LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OREGON
Election Methods Study Update 2016-17
Consensus Questions

INTRODUCTION

Alternatives to current election methods and voting systems exist in other states and the world and some are being proposed for Oregon.

Question 1. Do you agree that the League should have an actionable position on these alternatives? _____ (yes, no, undecided)

If not, why not? _____

SINGLE-WINNER SYSTEMS

When electing a single person to fill a position, voting methods include the current plurality, range voting, approval voting, and ranked-choice voting (aka instant runoff voting). These methods have different advantages and disadvantages.

Question 2a. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is "not important" 2 is "a little important," 3 is "somewhat important," 4 is "important," and 5 is "very important", rate the following criteria of voting methods in importance with respect to single-winner systems:

1 2 3 4 5   The system elects the candidate with the broadest support of the people although that person may not be the first choice of a plurality of voters.

1 2 3 4 5   The system elects the winner who is the first choice candidate of a majority (50%+1) of the electorate

1 2 3 4 5   The system is easy to use and understand

1 2 3 4 5   The system promotes sincere voting over strategic voting

1 2 3 4 5   The system encourages voter turnout and voter engagement

1 2 3 4 5   The system encourages those with minority opinions to vote

1 2 3 4 5   The system discourages negative campaigning

1 2 3 4 5   The system is easy to administer by elections officials

1 2 3 4 5   The system is not overly burdensome to taxpayers

1 2 3 4 5   The system is resistant to Gerrymandering

1 2 3 4 5   The system provides for the greatest level of voter representation

Comments: _____

Question 2b. Do you agree that alternative voting methods exist that can promote democratic choice better than our current plurality method under some circumstances? _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Comments: _____

Question 2c. Range voting allows voters to express their opinion about candidates on a scale, e.g., from 0 to 5. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a very representative outcome. It is very susceptible to strategic voting (which proponents often present as a benefit to knowledgeable voters), so it does not encourage sincere voting. It is relatively easy to understand and to administer. Would you approve of range voting in preference to the current plurality system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Why or why not? _____

Question 2d. Approval voting allows voters to say whether they approve of each candidate for the office. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a fairly representative outcome. It is very susceptible to strategic voting, so it does not encourage sincere voting. It is relatively easy to understand and to administer. Would you approve of approval voting in preference to the current plurality system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Why or why not? _____

Question 2e. Ranked-choice voting (aka instant runoff voting) allows voters to rank-order the candidates. When voters vote sincerely, it produces a very representative outcome. It is not susceptible to strategic voting, so it encourages sincere voting. It is somewhat more difficult than other systems to understand and to administer. Would you approve of ranked-choice voting in preference to the current plurality system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)
Why or why not? _____

MULTIPLE WINNER SYSTEMS

When a legislative body has more than one member, the members can be elected individually, one per district, as we currently do for the Oregon House of Representatives, or they can be elected as a bloc, with each candidate competing for a single position, as we do for the U.S. Senate, or they can be elected in proportion to their support in the population they will govern. Proportional representation can be semi-proportional or fully proportional.

Question 3a. John Adams famously said that legislative bodies should be "in miniature, an exact portrait of the people at large." Do you agree that legislative bodies should proportionally reflect the people they represent? _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Comments: _____

Question 3b. On a scale of 1-5, where 1 is "not important" 2 is "a little important," 3 is "somewhat important," 4 is "important," and 5 is "very important", rate the following criteria of voting methods in importance with respect to multiple-winner systems:

1 2 3 4 5 Allows voters to vote for a specific individual (instead of a party or platform)
1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes a stable government that does not have to be re-organized between elections
1 2 3 4 5 The system promotes a stable government by protecting the two-party system.

1 2 3 4 5   The system promotes stable policy outcomes that do not change abruptly when power changes hands

1 2 3 4 5   The system elects a legislature that proportionally reflects the overall electorate

1 2 3 4 5   The system is easy to use and understand

1 2 3 4 5   The system encourages voter turnout and voter engagement

1 2 3 4 5   The system encourages those with minority opinions to vote

1 2 3 4 5   The system discourages negative campaigning

1 2 3 4 5   The system is easy to administer by elections officials

1 2 3 4 5   The system encourages cooperation across party lines

1 2 3 4 5   The system enables voters to elect local representatives from their geographic area

1 2 3 4 5   The system is not overly burdensome to taxpayers

1 2 3 4 5   The system is resistant to Gerrymandering

1 2 3 4 5   The system provides for the greatest level of voter representation

Comments: _____

Question 3c. One voting method to achieve proportional representation is closed list, in which parties present a list of candidates, voters vote for the party of their choice, and the number of candidates elected from that party depends on the number of voters who chose it. Would you approve of closed list voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system?   _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Why or why not? _____

Question 3d.
One voting method to achieve proportional representation system is open list, in which voters vote for individual candidates listed by party, and the vote counts for the candidate and for the candidate's party. The party wins seats in proportion to the number of votes for candidates in their list, and candidates with the most votes win. Would you approve of open list voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)
Why or why not? _____

Question 3e. One voting method to achieve proportional representation system is mixed member proportional, in which voters vote for individual candidates in their local district and also for a party. The most popular local candidates win district seats, and each party wins party seats in proportion to the number of votes for the party. Would you approve of mixed member proportional voting in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system?   _____ (yes, no, undecided)

Why or why not? _____

Question 3f. One voting method for a proportional representation system is the single transferrable vote, in which voters rank candidates as in ranked-choice voting, and any candidate who passes a threshold wins a seat, with votes above the threshold for any candidate going to the voters' second choices. (This is the only proportional system that would apply to non-partisan offices.) Would you

approve of the single transferrable vote in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)
Why or why not? _____

Question 3g. Semi-proportional systems use limited or cumulative voting methods, in which voters have a number of votes and can give all of them to one candidate or spread them between candidates. If voters coordinate their voting strategy very carefully, minorities can achieve more representation than in single-winner systems. Would you approve of semi-proportional systems in preference to the current single-winner majority or bloc system? _____ (yes, no, undecided)
Why or why not? _____

THE PARTY PROCESS IN OREGON

Question 4a. Oregon allows a form of fusion voting where candidates endorsed by multiple parties can list those parties by their names on the ballot. An alternative is full fusion, where a candidate is listed multiple times on the ballot, once for each party nominating her. Full fusion enhances information candidates receive about their supporters and helps small parties maintain ballot access in future elections. Would you approve of full fusion voting for Oregon? _____ (yes, no, undecided)
Why or why not? _____

Question 4b. If proportional representation were chosen for Oregon, primary elections could be unnecessary. However, in the absence of proportional representation, there are several alternative types of primary elections, some of which allow more choice by unaffiliated voters. Indicate which of the following primary election types have your approval (you may choose as many as you like):

_____ *Closed*. Voters only get their party's ballot. Voters not registered with one of the major parties do not vote. (This is our current system.)
_____ *Limited open*. Non-affiliated voters choose which party's ballot to receive. Voters registered with a party only receive their own party's ballot.
_____ *Open*. Voters request whatever party's ballot they want on the day of the election.
_____ *Top-Two*. Primaries are not party based. All voters receive the same ballot. The top two vote getters, regardless of party, advance to the general election.

Comments: _____

ADMINISTRATION OF ALTERNATE METHODS

Creating the ballots, educating voters, and counting the votes will require additional effort by our hard-working elections officers if alternative voting methods are chosen.

Question 5. Any new voting method should be instituted only after voters in the district affected agree to provide the financial support necessary to the appropriate elections administrators to make technical changes and to educate voters.

_____ True
_____ False

Comments: _____