

Script  
Continued Study of Election Methods

*(Words in parenthesis are not intended to be spoken, but as background info or intentions. The art is intended as a reminder of which chart to call attention to in the Voter.)*

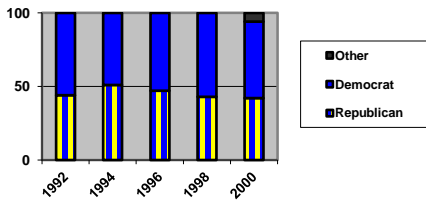
We are going to begin today by asking you to do a little voting. We have six ice cream candidates and we're going to give you the opportunity to select three winners.

On page S-3 of your Voter, is a sheet with three ballots on it. We would like you to try out all of the voting systems we are going to be talking about today. Please read the instructions and cast your vote for each one now. You are going to be counting your own ballot, so no need to worry about making the marks too carefully. As long as you know what you mean, it's fine.

*(Pause and allow time to vote and ask questions about the ballot. Encourage them to do this quickly by telling them that they will be counting their own ballots and therefore they don't need to fill in the circles as carefully as they would if a machine was going to process the ballots.)*

Has everyone finished? Good, We will count them a little later. First let's look at a couple of charts which demonstrate why a growing number of people are becoming interested in alternative voting methods.

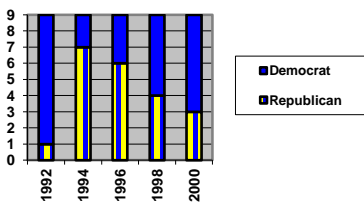
Washington  
State Vote By Party



This chart on S-5 shows the percentage of the statewide vote that the two largest political parties have gathered in the last five elections to the U.S. House of Representatives. The dark blue lines represent the vote for Democrats; the Yellow striped lines depict the Republican vote. The district boundaries were the same for all of these years. What does this chart show you about our state's political complexion?

(Voters split their support pretty evenly between the two parties with a slight edge in all but one election to the Democrats. In this last election, votes for candidates for other parties, primarily Libertarian, became high enough to be able to register on the chart.)

### Congressional Representatives Elected



When these votes were translated into the seats the next chart shows how many seats they won, District boundaries remained the same for this entire time period.

How does this chart correlate to the previous chart?

In 1992 the Democrats were awarded 8 of the 9 seats. Two years later, the Republicans were awarded 7 of the 9 seats. A popular vote shift of 7% caused a 67% change in party representation. This exaggerated relationship between votes and seats elected is not an unusual result in the election system most commonly used in American elections. This kind of information is causing people to more closely examine other election systems which may not distort the relationship between votes and representation.

Last year, with the help of this study, (*hold it up and have copies available*), League members across the state learned that there were a surprising number of election systems used in the world today. (*show colored map of world.*)

This map of the world uses different colors and shadings to indicate the many different kinds of voting systems that were in use in 1997. There have been several changes since then. You don't need to be able to see the detail to see that there are a lot of ways democracies conduct elections.

Last year legislation that would change some part of state election systems was introduced in at least 13 different states, including Washington. For the last 7 years Federal Bills have been introduced that could change the way we elect our representatives to the House. In the last year numerous additional state and federal commissions have been formed – all with the goal of improving our election system.

Living up to its name, our league has voted to continue our study of election methods so that we better understand alternatives and can continue our traditional role of educating the public.

In June, League members voted to narrow the focus of our study to three voting methods: a proportional system called Choice Voting; a semi-proportional system called Cumulative Voting and a system that usually provides a majority winner for single offices which is called Instant Runoff Voting. You used each of these voting methods when you cast your ice cream votes a few minutes ago.

Before we home in on these three methods, let's look at your page titled Common Election Terminology on page S-4. It's important to understand the terms we will be using. The first sketch shows the way most of our elections are conducted today. In this example 35 representatives will be elected one to a district or by single numbered position.

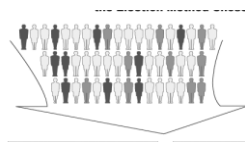
The second sketch shows what is meant by Multi Member Districts. In this example the same number of representatives are elected in 5 member districts. Fewer districts but more representatives to a district.


