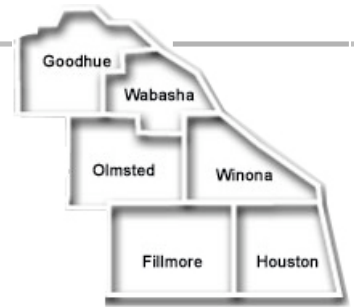




FairVote

MINNESOTA SOUTHEAST



An Educational Program for Better Democracy through Better Ballots—Issue 2, November 2007

IRV Activities are Soaring

MN Senate Committee to Hold IRV Hearing

State and Local Government Operations and Oversight - Subcommittee on Elections has scheduled a hearing on Ranked Choice Voting for Tuesday, November 20, 2007 10 a.m. Room 123 Capitol. Chair: Senator Dan Larson, District 63, Bloomington. Agenda: Presentations on and discussion of ranked choice voting.

**Please plan to show up and/or provide testimony.
Your Support is Needed.**

Three New Ballot Measures Proposed

Three more municipalities have placed ballot measures on instant runoff voting for November. Voters in Sarasota (FL), Aspen (CO) and Clallam County (WA) will each be considering the merits of this ranked choice voting method. IRV has won its last nine trials-by-ballot by an average two-to-one victory margin.

Reform-oriented citizens spearheaded a petition drive in Sarasota. The Clallam County Charter Review Commission voted unanimously for an enabling measure, while Aspen's city council voted unanimously to enact instant runoff voting for all city elections.

—<http://www.fairvote.org/irv/>

Upcoming IRV Elections

Hendersonville, North Carolina, will also be using IRV for the first time on November 6th this year. Voters there will join veteran IRV voters in Cambridge (MA) and San Francisco (CA) and second-time IRV voters in Takoma Park (MD).

California Senate Committee Passes IRV Bills

Bills would allow IRV for non-charter cities and overseas voters. On July 10, both AB 1294 and AB 1662 passed the California Senate Committee on Elections, Reapportionment and Constitutional Amendments.

Prior to the passage of AB 1294, only charter counties or cities could use ranked voting methods, leaving over three-fourths of cities and counties without such options.

<http://www.fairvote.org/irv/>

Exit polls show Cary, NC voters like IRV

Exit polls from Cary's first Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) election show voters like their new way of voting. The IRV ballot was easily understood by most voters and ranking candidates was preferred to voting for just one candidate.

The exit survey of over 1,600 voters discovered:

- 82 percent agreeing that it was "very easy" to understand.
- The study found no significant differences between different types of voters in their understanding or preference for IRV: whites and non-whites, males and females, lower- and higher-income voters all evaluated IRV roughly the same.

One senior voter said of IRV: "It's very simple. Anyone could do it, even a five year old child." The City saved about \$28,000 by not having to hold a separate district runoff election in November. If there were a city-wide runoff, the savings would have been \$62,000. Cary's 2005 population was 107,446.

—Fairvote news

Ranked Choice Voting Issues Group

Minnesota's Secretary of State, Mark Ritchie, has convened a Ranked Choice Voting Issues Group for the purpose of assisting Minneapolis in preparing for the 2009 IRV-based election. The purpose is to identify and propose new statutes and rules that need to be changed in order to allow Minneapolis to carry out the election method voted on by 67% of the voters. The meetings are open to the public. Contact editor for a meeting schedule with topic lists.

**Judge elections not on outcomes,
but on fairness of the procedures.**

—Anon



Graphic by FairVote

The Voter Bill of Rights

<http://www.libertytreefdr.org>

The Voter Bill of Rights is a product of the 2001 Democracy Summer program and the 2004 No Stolen Elections! campaign. <http://www.libertytreefdr.org>

1. A Constitutional Amendment Confirming the Right to Vote

Be clear: The U.S. Constitution does not give every American an individual affirmative citizenship right to vote. Rather, voting in the United States is based on the constitutional principle of states' rights. Since the word "vote" appears in the Constitution only with respect to non-discrimination, the so-called right to vote is a "state right." Only a constitutional amendment would give every American the much-needed individual affirmative citizenship right to vote. In addition, more than nine million American citizens are denied the same right to vote that they would enjoy *if living in another part of the country*. Nationally, more than 4.7 million Americans are denied the right to vote as a result of laws that prohibit voting by felons or ex-felons. While states may have their own regulations, choosing a President is a national enterprise that should involve the full diversity of the voting public.

7. Instant Runoff Voting and Proportional Representation

In one visit to the polls, instant runoff voting (IRV) ensures a winning candidate will receive a majority of votes rather than a simple plurality—as in most U.S. elections. IRV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference (first, second, third choice and so on). If no candidate gets a majority of first choices, a runoff count can be conducted without the need for a second election. In the wake of citizen frustration with "spoiler" candidacies and non-majority winners, efforts to replace plurality election laws with this more democratic alternative have made significant progress in various states because voters are not only provided the opportunity to vote for those candidates they like the most without worrying that their vote will help candidates they like least, IRV also saves taxpayers money and increases voter participation. Each runoff elections drains financial resources in our communities—a runoff election costs taxpayers upwards of two million dollars in San Francisco, for example. Money saved can be used to purchase more machines, staff more polling places and help to increase voter education and participation.

IRV is a time-tested, successful voting method that has been used around the world: Ireland uses IRV to elect its president, Australia to elect its House of Representatives, and San Francisco to elect its mayor

and other major city offices. Literally hundreds of jurisdictions, universities, organizations and corporations use IRV to elect its leaders. "Winner-take-all" is a very undemocratic way to choose representatives to government. Why should 49% of voters in a legislative district get 0% representation? Most democracies in the world use some form of proportional representation to choose legislatures. If one quarter of the voters support a particular party, they should be able to elect roughly a quarter of the seats in a city council or legislature. The majority of voters will elect the majority of seats but minorities will get their fair share of representation; it's common sense!

History

Instant-runoff voting was invented around 1870 by the American architect W. R. Ware. It started being used in public elections in the 1890s in Tasmania, Australia. Today it is in use at a national level to elect the Australian House of Representatives, the Fijian House of Representatives and the President of Ireland. In Australia it is also used for elections to the legislative assemblies (lower houses) of all states and territories except Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory, and for the Tasmanian Legislative Council (upper house).

IRV is also used for municipal elections in various places in Australia, the United States, and New Zealand. Because of its relationship to the Single Transferable Vote (STV) system, IRV is used for elections in a some jurisdictions that use STV for ordinary parliamentary elections, such as the Republic of Ireland. IRV is known by different names in the various countries in which it is used. It is also known as the 'Alternative Vote,' 'Ranked Choice Voting,' 'Preferential Voting,' and the 'Hare system.' The last three of these names may be misleading, because IRV is only one of a number of forms of preferential voting systems, and because the precise system known as 'instant-runoff voting' was invented by Ware rather than Thomas Hare.

—Wikipedia and other sources

Robert's Rules Rejects Plurality* Elections!

The problem with plurality elections is that a candidate preferred by a majority of voters can be defeated by a candidate the majority consider unacceptable. Having a benevolent king or dictator might not be a disaster either, but a basic principle of democracy is majority rule. Robert's Rules of Order rejects the plurality threshold for electing officers.

* Plurality is the number of votes cast for a candidate who receives more than any others but does not receive an absolute majority.

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A web site focusing on IRV & STV for SE MN is coming soon.
Want a speaker for your group? Contact me!