



**FairVoteMN is about  
Making Every Vote Count**

**FairVote**  
MINNESOTA SOUTHEAST



*An Educational Program for Better Democracy through Better Ballots—Issue 5, March 2009*

## **IRV News Update—a summary of recent events**

- \* Hennepin County District Court Judge George McGunnigle's Summary Judgment in the lawsuit against the use of Instant Runoff Voting in the City of Minneapolis was issued on January 13, 2009. The Judgement denied **all** the petitioner's claims.
- \* The plaintiff has appealed to the Appellate court. The City of Minneapolis (the defendant) and FairVoteMN (intervenor) have requested an expedited review from the State Supreme Court
- \* On February 5, the Minneapolis Council voted 12 to 1, overwhelmingly and unambiguously in support of IRV, after hearing from Elections Director Cindy Reichert that her department is prepared to handle the election using IRV. Their affirmation keeps IRV on track for 2009 and respects the intent of the city's voters, who approved IRV by a 2 to 1 margin in 2006.
- \* FairVoteMN's Board of Directors and Advisory Council members represent all four major political parties in MN. An educational, not for profit, non-political organization with two paid staff members.
- \* The Better Ballot Campaign in St. Paul collected more than 7,000 signatures last year for a petition to place IRV on the 2008 ballot. The St. Paul City Council rejected the petition, but with a caveat: If the courts found IRV to be constitutional, then they would place it on the ballot.
- \* Duluthians are becoming very interested in IRV. A local group has been formed to provide educational outreach, and IRV has the support of the mayor and three council members.
- \* Would IRV have prevented the lengthy recount process in the senatorial race? No, IRV does not prevent ties and near-ties in close elections. Accordingly, a recount could still be triggered when the margin of victory in an IRV election is 0.5 percent or less.

However, IRV would make recounts less likely in

the final round because, in effect, there are a greater number of votes cast in the final round for the top two candidates than in the initial round. According to a recent study on election recounts conducted by the national FairVote organization, the greater the number of votes cast, the less likelihood of a recount.

As it is, whoever wins the Minnesota senate seat, that person received 42% of the votes cast—far short of a majority support which IRV would have assured.

- \* The media is increasingly providing articles about IRV with several editorials supporting the concept.
- \* IRV likely would have also been impactful in the 3rd and 6th Congressional Districts races and in the state legislative races in Districts 41A and 51A, all of which were decided by a minority of voters.
- \* The Minnesota legislature is busy entertaining several proposals for improved voting systems. A bill that will standardize on IRV implementation for charter cities is expected. The language in this bill was a result of the Secretary of State's Ranked Choice Voting Issues Group's recommendations.
- \* FairVoteMNSoutheast, which was organized in 2007, is now ready to share the good news with interested people in the Southeast counties (check the masthead). The website:

**[www.fairvotemnsoutheast.org](http://www.fairvotemnsoutheast.org)**

is up and running. Special attention has been paid to charter cities. Voting systems currently in use are presented along with opportunities for improvement.

**Want an educational presentation  
for your organization?  
Contact Dag Knudsen  
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## A Sampling of IRV Supporters in MN

### Organizational Endorsements

- League of Woman Voters of Minnesota
- Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Citizens for Election Integrity
- Minnesota Alliance of Peacemakers
- Vets for Peace

### Media Endorsements

- Star Tribune
- Minnesota Daily

### Political Party Endorsements

- Minnesota DFL
- Independence Party of Minnesota
- Green Party of Minnesota
- Libertarian Party of Minnesota

### Former State & Local Elected Leaders

- US Senator Dave Durenburger
- US Congressman Tim Penny
- Arne Carlson, Former Governor
- John Hottinger, MN Senator and Majority Leader
- Matt Entenza, Rep. and Minority Leader
- Mike Hatch, Attorney General
- George Latimer, St. Paul Mayor
- Jim Scheibel, St. Paul Mayor
- Don Fraser, Minneapolis Mayor

### Candidates for US Senate, 2008

- Al Franken
- Dean Barkley

### Active citizens

- Mark Halvorson, Minnesota Citizens for Election Integrity
- Peter Hutchinson, President, Bush Foundation
- Curt Johnson, President, Citistates Group
- Liz Johnson, director, White House Project MN
- Sally Kenney, director, Humphrey Center on Women and Public Policy
- Tammy Lee, VP for Communication, NW Airlines
- Brian Melendez, Chair, DFL Party, Attorney, Faegre & Benson
- Javier Morillo, President, SEIU Local 26
- Jack Nelson Pallmeyer, Professor, St. Thomas University
- George & Sally Pillsbury, community volunteers
- Jon Pratt, Executive Director, Minnesota Council of Nonprofits
- Walter Rockenstein, Attorney, Faegre & Benson;
- Wy Spano, Director, UofM-Duluth Center for Advocacy and Political Leadership
- Aaron Street, Co-Director, Minnesota Institute of Law and Politics
- David Schultz, Attorney, Professor, Hamline University
- Jane Tschida, Community leader, former President, MN Governmental Relations Council;
- Paul Tschida, former Commissioner of Public Safety, University of Minnesota

## Why should Minnesota adopt IRV?

Majority rule is a fundamental principle of democracy. However, in recent years, winners of elections frequently have been chosen by less than a majority of voters. In the last three presidential elections, the winner received less than a majority of the popular vote. In Minnesota in 1998, not a single state-wide constitutional officer was elected with a majority of the vote. Most notably, Jesse Ventura was elected

### Majority Winners are in Short Supply

Minnesota Constitutional Offices	1998	2002	2006
<b>Governor</b>	37%	44%	47%
<b>Secretary of State</b>	47%	48%	49%
<b>Auditor</b>	49%	55%	52%
<b>Attorney General</b>	48%	55%	53%

3 of last 6 US Senate Contests

with 37 percent of the vote, the second lowest winning percentage in state history. In 2000, both state-wide races (for President and for U.S. Senate) and three U.S. Representatives were elected with less than a majority of the vote. In 2002, with four major parties competing, four of the five statewide elections were decided by less than a majority, and the principle of majority rule was once again not confirmed.

### Comparing Voting Options Identifies The Fair Solution

WITH > 2 CANDIDATES	Current	IRV Ranked Choice
<b>Assured Majority Win?</b>	NO	YES
<b>Spoiler Problem Solved?</b>	NO	YES
<b>Negates Need for a Primary Or Runoff Election?</b>	NO	YES

Instant Runoff Voting would assure that the principle of majority rule is upheld in Minnesota elections.

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