The third sketch shows what an At Large election looks like. All representatives are elected in one large district. *Does everyone understand these differences?*

### Choice Voting

Choice Voting is referred to by several names the most common of which are Preference Voting and the Single Transferable Vote. This voting system is one of several which produce proportional representation. Can anyone tell us what we mean by the term proportional representation?

*(The basic principle of Proportional Representation, commonly referred to as PR, is that the number of seats a political party or interest group wins in a legislature or council should be in proportion to the amount of its support among voters.)*



On the top of page S-7 is a picture of a hypothetical city, state or county whose council closely reflects the support of its three largest voting blocs the Reds, Blues, and Yellows. In this scenario the Blues comprise 60% of the voters and the other two groups each have about 20% of the voters support. If the goal is to elect 5 members to the Council and Choice Voting was the method used to elect them, the election outcome would generally look like this: 3 Blues, 1 Red and 1 Yellow.  This result is called Proportional Representation. This voting method requires Multi Member or At Large districts.

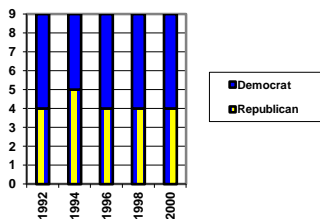
Who can tell us the most likely make up of this council under our current election system? *(It would usually produce a body made up of entirely of Blues.)* 

## Why?

(Washington voters can vote for City Council members in only two ways: at-large using single numbered positions or by smaller single member districts. Both are plurality election methods in which largest group, not necessarily the majority, will have the voting strength to elect everyone. The one exception to this rule is if the minority interest groups are concentrated in one or two districts in sufficient quantity to produce a plurality winner.)

Let's see what our voting charts on S-5 would look like if we had been using a Proportional voting system for these same Congressional Elections.

## If Elected Proportionally



What has happened using choice Voting?

Can anyone tell me if it's possible to conduct Choice Voting elections to elect our Representatives to Congress right now?

Why not?

(It would be necessary to amend a federal law, which requires election from single member districts. A bill which would allow alternative voting methods has been introduced in every Congressional session for the last 7 years.)

Probably the easiest way to see how Choice Voting works is to look at the voting you just did. Look at your ballots and we will tally them with a show of hands.

The first thing we do is count how many voters we have in the room. (*count*). Our task is to pick the three most popular winners, so we will divide total number of voters by 3. We will use that number as our threshold. A winner needs \_\_\_votes in order to win. We will begin by counting only the 1<sup>st</sup> choice votes. (*You can round down the numbers to a whole number. The last position may be filled by a number smaller than that. Don't fret if you get mixed up, just don't make a big deal out of it. Explain that it is really hard to do this demonstration count with a small count, it often provides ties. It's a good idea if you cast a vote for Green Tea or Jalapeno to be sure you have an example of the vote transfer.*) Now let's see with a show of hands, how many voted for (*each of the flavors, one at a time*).

(*Write on the chart, white board or black board which is prepared in advance. For example the counting might go like this:-----was selected one of the winners with \_\_\_ votes, and actually got more votes than was needed. So the first thing we do is transfer the surplus votes to those voters second choice. After that, we eliminate the flavors that have no possibility of winning, one at a time. But their supporters still get a chance to participate in the remaining decisions. We transfer their votes to their second choices, etc. We have found that the count transfers are easiest for the audience if you devise a chart which uses a new column for each vote transfer.*)

*Below is what a chart might look like with hypothetical numbers. In this example, 19 voters divided by 3= 6+. The 2 surplus votes for Mocha both voted Pistachio as their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice. Green Tea's second choice was Pistachio and 2 of Vanillas votes were transferred to Strawberry. The transfer of votes stops when three winners have been chosen, in this case by reaching the threshold of 6. Conducting this vote in unit meetings will be a challenge, since small groups tend to produce a lot of*

tied votes, so it is important for the presenter to fully understand the transfer process. Remember, in case of ties, Washington election law calls for a drawing of lots, so just do a coin toss. I like to circle the winner in a different color. Don't hesitate to call or email Janet Anderson for more help - 206-285-2460 or [JanetRAnderson@msn.com](mailto:JanetRAnderson@msn.com).)

