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CITIZEN
ADVISORY PANEL
ON COUNCIL
ELECTIONS
FINAL REPORT

Submitted to Seattle City Council
August 11, 2003

JIM COMPTON

Date: August 11, 2003

To: The Seattle City Council

From: Richard D. Ford, Chair
Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections

Re: Transmittal of the Panel's Report

I am pleased to submit the Report of the Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections in response to the Seattle City Council's Resolution 30509. The panel met over four months, commencing in mid-March and concluding in late July. This report and its appendices document the panel's outreach and efforts to identify and explain a range of electoral options for electing members of the City Council. Because the merits and the anticipated outcomes of the several options are highly subjective, the pros and cons we identified simply reflect the panel's consensus on likely arguments in a community debate about an option.

The Citizen Advisory Panel's sixteen active members are very diverse, with strong and conflicting opinions about the options and their merits. Some members were strong supporters of a particular option, and others equally opposed to a particular option. Most members wanted the panel to recommend a preferred option, some wanted no recommendations. In the end we presented a majority and a minority recommendation for city council and public consideration. It is our hope the report sheds light on the electoral options, and will serve to engage lively civic debate if electoral options are before the electorate in a proposed charter amendment.

To the reader of this report, while we tried to meld the perspectives of all 16 active panel members into the content, in the end the report was edited by the panel chairman. Each reader may wish to evaluate the impact of such editing on the quality of the work and its balance and fairness in presenting the collective views of the panel. With that human limit disclosed, the chairman wishes to thank all panel members for their hard work and for the rich and constructive dialogue around the issues of electoral reform. On behalf of all members of the panel, I want to extend our special thanks to City Council staff G. Saroja Reddy, John Taylor, and Nancy Roberts as well as panel facilitator Michael Bisesi, for their patience and extraordinary support of the panel's work.

REPORT OF THE CITIZEN ADVISORY PANEL ON
COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Submitted to the Seattle City Council on August 11, 2003

Active Panel Members¹

Richard Ford, Chair	Chairman and Partner, Preston, Gates and Ellis
Janet Anderson, Vice Chair	Chair of Washington Citizens For Proportional Representation
Chris Beer	Attorney, Invicta Law Group, PLLC
Stella Chao	Executive Director, International District Housing Alliance; Minority Executive Directors Coalition
Brewster Denny	Professor and Dean Emeritus, University of Washington
Michaelanne Ehrenberg	Attorney, Karr Tuttle Campbell
Joann Francis	Chief Administrative Officer, Sound Transit
Lester Goldstein	Retired Professor of Biology
Jody Haug	Chair, Planning Committee of the Ballard District Council
Wilda Heard	Doctoral Candidate, Educational Leadership, Seattle University
Randy Revelle	Vice President, Policy and Public Affairs, Washington State Hospital Association
Roger Valdez	Manager, Public Health -- Seattle/King County Tobacco Prevention Program
Brent White	Clerk, Seattle Personal Transit
Jeanette Williams	President, Citizen Sand Point Planning Association; Chair, Sand Point Community Liaison Committee
Richard Yarmuth	Attorney, Yarmuth, Wilsdon and Calfo
Karen Yoshitomi	Pacific Northwest Regional Director, Japanese American Citizens League

Panel Facilitator: Michael Bisesi, Professor, Director of Center for Nonprofit and Social Enterprise Management, Seattle University

Legislative Staff: G. Saroja Reddy, Nancy Roberts, John Taylor

¹ The designation of positions is intended for identification purposes only.

Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On August 12, 2002 the Seattle City Council adopted Resolution 30509 establishing an "Advisory Panel" to inform the public and to assist the Council in reviewing options for electing City Councilmembers. Panel members were appointed by the City Council in late February 2003. In the four months following its first meeting on March 13, 2003, the Citizen Advisory Panel has reviewed the history of Seattle's electoral system; received citizen and expert testimony on alternative electoral systems; reviewed writings on the options; and engaged in a lively discussion of the pros and cons and relative merits of the several electoral options Seattle voters might consider in the election of Councilmembers.

In the report that follows, the panel majority and its minority lay out "recommendations." While the panel did not agree on a single recommendation, there is a consensus that there is a perceived "problem" with the City Council, which some members of the public attribute to the current electoral system. The panel has distilled this perception into a "problem statement." The recommendations seek to address this problem statement, which is based on citizen comment, expert testimony, and panel members' personal views. Specifically the problem statement points to several perceptions of the status quo, including lack of access by many citizens to councilmembers; lack of responsiveness; the high cost of campaigning; the balance of power between the mayor and council; and the lack of balance in representation of diverse interests in the city.

With respect to recommendations, a clear majority of the panel determined that advocates for change in the electoral system failed to make the case for change. The minority concluded that broader and more diverse representation can be achieved by use of proportional representation voting. Whatever readers of this report may think of the majority and minority recommendations, it is hoped that in making the recommendations the panel may spark a community dialogue about issues that many Seattle citizens believe need to be addressed.

The outline of electoral options contained in the report and supporting materials in the appendices provide helpful information to inform public discussion. Those who seek precise analysis of the probable impact of the various electoral options on civic governance will be disappointed in this report. While there is substantial opinion about the virtues and flaws of the various electoral options, there is a dearth of evidence to prove beyond a doubt the perfect process for electing those who govern cities.

PANEL APPOINTMENT AND PROCESS

On August 12, 2002, the Seattle City Council adopted Resolution 30509, establishing "*an advisory Panel to evaluate options for electing City Councilmembers, to inform the public on such options, and to assist the City Council in reviewing possible amendments to the City Charter election provisions for City Council for possible inclusion on the 2003 ballot.*"

The resulting 19-member (of which only 16 actually participated) Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections was charged with: (a) assisting the Seattle City Council by reviewing the

various options for electing City Councilmembers: and (b) appraising the public of the pros and cons associated with the various systems. More specifically, the Panel was charged with considering "an array of electoral models in its consideration of options, including the current at-large system, geographic, proportional, a blended system or other systems of representation." The Panel was also asked to "be mindful of striking a balance between geographic accountability and creating an elected body that is able to balance neighborhood needs with a citywide and regional perspective."

The Panel met eleven times between March 13, 2003, and July 21, 2003. While the limited time frame for deliberations did not allow for an exhaustive empirical analysis, the Panel was able to organize a thoughtful and thorough approach to fulfilling its charge. The Panel received presentations from several speakers that informed the Panel's discussions (see Appendix 1 for a list of presenters). Mr. Walt Crowley, Executive Director of History Link, a Washington nonprofit, spoke at length about Seattle's rich electoral history and answered Panel member questions regarding the same (see Appendix 2). Professor David Olson of the University of Washington and Professor Todd Donovan of Western Washington University discussed the pros and cons of the various electoral systems and answered questions regarding the experience of specific cities (see Appendix 3). Mr. Stan Finkelstein, Executive Director of the Association of Washington Cities, presented the Panel with comparative data on the other cities and systems within Washington State (see Appendix 4). Appendix 5 includes an outline of the choice voting presentation given by Janet Anderson, one of the Panel members. A good description of proportional representation in Cambridge, Massachusetts is included in Appendix 6. An abstract of literature by political scientists regarding elections is presented in Appendix 7; and a paper by Mr. Charles T. Koon, an undergraduate student at the University of Washington, on the history of civic governance in Seattle, is included in Appendix 8. A City Council paper written in 1975 stating the Council's opposition to districting was distributed to Panel members and is included in Appendix 9.

In addition to the speakers and presentations identified above, Panel members heard from advocates for various systems, discussed criteria to be used in evaluating options, and participated in a simulated election using three different election methods: choice voting, a proportional method: cumulative voting, a semi proportional method: and the more traditional winner-take-all plurality voting format. With this ballot it was also possible to determine the outcome of an instant runoff election.

The Panel also considered community concerns about City Councilmember "access and responsiveness" and discussed how these concerns may also contribute to some community desires for system change.

Finally, two public hearings were held, one on June 23rd at the Municipal Building and the other on June 30th at New Holly Community Center. The purpose of the hearings was to invite public comment on the Panel's draft report that identified six election systems and the pros and cons of each (a seventh election system was added after public testimony). A list of witnesses, a summary of the hearings and the main themes introduced by the witnesses, and the e-mail responses are included in Appendix 10.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Certain citizen concerns and views that came to the attention of the Citizen Advisory Panel during its deliberations may be of interest to the Seattle City Council. How widely the concerns and views are shared we cannot determine, but we believe they are worthy of the City Council's attention. These problems, or perceived problems, underlie the concerns and dissatisfaction with the current state of affairs and have resulted in petitions being circulated that seek to change the way in which we elect City Councilmembers. Whether or not either of these measures ultimately appears on a ballot, the panel respectfully encourages the City Council to consider the sources of these movements and their perceived dissatisfaction in order to explore potential remedies and enhance whatever system is in place.

The following points comprise the key elements of the "problem statement." *These points are not presented as facts, but rather as perceptions of some citizens that interacted with the panel:*

1. Some Seattle citizens strongly believe that the current method of electing members of the City Council does not provide adequate representation of diverse groups and views.
2. Because of the lack of diversity in representation noted above, City Councilmembers are less accessible and responsive to those not adequately represented by the current electoral system.
3. Some citizens perceive the current electoral system is a root cause of the high cost of campaigning.
4. Some citizens believe the City of Seattle should do more to "level the playing field" in the financing and limiting of campaign costs including public financing or access to television and lowering the maximum contribution allowed to campaigns.
5. The current electoral system contributes to the downtown being a disproportionate beneficiary of the city's public investment in facilities and services. This perceived bias deprives neighborhoods of essential investment and services.
6. The balance of power between the mayor and city council can change based on the electoral system. There is a lack of clarity, however, on the probable impacts of the various electoral options on the balance of powers.

PANEL RECOMMENDATIONS

Majority Report (11)

(Stella Chao, Brewster Denny, Michaelanne Ehrenberg, Dick Ford, Joann Francis, Wilda Heard, Randy Revelle, Roger Valdez, Jeanette Williams, Richard Yarmuth, and Karen Yoshitomi)

A majority of the Citizen Advisory panel recommends keeping the current at-large system of electing members of the Seattle City Council. This recommendation is based primarily on the following three reasons:

- First, some members of the Panel are convinced, after consideration of other systems, that the current system is the best way to elect candidates to the City Council. In their view, the current system provides City Councilmembers with a broad perspective, allowing citywide interests and regional goals to be considered. The current system also helps maintain an appropriate balance of power and separation of powers between the mayor and city council. Under the current system, residents from all parts of Seattle who want access to a Councilmember can choose from among nine Councilmembers whose election they can influence directly.
- Second, other panel members feel strongly that while there are serious issues with the current function and responsiveness of the City Council raised by proponents of alternative systems, they failed to present a compelling case that these issues would be addressed by changing the current system of electing Councilmembers. Although these panel members are not enthusiastic about the current system, they did not find that other alternatives would necessarily lead to positive changes.
- Finally, there is a broad consensus that fundamental changes to the method of electing the City Council require compelling evidence that such changes would result in significant improvements to the overall quality of representation and governance of the City Council. No such compelling evidence was presented or found.

Considered together, these conclusions resulted in a majority opinion that the current system should be retained. The Panel strongly encourages the City Council to take seriously the concerns of the proponents of change to the current system, while at the same time exercising considerable skepticism about improving the Council's effectiveness, composition, and overall representativeness with any of the options presented in the Panel's report.

Minority Report (4)

(Janet Anderson, Lester Goldstein, Jody Haug, and Brent White)

The minority joins in consensus with the rest of the panel in its assessment that electing City Councilmembers by district would be undesirable. However, we feel that other options deserve further study and deliberation. We especially like the ranked-voting proportional representation system that was supported by 22 of the 32 people who testified or submitted written comments.

The signatories of the minority position feel that this proportional representation system is clearly superior to the status quo, for reasons detailed below. We recommend that another panel be convened to further study this system, and other options in comparison to the status quo.

Using the panel's criteria, we provide our assessment of how PR elections would better serve the interests of the Seattle electorate:

- *Does the system promote broad representation?* There can be no doubt that PR election systems ensure the broadest possible representation, reflecting the voters' preferences.
- *Does the system promote accountability of Councilmembers?* All Councilmembers must be highly accountable to constituents, but those elected by a particular segment of the electorate, as under PR, must be especially responsive to those constituents.
- *Does the system promote quality candidates?* Under the current at-large system candidates for one position may be undesirable, while candidates for another position may be exceptional choices. In a nonpartisan PR election, all candidates run against one another, providing voters the opportunity to choose the best of the total slate.
- *Does the system promote quality government?* Election systems can promote quality government ensuring that the best candidates representing the broadest range of the community's political views are elected. PR systems provide the voters the superior opportunity to achieve that result.
- *Does the system allow for addressing diverse issues?* PR elections allow for more minority political views to be represented and can address a great diversity of issues.
- *Does the system lower election costs?* Since PR elections do not require primaries for choosing candidates, PR elections would have lower costs than elections with both a primary and general election. Campaign costs may also be substantially reduced in PR elections because a candidate need only reach the appropriate 10 to 20 percent of the electorate the candidate wishes to represent, not the entire body of voters.
- *Does the system promote quality campaigning?* There are three powerful reasons why PR improves the quality of campaigns: (1) PR systems allow the voter to indicate her/his first, second, third, and other choices among the field of candidates; therefore, candidates will be constrained in slinging mud at opponents because they want to be considered for the second, third, and other choices if not the first choice; (2) when running against a relatively large field of opponents, a candidate will look silly disparaging lots of opponents; and (3), a candidate who needs just 10 to 20 percent of the vote will avoid the typical pabulum of being all things to all people and will focus on dealing forthrightly on those issues of most direct concern to those citizens the candidate wishes to represent.
- *Does the system promote voter participation?* When a voter has more choices and the chances are improved to elect someone who closely represents the voter's views, voter participation should increase.

