

Alternative Election Systems

Limited Voting - Voters either cast fewer votes than the number of seats, or parties nominate fewer candidates than there are seats. Winners are determined by totaling all votes cast. The greater the difference between the number of votes and the number of seats, the greater the opportunities for fair representation. Limited voting has been adopted recently in several North Carolina and Alabama localities and for decades has been used in many north-eastern municipalities.



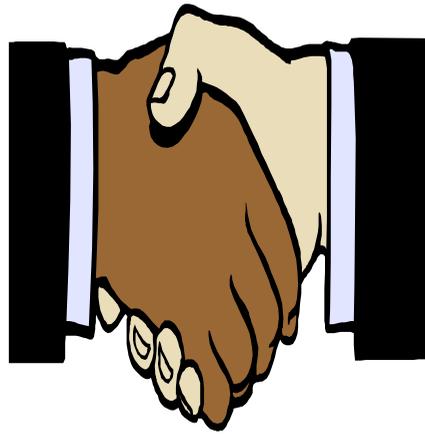
Cumulative Voting - Voters cast as many votes as there are seats, but are not limited to giving a candidate one vote. Instead, they can concentrate their votes on one or more candidates. Winning candidates are determined by a simple plurality of votes cast. Cumulative voting is used in Peoria (IL), Chilton County (AL) and more than fifty Texas localities, including Amarillo. It was used to elect the Illinois state assembly from 1870 to 1980.

Choice Voting - Voters rank (1st choice, 2nd choice, etc.) as many candidates as they wish. Candidates win by reaching a "victory threshold" of 1st-choice votes roughly equal to the number of votes divided by the number of seats. Ballots are transferred to next-choice candidates if a higher choice loses. These transfers facilitate coalition-building and participation. Used to elect the city council in Cambridge (MA), Choice voting is also called "single transferable vote" and "preference voting."

Instant Runoff Voting - Like choice voting, but only one candidate wins. Voters rank as many candidates as they wish (1, 2, 3 and so on). The candidate with the fewest first-choice votes loses. Ballots from this candidate are transferred to the next choice indicated on each ballot. This process continues until one candidate has a majority. IRV is under serious consideration in several states.

"Making Your Vote Count"

FULL REPRESENTATION



A joint project of

**The Southern Center For
Studies In Public Policy
&
The Center For Voting
and Democracy**



HOW CAN WE ENSURE MINORITY REPRESENTATION?

*In Texas, **cumulative voting** is real in 1999! With a population of more than 150,000 people, the Amarillo Independent School District became the nation's largest city to adopt cumulative voting. Attorneys from MALDEF, members of LULAC, and the NAACP joined in settling a voting rights suit as both African American and Latino voters will gain new opportunities for winning representation.*

*In Chilton County, Alabama, Bobby Agee in 1988 became the first African American elected to the Chilton County Commission even though blacks comprise only 12 percent of the population. Now serving his third term, his success is attributed to **cumulative voting** which was implemented the first year he was elected. Mr. Agee has been elected to chair the commission several times by his white colleagues.*

***Cumulative voting** was used to elect the Illinois State House of Representatives from 1870 to 1980. Harold Washington and Carol Moseley-Braun were elected to the state's house of representatives under this system. Governor George Ryan (R), Senate Minority Leader Emil Jones (D), and many others support its return.*

*In several Alabama areas, an increase in turnout and the success of women elected to city council and school boards are attributed to the implementation of **cumulative voting or limited voting** in those areas.*

*In 1993, Jamesville, North Carolina elected two black commissioners for the first time in the town's history (two out of five.) This is in proportion to the 40 percent black population in Jamesville. Several localities along North Carolina's coastal plain use **limited voting**. Limited voting was used as a remedy which did not distort district lines or create judicial challenges to the redistricting process.*

*In Cambridge, Massachusetts, Ken Reeves serves on the city council and is a former mayor of Cambridge. Cambridge, Massachusetts has used **choice voting** (also called the 'single transferable vote,' or 'preference voting') to elect city council members since 1941. Blacks comprise only 13 percent of the population in Cambridge but have had near-continuous representation on the city council and school committee for decades.*

*New York City uses **choice voting** for local school board elections. Under this system there is significant representation of blacks, Latinos, and Asian Americans. The Department of Justice refused to pre-clear a plan to modify the system because of minority voters' successes. Cincinnati, Ohio, used **choice voting** from 1925-1957. Blacks served on ten of the fifteen councils elected during this period and a number of reforms in racial policies were initiated.*

***Full Representation** seeks to provide education, training, and research on these systems to help policymakers, activists, and educators seek meaningful and realistic opportunities to increase minority representation and "make votes count!"*



Organization

The Southern Center for Studies in Public Policy (SCSPP) of Clark Atlanta University was created in 1968 as a mechanism for faculty and students to develop competence in the formulation, implementation, and evaluation of public policies that impact African Americans and low-income people in the South. The goal of the SCSPP is to help improve the relative condition of disadvantaged people by developing creative and innovative strategies, policies, and programs by utilizing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of public policy. The SCSPP has recently expanded in the areas of conducting political education and training programs for black elected officials, the business community, and civic and civil rights leaders. For example, SCSPP has helped to organize statewide coalitions for peoples' agendas, conducted seminars/workshops to form neighborhood environmental partnerships, and used national surveys on alternatives to single member electoral systems. Short-term training programs have been conducted for non-governmental organizations, elected government officials and administrators in-country and in the U.S.

The Center for Voting and Democracy studies and provides information on how voting systems affect participation, governance, and representation.

We specialize in redistricting models and the broad range of proportional representation systems that allow more voters to elect candidates of their choice. We also advocate reforming elections for one-seat offices to promote majority rule and more participation.

The Center's mission is founded on the belief that our voting system can be reformed at all levels of government in order to increase vitality in our democracy, ensure fairer representation of our society's diversity in elected bodies, and assist local, state, and national governments in their efforts toward solving the complex issues facing our nation.

CVD has a comprehensive website and a wide array of public education materials, provides legal assistance in voting rights cases, and holds workshops in communities and at conferences around the country.

Full Representation

Full Representation is a collaborative project of the Southern Center For Studies in Public Policy and The Center for Voting and Democracy. In 2001 the reapportionment/redistricting of legislative bodies will occur at the state and local levels, and the lines will be drawn for Congress, state legislatures, county commissions, city councils and school boards. Since the Supreme Court decisions in *Shaw v. Reno* (1993) and *Miller v. Johnson* (1995), which established that race could not be used as the primary criterion in redistricting and reapportionment, black elected officials have become more interested in exploring alternatives to single member districts.

The principle of "full representation" voting systems—also called "proportional rep-

resentation" - is a powerful one: the right of decision belongs to a majority, but the right of representation to all. Proportional representation systems allow groupings of voters to elect a fair share of candidates. Gaining more than half of the popular vote wins a majority of the seats, but not all. One-fifth of the vote wins one in five seats rather than none. Proportional representation means representative democracy.

Full Representation is a broad-based program aimed at three major goals: 1) to provide an effective education/training program for black elected officials and community/civil rights leaders in the South and a few other selected states on alternatives to the single member district election system, 2) to develop a network of organizations ranging from **Historically Black Colleges and Universities to the Congressional Black Caucus, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and the National Organization of Negro Women, and the National Organization of Black County Officials to the NAACP and SCLC** and involve them in the 2001 redistricting process, and 3) to provide technical assistance to black elected officials and groups in developing redistricting/reapportionment plans at all levels of government. **Full Representation** will increase awareness of alternative election systems as a strategy/option to achieve minority political empowerment and fair representation for people of color.



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