



# FairVote is Making Headlines...

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## The Washington Post

### **Editorial: Three ways D.C. can improve the electoral process for voters**

November 13, 2014

Before memories of last week's D.C. election fade, city officials should commit to look at ways to improve the electoral process before the next campaign cycle kicks in. Tops on the list should be the consideration of legislation languishing in the D.C. Council that would fix the problems of multi-candidate elections by establishing instant-runoff voting. The system allows voters to select candidates in order of preference, and its need was underscored by several contests in which [the winners](#) received far less than a majority of votes. It's not good for government or democracy when candidates are able to squeak into public office with — as was the case last Tuesday — 37 percent or 24 percent or 12 percent of the vote.

[A bill](#) introduced this year by council member David Grosso (would provide a method of casting and tabulating votes under which voters would rank candidates; candidates with the fewest votes would be eliminated. The measure, modeled after systems used successfully across the country, would have other advantages. Voters afraid that their first choice can't win could vote for that candidate, knowing they wouldn't be throwing away their vote because they would still have the ability to influence the election's outcome. It's been the experience of those seeking office under ranked voting that there is less negative campaigning, because saying something negative about a voter's first choice lessens the chance of becoming that voter's second choice.

## The Portland Press Herald

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### **Our View: Ranked-choice petition first step toward reform**

October 31, 2014

The second most important thing voters can do on Election Day is to pause after casting their ballots and sign a petition to bring ranked-choice or instant-runoff voting to Maine elections. It is a voting system

designed for elections with more than two candidates that is employed in a number of U.S. cities, including Portland. It fixes two of the main problems of multi-candidate elections: It guarantees that the eventual winner has the approval of a majority of the electorate, and it provides a way for people to vote for a first choice — even if it looks as though that person can't win — and still have the ability to positively influence the election's outcome...

We have a system that is constructed to serve a world that no longer exists. Across the nation, political parties are becoming less representative of the population, and technological advances have made it easier than ever for individuals and small parties to reach a large number of donors and voters. Mainers who are tired of campaigns like the one that is coming to an end should mark the name of their favorite candidate on their ballots and then put their own names on a petition to fix this broken system.



### **Editorial: Minnesota voters stand apart, at least in part**

November 5, 2014

We're struck by the vast difference in the tone and substance of campaign messages this year compared with the more temperate Minneapolis mayoral contest in 2013. To be sure, an off-year election in a DFL-dominated city is different from the national midterms in many respects — but a key one is Minneapolis' use of ranked-choice voting. Mayoral candidates didn't air scowling gray photos of one another, bash one another's hairstyles or personal wealth, or deal in ugly innuendo about each other's personal traits. That wasn't because they were a kinder, gentler political species. It was because they were seeking to be the second choices of voters whose first choices were their opponents. Ranked-choice voting presents candidates with a disincentive to dish out offensive personal attacks.

Our guess is that even voters who backed Tuesday's winners are finding it hard today to feel good about the campaign that produced their preferred result. If that's the case, an opportunity has arrived for promoters of ranked-choice voting and other electoral reforms to swell their ranks.

## The Biggest Problem in American Politics

September 11, 2014

By Reihan Salam

As a conservative living in New York City, my vote for Congress is essentially a socially approved form of venting. A short while ago, I moved from an extremely liberal neighborhood in Manhattan to an extremely liberal neighborhood in Brooklyn...None of this should come as a shock. New York City is a liberal town, and I've long since resigned myself to being part of a small political minority. What I find galling is that, as observed in May by Rob Richie, the executive director of the electoral reform group FairVote, there are actually quite a few conservatives in New York City—believe it or not, Mitt Romney won 435,000 votes here. If Grimm goes down in November, Republicans in New York City will have no representation at the national level, an outcome that Richie rightly sees as a reflection of a much larger problem.

When you combine single-member districts into bigger multi-member districts, the picture starts to look quite different. The beauty of multi-member districts is that they allow us to use what FairVote calls "fair representation voting....As FairVote explains, the goal of this approach is to ensure that all candidates who receive a certain share of the vote will be elected...., FairVote envisions multi-member districts that would send no more than five representatives to Congress—big enough to represent relatively small minorities, but not so big that they don't have a connection to concrete communities....This ever-present need for coalition-building creates a powerful incentive to treat your political rivals with respect, even when you disagree with them. That would make for a much healthier political culture—and certainly a more interesting one.