- *The next two criteria — Does the system promote Councilmember responsiveness? and Does the system promote Councilmember accessibility? — can be taken together.* The most important factor influencing responsiveness and accessibility is the need for the Councilmember to run for re-election. It is a matter of considerable debate as to which system might be best in these regards. We can expect, however, that each Councilmember would be especially responsive and accessible to those responsible for their election.
- *Does the system promote the best checks and balances between Executive and Legislative power?* Checks and balances are, of course, primarily determined by the City Charter. We expect a city council elected by PR to possess powers resembling the powers currently enjoyed by the council elected via an at-large system, but we have insufficient evidence to know whether a PR-elected council would be stronger or weaker than the current one.

ABSTENTION

Panel member Chris Beer abstained from both the majority and minority recommendations. His comments are found in Appendix 12.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Since its founding, the citizens of Seattle have repeatedly struggled with and searched for the “best” electoral system from which to draw its city Councilmembers (see Appendix 11 “Seattle City Council Electoral Systems A Historical Timeline”). Incorporated in 1865, Seattle’s first city charter was revoked and then rewritten by the Republican controlled territorial legislature in 1869. Under the imposed system, a seven-member City Council was elected at-large until 1883.

From 1883 to 1910, Seattle experimented with no less than four different electoral systems: Councilmembers were elected by wards (districts), which ranged in number from 3 to 9, as well as by mixed systems which combined districts and at-large. From 1890 to 1896, Seattle had a 25 member Bicameral Council composed of a Board of Aldermen (9 at large) and a House of Delegates (2 from 8 districts). From 1896 to 1910, Seattle returned to a Unicameral Council made up of members elected by district (ranging in number from 9 to 14) and four members elected at large.

In 1910, the voters of Seattle approved another amendment to the city charter changing the size and nature of the City Council to a nine member, nonpartisan body elected completely at large. The change was supported by progressive Republicans, labor organizations, and business groups, but opposed by the incumbent politicians. The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* and the *Seattle Star* backed the reform, while *The Seattle Times* opposed it, arguing that the change would increase the power of special interest groups. Subsequent changes initiated by citizens and the State have continued to shape Seattle’s government and the dynamics of city hall:

- 1925 City manager system proposed and defeated.
- 1926 City manager system rejected again.
- 1927 Proposal to restore districts rejected.
- 1946 New City Charter approved establishing a nonpartisan City Council with nine members and an elected nonpartisan Mayor in what was characterized as a "strong council-weak mayor system.
- 1966 State law gives the Mayor new authority over preparation and administration of the city budget, tipping the power balance in favor of the Mayor.
- 1975 Proposal to elect some Councilmembers by district rejected.
- 1995 Proposal to restore districts rejected.

CRITERIA FOR REVIEWING OPTIONS

In addressing the pros and cons of the various election systems, the Citizen Advisory Panel considered a number of criteria, including but not limited to the following:

- Does the system promote broad representation?
- Does the system promote accountability of Councilmembers?
- Does the system promote quality candidates?
- Does the system promote quality government?
- Does the system allow for addressing diverse issues?
- Does the system lower election costs?
- Does the system promote quality campaigning?
- Does the system promote voter participation?
- Does the system promote Councilmember responsiveness?
- Does the system promote Councilmember accessibility?
- Does the system promote the best checks and balances between Executive and Legislative power?

The Panel members are split in their expectations of a voting system. Some members believe the most important measure of a good voting system is how well it mirrors the preferences of the electorate -- a group that makes up 30 percent of the electorate should be able to elect about 30 percent of the "representative" body. Other members believe the best election system produces "good governance." Good governance is defined by these members in a variety of ways: produces a strong council, produces good results for citizens, and promotes honest government.

In the literature reviewed by the Panel and the testimony received, there is reference to the advantage of incumbents and to well-financed candidates. No electoral system will affect this advantage. Consequently, none of the pros and cons in the options identified below address this issue.

COUNCIL ELECTION OPTIONS

Of the ten largest cities in Washington State, excluding Seattle, four elect Councilmembers by districts (Spokane, Tacoma, Yakima, and Bellingham) and six elect their Councilmembers at-large (Bellevue, Everett, Kent, Federal Way, and Spokane Valley elect by district).

Guest speakers cautioned the Panel against crediting the election methods used with the strength or weakness of the resulting government. Much of how well or poorly a governmental unit operates depends on the individuals involved rather than the method used to elect them. For the most part, the pros and cons of the various options are subjective and difficult to prove. The options listed below were offered by one or more Panel members and are not necessarily agreed to by the full Panel. In general, it was agreed that these "pros" and "cons" would appear in any debate about the options. As noted earlier, while the Panel's work was thorough and thoughtful, it became clear that substantial conflicting evidence could be mobilized to support or refute the alleged benefit of any particular election option. The Panel considered the following options:

- at-large by position (current system);
- at-large/no positions;
- at-large/choice/proportional;
- geographic districts;
- mixed: districts/at large;
- mixed: districts/choice; and
- primary nomination by district/general election citywide.

At-Large by Position (Current System)

At-large by position voting systems are characterized by the entire electorate voting for candidates who run by separate numbered positions. Thus, in a city with 400,000 eligible voters and nine Council positions, the entire pool of 400,000 voters could cast a vote for each of the nine positions.

Pros

- Provides elected officials with a geographically broad perspective, allowing citywide interests and regional goals to be considered.
- May mute the affects of parochial interests influencing elected officials.
- Residents from all parts of Seattle who want access to a Councilmember can choose from nine Councilmembers whose election they can directly influence.
- Citywide campaigns offer an excellent education for service as a Councilmember.
- Seattle's historical experience has shown that at-large election systems can result in greater efficiency and less corruption.
- May provide the largest pool from which to select candidates.
- Helps maintain an appropriate balance of power and separation of powers between the Mayor and the City Council.
- Seattle voters have historic experience with this system, and they understand how it works.
- Seattle's history has shown at-large elections can be conducive to electing minorities and women.

Cons

- May result in elected officials who pay less attention to, and have less familiarity, with some neighborhood concerns.
- May unduly enhance the influence of downtown business interests and other special interests.
- May contribute to the higher cost of elections.
- May reduce the accountability of elected officials by broadening the constituency served.
- As a winner-take-all system, may result in less representation of minority groups and/or views (for example, racial and ethnic groups, women, sexual minorities, and economic/political groups).

At-Large/No Positions

At-large citywide systems allow an unlimited field of candidates to run for a fixed number of seats. If citizens are allowed to cast one vote per seat and the top vote getters win each seat, the political majority will likely win most of the seats. An alternative method provides citizens with only one vote for the whole slate. In this case the winners will represent a broader political spectrum, but the majority perspective may be disproportionately low.

Pros

- Provides elected officials with a geographically broad perspective, allowing citywide interests and regional goals to be considered.
- May mute the effects of parochial interests influencing elected officials.
- Seattle's historical experience has shown that at-large election systems can result in greater efficiency and less corruption.
- Offers more choices to voters since all candidates are running against each other as well as newcomers. Candidates do not select specific opponents.
- May allow for election of certain minority groups.
- Residents from all parts of Seattle who want access to a Councilmember can choose from nine Councilmembers whose election they can directly influence.
- Citywide campaigns offer an excellent education for service as a Councilmember.
- Helps maintain an appropriate balance of power and separation of powers between the Mayor and the City Council.

Cons

- May result in elected officials who pay less attention to, and have less familiarity with, some neighborhood concerns.
- May contribute to the higher cost of elections.
- May reduce the accountability of elected officials by broadening the constituency served.

- May result in less representation of minority groups and/or views (for example, racial and ethnic groups, women, sexual minorities, and economic/political groups)) depending upon how many votes are allotted to each voter.
- May result in the voting majority being underrepresented.
- May unduly enhance the influence of downtown business interests and other special interests.

At-Large/Choice/Proportional

The rationale underpinning all proportional voting systems is that the representative elected body should mirror the make up of the electorate as closely as possible. A group of like-minded voters who make up about 30 percent of the electorate should have the ability to elect about 30 percent of the officials. Several different election systems will enable such proportional results. The Panel devoted its attention to the system currently being promoted by a charter amendment petition. It is known by several different names: choice voting, preference voting, and single transferable vote.

With this voting method, the electors rank their preferred candidate as their first choice. They may then go on to rank additional preferences. The voter will have only one vote that counts towards election, but if their first choice has insufficient support to win a seat, their vote will be transferred to their next choice if they have listed one. The result is that most voters will be able to elect one of their preferences and fewer votes are "wasted." If nine seats are to be elected, a little less than one ninth of the votes will be required to fill a seat.

Under this electoral system, only one election is required. There may be a series of vote counts to determine who wins the election. A primary election is optional.

Pros

- May be the most representative as an electoral model. Most voters will have the ability to elect someone who is one of their choices.
- Unlike winner-take-all elections that require over 50 percent of the vote to win, choice voting enables a winner to be elected with only 10 to 20 percent of the vote.
- May be deemed more "democratic" than most other systems by allowing a broader diversity of perspectives to be elected.
- Could reduce election costs for both the candidates and administrators because a primary election is not required with this system; the elimination process can take place on one ballot.
- May encourage participation of groups that traditionally have felt their views have not been represented.
- Campaigns may be more likely to focus on policy issues.
- Seattle could be the first city in the state to adopt such an innovative voting system, thereby setting an exciting example for others.
- This system allows neighborhoods to elect a representative if such representation is of prime importance to their voters.
- Similar systems have been used elsewhere in the United States.
- May not require a change in state law because Seattle is a home rule charter city.

Cons

- May be difficult for voters to understand the vote transfer process.
- Proportional representation is unfamiliar to most Americans and its adoption would require a significant educational component.
- Would require new software for King County voting equipment — a one-time new expense.
- May require a change in state law.
- In a crowded field, those with less financing may be at a disadvantage.

Geographic Districts

This system of elections divides a city into geographic districts that are more or less of equivalent size relative to population. Rather than running citywide, as Councilmembers do in an at-large system, they are elected by the voters within a district. This is a winner-take-all system in which one voter will have one vote to cast for a candidate. The political majority or plurality in each district will name the winner.

Pros

- Better representation for some groups than in at-large systems because the potential pool of constituents is smaller.
- May result in less costly campaigns for some candidates due to the small geographic area to be covered.
- May allow elected officials to be more responsive to their constituents.
- Simple for voters to understand and administer.
- Depending on housing patterns, may result in greater representation of ethnic and racial minorities.

Cons

- May lead to a focus on smaller parochial issues, at the expense of broad, regional issues.
- May increase the influence of moneyed special interests.
- Like all winner-take-all systems, overrepresents those who vote for the winner and underrepresents those who vote for the loser.
- Requires that districts be drawn.
- Raises issues of gerrymandering.
- Seattle does not divide into nine “natural neighborhoods” of equal population.
- Constituencies that are not defined geographically may not be served.
- Electing Councilmembers by district could result in Councilmembers becoming mini-mayors for their district.
- Voters can influence the election of only one Councilmember.
- May eliminate highly qualified candidates when more than one lives in the same district.

Mixed: Districts/At-Large

This is a winner-take-all electoral system that allows for some number of Councilmembers to be elected by all of the eligible voters in the City of Seattle and others to be elected in single member districts. Blended systems have all of the strengths and weaknesses of at-large and district systems, but are presumed, by blending the two systems, to create a unique electoral model, which maximizes the strengths of both systems while neutralizing the inherent weaknesses of both.

Pros

- Universal and parochial interests are represented, allowing citywide interests and regional goals to be advanced as well as neighborhood interests.
- Some campaigns may be less costly.
- May affect a balance between the influence of moneyed special interests and neighborhood interests.
- May provide for greater representation of minority groups and/or views (for example, racial and ethnic groups, women, sexual minorities, and economic/political groups).

Cons

- May create two classes of elected officials — at-large and district-based Councilmembers: the at-large Councilmembers may be perceived as more important than the district Councilmembers.
- District elected officials may focus on parochial issues.
- The system remains a winner-take-all system, and consequently may overrepresent those who vote for the winner and under-represent those who vote for the loser.
- Political and monetary costs are associated with defining districts.
- Because an at-large Councilmember will also live in a district represented by another district Councilmember, some neighborhoods would have “double” representation and may enjoy a disproportionate amount of power relative to other parts of the city.

Mixed: Districts/Choice

A compromise between a proportional system and a winner take all district system might work as follows: in one year voters elect four city Councilmembers, one from roughly each quadrant of the city. Two years later, they elect the five Councilmembers at-large using a choice voting proportional system. Such a combined system would theoretically give each voter six Councilmembers they could look upon as “theirs” (their own district plus the five elected at large). The proportional election would enable minority representation for any group that could gather together roughly 17 percent of the vote. Such a compromise might at least partially satisfy both groups that are advocating a change from our current system.

