

League of Women Voters positions on Ranked Voting Methods (IRV and Choice Voting)

ARIZONA

The League of Women Voters of Arizona believes in the election system principle of greater vote representation. The LWVAZ maintains the hope that election system reform that provides a stronger voice for the greatest number of voters should have a positive effect on voter participation. Therefore, the LWVAZ:

- Supports changing the present election systems so that they more accurately represent the wishes of voters:
 - Adopting the Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) system for single seat races;
 - Adopting proportional representation for multi-seat races, specifically Ranked Choice Voting.
- Believes that education of the voting public is important to election systems.
- Supports giving Arizona voters the option of more choice among election systems.

Consensus 2005, Amended 2008

CALIFORNIA

Election Systems Position

Support election systems for executive offices, both at the state and local levels, that require the winner to receive a majority of the votes, as long as the majority is achieved using a voting method such as Instant Runoff Voting, rather than a second, separate runoff election.

Adopted 2001; Modified 2003; Readopted at last convention.

FLORIDA

Following statewide local League consensus meetings, the League of Women Voters of Florida announced a new Election Law, Voting Process position making the method of instant runoff voting a recommended alternative to plurality voting.

MASSACHUSETTS

VOTING SYSTEMS

GOAL: Voting systems should be easy to use, administer and understand, encourage high voter turnout, encourage real discussion on issues, promote minority representation, and encourage candidates to run.

When electing someone to a single executive office at the state level, such as governor or attorney general, including primary and general elections, the voting system should require the winner to obtain a majority of the votes.

The League supports instant runoff voting. Cost and complexity make two-round runoff not acceptable.

Adopted 2005

MINNESOTA

Position on Alternative Voting Systems:

Alternative Voting Systems: Support of the option to use Instant Runoff Voting to elect State or Local Officials in single seat elections. LWVMN also supports the continued use of the plurality voting system in our elections. The LWVMN Board reserves the right to decide the appropriateness of legislation proposing to replace the plurality voting system with the Instant Runoff System at the state level. LWVMN strongly supports the right of local governments and municipalities to choose Instant Runoff Voting for their own elections. Voters need to understand how votes in an election are tabulated and how a candidate actually wins an election. If a change in elections occurs, LWVMN strongly supports adequate voter education. LWVMN does not support Approval, Borda Count, or Condorcet as alternative voting systems.

NORTH CAROLINA

IRV Endorsement:

In accordance with the League of Women Voters' position of promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, the LWFVNC will support legislation that assures that the candidate preferred by a majority of voters wins the election.

Specifically, the LWFVNC will support instant runoff voting (IRV) for all statewide and local elections.

Adopted: May 31, 2008.

SOUTH CAROLINA

11. Adopting election systems that ensure better proportional representation of the varied segments of our voting population, within South Carolina, by city, county or statewide, as is appropriate. Our present “winner-take-all” system in many instances fails to achieve a goal of fair representation of minorities and women. Most of the world’s major democracies use a form of proportional representation, and we endorse this opportunity for the following reasons:

- a. To achieve better election and/or influence for minorities and women in proportion to their numbers in the population.
- b. To lessen election costs, in part by eliminating costly runoff elections.
- c. To eliminate redistricting and its frequent abuse through gerrymandering.
- d. To lessen the advantages now in place for incumbent candidates over new office-seekers.
- e. To lessen polarization among segments of the population.
- f. To increase voter turnout and decrease voter cynicism.
- g. To encourage election campaigns based on issues rather than personal attacks.
- h. To promote a greater opportunity for the voices of third party candidates.

Continued support for the League’s one-person, one-vote position, with added emphasis on the right of each community to develop its own election system, after careful examination of the demography of its community. Systems which may be considered include Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), Limited Voting, Cumulative Voting, and others. Of these, IRV has been used in various states and localities, and is being introduced into various election districts. It is likely to be the most effective and widely accepted new system.

The actions supported below speak to local elections only because it is unrealistic to consider them at a statewide level before actual local practice has taken hold so that the public may be aware of the advantages of a new system, as well as its simplicity in practice. In order to seek the method most suitable for the local population, we recommend that the local League determine whether a form of proportional voting would benefit the community in so far as providing more equitable elected representation and if the result is affirmation, proceed as follows:

- a. Determine what alternative election system would be desirable to achieve the above goals.
- b. Engage in a concerted voter-education process within the community so as to gain community understanding and support.
- c. Work with the city or county council to change their respective election methods to incorporate at-large elections, as well as a selected alternative election system, either through Council vote or by voter referendum.