	<i>1<sup>st</sup> choice votes</i>	<i>Transfer surplus</i>	<i>New Tally</i>	<i>Transfer to losers their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice</i>	<i>Final Count **Winner</i>
<i>Mocha Almond</i>	8	6	6		6**
<i>Vanilla Swiss</i>	3		3	1	1
<i>Green Tea</i>	1		1	0	0
<i>Jalapeno</i>	0		0		0
<i>Strawberry Cheesecake</i>	4		4	6	6**
<i>Pistachio Maple Nut</i>	3	5	5	6	6**

Now lets see if the other election methods you used produced the same result. The second Ballot, labeled Plurality, Single Member District, required you to select one of each pair of choices. This ballot most resembles your current general election ballot. In the General Election you must usually choose between two finalists. In this case let's see the results. Etc. (*In most cases, the results will be different*)

	<i>1<sup>st</sup> choice votes</i>	<i>Transfer surplus</i>	<i>New Tally</i>	<i>Transfer to losers their 2<sup>nd</sup> choice</i>	<i>Final Count **Winner</i>	<i>Single Winner Plurality *</i>
<i>Mocha Almond</i>	8	6	6		6**	9
<i>Vanilla Swiss</i>	3		3	1	1	10*
<i>Green Tea</i>	1		1	0	0	18*
<i>Jalapeno</i>	0		0		0	1
<i>Strawberry Cheesecake</i>	4		4	6	6**	9
<i>Pistachio Maple Nut</i>	3	5	5	6	6**	10*

Which of these two voting method produced the most accurate reflection of this groups preferences? Why?

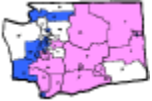
Have you ever faced a ballot where you had a difficult time choosing from between two outstanding candidates? Have you ever had to choose between two weak candidates?

Can any of you think of any elections we hold in Washington which give proportional results? Why not?

*(Our Constitution and State Election Laws were written before most proportional election systems were invented. As we mentioned before, our state election laws provide for two ways of conducting elections: they can either be held in single member districts or run at large, but by numbered position. In either case, the candidate with the plurality wins.)*

Because PR voting methods are not currently in used in Washington elections, it's hard for people to imagine what it would be like to have such elections. We have put together an example of what such an election might look like for a State

Representative on page S-6. This map has been shaded to indicate the political complexion of our 49 legislative districts.



How many members to House of Representatives are currently elected from each district? (2) The 19 districts in grey indicate those which currently elect 2 Republicans and the 19 in black indicate those electing 2 Democrats.

How do you think Democrats in Eastern Washington feel about their representation in Olympia, unless they happen to live in this one Spokane district? How do you think Republicans living in Seattle feel about their level of representation in Olympia?

Only the voters living in one of these 11 uncolored districts currently elect one representative from each of the two major parties. Any ideas about why we have so few 2 party districts in the State? (Each seat is voted on separately. Each voter has two votes and the majority party usually has the voting strength to win both seats.)

Now let's do a mock redistricting of the state so that we can do Choice Voting. Why is it necessary to redistrict? (Because you need more than two candidates in a district to get proportional results.)



The more winners in a district, the more proportional will be the result.

For mathematical convenience, we have reduced the number of legislative districts by 1 making 48. Then we then combined every 3 legislative districts into one larger super district, creating 16 districts in all. Each super district will elect 6 representatives, which means it will require a little less than 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the total vote to win one of the representative seats.

Do you follow what we are doing? We merged the districts starting in Eastern Washington where the districts will have equal population but the most square miles. Spokane and its suburbs make one logical super district. Then these 3 predominately wheat districts are combined, then these 3 agricultural districts and

so on. On the more populated west side of the State, it becomes easier to draw geographically smaller super districts.

When we examine the political complexion of each super district we see a huge difference. Instead of having the 38 one party districts that we have now, what happens? (EVERY SINGLE LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT in the State would become a two party district).

*(PLEASE NOTE: We have just completed another mock redistricting merging every two districts instead of three and the bottom line was the same, all 24 districts elected 4 representatives and at least 1 of those were from the minority of the two largest parties. The trade off is smaller geography vs. more votes needed to win. A four member district would require a bit over 20% of the vote to win, a six member district would require approximately 15%.)*

What difference does it make if you live in a one party or two party district?