Pros

- May increase the opportunity for representation of citywide, neighborhood, and dispersed minority interests.
- May result in less costly campaigns. Winning a district seat would require roughly 51 percent of the vote (that would be about 13 percent of the citywide vote). The proportional seats would require about 17 percent of the vote, and campaign contributions would be collected citywide.
- May enhance Councilmember accountability as each voter will have multiple ways to be represented, and thus have multiple Councilmembers who feel a need to listen to them.
- May create a disincentive against mudslinging when ranked ballots are used.
- Would reduce the likelihood of gerrymandering, compared to a district system, since it would only be useful to a minority of Councilmembers.
- A mixed system using choice voting may be more stable given the American history of swinging back and forth between districts and at-large winner take all elections.
- May contribute to lower election costs because the Mayor and City Attorney, as well as district winners, could be elected using the same ballot style; for example, the voting results could be tallied using instant runoff voting principles. This could make possible the elimination of the cost of Seattle primary election and related expenses.

Cons

- The alternating form of elections may confuse many voters.
- Voters may be initially distrustful of the process for counting ranked ballots.
- There are additional costs for the district-drawing process and the software upgrade to count ranked ballots, potentially making this system the more expensive to administer. These increased costs may be somewhat offset by eliminating the need for a primary election.
- May create two classes of Councilmembers who are perceived differently.
- Because it is possible for an at-large Councilmember and a district Councilmember to be elected from the same neighborhood, some neighborhoods will have "double" representation, and may enjoy a disproportionate amount of power relative to other parts of the city.

Primary Nomination by District/General Election Citywide

Under this type of system, candidates would run by district for the primary and the winners would run in a citywide election. Such a system would theoretically give voters the best of district and at-large systems in that they would initially select candidates that represent smaller, geographically based constituencies, and the winners would represent citywide interests. This electoral system is how Seattle School Board members are elected.

Pros

- Better representation for some groups than in at-large systems because the potential pool of candidates is more representative of neighborhoods.

- May allow elected officials to be more responsive to their constituents.
- Provides elected officials with a geographically broad perspective, allowing citywide interests and regional goals to be considered as well as neighborhood interests.
- May mute the effects of parochial interests influencing elected officials.
- Residents from all parts of Seattle who want access to a Councilmember can choose from nine Councilmembers whose election they can directly influence.
- Citywide campaigns offer an excellent education for service as a Councilmember.
- Helps maintain an appropriate balance of power and separation of powers between the Mayor and the City Council.

Cons

- Like all winner-take-all systems, overrepresents those who vote for the winner and underrepresents those who vote for the loser.
- Requires that districts be drawn.
- May allow well-funded groups to more easily target candidates they wish to defeat.
- There are political and monetary costs associated with defining districts.
- May eliminate highly qualified candidates when more than one lives in the same district.
- May unduly enhance the influence of downtown business interests and other special interests.

CLOSING REMARKS

Attached to this report are several appendices that the more committed reader may find both enlightening and useful in any further consideration of changing the method of electing City Councilmembers. Those panel members who provided the minority recommendation believe the city council should further study the option of electing councilmembers under a PR system of voting. Appendix 6 provides information on a form of PR elections used in Cambridge, MA. Other appendices report on the comments of citizens and experts who appeared before the panel. Also, members of the panel were offered the opportunity to submit signed letters with their specific and personal views for inclusion in Appendix 12.

Appendix 1

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF PRESENTERS

The Citizen's Advisory Panel heard from the following guest presenters (listed in chronological order of presentation) who were scheduled based on calendar availability:

Charles T. Koon
Undergraduate Student, University of Washington

Jay Saucedo and Jeanne Legault
Seattle Districts Now Initiative

Walt Crowley
HistoryLink

George Griffin
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce

David Olson
University of Washington

Todd Donovan
Western Washington University

Stan Finkelstein
Association of Washington Cities

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Metropedias & Features

Title: Eckstein, Nathan (1873-1945)

Abstract:  Nathan Eckstein was a prominent citizen who came to Seattle after being in the grocery business for 10 years in New York. He married Mina Schwabacher in 1902 and served as vice president and then chief executive officer of Schwabachers and Co., one of the oldest business houses in Seattle. He was a member of the Seattle School Board (1913-1920), chairman of the Washington State Tax Commission (1921-1922), Campaign Chairman for the Seattle Community Fund which was the forerunner of United Way (1924, 1925), and a member of the commission to revise the City Charter (1925). On acceptance of the 1926 "Seattle's Most Useful Citizen" award, Nathan Eckstein stated "To be a useful citizen is more than a duty, it is a high privilege." Nathan Eckstein Junior High is named after him. [Full Text>>>](#)

Timelines

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Title: Voters choose non-partisan city council elected at large on March 8, 1910.

Abstract: On March 8, 1910, voters in Seattle approve amendments to the city charter that change the city council to consist of nine non-partisan members elected from the city at large. The change is supported by progressive Republicans, labor organizations, and business groups, but opposed by incumbent politicians. [Full Text>>>](#)

Title: Voters reject city manager system of government on March 10, 1925.

Abstract: On March 10, 1925, Seattle voters reject an amendment to the city charter that would place a city manager in charge the police and fire departments, City Light, and the Municipal Railway. *The Seattle Times* opposes the measure in a strenuous campaign. [Full Text>>>](#)


Title: Voters narrowly reject city manager plan on March 9, 1926.

Abstract: On March 9, 1926, Seattle voters narrowly reject a Municipal League plan for a business manager to run city government. The voters approve a slate of freeholders to draw up a new city charter. [Full Text>>>](#)

Title: Voters reject district city council elections and Rich Man's Charter on November 4, 1926.

Abstract: On November 4, 1926, Seattle voters reject a city charter proposal that includes a city manager, a return to district elections, and salaries of \$600 a year for city council members. Opponents call the proposal "The Rich Man's Charter." [Full Text>>>](#)

Title: Seattle voters approve new City Charter on March 12, 1946.

Abstract:  On March 12, 1946, Seattle voters approve the city government's first new Charter in half a century. The Freeholder-drafted structure establishes a non-partisan City Council with nine members, and a non-partisan Mayor, in what is characterized as a "strong council-weak mayor" system. It also creates or institutionalizes numerous citizen commissions for planning, parks, libraries, civil service, etc., and a powerful Board of Public Works (BPW) made up of the department heads for Building, City Light, Water, Parks & Recreation, and Engineering. Although substantially amended over the years, this document remains the organic law for Seattle city government. [Full Text>>>](#)


Title: Seattle voters narrowly approve new Monorail while King County rejects Referendum 51 transportation package on November 5, 2002.

Abstract: On November 5, 2002, Seattle voters narrowly approve a new Seattle Popular Monorail Authority and Washington voters reject the state Referendum 51 transportation plan and gas tax increase while approving Initiative 776, which cuts motor vehicle taxes. The Monorail plan calls for a 1.4 percent motor vehicle excise tax to raise \$1.75 billion to construct and operate a proposed "Green Line" from Crown Hill to West Seattle. Referendum 51 would have raised the gas tax and other fees to fund \$7.9 billion in road and transit improvements. Initiative 776, sponsored by populist tax-cutter Tim Eyman, caps the state motor vehicle excise tax at \$30 per year, and repeals previous increases, including revenues used by Sound Transit. [Full Text>>>](#)

People's Histories

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Title: Breaking In a New Mayor

Abstract:  In this op-ed essay for *The Seattle Times*, Walt Crowley compares the "transition" of Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels to that of Wes Uhlman, Charles Royer, Norm Rice, and Paul Schell. Crowley was an aide to Uhlman from 1972 to 1977 and served as deputy director of the former Office of Policy Planning under R. W. Woody Wilkinson. The essay focuses on the competition for control of policy-setting between the Seattle City Council and the Mayor under the City Charter. It was published on February 11, 2002. [Full Text>>>](#)

Oral History Transcripts

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Voters choose non-partisan city council elected at large on March 8, 1910.

On March 8, 1910, voters in Seattle approve amendments to the city charter that change the city council to consist of nine non-partisan members elected from the city at large. The change is supported by progressive Republicans, labor organizations, and business groups, but opposed by incumbent politicians.

Traditionally across the country, state and federal legislators were elected to represent geographic areas. This principle held in municipal government as well. In Seattle each of 14 wards elected a council member, and four council members were elected at large. Between 1890 and 1910, Seattle's population grew from 42,000 people to more than 238,000. The construction of streetcar lines allowed new neighborhoods to develop in the north end, the Rainier Valley, and West Seattle, which were annexed to the city in 1907. Georgetown would soon be annexed as well.

Alden Blethen (1845-1915) and his *Seattle Times* opposed both Amendment 12, for the at-large representation on the city council, and Amendment 13, for non-partisan primary and general elections. A *Seattle Times* editorial argued that municipal governments should follow the tradition of state and federal government. "Now comes a proposition to **abolish** [emphasis in original] those wards, each of which has a councilman to look after the special interests thereof, and proposes to **substitute nine councilmen-at-large** for the **fourteen councilmen** and the **four councilmen-at-large!**"

The Times editorial quoted from a letter from Mr. H. B. Harbin, a real estate and loan dealer, who asserted that Amendment 12 "will make it easy for any strong corporation, so desiring, to mass its support in favor

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of a select few who are known to favor its interests ..."

The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* and *The Seattle Star* backed the reform measures. *The Star* claimed, "The present system has been stubbornly tried for years and has never been anything but a failure, a disgrace, and oftentimes a jest. The present system is ideal for combinations, graft and the perpetuation of incompetent and dishonorable men in office."

Supporters said that council members looked to the interest only of their home districts and traded favors to back pet local projects. Districts whose councilmen were less influential, would suffer. The constant growth of Seattle and the increase in the number of wards would result in a council of unwieldy size. Backers included the Chamber of Commerce, the Central Labor Council, the Commercial Club, and the Manufacturers' Association. Opposing the measures were incumbent Republicans led by councilman and mayoral candidate Hiram C. Gill (1866-1919).

The *P-I* printed the position of the Rev. Mark A. Matthews (1867-1940), who supported reform. He stated, "[Amendment 12] means your emancipation from the serfdom and slavery of corrupt politics. Intelligent people are growing tired of the 'yellow-dog-collar-partisan methods.' ...Under the present method you are party slaves, more menial and helpless than the slaves of past days. If you will carry Amendment No. 12 it will mean your emancipation, your freedom and the prosperity of this city. ...[The reform amendments] are proposed and submitted to you by clean Republicans in order that you may be free men and have a clean Republican city government... They mean righteous government and prosperity, free from corruption and graft of every form."

Amendment 13, which changed elections to a non-partisan basis and eliminated the influence of party conventions, was supported because it would destroy the political machines which had evolved. *The Seattle Times* reported, "Someone is spending a lot of money in advertising a fight for the adoption of Amendment No. 12..." and predicted that the measures would pass.

Both measures passed and Gill was elected mayor in a record turnout. Election returns were projected onto a screen the Antlers Hotel by means of a stereopticon.

Sources:

"Dr. Matthews On Charter Changes," *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, March 6, 1910, p. 5; "Crowd Watches P.-I. Bulletins," *Ibid.*, March 9, 1910, p. 4; "Amendment No. 12 Makes For Economy In City Affairs," *Ibid.*, March 6, 1910, p. 6; "Most Of Amendments Expected to Carry," *The Seattle Times*, March 7, 1910, p. 14; "Defeat Amendments Eight and Twelve," *Ibid.*, March 6, 1910, p. 6; "Vote For Amendment No. 12," *The Seattle Star*, March 3, 1910, p. 4; Richard Berner, *Seattle 1900-1920*, (Seattle: Charles Press, 1991), p. 60, 191.

By David Wilma, April 18, 2002

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Appendix 3
Professors Olson and Donovan Speaking Notes

May 1, 2003

Professor David Olson

CITIZEN ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Dick Ford, Saroja Reddy, Janet Anderson, Christian Gunter

Pleased to be here to share some thoughts.

DJO: 6512 E. Green Lake Way N. (30 yrs); 30 yrs. Prof. Of Pol. Sci. at UW; chaired the dept. most of '80s; founded the Bridges Labor Center in early '90s; research and teach in state and city politics.

I'll offer ten minutes or so comments on At-Large vs. District Elections; my colleague from WWU's Pol.Sci. Dept. will then address preferential or choice voting systems, where he has particular expertise; then hopefully have a useful conversation.

First Point: Election laws and systems make a difference:

There is no such thing as an election system that does not favor some interests, and disfavor others; no such thing as "neutral", "objective", or "unbiased" electoral law.

Instead: Election systems affect: who runs, candidate qualities, what role the media, parties, interest groups play, who wins/loses, and, most imp. What kind of public policy results.

Second Point: At-Large vs. District systems.

Two most frequent electoral systems in US cities. Each one has its strengths, as well as its weaknesses.

Two completing philosophies, or visions of the city: at-large= there is such a thing as "the interest of the city as a whole" that all citizens benefit by, and designing electoral systems to achieve the "public interest" is paramount; district=challenges the notion of a single, uniform. "public interest" that affects all equally in the city, instead looks to diverse communities that compose the city, each with distinct (and often) competing interests.

At-Large Strength:

All members of the Council, elected by the whole constituency, better ensures attaining the "public interest". Employs "universalistic" criteria for candidate recruitment, conduct of the campaign, and public policy. All citizens in the city have an interest in economic development, growing a diversified and health local economy.

District Strength:

Substitutes "particularistic" for "universalistic" interests of the city. Argues that the interests of the "city as a whole" usually redound to the benefit of the C-B-D at the expense of diverse communities of interest composing the city. Attempts to bound elected councilors by district lines that reflect neighborhood groups, communities of interest specific to geographic areas of the city.