- d. Work with legislators to change school board election methods. (Any agreement to change the voting method will require subsequent approval of the US Justice Department.)
- e. Provide continuing voter education to enhance public acceptance and ease of voting under a new election system and work with County Election officials to ensure successful execution at the first election under a new system.

Background/Action: A study of alternative election systems was passed at the LWVSC 2003 convention. The number 11 support position was adopted by the state board at its March 2005 meeting. In 2007, with completion of a two-year study of electronic voting in SC, Section 9.f. was amended and Section 12 was added.

VERMONT

CONSENSUS ON INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING (IRV):

In accordance with the LWV's position of promoting political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government, the LWVVT will support legislation that assures that the candidate preferred by a majority of voters wins the election.

Specifically, the LWVVT will support instant runoff voting (IRV) for all statewide Elections.

Adopted: 1999

Position on Redistricting and Voting Methods:

The emphasis on geographic representation in legislative bodies in the U.S. may be anachronistic. It is more important that voters be represented by elected officials who reflect their political views, than happen to live nearby. Single-seat winner-take-all elections, regardless of method of redistricting, elevate the representation of geography above political philosophy, and other priority voter self-identities.

It is impossible to redistrict single-seat districts in such a way as to promote BOTH competitive elections AND a highly representative delegation (as these two priorities are in inherent conflict in single-seat districts). Therefore,

The League of Women Voters of Vermont supports the principle of legislative districts using alternative voting methods, such as proportional representation in multi-seat districts, as a way of achieving both competitive elections and fair representation of both majorities and minorities within a district.

Adopted: 2008

WASHINGTON

POSITION IN BRIEF: Action to facilitate changes in the state constitution to achieve a representative and effective state legislature. Action to promote an informed electorate. Action to limit methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the election process. Action to support access for citizens to initiate or modify legislation through the initiative and referendum process. Action to protect the interests of all affected parties in considering the formation of new counties. Action to clarify in legislation the processes in county formation and to require that the entire county have the ability to vote on separation. Action to allow more options for alternative election systems that promote "representative-ness" such as proportional representation, citizen participation and accountability and a primary that is "open" and encourages minor party participation.

...The LWVWA adopted a two-year study, "An Evaluation of Major Election Methods and Selected State Election Laws," at the 1999 state convention in Spokane, WA. This study, completed in 2000, described a number of election systems in use throughout the world which could serve as alternatives to the system commonly used in the United States. Election methods dealing with both multimember and single-member races were described. The study provided a list of criteria by which election methods could be evaluated, and these criteria were ranked by League members, with representative-ness, citizen participation and accountability receiving top ranking. The term "representative-ness" was coined to signify the degree to which a legislative body reflects the demographic makeup of the state (mirrors the political preferences of the voters, including ethnic, racial, philosophic, or minorities) and also to signify protection of the right to representation for ethnic, racial, philosophic and other minorities. After reading and discussing the study, League members concluded that the State should enable jurisdictions in Washington to experiment with a variety of election methods.

...Recognizing the complexities of the topic of election methods, delegates at the 2001 LWVWA convention adopted a one-year continuation of the Election Methods study focusing on the three alternative election methods currently receiving considerable public attention:

- Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) for single winner offices (produces a majority vote winner.)
- Choice Voting (Single Transferable Voting) for representative bodies used to achieve proportional representation.
- Cumulative Voting (achieve semi-proportional representation)

An explanatory program was developed which utilized visual aids and mock voting using current voting methods as well as the three major alternative systems. This program was a great help in better understanding the relationship between the election method used and election results. Members are enthusiastic about sharing this program with the public and in seeing alternative election methods adopted at the state and local level...

The League of Women Voters of Washington:

- Supports state election laws allowing for more options for alternative election systems in governmental jurisdictions at both the state and local levels.
- Believes that consideration should be given, when evaluating election systems, to how well they promote "representative-ness", citizen participation and accountability.

- Supports adoption of election methods that produce proportional representation when electing representative government bodies such as councils, legislatures and Congress.
- Supports the concept of a majority vote requirement for winners of single offices such as mayor or governor, as long as it is achieved using a voting method such as the Instant Runoff Vote, rather than a second, separate runoff election.

Local Leagues

BERKLEY (CA)

“Instant runoff voting” should be used in all elections involving more than two candidates for a single position.

Adopted: 2000

OAKLAND (CA)

“Instant runoff voting” should be used in all elections involving more than two candidates for a single position.

Adopted: 2003