*(Every voter would have a Republican or Democrat in his or her district to communicate and identify with. Some third parties might have a realistic chance of gathering together the necessary 1/6<sup>th</sup> of the vote in some districts to be able to elect a representative. Every inch of the state would be represented in each of the two major party's caucus's. Democrats would have to be more sensitive to Eastern Washington problems and Republicans would have to be more sensitive to Seattle's problems.)*

Since the new census figures were not yet available to us, these maps are based upon how voters cast their ballots in the last presidential election. They are meant as an example of what multi-member districts might look like. Actually, this kind of redistricting could be done under existing laws, however, without a change in our constitution, the number of Senators would have to be reduced to 16 (*1 per district*). Our state constitution currently dictates the numeric relationship between the House of Representatives and the Senate. Not a likely scenario!

Now we would like you to help us list the pros and cons of proportional voting systems. (*They are also listed on S-8.*)

What are the drawbacks? (Let audience offer suggestions – fill in ones they may leave out)

- Some people think it's confusing and complicated.
- It requires larger geographic districts or an increase in the number of representatives to be elected.
- Larger districts may make it harder for candidates to campaign.
- Doorbelling may be impractical.
- Works best if election terms are not staggered (the more winners, the lower the threshold)
- Requires modern voting equipment to be practical.
  
- Voters will only have one vote counting for a winner.
- May heighten intra party competition
- Too many choices on ballot

What are the advantages of a proportional voting system?

- Most voters have someone they identify with at the decision making table.
- The majority will hold the majority of seats, but substantial minorities will also have a voice.

- Because a broader cross section of voters is represented, there is greater incentive for more voters to participate in the election process. This is demonstrated year after year by the election turnout in countries using PR election methods.
- Voter Participation is usually much higher than typical turnouts in the United States.
- Voters have more choices among candidates with genuine differences.
- Better representation of ALL voters;
- Slightly fewer votes necessary to win, and they can be gathered from broader geographic territory which is especially important to minority interest groups;
- More voters with a stake in government
- Campaigning can actually be easier for candidates because they can target their campaign to their “natural” supporters.
- Less negative campaigning

Any more questions about Choice Voting before we move on? Do you feel you understand the principal of proportional representation?

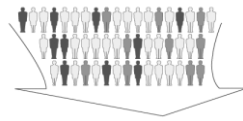
Remember, it's not necessary to fully understand how to count and transfer the ballots. Do you consider it necessary to know how to repair your car before you drive it? Or to understand the workings of your watch in order to tell time?

Now \_\_\_\_\_ will describe another voting system that is in use today by many American cities, counties and school boards.

### Cumulative Voting

Would anyone like to guess which new form of voting is the fastest growing system in the United States today?


Right, it is called Cumulative Voting. This is called a semi proportional voting system because it may OR MAY NOT produce proportional results. Lets go back to our mock city with three political factions and a council of five members.




In this example we will assume that every voter is allowed three votes, which they may place all on one candidate, or divide between two or three candidates.


The key to proportional results will depend on advance strategic planning. In this case, the three political groups pictured here and who have a chance to win some representation, will have to have some idea of their political strength so they do not run too many or too few candidates.



Let's say that the majority party (the Blues) over confidently runs six candidates. Although they make up 60% of the voters in their town, they split their support among the six candidates, winning only one seat. 

In this scenario, the two minor parties optimistically ran two candidates, split their support evenly and win a disproportional number of seats.

The same thing can happen in reverse with the minority parties splitting their votes between too many candidates and winning no seats. 

If everything is planned just right, with just the correct number of candidates, it is possible to have proportional results. 

These scenarios are depicted on the flyer titled "Election Results Differ Depending on the Election Method Chosen".

Would anyone like to venture a guess as to why Cumulative Voting has been adopted by over 60 local American governments in the last 20 years? (*50+ in Texas; Alabama, 5; Illinois and South Dakota 1 each. Most resulted from successful court challenges brought under the Federal Civil Rights legislation of the 60's and 70's.*)

Legal actions, frequently brought against school boards, by racial, linguistic or cultural minorities, claiming lack of representation, began to be satisfied by adopting Cumulative voting systems. In recent years many such cases have been settled out of court by agreeing to change the election system. (*When a prominent civil rights attorney was asked why courts didn't mandate PR elections instead of Cumulative, his response was "we lawyers didn't know enough to ask at the time and now Cumulative Voting is an easy precedent!"*)

Although Cumulative Voting is currently being adopted primarily to help certain minority groups gain representation, it can also be used to reinforce a two party system at the expense of third parties. For over 100 years the State of Illinois elected their State Representatives in three person districts. For many years, the majority party ran only two candidates and the minority party ran one. This Resulted in Republican representation in heavily democrat Chicago and Democrat representation in the "collar" suburbs and downstate districts that tend to be heavily Republican. However third parties were effectively discouraged by other legislation which required all parties to qualify by running candidates in all districts in the State, not just one or two.