Here then are two competing visions of the city; arguing opposite electoral laws to ensure their vision is forthcoming. The two are seemingly irreconcilable.

At-Large Weaknesses:

Reduces turnout, specific to social class. Increases influence of C-B-D, large capital firms. Creates large role for special interests organized city-wide. Less campaign activity. Fewer contested elections. More costly campaigns. Advantages "name familiar" candidates. Reduces access. Less direct link to citizens. Leads to public policy favoring C-B-D, at expense of neighborhoods.

District Weaknesses:

Leads to provincialism, parochialism, balkanizes the city; neighborhood special interests replace city-wide special interests; may lead to pluralistic bargaining; increases clout of small capital firms, tendencies toward pork barrel legislation, tendencies toward cronyism, replaces the "public interest" with "partial, parochial interests".

150 year conflict between the two systems; each system has its strengths, each its weaknesses, seemingly irreconcilable.

Your task is to design and recommend an electoral system that enhances the positive and decreases the negative in an election system for Seattle. With Madison, I would urge you to check faction vs. faction; interest vs. interest; curb the worst of the flaws of either system and allow electoral expansion of their strengths.

My preferred system:

Toward a "mixed"/"modified" system.

Mixed/Modified System:

Mixed: 5 by district, 4 by at-large

Modified: 1. 4 at-large elected by preferential voting method
 2. 4 at-large do not run by position.
 3. Top 8 in primary go to general. Then preferential ballot.
 4. At-large run coincident with Mayoralty election.
 5. The 5 district elections are held in odd-election cycle, when Mayor not on the ballot.

1. Ensures "choice"; allows 'minority to be elected with as few as 25% of vote, if cohesive (whatever that 'minority' may be, by race, ethnicity, sexual preference, "Green Party", "New Party", or "Republican Party").
2. Make them genuinely "at-large", representing the 'city as a whole'.
3. Will ensure competition, trial by fire of a primary, pri/gen campaigns to inform voters.

4. On alternate election cycles, discuss and debate interests of the city as a whole, larger, unitary interests.
5. Ensures that 5 geographic districts define, discuss and debate neighborhood interests.

In election cycle #4, interests of the city as a whole; advantages C-B-D and economic development issues; daily newspapers; good govt. groups; reform tradition of Seattle; promote firm economic base.

In election cycle #5, interests of neighborhoods and discrete communities; weekly and neighborhood newspapers; ethnic/racial/gender/party minorities; strong neighborhood traditions of Seattle; quest for livable, residential Seattle; promote community interests.

Todd Donovan
Seattle Election notes
May 2003

Election rules provide a menu of options for producing different outcomes.

Electoral engineering /reform of local election rules has been used to accomplish various ends:

- reduce influence of electoral majorities, political parties (circa 1900)
- reduce influence of racial ethnic minorities (circa 1900 – 1940s)
- increase influence of racial/ethnic minorities (circa 1970s - today)
- increase influence of geographic groups/neighborhoods (1970s – today)
- etc.

Large list of factors in addition to election rules that affect participation, representation results from city election;

Variables include

1) partisan v. non-partisan ballots
non-partisan = less turnout

2) method of allocating seats

- at large (by post, by list), vs. geographic districts
- mixed system (at large & districted)

3) size of council

- number of members per district
- more council members = more minority representation

4) method of translating votes into seats

- majority (runoff?), plurality, semi-PR, PR
- each method sets a different “price” per seat in terms of votes

5) election cycle

- all seats up ea. election, 1/2 up, etc.
- if all seats up at once, different dynamic re: council representation under some election systems

6) timing of elections

on-year, off-year, odd v. even year elections
turnout higher in cities w/ "on year" elections.
lower in odd years

Cities vary greatly in election systems, since there are so many variables

not always easy to isolate which variables cause what...
thus, not easy for social scientists to isolate effects of district (vs at-large elections)

Crudely, cities might be classified re: how "reformed" or "unreformed" they are on a continuum that includes all of the variables listed above (as well as others such as civil service regs, public accounting processes, appointed city manager, strong v. weak mayor, allowance for ballot initiatives, etc.)

unreformed: partisan, districted, large council, plurality, on-year, weak civil service, strong mayor, no initiative process, etc.

vs.

reformed: non-partisan, at-large, small "n" council, city manager, weak mayor, majority, off-year elections, initiative process, etc.

in reality, everyone has a 'mixed' system that shuffles these variables in diff ways

What do we know about these 'reformed' more types of cities:

lower voter participation
upper SES bias in representation/composition of electorate
lower levels of minority representation
if racially polarized voting can be shown, and identifiable minority not winning council seats,
at-large elections subject to law suits under VRA.

What we think we know (but data less solid) or perhaps really don't know:

Reformed cities (w/ at-large elections) supposedly have:

- greater dominance of "business" interests vs. neighborhoods
- limited electoral competition
- more uncontested elections
- less public expenditure (??)
- less corruption (a dated, Machine-era argument?)

Again, hard to tease out which effects due to at-large elections, and which are due to the larger reform package

All this said, Seattle is an exception to what we know re: the identifiable effects of at-large election rules:

- no evidence of racially polarized voting
- solid evidence of descriptive representation of racial/ethnic minorities

Local Electoral Reform, 1960s – 1990s

motivated by:

- "winner-take-all" or "sweep" effect of AL elections, where any group w/ a simple plurality support will win every seat (see Justice William O Douglas)

if:

- racially polarized voting
- lack of descriptive representation or ethnic/racial groups

also, in some cities:

- elimination of AL elections a reaction against "downtown" interests dominating "neighborhoods" (e.g. San Jose)

outcome:

- VRA challenges to AL systems
- shift from AL to district
- shift from AL to mixed

What empirical effects shift AL to Districts?

- greater descriptive representation of African Americans
- greater Latina/o rep. (but effect less than w/ African Americans)
- less campaign activity

other effects (no empirical verification):

- more influence of “neighborhoods” vs. “downtown”

However

districted elections are still, “winner-take-all”, share some problems of winner take all elections associated w/ AL

limited electoral competition
uncontested seats/safe incumbents

Electoral Reform, 1990s - 21st Century:

motivated by:

increased racial/ethnic diversity
lack of dominant minority group
minority groups that are not geographically specific

political minorities subject to “sweep effect”

Increased interest in “Alternative” elections

Cumulative voting, limited voting, STV, choice voting, etc.

“Modified At-large” Elections

AL multi-member districts, but votes cast/counted such that “sweep” effect of AL ended.

Used now in dozens of places in US (city & county councils, school boards)

Peoria, IL, Alamogordo NM, Amarillo, TX – towns in TX, AL, SD, NC
Cambridge, MA

What happens when city/town changes from standard AL to:

Single member districts vs.
AL modified with some form of “preferential” voting

Recent research shows us both “worked” in increasing racial minority representation

With standard, old-fashioned AL:

- most (84%) seats uncontested
- takes plurality to defeat inc.
- little minority representation
- low turnout

With SMD,

- less cost per seat
- many (43%) of seats still remained uncontested
- still takes plurality to defeat inc.
- no change in turnout

With at-large modified with cumulative voting (CV)

- more campaigning
- nearly all seats contested
- no longer takes plurality to defeat inc.
- more diversity in racial & ethnic representation
- 5% increase in turnout

Implications for Seattle:

If some number of seats to be elected AL, consider modifying AL with CV, Choice voting, etc.

of seats determines threshold at which candidate can't be denied seat if receiving certain proportion of vote:

- If 5 seats elected at once, 17% = threshold of exclusion
- If 4 seats elected at once, 20% = threshold of exclusion
- If 3 seats elected at once, 25%
- If 2 seats elected at once, 33%

This ends sweep effect of standard AL, where all seats are won by similar blocks of candidates supported by the same block of voters

Modified at-large is **not** a "proportional representation" system – candidates with majority/plurality support continue to win most seats; candidates above the threshold of exclusion can win some; candidates with less than threshold support win nothing. Rather, it is a "semi-proportional" system.

Modified at-large allows for geographically dispersed groups to win seats
people who can't muster majority/plurality in any single district can elect candidates if they have votes beyond the threshold citywide

Council members campaign city-wide

Need not see their electoral coalitions as “zero sum game”

A single candidate can make campaign appeals to groups who might otherwise not agree (silly example – appeal to Republicans and environmentalists for support), since voters can give some votes to candidate 1, some to candidate 2, etc.

City Council Elections - At-Large, Ward or Mixed Systems?

Stan Finkelstein Handout

Table 1: U.S. Cities with At-Large Systems of Councilmanic Elections

Cities that appear to have always had an at-large system		Population		
Cincinnati, OH		331,285		
Detroit, MI		951,270		
Cities that have changed from a ward/district system		Year Decided	Reason for Change	Population
Portland, OR		1913	Vote of the people ¹	529,121

At-Large System Notes:

1. "Vote of the people" is a generic label used when specifics about the actual mechanism of change were not available but when it was clear that a measure was proposed to the people.

Table 2: U.S. Cities with Ward/District Systems of Councilmanic Elections

Cities that appear to have always had a ward/district system		Population		
Minneapolis, MN		382,618		
Albuquerque, NM		448,607		
Milwaukee, WI		596,974		
Cities that have changed from an at-large system		Year Decided	Reason for Change	Population
Memphis, TN		Unknown ¹	Unknown	650,100
San Francisco, CA		1996 ²	Citizen initiative	776,733
Dallas, TX		1971	Lawsuit	1.2 million
San Diego, CA		1988 ³	Citizen initiative	1.25 million
Phoenix, AZ		1982	Citizen initiative	1.3 million

Ward System Notes:

1. It appears that there was a change, though no specific information was accessible.
2. At-large council elections only existed for approximately 20 years prior to 2000, representing only a temporary switch from and to a ward system.
3. From 1931 to 1988, San Diego nominated its council members by district but elected them at large.

Table 3: U.S. Cities with Mixed Systems of Councilmanic Elections

Cities that appear to have always had a mixed system		Population		
Tucson, AZ ¹		486,699		
Baltimore, MD		651,154		
Cities that have changed from an at-large system		Year Decided	Reason for Change	Population
St. Louis, MO		1943	Vote of the people ²	348,189
Denver, CO		1968	Vote of the people	554,636
Boston, MA		-1980 ³	Unknown	589,141

Mixed System Notes:

1. According to accessible information, Tucson has had a mixed system (nominations by ward, elections at-large) since at least 1930, and there is no evidence that it used a different system before then.
2. "Vote of the people" is a generic label used when specifics about the actual mechanism of change were not available but when it was clear that a measure was proposed to the people.
3. A clear date or mechanism of change could not be identified. However, a 1985 court case notes, "Boston has recently changed its voting system to one of District selection, a fact that should help increase minority voter influence." Latino Political Action Committee v. City of Boston, 609 F. Supp. 79 (D. Mass., 1985) aff'd 784 F. 2d 409 (First Circuit, 1986). 1980 was selected as an approximation of "recently," as mentioned above.

Table 4: Councilmanic Elections in Ten Largest Washington Cities (excluding Seattle)

Cities	2000 pop.	Form of gov't ¹	No. council positions ²	No. elected at large	No. elected by district	No. of districts
Spokane	195,629	MC	7	1	6	3
Tacoma	194,900	CM	8	3	5	5
Vancouver	143,560	CM	7	7	0	0
Bellevue	117,000	CM	7	7	0	0
Everett	96,070	MC	7	7	0	0
Kent	84,275	MC	7	7	0	0
Federal Way	83,850	CM	7	7	0	0
Spokane Valley	80,693	CM	7	7	0	0
Yakima	79,120	CM	7	3	4	4
Bellingham	69,260	MC	7	1	6	6

1. CM = Council-Manager; MC = ^{Mayor} Manager-Council

2. Mayors are included in the count of councilmembers in Council-Manager forms of government.

Table 5: Washington Cities with *Mixed or Ward* Systems of Councilmanic Elections

Cities	2000 pop.	Form of gov't ¹	No. council positions ²	No. elected at large	No. elected by district	No. of districts
Spokane	195,700	MC	7	1	6	3
Tacoma	194,500	CM	8	3	5	5
Yakima	73,040	CM	7	3	4	4
Bellingham	68,890	MC	7	1	6	6
Kennewick	55,780	CM	7	1	6	3
Bremerton	37,260	MC	9	0	9	9
Puyallup	33,900	CM	7	1	6	3
Pasco	33,010	CM	7	2	5	5
Mount Vernon	26,460	MC	7	1	6	3
Pullman	24,540	MC	7	1	6	3
Bainbridge Island	20,740	MC	7	1	6	3
Aberdeen	16,490	MC	12	0	12	6
Centralia	14,950	CM	7	3	4	4
Anacortes	14,850	MC	7	0	7	7
Camas	12,970	MC	7	1	6	6
Bonney Lake	9,980	MC	7	2	5	5
Hoquiam	9,035	MC	12	0	12	6
Sedro-Wooley	8,700	MC	7	1	6	6
Burlington	6,995	MC	7	1	6	6
Colville	5,010	MC	7	1	6	3
Blaine	3,855	CM	7	1	6	3
Dayton	2,715	MC	7	1	6	3
Ritzville	1,745	MC	7	2	5	5
Roslyn	1,017	MC	7	1	6	6

1. CM = Council-Manager; MC = ^{Mayor} Manager-Council

2. Mayors are included in the count of councilmembers in Council-Manager forms of government.

Outline of Choice Voting Presentation

The prime measurement of an election system must be how well it represents those who do the electing. John Adams, the second President of the United States argued that legislatures "should be the exact portrait in nature, of the people at large, as it should think, feel, reason and act like them".

