.
- It would require education for voters to understand their options for casting their votes.
- It would require special ballots and tabulation software.

**OPTION E. LIMITED VOTING**

The Limited Voting Method (LV) is used in a multi-seat election, such as those for multi-member or at-large districts.

**How does it work?**

- The voter is allowed "fewer" votes than the number of seats being filled. For example, in a race where there are five open seats, the voter may be allowed only three votes.
- Voters may not cast more than one vote per candidate.
- Ballots are counted in the same way as plurality voting, in which the candidate with the most votes wins even though the total percentage won may be less than 50%.

**When was it conceived?** This system was used between 1867 and 1885 in the United Kingdom for some Parliamentary constituencies. In the United States this system grew out of the Civil War, when it was feared that one party would dominate the elections. It was also used in Spain and Portugal in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

**Where is it used?** The LV system is widely used in municipal at-large elections within the United States. It is currently used in Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Alabama, Georgia, New York and North Carolina.

**What are the advantages of this system?**

- The LV system is intended to keep the dominant party or faction from capturing all the seats in an at-large election.
- As the difference between the number of votes allotted and the number of seats to be filled increases, the opportunity for more diverse representation increases.

However, this result is not guaranteed under LV. Inclusion of minority groups largely depends on the number of votes granted to each voter compared to the number of vacant seats. The smaller the number of votes granted to each voter, the greater the chance that minority candidates may win some seats. The same is true for third party candidates. This could encourage greater participation/turnout by voters in minority parties and ethnic groups if they believe their vote will actually count and result in the election of at least one candidate from their party or group.

- Limited voting procedures are easy to explain to voters.

Our current touch screen system for voting and tabulation could allow this option. It would also be compatible with any software that counts votes for plurality races such as the software that will likely be purchased for the 2010 elections when an optical scan system will be in use.

**What are the drawbacks of this system?**

- Although the LV system is intended to increase diverse representation in multi-seat contests, it does not guarantee that minority parties or groups will be fully represented in proportion to their voting strength.
- It is a form of "bullet voting" which can be perceived as unfair and manipulative.
- Voters may be dissatisfied in being limited in the number of votes they can cast compared to the number of open seats.
- There would be some cost for a voter education campaign and perhaps some cost to adjust the current software on the voting machines, but these should be small since votes under LV are counted in the same way as the current plurality system.

**IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS**

If the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County adopts a position in favor of one or more of the alternative election methods, what would be the next steps for using the position for advocacy? Although the voters of Montgomery County may approve charter amendments to change the structure of county government, state law controls the actual process of voting. Accordingly, any change in the method of counting votes, except in municipal elections, would require the approval of the Maryland General Assembly and the issuing of implementing regulations by the state Board of Elections. Therefore, we could only use our position to ask local leaders to work at the state level for such a change. However, we could encourage LWVMD to adopt a study like ours so that the LWVMC and other Leagues could request local enabling legislation authorizing their county or the City of Baltimore to implement an alternative election method. A state study could also develop positions on electing state officials such as the governor and members of the General Assembly.

**CONCLUSION**

The League has long been concerned about the level of participation in elections. Local elections tend to draw less voter interest than national elections. Would changing the way our votes are cast and counted increase voters' confidence that their votes really mean something? If candidates knew that attacking fellow candidates could cost them a "second choice" vote and therefore the election, would they be more civil in their campaigning? Only a few of the 2006 House of Delegates primary races and none of the County Council at Large primary or general races were won with a winning threshold of votes. If such a threshold were required using one of these alternative methods, we would probably have different members serving on the County Council and in the House of Delegates.

Does the public desire a change in the election process? The 2006 Board of Education At Large and District 5 races produced majority winners in the primary that were replicated in the general election. Do nonpartisan races really require the expense and time commitment of both a primary and general election if the election method produces a majority winner in one election?