In 1978, the Illinois legislature angered the public by adopting a major pay raise for public officials, including a 40% increase for themselves. In response, a petition drive was initiated to reduce the size of the legislature from 177 to 118 members and in the process created single member legislative districts. It was adopted. Considerable controversy surrounded this vote and many supporters of cumulative voting argue that the vote was not a reflection of the electorate's attitude toward Cumulative Voting, but rather, their desire to reduce the size of the Illinois House. A major movement to bring back cumulative voting in Illinois is currently underway.

Let's see how our ice cream choices fared under cumulative voting. To tally these votes show me with your fingers how many votes you have given each flavor. How many votes for Mocha Almond Fudge? Etc. (*Show results on right hand side of the Choice Voting chart and analyze. Usually they will be the same three winners as in Choice Voting, but it may be more revealing by showing the strength of support. This is why it was used last year in state program*

*making. Hypothetical chart might look like the following. The three with the highest totals are the winners. Since each voter will have 3 votes, vote totals will be 19 x 3.)*

	<i>1<sup>st</sup> choice votes</i>	<i>Transfer surpluses</i>	<i>New Tally</i>	<i>Transfer to losers 2<sup>nd</sup> choice</i>	<i>Final Count **Winner</i>		<i>Cumulative Vote Totals</i>	
<i>Mocha Almond</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>		<i>6**</i>		<i>10</i>	
<i>Vanilla Swiss</i>	<i>3</i>		<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>4</i>	
<i>Green Tea</i>	<i>1</i>		<i>1</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>	
<i>Jalapeno</i>	<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>		<i>0</i>	
<i>Strawberry Cheesecake</i>	<i>4</i>		<i>4</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6**</i>		<i>6</i>	
<i>Pistachio Maple Nut</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6**</i>		<i>7</i>	

Any questions about Cumulative voting? (*Yes, this is the system favored by Lani Guinier and got her into so much trouble with the Senate during the brief time she was nominated for the position of Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights in 1993.*)

Now please help me to name the major weaknesses of the Cumulative voting system:

- Requires strategic planning in order to achieve proportional results.
- Unless voters follow “the strategy”, parties or special interest groups may have disproportional representation.
- Tends to reinforce a two party system. It can help one minority party, but seldom two or more.
- More wasted votes (*votes that did not elect anyone*)

Let's list the major strengths of the system:

- Easy to understand
- May offer minority representation.
- History of satisfying Civil Rights legal actions.
- May offer more proportional results than possible in single member districts.

\_\_\_\_\_ will now fill us in on another use for Choice Voting which, in recent years, has been called Instant Runoff Voting.

The two voting systems that we have been talking about up to now, are alternative methods that could be used for electing representatives to a governing council – a representative legislative body. They would provide proportional or semi

Proportional representation. Those voting methods are not used to elect single officers like mayor or governor where there can only be one winner. The system we are going to talk about now, only applies to single winner offices. It is currently being called the Instant Runoff Vote, often shortened to IRV. It uses the Choice Vote ballot and is a way for the majority to select a single winner who will be the most satisfactory to most of them. Because it allows transfer of votes, it eliminates the charge that third party candidates play a “spoiler” role in close elections.

There are many states that require their top office holders to be elected by a majority of those voting. In those states, a second run off election is frequently necessary in order to obtain that majority. In addition to the added expense of the second election, voter turnout frequently falls off dramatically the second time around. Using a Choice Vote could accomplish the same result in one election, hence the name Instant Run Off Vote.

I call your attention to the flyer each of you have, which depicts the differing Election results depending on the election method chosen. Instant Runoff Voting is depicted in the lower left corner. Just above it is plurality voting. You see that in either case the winner will likely be of the same party, but not necessarily the same person.