This presentation is divided into five parts:

1. Examples of how poorly winner-take-all elections accurately reflect the electorate.
 - At-Large by Position and Single Member Districts are both examples of winner-take-all elections
 - Several speakers pointed out how many cities, including Seattle, have moved back and forth between these two methods, dissatisfied with elements of both.
 - Both methods exaggerate the representation for the winners and preclude representation of those who did not vote for the winner. (Copies of most of the charts shown are available).
2. Demonstrate how a proportional election system works. We will conduct a mock election using a proportional system (Choice Voting) and also a winner-take-all system (Plurality) and compare the results.
3. We will discuss the elements of the petition being circulated to amend the City Charter. It would:
 - Elect 9 council members at-large in un-numbered positions. (All candidates running against each other.)
 - After initial "unstaggering" of council seats, terms would be 4 years.
 - Elect Mayor and City Attorney using same choice ballot, but the results will be counted in a slightly different way which is currently being called Instant Runoff Voting (IRV).
 - Use the results of council election to fill any between terms vacancies that may arise.
4. Summarize the advantage of conducting Seattle elections using Choice Voting.
 - Combines the best features of District and At-large. A win-win for all voters.
 - Encourages candidates to have a citywide understanding of issues.
 - Allows neighborhood representation IF enough of the neighborhood supports the same candidate. Allows political minorities to "pool" their votes if their favorite candidate lives in another part of town.
 - Allows true diversity and representation of almost ALL voters on the council. Maximizes the number of Communities of Interest that can be represented.
 - Increases voter turnout since everyone's vote would be more meaningful and everyone would have a better chance of electing a representative who best reflects their own points of view.
 - Enables the political majority to elect the majority of the city council, but would allow representation of any minority group that can gather together 1/9th of the total vote.
 - Could eliminate the need for non partisan primary elections and significantly reduce campaign costs
 - Discourages negative campaigning, since candidates who engage in mudslinging would have difficulty getting second-choice votes from other candidates' supporters.
 - Would elect the Mayor and City Attorney using IRV, (instant runoff vote).
 - Is easily accomplished with current election equipment.
 - Is cheaper to conduct than District Elections when the costs of re-districting are included.
 - Is as easy for voters to understand as 1,2,3.
5. Finally we will hear from a Seattle voter, Greg Hill, who has moved here from Cambridge, Massachusetts where they have used Choice Voting for over 60 years.

Numerous speakers have emphasized the uniqueness of Seattle. It is therefore the perfect location to think "out of the box" and lead the State in election reform.

Mathematics of Elections

How many effective votes should a voter have?

- With Single Member Districts – voter has 1 vote. The voter who supports the winner has a representative. Those who supported the losers do not.
- When voting At-large by position – voter has 1 vote per position. If 5 positions are up for election – voter casts 5 votes. Those who vote for the winner have 5 representatives; those who vote for losers have none.
- With Choice Voting, the voter may prioritize his favorites among many choices, but will have 1 vote that will usually count for a winner. If his 1st choice cannot be elected, his vote needn't be wasted, his vote can be transferred to his next choice.

How many voters have the power to elect?

In winner-take all elections with 2 finalists, 50% + 1 win the representation and up to 49% of the voters may be unrepresented.

Ideally we would like 100% to win representation.

Now lets do a little out of the box thinking. Instead of dividing up the land into 9 districts, what happens if we divide up the council into 9 at-large, with no numbered seats?

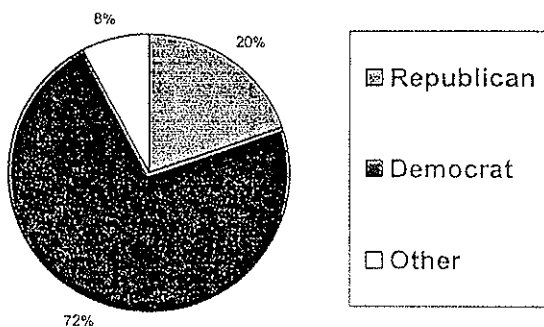
Total voters divided by 9 = 11%. Now 89% of the voters have the power to elect a representative.

If the Council is divided by 4, each seat requires 25 %.

If divided by 5 each seat requires 20 %.

Election System	Seats To Be Elected	Percent of Votes To Win	Wasted Votes - No Power to Elect
Winner-Take-All	1 per district or At-large by position	50% + 1 if 2 finalists	Up to 49% might not elect someone
Choice Voting	13	8%	Up to 7% might not help elect someone
	9	11%	Up to 10% might not help elect someone.
	5	20%	Up to 19% might not help elect someone.
	4	25%	Up to 24% might not help elect someone.

2000 Presidential Votes - Seattle



Policy on Proportional Representation
Adopted by national American Civil Liberties Union
April 1, 2001

The ACLU has long recognized the relationship between the rights of citizens and the opportunity to cast a meaningful and effective vote. The denial or dilution of political representation violates the constitutional principles of political fairness and equal protection.

One aspect of a meaningful vote is the opportunity to join with like-minded voters in support of candidates who are committed to advancing that group's shared interests. Another aspect is the availability of electoral mechanisms that enable groups of voters to have a realistic prospect of electing candidates of their choice in rough proportion to the group's size and prominence in the electorate. When an electoral mechanism compromises the ability of groups to share in the exercise of political power, it violates the spirit of the U.S. Constitution.

The ACLU whole heartedly supports efforts to protect fair representation for ethnic and racial minorities through the creation of majority minority districts. Since single member districting is sometimes unable to provide sufficiently diverse representation in elected bodies, we believe that alternative voting systems, including single transferable vote (Choice Vote), cumulative voting, party list, and mixed member, as well as other preferential voting systems may enhance such diverse representation. Statutory barriers to the adoption of such alternative systems should be removed, and the use of these systems should be adopted where appropriate. (Emphasis and Parenthesis added by JA)

The League of Women Voters of Washington:

- Supports adoption of election methods that produce proportional representation when electing representative government bodies such as councils, legislatures and Congress.
 - Supports the concept of a majority vote requirement for winners of single offices such as mayor or governor, as long as it is achieved using a voting method such as the Instant Runoff Vote, rather than a second, separate runoff election.
 - Believes that consideration should be given, when evaluating election systems, to how well they promote "representative-ness," citizen participation and accountability.
 - Supports state election laws allowing for more options for alternative election systems in governmental jurisdictions at both the state and local levels.
-

The only major democracies in the world which do NOT use some form of election which produces Proportional Representation are England and its former colonies of Canada, India and the United States. Australia rejected winner-take-all voting systems long ago as did the Republic of Ireland. New Zealand changed their national system in 1993 and its smaller governmental units are gradually converting. It appears that Scotland will convert to Choice Voting in 2007 and British Columbia has recently announced the formation of a Citizens Assembly on Electoral Reform which could result in a referendum changing the voting system in 2005. Although England has not yet changed its national voting system, it does use a proportional system to elect its delegates to the European Union and required that a proportional election system be included in Northern Ireland's new constitution. In the United States a growing number of Universities are adopting proportional systems for their student body elections.

Election Commission > Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 54A

Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 54A

ELECTION OF CERTAIN CITY AND TOWN OFFICERS BY PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION OR PREFERENTIAL VOTING

Sec.

1. Definitions; applicability of chapter.
2. Petitions; filing; certification of signatures; referendum; adoption.
3. Nomination of candidates.
4. Ballots; form; contents.
3. Printing of ballots; arrangement of names; number of ballots.
6. Central counting place of ballots; director.
7. Challengers; witnesses; watchers; other representatives.
8. Use of ballot boxes; procedure.
9. Rules for counting ballots and determining results.
10. Ballots; preservation; examination.
11. Publication of statements regarding ballots cost
12. Recount of ballots.
13. Vacancies in bodies elected by proportional representation; filling.
14. Ballots; rules for counting where election by preferential voting.
15. Vacancies in single elective offices; filling.
16. Mechanical or other voting devices; methods of counting first choices.
17. Applicability of general laws relating to elections and corrupt practices.

Original chapter 54A §§ 1-16, added by St.1937, c. 345, which related to the same subject matter as the present chapter, under a slightly different heading, was stricken out by St.1938, C. 341, § 1, which inserted the present chapter 54A §§ 1-17 in place thereof.

Cross References

Arrest for violating provisions of this chapter, warrant not needed, see c. 56 § 57.

Cities or towns, laws relating particularly to shall prevail if a conflict, see c. 50, § 6.

Counting ballots before voting ceased, see c. 54, § 105.

Definitions of terms used in this chapter, see c. 50, § 51.

Jurisdiction of courts enforcement of provisions of this chapter, see c. 56, § 59.

Jurisdiction of supreme judicial and superior courts in enforcing chapters 50-56 inclusive, see c. 50, § 59.

Laws relating particularly to any city or town, see c. 50. §

"Elective officer" or "officer" shall mean any officer of any city or town, not a member of a body as herein defined, who is elected at large.

"Proportional representation", shall mean any proportional representation method of election authorized by this chapter.

"Preferential voting" shall mean the preferential voting method of election provided for in this chapter.

This chapter shall not apply to any town wherein official ballots are not used at town elections. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1, as amended St.1941, c. 345.

Cross References

Applicability to district elections, see c. 41, § 114.

Applicability to town elections, see c. 41, § 6.

Applicability to town elections and primaries upon establishment of voting precincts, see c. 43A, § 3.

§ 2. Petitions; filing; certification of signatures; referendum; adoption. A petition in a form prescribed as hereinafter provided, signed in person by registered voters of any city or any town as to which this chapter applies, equal in number to at least ten per cent of the registered voters thereof, petitioning that all the members of any particular elective body as to which this chapter applies, specified in the petition, to be composed of any odd number of members not more than fifteen in a city, or any number then permitted by law in a town, which is specified therein, be elected at large by proportional representation, or that any particular elective officer, specified therein, be elected by preferential voting, and that the question of adopting the proposed change be submitted to the voters of such city or town at a regular municipal election, as specified therein, may be filed with the city or town clerk not later than sixty days prior to such a municipal election; provided, that this section shall not authorize the filing of a petition for the submission of such a question relative to a body or officer except at the regular municipal election next preceding a regular municipal election at which successors to one or more members of such a body are to be elected or a successor to such officer is to be elected, as the case may be: and provided, further, that this section shall not authorize the submission of such a question relative to any body the members of which are already authorized to be elected by proportional representation.

The city or town clerk shall prescribe the form of the aforesaid petitions which shall conform to the provisions of section thirty-eight of chapter forty-three relative to initiative petitions in cities governed by said chapter.

Within twenty days after the filing of any such petition, the city or town clerk shall transmit the same to the registrars of voters who shall certify upon such petition the number

16.

Prosecutions for violating provisions of this chapter not placed on file. see c. 56, § 58.

Removal of ballots from ballot box, exception thereto, see c. 54 § 105.

Section providing for determination of results of election not to derogate from this chapter. see c. 50, § 2.

Speedy trial of actions involving election laws, see c. 211, § 59A.

Temporary city clerk, appointment of, see c. 41, 1§ 14

Town boards, filling of vacancies in, exceptions thereto, see c. 41, § 11.

Town officers, election of, see c. 41, § 6.

§ 1. Definitions; applicability of chapter. The following words, as used in this chapter, shall, unless the context otherwise requires, have the following meanings:

"Elected at large" shall mean elected by and from all the voters of a city or town.

"Elective body" or "body" shall mean any body, board or commission of any city or town, whether or not any or all of its members are elected at large, including the school committee, the selectmen of a town and the legislative body of a city, or either branch thereof, but shall not include the town meeting members of any town.

"Elective office" or "office" shall mean any office in any city or town, other than that of a member of a body as herein defined, the incumbent of which is elected at large.

(1) Referendum on the election at large by proportional representation of the members of (insert name of the elective body specified in the petition) of the (city or town) of

Shall the (insert name of the elective body specified in the petition) of this (city or town) be elected by proportional representation as authorized in chapter fifty-four A of the General Laws, said body to consist of (insert number) members, all to be elected at large?

YES

submission to a vote of the question proposed by the earlier petition. Should the result of such vote be adverse thereto, proceedings shall then be had upon the petition under this chapter as though it had been filed on the day when such vote on the earlier petition was cast. Added St. 1938, c. 341, § 1, as amended St. 19 c. 378, § 17; St. 1941, c. 640, § 6

NO

(2) Referendum on the election by preferential voting of (insert title of the elective officer specified in the petition) of the (city or town) of

Cross References

YES Initiative and referendum petitions, generally, see

of signatures which are names of registered voters in such city or town; provided, that the registrars need not certify a greater number of names than is equal in number to twelve per cent of the registered voters therein.

Within twenty days after the filing of any such petition, the city or town clerk shall transmit the same to the registrars of voters who shall certify upon such petition the number of signatures which are names of registered voters in such city or town; provided, that the registrars need not certify a greater number of names than is equal in number to twelve per cent of the registered voters therein.

If such a petition, signed by the requisite number of voters of a city or town and otherwise conforming to the provisions of this section, is filed with the city or town clerk and the signatures thereon certified as hereinbefore required, there shall be printed on the official ballot to be used in such city or town at the election specified in such petition, the question of the adoption of the change petitioned for, in the form set forth in the first of the following questions, in case the change will affect an elective body or in the form set forth in the second, in case it will affect an elective officer, the blanks in either such question to be properly filled in:-

Shall the (insert title of the elective officer specified in the petition) of this (city or town) be elected by preferential voting as authorized in chapter fifty-four A of the General Laws?