Are voters willing to learn about these new systems and give them a chance? We will not really know the answers to these questions until enough jurisdictions begin using these alternate systems and there are data to evaluate the change. However, exit polling in San Francisco showed high acceptance of the changes and good to excellent understanding of the method.

Is the League of Women Voters of Montgomery County ready to promote these new systems to our local legislators and state League in order to find out?

**CONSENSUS QUESTIONS**

1. Which of the following goals or criteria are a) important in evaluating an election system; b) have no role in evaluating an election system or c) no consensus in unit. (NOTE: You may support as many or as few as you wish.)

- a. Produces representation that fairly reflects community sentiment. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Maximizes the power of each voter's vote. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Ensures minority view and interests have some influence in selecting elected officials. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Promotes openness and responsiveness between candidates and constituents. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Raises the level of political campaigns by encouraging a focus on the issues and discourages negative campaigning. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Increases voter participation by providing a broader range of candidates and more civil campaigns. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- g. Is easy for the voter to understand and use. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- h. Is feasible to implement. a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Of the criteria above that are selected as important, which, if any, are the most important? \_\_\_\_\_

3. We support the principles and operating procedures of the following election system(s) and find them a) acceptable b) not acceptable or c) no consensus. (NOTE: You may support as many or as few as you wish.)

- a. Instant Run-Off Voting a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Approval Voting a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Single Transferable Voting a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- d. Cumulative/Weighted Voting a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- e. Limited Voting a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_
- f. Winner Take All Voting (current system in use) a)\_\_\_\_\_ b)\_\_\_\_\_ c) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Of those election system(s) above you find acceptable, which, if any, are preferable? \_\_\_\_\_

5. We support a single election requiring a candidate to receive a majority of votes (using Instant Run Off) in order to be elected to the nonpartisan Board of Education, instead of both a primary and general election. The election should be concurrent with the general election.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

6. To fill vacancies in any county offices, when special elections are held, we support a single election requiring a candidate to receive a majority of votes (using Instant Run Off) instead of conducting both special political party primaries and a special general election.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

7. We support the purchase of election hardware and software that allows alternative ways of casting and counting ballots.

Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

This Fact Sheet was prepared by the Alternative Election Methods Study Committee members: Elaine Apter, Barbara Ditzler, Theresa Morgan, Sylvia Brown Olivetti, Barbara Sonnino, Nancy Soreng, Anne Marie Stanley, Ralph Watkins and Barbara Sanders, Chair.

## **RESULTING POSITIONS**

### **Election Criteria**

1. We believe it is important that election systems:
  - a) produce representation that reflects community sentiment,
  - b) help increase voter participation by encouraging a broader range of candidates and more civil campaigns and
  - c) are feasible to implement.
2. We also prefer election systems that:
  - a) are easy for the voter to understand, both in terms of how to vote and how their vote is counted,
  - b) help ensure minority views and interests have some influence in selecting elected officials,
  - c) help raise the level of political campaigns by encouraging a focus on the issues and discouraging negative campaigning,
  - d) maximize the power of each voter's vote and
  - e) help promote more openness and responsiveness between candidates and constituents.

### **Election Systems**

3. We support the option to use Instant Runoff Voting for single seat or executive office elections, both at the county and local level. This would require the winner to receive a majority of the votes cast.
  - a) To fill vacancies in any county offices, when special elections are held, we support a single election requiring a candidate to receive a majority of votes (using Instant Runoff Voting) instead of conducting both special political party primaries and a special general election.
  - b) In addition, we support using a single election, instead of both a primary and general, which requires a candidate to receive a majority of votes (using Instant Runoff Voting) in order to be elected to the nonpartisan Board of Education. The election should be concurrent with the general election.
4. We support the continued use of plurality voting system in our elections.
5. We do not support Limited Voting as an alternative voting method.

### **Election Equipment**

6. We believe all newly acquired voting equipment (hardware and software) for use in Montgomery County should allow alternative ways of casting and counting ballots and be usable for all county and municipal elections.