Let’s look at the Choice Vote you cast for ice cream. It’s the first ballot. The same ballot can be used to determine a single winner, only the counting is slightly different. Since the goal is to choose the one that gets a majority of the votes, there is no surplus vote to transfer. We immediately drop the lowest votes and transfer them to each voter’s second choice. In a plurality election, like the ones we use now, \_\_\_\_\_ would have been the winner. But the point of the Instant Runoff Vote is to find the candidate that the majority likes best, which may or may not be the same as the plurality leader. In this case, after we transfer the votes that went to losing candidates, the winner is (*or is not*) the same.

	<i>1<sup>st</sup> choice votes</i>	<i>Transfer surplus</i>	<i>New Tally</i>	<i>Transfer to losers 2<sup>nd</sup> choice</i>	<i>Final Count **Winner</i>		<i>Cumulative Vote Totals</i>		<i>Instant Runoff Vote Needs majority to win</i>	<i>Transfer from lowest vote up</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Mocha Almond</i>	8	6	6		6**		10		8	10 **	10
<i>Vanilla Swiss</i>	3		3	1	1		4		2	0	0

<i>Green Tea</i>	1		1	0	0		0		0		0
<i>Jalapeno</i>	0		0		0		0		0		0
<i>Strawberry Cheesecake</i>	4		4	6	6**		6		4		4
<i>Pistachio Maple Nut</i>	3	5	5	6	6**		7		5		5

Interest in this method of voting has dramatically risen since our last presidential election. Nader and Buchanan supporters were frequently accused of being spoilers for Bush and Gore. As a result, campaigns to adopt IRV have been popping up in many states. This year legislative bills were introduced in Washington, California, New Mexico, Vermont, Illinois and several other states. Last month San Francisco Voters adopted this system. The election was no doubt helped by its election experience in December. Because its election law requires a majority vote to win and no candidate for City Attorney obtained that in the November election, a December runoff election had to be held. It attracted only 15% of the voters and cost the City over 5 million dollars.

Some bills are also proposing to use an Instant Runoff Vote for selecting the state's representatives in the Electoral College. However an Instant Runoff Vote would still distort a state's popular vote if the winner would take all the State's electoral votes as most States elect to do now.

Another alternative has been suggested. By doing an Instant Runoff Vote for President within the state, STOPPING THE VOTE TRANSFER WITH THE TOP TWO CANDIDATES, and then apportioning the electoral votes between them, you could achieve proportionality and probably still eliminate the spoiler effect of third party candidates for a number of years.

The argument most often given to support maintaining the winner take all distribution of electoral college votes that most states now use, is that in a close

election, awarding any electors to a third party is likely to throw the election determination into the House of Representatives. That would not be likely to happen for a long time if the elimination of minor parties was done at the state level before the electors were chosen. *(Members will probably be interested in talking more about the presidential vote than time will allow. Remind them to remember that this subject has been proposed as part of the national study of election laws.)*

Now would you please help me summarize the pros and cons of Instant Runoff Elections?

Disadvantages:

- It is a confusing change for voters.
- It requires modern voting equipment to be practical.
- There are other systems that, although more complicated to explain, are better at choosing the candidate most acceptable to the most voters. *(Borda, Condorcet, Approval are examples. We are not covering them in this study.)*

- Adoption of this voting reform may reduce the pressure to adopt a more important reform that would provide proportional representation.

Advantages:

- Helps the majority to coalesce around their most popular candidate.
- Eliminates the validity of the “spoiler” charge attributed to third parties.
- Usually produces a majority vote (instead of a plurality) for the winner.
- Saves the cost of a second election.

Do you have any questions about Instant Runoff Voting? Are these three voting systems a little easier to understand than they were at the beginning of the meeting?

### Three Consensus Questions

*(Members Only)*

- Do you think proportional representation of voters in “representative” government bodies (councils, legislatures, congress) is a desirable goal? Why or why not?
- To win election to a single office, (mayor, governor) do you think a majority vote requirement is desirable? Why or why not?
- (Advisory only to LWVUS) Last year members agreed that it would be desirable for state election laws to allow more options for alternative election systems at the state and local level. Would you like to see the same flexibility extended to states for their congressional elections? Why or why not?