NO Const.Amend, art. 48.

Method of electing town officers, see c. 41, § 1.

Provisions of section not applicable, see c. 41, § 1.

If, pending the determination of the question of electing by proportional representation the members of any elective body proposed by a petition already filed under this section, a petition presenting the question of so electing the members of such body but specifying a different number of members shall be presented for filing with a city or town clerk, no action shall be taken upon the later petition except to file it, until after the submission to a vote of the question proposed by the earlier petition. Should the result of such vote be adverse thereto, proceedings shall then be had upon the later petition as though it had been filed upon the day when such vote on the earlier petition was cast.

Notes of Decisions

Library references

Statutes [key]344

C.J.S. Statutes § 122

1: In general

A difference among the several cities of the commonwealth resulting from adoption by one of them of a form of government providing for proportional representation involving limited and preferential voting, is not constitutionally objectionable on ground of inequality in the right of duly qualified voters to elect officers among the several cities of the commonwealth. *Moore v. Election Commissioners of Cambridge* (1941) 35 N.E.2d 222, 309 Mass. 303.

§ 3. Nomination of candidates. Notwithstanding any provision of general or special law, nominations of candidates to be elected to such a body or office shall be made only by nomination papers; and, except as hereinafter provided, the provisions of special law, if any, relative to the nomination of candidates by nomination papers for election to such body or office shall apply with respect to such nominations or, if there is no such special law, the provisions of general law relative to such nominations shall so apply.

The number of signatures of voters of a city or town required for nomination of a candidate for election as a member of any such elective body shall be not less than or nor more than two for every two hundred votes cast for governor at the preceding biennial state election in such city or town, and for nomination of a candidate for election to any such elective office not less than one nor more than two for every one hundred votes so cast; and any nomination papers for election to any such body or office bearing more than the maximum number of signatures permitted by this section shall be invalid. Nomination papers shall be issued by the city or town clerk to any such candidate, upon request, to such number as will provide spaces for signatures equal to three times the number of signatures required for the nomination of such a candidate, but no more. A voter may not sign the nomination papers of more than one candidate for election as a member of any such body; and if a voter signs nomination papers of more than one such candidate his signature shall be invalid on all such papers except the first one acted upon by the registrars of

If a majority of the votes cast upon any such question relative to a body or officer of a city or town is in the affirmative the following provisions of this chapter, so far as apt, shall apply with respect to such body or officer and shall become operative with respect to the regular municipal election of such city or town next succeeding the vote on such question, provided, that if the terms of all members of such a body in office immediately preceding such election will not so expire that successors to all the members will be required by law to be elected at such election, the operation of such provisions shall be suspended and, as the terms of the members so in office, other than those having the longest unexpired terms, expire, their successors shall be elected, by the voting system then in effect, to serve only for terms of such length that the terms of all members so in office will expire at the same time.

At the regular municipal election immediately preceding the termination of the terms of all members of such a body, the full number of its members as specified in the question shall be elected at large, to serve for terms of the same length as the longest term then established for any of its members, by proportional representation and in accordance with the provisions of law governing elections to such body which are not inconsistent with this chapter, and thereafter as the terms of the members so elected expire their successors shall be elected in the same manner and, except as otherwise provided by chapter forty-one in the case of a town, for the same terms.

At the regular municipal election immediately preceding the termination of the term of such an elective officer, his successor shall be elected, for the same term of office as then provided by law, by preferential voting and in accordance with the provisions of law governing elections to such office which are not inconsistent with this chapter.

If, pending the determination of the question of the adoption of one of the plans provided for by chapter forty-three, which has already been filed, a petition under this chapter shall be presented for filing with the city clerk, no action shall be taken upon the petition under this chapter, except to file it, until after the

voters. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Library references: Elections [key]126(1), 141; C.J.S. Elections §§ 106, 111.

Cross references

Nomination papers, number of voters can sign, exception thereto, see c. 53, § 7.

Signing nomination papers generally, see c. 53 § 7.

§ 4. Ballots; form; contents. At any election at which members of such a board are to be elected by proportional representation or such an officer is to be elected by preferential voting, official ballots for such purpose shall be prepared and furnished by the city or town clerk. There shall be a separate form of ballot for each such body and for each such officer, and each such separate form of ballot shall be of a different and clearly distinguishable color from that of any other form of ballot prepared and furnished at the public expense for use at the same election.

On such ballots for use in elections by proportional representation or preferential voting, there shall be printed the following directions to voters, the first sentence under the heading to be printed in prominent bold-faced type.

DIRECTIONS TO VOTERS

DO NOT use X marks.

Mark your choices with NUMBERS only.

Put the figure 1 opposite your first choice, the figure 2 opposite your second choice, the figure 3 opposite your third choice, and so on. You may mark as many choices as you please.

Do not put the same figure opposite more than one name.

If you spoil this ballot, return it for cancellation to the election officer in charge of the ballots and get another from him. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Library references: Elections [key]166, 170; C.J.S. Elections § 156.

§ 5. Printing of ballots; arrangement of names; number of ballots. Ballots used in elections to such a body or office by proportional representation or

Director of count, penalty for interfering with, see c. 56, § 48.

Failure to perform general duties, penalty for, see c. 56, § 22.

General penalty provisions, See c. 56, § 22.

Improper disposition of ballots and lists. see c. 56, § 16.

Municipal elections in city adopting charter plan, this section applicable, see c. 43, § 113.

Officers qualified to administer oaths, see c. 222, § 1.

Penalty for interfering with election officials appointed under this section, see c. 56, § 48.

Supervision of counting of ballots, see section 9 of this chapter.

Violation of provisions relating to disposition of ballots, penalty for, see c. 56, § 16.

§ 7. Challengers; witnesses; watchers; other representatives. At each election by the method of proportional representation or preferential voting any candidate for election by such method

preferential voting shall be printed in as many lots as there are candidates for election thereto. In the first lot the names of the candidates shall appear in the alphabetical order of their surnames. In the second lot the names shall appear in the same order except that the first name in the first lot shall be placed last. In each succeeding lot the order shall be the same as that of the lot preceding, except that the first name in that preceding lot shall be placed last. Sets of ballots to be used at the several polling places shall be made up by combining ballots from the different lots in regular rotation, so that no two successive voters shall receive ballots from the same lot, and so that each candidate's name shall appear first and in each other position substantially the same number of times on the ballots used. The number of ballots provided for each polling place shall exceed by twenty per cent the number of voters entitled to vote thereat. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Applicability to municipal elections in cities under governmental Plan E, see c. 43, § 113.

Municipal elections in city adopting charter plan, this section applicable, see c. 43, § 113.

§ 6. Central counting place of ballots; director. Immediately preceding an election by the method of proportional representation or preferential voting, the city or town clerk shall designate a central counting place where ballots used under such method shall be brought together and counted publicly, appoint a competent person to act as director of the count, employ a sufficient staff of assistants and make suitable arrangements for the counting of such ballots.

The city or town clerk shall furnish the director of the count with a seal or suitable device with a designation thereon of such central counting place, and such seal shall be used in sealing all envelopes required by law to be sealed at said central counting place. The director of the count shall retain custody of the seal and shall after the election is at an end deliver it to the city or town clerk. Before entering upon the performance of his official duties, the director of the count and each of his assistants shall be sworn before the city or town clerk or any officer qualified to administer oaths, or, in the case of any such assistant, before the director; and a record thereof shall be made. The director of the count and his assistants shall receive such compensation for each day's actual service as the city council or selectmen may determine. During the absence or disability of the director of the count, such one of his assistants as may be designated by the city or town clerk shall perform the duties of such director. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Library references: Elections [key]242; C.J.S. Elections § 225.

shall be entitled, upon written application to the city or town clerk at least ten days before said election, to exercise all rights granted by the election laws to a political party in regard to the appointment of challengers at the polling places. Such challengers shall be permitted to remain at the polling places until the ballots have been transmitted to the central counting place, and to accompany the ballot receptacles to the central counting place.

Each such candidate shall be entitled to appoint two witnesses and two alternate witnesses of the count of the ballots cast for election to the body or office to which he seeks to be elected, and any such appointments shall become effective upon the issue to such appointees of credentials as hereinafter provided. Such credentials shall be issued by the city or town clerk, provided the written notice of the names and addresses of the appointees signed by such candidate is filed with the city or town clerk at least ten days before the election at which they are intended to be used. Credentials issued to any such witness shall entitle the holder to free access to any part of the central counting place wherein the ballots cast at such election for election to the body or office to which the candidate seeks to be elected are being counted, to witness the counting of such ballots and to inspect a activities in connection with the counting thereof; and credentials issued to any such alternate witness shall entitle the holder to exercise like rights in the absence of the principal witness for whom he has been appointed to act as alternate.

Each such candidate shall also be entitled to appoint two representatives to watch the ballots at the central counting place during recesses when the counting of ballots is not in progress. Application for the appointment of such representatives shall be made and credentials issued as provided in this section for witnesses to the central count and their alternates. During any time when the counting of ballots is not in progress, from the time the ballots first begin to arrive at the central counting place until the ballots have been sent from the central counting place to the city or town clerk as provided in section nine (s), such representatives shall have the right to be present, with facilities for keeping in full view all the ballots cast in electing persons to fill the office sought by their candidate, or the containers in which such ballots have been placed, except during such time as the ballots or containers of ballots may be kept in a locked safe or a vault. No such witness, alternate witness or representative shall be allowed to handle any of such ballots.

Challengers, witnesses, alternate witnesses and representatives provided for in this section shall serve without compensation. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Applicability to municipal elections in cities under governmental Plan E, see c. 43, § 113.

Candidates may appoint member to board of review, see section 9(r) of this chapter.

Cross References

Applicability to municipal elections in cities under governmental Plan E, see c. 43, § 113.

Municipal elections in city adopting charter plan, this section applicable, see c. 43, § 113.

Political party committee empowered to appoint challengers, see c. 54, § 85A.

§ 8. Use of ballot boxes; procedure. At each polling place in any city or town where an election by proportional representation or preferential voting is to be held as a part of an election by any other method or at which any question is to be submitted on the ballot, an additional state ballot box shall be used for the ballots cast under proportional representation or under preferential voting, or under both, as the case may be. In such case, the clerk of the city or town shall, at the expense of the city or town, provide the additional state ballot box for each polling place in the city or town and shall deliver the same to the election officers thereat seasonably before the election at which it is to be used.

out, and the ballots spoiled and returned and the ballots not given out, all of which shall be enclosed in an envelope or envelopes sealed and identified as aforesaid.

Proper receipts shall be required in connection with the transmission of ballot boxes, ballots, records and copies of records.

The ballot receptacles shall be assembled by polling places for counting at the central counting place in an order of polling places determined by the city or town clerk by lot. For such purpose lots shall be drawn not later than the closing of the polls in the presence of such candidates or their agents as wish to attend after due notification at least five days in advance.

In such case, as soon as the polls have closed and the ballot box used for ballots other than those cast under proportional representation or preferential voting, has been opened in accordance with section one hundred and five of chapter fifty-four and while such ballots are being audibly counted as provided therein, the election officers shall sort out any ballots cast under proportional representation or preferential voting which have been deposited in such ballot box and immediately deposit such ballots in the additional ballot box provided therefor. Such additional ballot box shall then be opened by the presiding officer and the ballots taken therefrom and audibly counted one by one and the whole number of ballots cast under proportional representation and preferential voting shall be publicly announced by him and a record made thereof in words at length and of the ballot box register. Any ballots other than those cast under proportional representation or preferential voting found in such additional ballot box shall immediately be deposited in the ballot box provided therefor for cancellation and shall then be taken out and included for counting with the other like ballots already audibly counted.

The ballot receptacles shall be opened and the number of ballots found therein recorded and the number thereof shall be compared with the records sent from the corresponding polling places. The records thus compared shall be made available to the public with notations explaining any necessary corrections therein and if any discrepancy appears in such records which cannot be reconciled it shall be noted on the records. Added St.1938, C. 341,

§ 1.

Library references: Elections [key]217, 227(8); C.J.S. Elections § 194.

Cross References

Applicability of this section to municipal elections in Plan E cities, see c. 43, § 113.

The presiding officer shall thereupon cause all ballots cast under proportional representation and preferential voting to be publicly enclosed in an envelope or envelopes and sealed up with the seal provided for the polling place and also with the private seal of any election officer who may desire to affix the same thereto. A majority of the election officers at the polling place shall endorse upon such envelope or envelopes the polling place, the election and date and also a certificate that all the ballots cast under proportional representation and preferential voting by the voters at such polling place and none others are enclosed therein.

Applicability to municipal elections in cities under governmental Plan E, see c. 43, § 113.

State ballot boxes, additional ones, see c. 54, § 67A.

§ 9. Rules for counting ballots, and determining results. Ballots cast under proportional representation shall be counted and the results determined under the supervision of the director of the count appointed pursuant to section six, according to the following rules:-

The presiding officer shall cause a copy of the record of the total number of names checked on the voting lists, a copy of

(a) The ballots in each ballot receptacle shall be examined for validity and those which are found to be blank or otherwise

the record of the whole number of ballots cast under proportional representation and preferential voting, a copy of the record of the register of the ballot box used for such ballots and a record of the number of such ballots given out to voters and of the number of such ballots spoiled and returned by the voters for cancellation, to be enclosed in an envelope and sealed up as aforesaid and shall certify on the envelope the contents thereof. He shall also enclose in an envelope or envelopes in like manner those of such ballots which were spoiled and returned and those which were not given out.

