



Program for Representative Government

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The Program

Our nation's strength flows from its willingness to improve upon the American experiment. Seeking full representation through proportional voting has been central to FairVote's mission since 1992. Engaged in the long-term campaign to provide fair access to power too often denied by winner-take-all election methods, we seek to empower women, local communities, political, racial and ethnic minorities and indeed all voters by opening up the political process through proportional voting systems. This perspective is informed by a core belief: *the right to decide belongs to a majority, but the right to representation belongs to all.*

What's Wrong with Winner-Take-All Systems?

"Winner-take-all" describes voting systems characterized by single member districts and at-large elections where a slim majority of voters can control 100% of seats, leaving everyone else effectively without representation. This causes:

Severe under-representation of women, communities of color, third parties, young people, and major party backers living in areas dominated by another party.

"No-choice" elections in which one party has a lock on power due to partisan leanings and incumbency advantages. Nine in ten congressional races are not competitive, and more than a third of state legislative races have only one major party candidate. Voter turnout and political debate suffers.

Undervoting. Under at-large systems, voters who strongly support a candidate have a strong incentive to "bullet vote" (use only one of their votes), while majority voters can use their votes to win all representation. The principle of one-person, one-vote is violated both in the casting of votes and the effectiveness of votes.



Decreased voter turnout. With limited choice and little chance of influencing the outcome of an election under winner-take-all rules, many people will unsurprisingly choose not to participate.

Divisive campaigns that fail to address challenging issues and ignore entire constituencies. Under winner-take-all, there is no incentive to reach out to opponents or build cross-party support.

The Proportional Voting Solution

Proportional voting systems used in the United States include choice voting, cumulative voting, and limited voting. Through proportional voting electoral systems, like-minded groupings of voters win legislative seats in better proportion to their share of the population.

Under proportional voting systems, the right to govern still belongs to the majority. However, the right to representation belongs to everyone.

Make It Happen!

- Invite a FairVote representative to speak at a meeting of your friends, organization, legislature, political party, or company.
- Adopt proportional voting systems for your student government elections at a local high school, college, or university.
- Submit a letter to the editor in favor of proportional voting to your local newspaper.
- Testify about the need for proportional voting at your city council or school board meeting.
- Check out proportional voting resources at www.fairvote.org/pr