## The Washington Post

### We need a fairer system for choosing House members

August 19, 2014

By Katrina vanden Heuvel

While gerrymandering matters, we must think more broadly. The core problem turns out to be districting, not redistricting. Congress's 1967 law that mandates use of single-member districts for House elections has institutionalized the practice of shoehorning voters into boxes that restrict choices and distort

representation. That is, districts are drawn in ways that lead to results predetermined by the powers that be. But today, there's a growing call, from members of Congress including James Clyburn (D-S.C.) to institutions such as The Washington Post editorial board, to consider allowing voters to define their own representation in multi-seat district elections.

FairVote has created just such a fair-representation plan that Congress has full authority to establish. Every state would keep its same number of seats, but districts would be combined into larger districts drawn by independent commissions. Of critical importance: In each new "superdistrict," like-minded voters could elect candidates of choice in proportion to their share of the vote. (Watch FairVote's excellent video for a primer on the system.) ...People are thinking creatively about how to re-energize American democracy. It is not acceptable to sit on our hands as we watch the value of a vote get more and more skewed. It's time to launch a drive for a fair-representation system for Congress so that the House of "We the People" can finally live up to its name.

## The Washington Post

### Editorial: Runoff system would improve the District's democratic process

March 27, 2014

Among the calculations some District voters are weighing in advance of Tuesday's Democratic primary is whether to bypass the person they most want elected in favor of a candidate whom they think might have a better chance of winning. Underscoring that dilemma is an expected low voter turnout and a large field of candidates that could produce a winner with a meager plurality. Not exactly the best recipe for democracy.

That is why there is much merit to a package of reforms being championed by D.C. Council member David Grosso (I-At Large) that would overhaul how elections are held in the District. Legislation introduced this month by Mr. Grosso would solve the problem of candidates winning without a majority of votes. He favors an instant-runoff system that casts and tabulates votes by ranked choice. ... We would urge [the city council] to follow the lead of Mr. Grosso. He understands that if the new rules are in place in 2016, as he hopes, he might be standing for reelection in a more competitive field and having to appeal to more voters. But he told us the purpose of being on the council shouldn't be about protecting one's seat but rather "trying to do things better in the long run." Let's see which of his colleagues agree.

# The Washington Post

## **Editorial: The District needs to tackle election reform**

January 15, 2014

Among the calculations some District voters are weighing in advance of Tuesday's Democratic primary is whether to bypass the person they most want elected in favor of a candidate whom they think might have a better chance of winning. Underscoring that dilemma is an expected low voter turnout and a large field of candidates that could produce a winner with a meager plurality. Not exactly the best recipe for democracy.

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# The New York Times

## **Letter to the Editor: The G.O.P.'s Edge in House Elections**

Sept. 12, 2014

By Austin Plier, FairVote Democracy Fellow

The Upshot article highlights how the geographical concentration of the Democratic base in urban areas creates a significant Republican bias in House elections. It suggests that this bias will exist as long as current demographic trends persist. However, there is a structural solution to the partisan bias prevalent in House elections: Congress needs to eliminate single-member districts. Our winner-take-all system often leaves large contingencies in single-member districts (on both sides of the political spectrum) without an elected official representing their beliefs. This is not representative democracy.

The solution is a fair representation voting system — promoted by the nonpartisan electoral reform group

FairVote — that replaces our current system with multi-member districts. With multiple seats, voters could elect candidates in proportion to their preferred party's strength in the electorate. The candidate-based campaigning synonymous with the American political tradition would still thrive; however, "the People's House" would more accurately represent the will of voters.

# The New York Times

## **Letter to the Editor: Trying to Ensure the Fundamental Right to Vote**

August 17, 2014

By Rob Richie, FairVote Executive Director

Your Aug. 12 editorial "Where Voting Is Now Easier," about the divergent directions states are taking on the accessibility of voting, underscores an unsettling reality: Our 50 states and more than 10,000 local jurisdictions structure and administer elections that are all separate and unequal. Our nation is long overdue for an explicit right to vote in the Constitution. In 1787, our founders were not ready to establish that right. Over time, the right to vote has advanced largely as a state right. Federal constitutional changes have expanded suffrage, but they have never established it as a fundamental right of American citizenship. Until we join most states and other nations in enshrining the right to vote in our Constitution, some states and localities will infringe on voting rights, whether by design or as a byproduct of running democracy on the cheap.