He shall then personally deliver the said envelopes to the central counting place or transmit them thereto by a police officer.

In the event that an election by proportional representation or preferential voting shall be conducted but not as a part of an election by any other method or at which any question is to be submitted on the ballot, the presiding officer shall, as soon as the polls are closed, seal the ballot box and deliver it in person to the central counting place or transmit it thereto by the police officer in attendance at the polling place, together with the voting lists, a record of the ballot box register and of the number of ballots given

invalid shall be separated from the valid ballots. The number of valid ballots from each precinct and the total number of valid ballots shall be recorded. If a ballot does not clearly show which candidate the voter prefers to all others, or if it contains any word, mark or other sign apparently intended to identify the voter, it shall be set aside as invalid. Every ballot not thus invalid shall be counted according to the intent of the voter, so far as that can be clearly ascertained, whether marked according to the directions printed on it or not. No ballot shall be held invalid because the names of candidates thereon for whom the voter did not mark a choice have been stricken out, unless such striking out constitutes an identifying mark. A single cross on a ballot on which no figure 1 appears shall be considered equivalent to the figure 1. If a ballot contains both figures and crosses, the order of the choice shown by the figures shall be taken as the voter's intention in so far as the order is clearly indicated. If the consecutive numerical order of the figures on a ballot is broken by the omission of one or more figures, the smallest number marked shall be taken to indicate the voter's first choice, the next smallest his second, and so on, without regard to the figure or figures omitted.

(b) Each candidate shall be credited with one vote for every valid ballot that is sorted to him as first choice, or otherwise credited to him as hereinafter provided, and no ballot shall ever be credited to more than one candidate at the same time.

(c) A "quota" is the smallest number of votes which any candidate must receive in order to be assured of election without more candidates being elected than there are offices to be filled. It shall be determined by dividing the total number of valid ballots by one more than the total number of candidates to be elected and adding one to the result, disregarding fractions. Whenever at any

stage of the counting the number of ballots credited to a candidate becomes equal to the quota, he shall be declared elected, and no ballots in excess of the quota shall be credited to him except as provided in rule (f) or (l) of this section.

(d) The ballots shall be sorted according to the first choices marked on them, the ballots from each polling place being handled together, and those from different polling places being handled in the order of polling places determined under the provisions of section eight.

(e) If a candidate is elected while the ballots are being sorted according to first choices, any subsequent ballots which show him as first choice shall each be credited to the second choice marked on it, or, if the second choice also has been elected, to the next choice marked on it for a candidate not yet elected.

(f) If during the first sorting of ballots, ballots are found

quota was reached shall be completed, but immediately thereafter all continuing candidates shall be declared defeated and the election shall be at an end. Whenever all ballots of all defeated candidates have been transferred, and it is impossible to defeat another candidate without reducing the continuing candidates below the number still to be elected, all the continuing candidates shall be declared elected and the election shall be at an end.

(m) A record of the count shall be kept in such form as to show, after each sorting or transfer of ballots, the number thereby credited to each candidate, the number thereby set aside as exhausted, the total for each candidate, the total set aside as exhausted, and the total number of valid ballots found by adding the totals of all candidates and the total set aside as exhausted.

(n) Every ballot that is transferred from one candidate to another shall be stamped or marked so that its entire course from candidate to candidate can be conveniently traced.

which are marked for a candidate already elected as first choice, but show no clear choice for any unelected candidate, such ballots shall at the end of the sorting be given to the candidate of their first choice, and in their place an equal number, as nearly as possible, of the last ballots sorted to that candidate which show a clear choice for unelected candidates, all as determined by the director of the count, shall be taken and re-sorted to unelected candidates as if they were then being sorted for the first time.

(g) When all the ballots have been thus sorted and credited to the first available choices marked on them, every candidate who is credited with fewer ballots than the number of signatures required for his nomination shall be declared defeated.

(h) All the ballots of the candidates thus defeated shall be transferred, each to the candidate indicated on it as next choice among the continuing candidates. A "continuing candidate" is a candidate not as yet either elected or defeated. Any ballot taken for transfer which does not clearly indicate any candidate as next choice among the continuing candidates shall be set aside as "exhausted".

(i) When all the ballots of the candidates thus defeated have been transferred, the one candidate who is then lowest on the poll shall be declared defeated and all his ballots transferred in the same way.

(j) Thereupon the candidate who is then lowest shall be declared defeated and all his ballots similarly transferred; and in like manner candidates shall be declared defeated one at a time and all their ballots transferred.

(k) If, when a candidate is to be declared defeated, two or more candidates are tied at the bottom of the poll, that one of the tied candidates shall be declared defeated who was credited with fewest ballots immediately prior to the last transfer of ballots. If two or more of the tied candidates were tied at that stage of the count, also, the second tie shall be decided by referring similarly to the standing of candidates immediately prior to the last transfer of ballots before that. This principle shall be applied successively as many times as may be necessary, a tie shown at any stage of the count being decided by referring to the standing of the tied candidates immediately prior to the last preceding transfer of ballots. Any tie not otherwise provided for shall be decided by lot.

In interpreting this and other rules contained in this section the transfer of all ballots from candidates defeated together under rule (g) of this section, and the transfer of all ballots from each candidate defeated thereafter shall each constitute a single separate transfer.

(l) Whenever candidates to the number to be elected have received the quota, any transfer of ballots in progress when the last

(o) If at any time after the first sorting of the ballots a ballot is found to have been credited to the wrong candidate, it may be transferred, as part of the transfer that is in progress, to the continuing candidate, if any, to whom it should have been credited at the time the error was made, or, if it should previously have become exhausted, may be set aside as exhausted as part of the transfer that is in progress; provided, that if the number of misplaced ballots found is sufficient to make it possible that any candidate has been wrongly defeated, so much of the sorting and transferring as may be required to correct the error shall be done over again before the count proceeds.

If in correcting an error any ballots are re-sorted or re-transferred, every ballot shall be made to take the same course that it took in the original count unless the correction of an error requires its taking a different course. The principles of the rules of this section shall apply also to any recount which may be made after the original count has been completed.

(p) The director of the count and his assistants shall proceed with reasonable expedition in the counting of the ballots, but may take recesses at the discretion of the director. The city or town clerk shall make proper provision for the safekeeping of the ballots while the counting is not in progress.

(q) The candidates, their witnesses, alternate witnesses and representatives accredited under section seven, representative of the press, and, as far as may be consistent with good order and with convenience in the counting and transferring of the ballots, the public shall be afforded every facility for being present and witnessing the counting and transferring of the ballots.

(r) Each of the candidates entitled to appoint witnesses of the central count as provided in section seven shall be entitled to appoint a member of a board of review of the central count. Such appointment shall be made within the time and in the manner prescribed for the appointment of such witnesses of the central count. In the central counting place a board of review so constituted shall be given facilities for examining all the ballots in the quota of each elected candidate in order to make sure that all the ballots of such quota are rightfully credited to the candidate toward whose election they have been counted, that the number of ballots therein is actually equal to the quota prescribed in this section, and that "exhausted" ballots have been properly so designated. Any errors discovered by such a board of review shall be reported to the director of the count.

(s) When the election with respect to any particular body or office is at an end the director of the count shall publicly announce the result of the vote for such body or office. The provisions of section one hundred and seven of chapter fifty-four relative to

presiding officers and other election officers at polling places shall, so far as apt, apply to the director of the count and his assistants with respect to all ballots, records, copies of records, envelopes and ballot boxes, transmitted to the central counting place under section eight and to all other papers, records and apparatus used in counting the votes at the central counting place, except that ballots cast for a particular body or office, as well as those spoiled and returned and those not given out, shall be enclosed, and the envelopes sealed and delivered or transmitted to the city or town clerk as soon as may be after the public announcement of the result of the vote for such body or office.

(t) No canvass or count of the vote shall be made on the Lord's day. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1, as amended St.1950, c. 28.

Historical Note

The 1950 amendment added paragraph (t), prohibiting canvass or count of the vote on the Lord's day.

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

Applicability to municipal elections, see c. 43, § 115.

Determination of election results generally, see c. 50, § 2.

Municipal elections in city adopting charter plan, this section and the following sections applicable, see c. 43, § 115.

Preferential voting elections, counting ballots, see section 14 of this chapter.

Representatives of candidates to watch ballots, see section 7 of this chapter.

Notes of Decisions

In general 1

Determination of voter's intent 2

Library references: Elections [key]235. C.J.S. Elections § 223

1. In general

The lower Court and the Supreme Judicial Court may

(a) The number of first-choice ballots cast for each candidate at each polling place.

(b) The number of ballots from each polling place finally counted for each of the elected candidates.

(c) The number of the exhausted ballots from each polling place which showed one or more choices for elected candidates and the number which did not show any such choice.

(d) The number of blank ballots cast for each body or office at each polling place.

(e) The number of ballots otherwise invalid cast for each body or office at each polling place.

(f) The number of first choices, second choices, third choices, and so on, used in the election of each of the elected candidates.

(g) Such other information in regard to the ballots as the city or town clerk may deem of interest.

A copy of such statement shall be kept on file in the office of the city or town clerk open to public inspection. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

§ 12. Recount of ballots. Partial or complete recounts of the ballots cast for any body or office in an election by proportional representation or by preferential voting shall take place in the manner provided in sections one hundred and thirty-four to one hundred and thirty-seven, inclusive, of said chapter fifty-four, except that any petition shall be submitted on or before five o'clock in the afternoon of the third day following the public announcement by the director of the count of the result of the vote for such body or office and shall be on a form approved and furnished by the city or town clerk and be signed in a town by ten or more voters of such town, in a city, except Boston, by fifty or more voters of such city and in Boston by two hundred and fifty or more voters of said Boston and except that any such recount in any city or in any town divided into precincts shall be conducted for the entire city or town instead of for specified precincts. If a partial or complete recount of the ballots cast in such an election shall in fact take place, it shall be conducted according to the rules prescribed for the original count as nearly as is practicable. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Library references: Elections [key]245. C.J.S. Elections § 228

correct any error of law, appearing on face of ballot, which error has been made by returning board in counting ballot as vote for a particular candidate. *Contakos v. Election Commission of Lowell* (1954) 118 N.E.2d 736, 331 Mass. 254.

2. Determination of voter's intent

The will of a voter, if it can be determined with reasonable certainty, must be given effect. *Contakos v. Election Commission of Lowell* (1954) 118 N.E.2d 736, 331 Mass. 254.

Where ballot, considered in light of character and location of mark and conditions attendant upon election, fairly indicate voter's intent, vote should be counted in accordance with that intent, provided voter has substantially complied with election law, but where ballot is marked so as to leave voter's intent a matter of conjecture, the vote should not be counted.

Ballots, on which voters had at first marked a cross in box opposite certain candidate's name and had them marked over the cross with what appeared to be the figure "1," would be credited to such candidate.

§ 10. Ballots; preservation; examination. The ballots cast at each election by proportional representation or preferential voting shall be preserved by the city or town clerk until the term of office of the members of the body or of the officer elected thereby has expired, and shall be available for examination continuously throughout the business day, under supervision of the city or town clerk, on written application signed by not less than one hundred voters of the city or town and the payment of a fee of twenty-five dollars for each day on which such inspection is held. Such application shall name not more than three representatives of the applicants to make such examination. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

§ 11. Publication of statements regarding ballots cast. Within thirty days after an election to elect members of a body by proportional representation or an officer by preferential voting, the city or town clerk shall cause the ballots cast for such body or office to be examined and shall publish a statement showing-

(d) If no candidate receives more than half of such ballots, the candidates lowest on the poll shall be declared defeated

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

§ 13. Vacancies in bodies elected by proportional representation; filling. When a vacancy occurs in an elective body whose members were elected by proportional representation, such vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term by a public recount of the ballots credited at the end of the original count to the candidate elected thereby whose place has become vacant. Except for the following special rules, the provisions governing the original count shall be in effect:

(a) All choices marked for candidates theretofore elected or who have become ineligible or have withdrawn shall be disregarded:

(b) The ballots shall be sorted each to the earliest choice marked on it for any of the eligible candidates.

(c) If any candidate has to his credit more than half of the ballots which show any preference among the eligible candidates he shall be declared elected to the vacant place.

Cross References

one after another and after each candidate is defeated his ballots shall be transferred among the continuing candidates.

(e) The process hereinbefore provided shall be continued until one candidate is credited with more ballots than all the other undefeated candidates together, when he shall be declared elected to the vacant place.

If a vacancy in an elective body occurs for which no regularly nominated candidate remains it shall be filled for the unexpired term by a majority vote of the remaining members; and if but a single member remains or if a majority vote of the remaining members is not obtained within thirty days after the vacancy occurs, it shall be filled by a special election, in the case of a single vacancy, by preferential voting or, in case two or more vacancies exist at the same time, by proportional representation. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

City charter plan, vacancies filled in elective bodies, see c.43, § 102.

§ 14. Ballots; rules for counting where election by preferential voting. Ballots cast under preferential voting shall be counted in the central counting place under the supervision of the director of the count, in accordance with the following rules:-

(a) The ballots shall first be sorted according to the first choices marked on them, and the total number of valid ballots thus sorted to each candidate shall be ascertained. The validity of ballots shall be determined according to the principles laid down for the count of ballots in an election by proportional representation in rule (a) of section nine.