Congress is entertaining H.J. Res. 44 to put a right to vote in the Constitution, a measure backed by a growing number of local governments. Let's end the voting wars and accept voting as the fundamental democratic right that it is.

# The Washington Post

## **Best state Hawaii, where women have more parity in pay and politics**

October 2, 2014

By Reid Wilson

Women make up a substantial portion of Hawaii's elected officials, too. The state ranks third for gender parity in statewide political officeholders, according to [FairVote project] Representation 2020, a group that works to raise awareness about the under-representation of women in government. Only New Hampshire and Washington rank higher.... The

presence of so many women in office and in party leadership positions can lead more women to seek election, said Cynthia Terrell, who runs Representation 2020. “We’re looking to find more ‘queenmakers’ to join the kingmakers,” she said.

Southern states are far less likely to be governed by women, according to Representation 2020’s count. Virginia, which ranks last on the group’s list, has an astonishingly bad record: Just one woman has been elected to a statewide executive office — Mary Sue Terry, who served as attorney general from 1986 to 1993 — and only three have represented the commonwealth in Congress.

## THE OPEN STANDARD

### **Let’s Open Up U.S. House Elections**

October 29, 2014

By Krist Novoselic, FairVote Board Chair

Either way you cut it, it can be voters – and not political elites – that decide who is represented. This is done with modified at-large systems known as fair representation voting, or proportional representation. This takes the power out of the hands of political insiders and puts it where it belongs — with the voter.

Imagine if in 2010, when the Democratic Party controlled Congress, they had enacted a historic change to House elections. The new rules could have replaced single-winner districts with larger districts electing three winners by a fair representation system where a third of voters can elect a winner. Visualize rural Democrats and Massachusetts Republicans. The effect would be that more Democrats would get elected from rural areas — enough that the effects of gerrymandering and winner-take-all elections would be negated. Electoral outcomes would better reflect the voice of voters.... If a state like Massachusetts had three-seat districts, each one of them could send a GOP candidate as part of their state delegation. There you have it. Modified at-large voting can be good for Republicans. In addition to rural Democrats, Boston, and other urban centers around the nation, could elect GOP representatives.... Voters deserve an equal voice in electing their representatives. Fair representation voting gives voters, and not political insiders, real power. U.S. House elections are out of balance. We need to open up U.S. House elections to let people back into the People’s House.



### **Can National Popular Vote end the voting wars?**

April 17, 2014

By Rob Richie, FairVote Executive Director

A reform win in New York could foreshadow a cease-fire in the voting wars. On April 15, Governor Andrew Cuomo signed legislation making New York the 10th state to pass the National Popular Vote interstate compact for president. Overwhelming majorities of both Republicans and Democrats approved the bill, which seeks to guarantee election of the presidential candidate who wins the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The National Popular Vote plan has been working its way through the states since 2006. It offers an elegant reform solution that pleases conservatives by preserving state power over elections and the future of the Electoral College, yet satisfies liberals who back constitutional change to achieve direct election.... National Popular Vote has, from the beginning, emphasized the nonpartisan value of its proposal. For how can opponents convincingly argue that electing the candidate with the most votes is partisan? It’s an eminently fair fight — with strong candidates from both parties able to win. It comes down to whether parties have confidence in their policies and ability to earn majorities. If you do, you can be confident in winning majority support in a truly representative democracy....

The broader promise of setting aside the voting wars is tantalizing. Suppose the parties agreed to establish an explicit individual right to vote in the Constitution and passed measures that ensured no votes were cast by ineligible voters, but all eligible voters had fair access to the polls. Suppose Congress finally took on the problem of gerrymandered congressional districts and required all states to have independent commissions draw larger districts in which nearly all voters could elect preferred candidates using fair representation voting systems. Nothing would be better for restoring Americans’ faith in their elected officials if those officials made it clear that voters and their democracy come first. Our political leaders should be willing to allow fair completion and encourage high participation in exchange for earning the consent of the governed.