(b) If any candidate is found to have been marked as first choice on more than half of the valid ballots he shall be declared elected.

(c) If no candidate is so elected after the count of first choices, every candidate who is credited with fewer ballots than the number of signatures required for his nomination shall be declared defeated.

(d) All the ballots of the candidates so defeated shall be transferred, each to the candidate indicated on it as next choice among the undefeated candidates. Any ballot taken for transfer which does not clearly indicate any candidate as next choice among the undefeated candidates shall be set aside as "exhausted".

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

Notes of Decisions

In general 1

Reasonableness of procedure 2

1. In General

The essential feature of "preferential voting" is that a voter, though permitted to cast only one effective vote for an officer is permitted to express not only a first choice for one candidate, but also one or more other choices, in the order of his preference, for other candidates for the same office. *Moore v. Election Commissioners of Cambridge* (1941) 35 N.E.2d 222, 309 Mass. 303.

2. Reasonableness of procedure

The method of counting employed in preferential system of voting embodied in Plan E form of city government is not unreasonable or productive of inequality because excess of votes representing first choices for a candidate are counted for candidates who represent second or successive choices of the voters, in accordance with a uniform principle. *Moore v. Election Commissioners of Cambridge* (1941) 35 N.E.2d 222, 309 Mass. 303.

The provision for preferential voting embodied in Plan E form of city government, as applied to the election of members of the municipal council in the city of Cambridge, is not unreasonable, nor does it impair equal rights of all duly qualified voters of the city to elect members of the council, though in application to particular situations exact mathematical equality may not result, since theoretical perfection is not essential to constitutional validity. *Id.*

The element of chance in determination of candidates that from time to time are to be eliminated under preferential system of voting embodied in Plan E form of city government is not so great as necessarily to vitiate the method of counting embodied therein. *Id.*

§ 15. Vacancies in single elective offices; filling. All provisions of law from time to time applicable in the case of a vacancy in an elective office shall continue to apply after the filling of such office by preferential voting, except that any election to fill such vacancy shall also be by preferential voting. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

(e) If, after this or any subsequent transfer of ballots, one candidate is credited with more than half of the valid ballots which have not become exhausted, he shall be declared elected.

(f) If no candidate is so elected after the transfer of the ballots of candidates defeated under rule (c), the one candidate who is then lowest on the poll shall be declared defeated and all his ballots transferred in the same way.

(g) Thereupon, if no candidate is yet elected, the candidate who is then lowest shall be declared defeated and all his ballots similarly transferred. Thus candidates shall be deemed defeated one at a time, and all their ballots transferred until some candidate has received the necessary majority of the ballots which have not become exhausted and is accordingly declared elected.

(h) Ties shall be decided, a record of the count kept, errors corrected, recesses taken, and candidates and others permitted to be present according to the principles prescribed for elections by proportional representation in rules (k), (m), (o), (p) and (q) of section nine. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Library references: Elections [key]222. C.J.S. Elections § 203

Cross References

Application of proportional representation provisions of this section to Plan E city elections, see c. 43, § 115.

§ 17. Applicability of general laws relating to elections and corrupt practices. All elections by proportional representation or preferential voting held in any city or town under this chapter shall be subject to all general laws relating to elections and corrupt practices, so far as applicable and not inconsistent with this chapter. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

Cross References

Corrupt practices, generally, see c. 55, § 1 et seq.

Determination of election results generally, see c. 50, § 2.

[Election Commission](#) > Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 54A

§ 16. Mechanical or other voting devices; methods of counting first choices. (a) In conducting any election by proportional representation or preferential voting, mechanical or other devices may be used, subject, however, to the provisions of sections thirty-two to thirty-nine, inclusive, of chapter fifty-four, if the city council or the town passes a vote providing expressly that such devices shall be used in such election; and said sections, so far as apt, shall be applicable in all respects in case of such devices so used. In case such devices are to be used in any city or town, the city or town clerk may modify the form of ballot, the rotation of names thereon, the directions to voters and other details in respect to the election process; provided, that no change shall be made which will alter or impair the principles of voting or counting the ballots governing elections by proportional representation or preferential voting, as the case may be, but the voter may be limited to not less than fifteen choices for any particular body or office.

(b) In any city or town where elections by proportional representation are to be held, any method of counting the voters' first choices and treating any such choices in excess of the quota, provided for under any system of proportional representation which on January first, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight was in effect for the purpose of municipal elections in any city of the United States, may be substituted for the method of counting such choices set forth in this chapter, if the registrars of voters determine that such substitution is advisable; provided, that they issue regulations embodying the method so substituted and provided, further, that such regulations shall not be effective with respect to any election unless at least thirty days prior thereto copies of such regulations are available for delivery to such of the voters as may request them. Added St.1938, c. 341, § 1.

How The Ballots Are Counted

The count begins with the sorting of ballots by the first preference shown on each valid ballot. That is the NUMBER 1 vote on each ballot. This is generally known as the "First Count".

Any candidates who reach the necessary quota with Number 1 votes are declared elected. Any extra ballots they receive beyond the quota are redistributed to the candidates marked next in preference (the number 2 preference) on those excess ballots.

The count continues with the elimination of those candidates receiving fewer than fifty votes in the first count. Their ballots are redistributed to the other candidates according to the next preference marked.

After each distribution, the candidate now having the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his/her ballots redistributed to the next indicated preference (number 2,3,4 etc.)

As candidates reach the quota through the addition of redistributed ballots to their totals, they are declared elected and no further ballots are transferred to them.

This process continues until all candidates have been eliminated except the nine winners.

[Election Commission](#) > [Proportional Voting](#) > How Ballots Are Counted

Munic. Elections in Cambridge
Since 1941 the City of Cambridge has elected its City Council and School Committee by Proportional Representation (PR).

Elections for nine members of the Council and six members of the School Committee are held in November in odd-numbered years.

Under PR, any group that numbers more than one-tenth of the voters may elect at least one member of the City Council.

Any group that numbers more than one-seventh of the voters may elect a member of the School Committee.

The mayor is elected by the City Council from among its own members and acts as chair both of that body and of the School Committee.

Proportional Representation (PR)

A voter may vote for as many candidates as are listed on the ballot in a PR election, but *the voter must rank the candidates in order of preference* (1, 2, 3, and so on).

If the voter's 1st choice is not elected, a 2nd, 3rd, or subsequent preference may still be elected by that voter's ballot.

The voter also has the option of voting for only one candidate, or for as few as are preferred.

Marking the Ballot

The PR ballot lists candidates with numbered ovals next to their names.

To vote for a candidate, the voter fills in one oval only next to the candidate's name: 1 for first choice, 2 for second choice, 3 for third choice, and so on.

Example: Correct Marking

- Candidate A 2 3
- Candidate B 1 3
- Candidate C 1 2

Candidates' names are rotated on ballots so that each candidate's name appears at the top of the ballot an equal number of times.

Invalid Votes

Votes are invalidated when more than one oval is filled in for the same candidate, or when the same numbered oval is filled in for more than one candidate.

Example: Invalid Votes for Candidates

Filling in more than one choice for a candidate

- Candidate A 3

Filling in the same choice for more than one candidate

- Candidate A 2 3
- Candidate B 2 3

Votes may also be invalidated by marking ovals incorrectly, so that they cannot be read by the optical scanner.

Example: Incorrect Marking of Ovals



If a mistake is made in marking the ballot, the voter may return it to the election official in charge and receive another one, but no voter may receive more than two such new ballots.

Counting the Ballots

The precinct order in which ballots are counted is determined by a random draw prior to the election.

Tabulation of PR ballots begins with the sorting

and tallying of first choice votes for each candidate and the establishment of quota, the minimum number of votes sufficient for election.

It continues with the transfer of surplus and the redistribution of votes from defeated candidates to continuing candidates until nine Councilors and six School Committee members are elected.

First Choices

The initial count of ballots determines the total number of first choice votes for each candidate. The candidates are then ranked in order according to the total of number one (#1) votes each has received.

Quota

In a PR election, a candidate needs to win a certain proportion of the votes to be elected. This proportion is referred to as quota.

Quota is established after the count of first choices.

Quota is determined by dividing the total number of valid ballots by the number of candidates to be elected plus one and adding one to the result.

Example: If 25,000 valid ballots are cast for City Council, the quota will be 2,501 (25,000 divided by 10, plus 1).

Surplus

Candidates who reach quota after the count of first choices are declared elected. Any votes they receive beyond quota are surplus votes.

Example: If Candidate A receives 3000 first choice votes and quota is 2501 votes, Candidate A is elected with a surplus of 499 votes.

A formula determines which ballots are selected to be counted as surplus.

Surplus votes are transferred to the second choice candidates on the surplus ballots.

Eliminating Candidates

After surplus votes are transferred, candidates who have fewer than fifty number one (#1) votes are eliminated.

Their votes are transferred to the continuing candidates marked next in preference on those ballots.

After each transfer of ballots from a candidate being counted out to continuing candidates, a new ranking is established.

The candidate with the lowest number of votes is declared defeated and that candidate's ballots are transferred to the next continuing candidate marked on each ballot.

Electing Candidates

Transferred ballots are added to the totals of the continuing candidates until they reach quota or are counted out. After a candidate reaches quota and is declared elected, no more ballots are transferred to that candidate.

Computerized Ballot Tabulation

In 1997 the Election Commission computerized the City of Cambridge PR elections using a precinct-based optical scanning system and specially designed software.

Tabulating the Votes

The PR Count, which used to be performed manually during the course of a week by a staff of over a hundred, is now completed in a matter of minutes through the electronic sorting, counting, and transfer of votes.

Unofficial Results

Unofficial results for City Council and School Committee are available on election night. These results are "unofficial" because not all ballots have been counted.

The tabulation does not include ballots with write-ins or ballots marked in a way that could not be

read by the scanner. These are auxiliary ballots which must be processed manually and added to the computer totals.

Official Results

On the day after the election, votes from write-in and auxiliary ballots are added to the totals from the previous night.

The complete ballot records are tabulated, without reference to the earlier tabulation of unofficial totals, to produce the official first choices.

Next, the software distributes surplus ballots, transfers votes, and eliminates candidates until the number of seats for each office has been filled.

Only then are the results declared to be official.

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Voting by

Proportional Representation



Board of Election Commissioners

ARTIS B. SPEARS
DARLEEN G. BONISLAWSKI
LYNNE ALEXIS MOLNAR
WAYNE A. DRUGAN, JR.

For further information on PR elections in Cambridge, please refer to the Election Commission Department Web Site at:
www.ci.cambridge.ma.us

Election Commission > Cincinnati Method

Cincinnati Method

The technique used by Cambridge for selecting ballots to transfer from a candidate's surplus to bring the candidate down to quota. The method is as follows: the ballots of the candidate who has surplus are numbered sequentially in the order in which they have been counted (that is, in the sequence dictated by the random draw of precincts) and then every n th ballot is drawn and transferred to a continuing candidate until the original candidate is credited with ballots equaling no more than quota. n is nearest whole number computed by the formula

$$n = \frac{\text{Candidate's Total Ballot}}{\text{Surplus.}}$$

A ballot selected by this method that does not show a preference for a continuing candidate is skipped and remains with the original candidate. If not enough ballots are removed when ballots $n, 2n, 3n, \dots$ have been transferred, the sequence starts again with $n+1, 2n+1, 3n+1, \dots$

Election Commission > Cincinnati Method



Election Commission

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- Frequently Asked Questions
- Campaign Finance Reporting
- Ethics Ordinance

Cambridge Election Commission
 51 Inman Street
 First Floor
 Cambridge, MA 02139
 Phone: (617) 349-4361
 Hours: 8:30-5:00
 Email to: Elections@CI.Cambridge.MA.US

Department Head: Board of Election Commissioners

The Cambridge Election Commission is responsible for supervising all federal, state and municipal elections within the City; providing voter registration; certifying nomination papers and initiative conducting an annual census; administering municipal campaign and political finance reporting City; and implementing Chapter 2.118 of the Cambridge Municipal Code known as the "Ethics Ordinance".

The Board of Election Commissioners, two Democrats and two Republicans, are appointed to four-year terms by the City Manager from a list of candidates submitted by the City Committee party.

Daily operations of the Commission are conducted by five full-time staff persons (an Executive Assistant Director, an Administrative Assistant, two data entry staff) and two part-time clerical staff. They are assisted at peak times by temporary part-time employees in voter registration, census canvassing, and signature certification. In addition, prior to each election, approximately 260 additional personnel are recruited, trained, and supervised by the Board to staff each of the 33 polling locations within the City.

Over 40,000 voter records (from a total of nearly 73,000 residents over the age of 17) are actively maintained both in a computer database and in a cross-referenced card system, with several thousand changes of party, name, and address annually. Confirmation of each change to a voter's record to the respective voter in accordance with statutory requirements. In order to preserve the integrity of the database for the street lists and voting lists, the Board of Election Commissioners personally verify the existence or nonexistence of questionable addresses within the City. They also prepare manuals and guide poll workers' operations on election day.

You may find frequently asked questions about the following topics:

- Proportional Representation Voting in Cambridge Municipal Elections
- Voter Registration FAQs
- Conduct of Elections
- The Annual City Census
- Public Requests for Records and Documents
- The Election Commission
- Absentee Ballot Application (pdf format)
- 2002 Ward and Precinct Maps
- 2003 State Senate Districts
- all 33 precincts as a list in a pdf downloadable format
- 2003 State Representative Districts

Send mail to Elections@CI.Cambridge.MA.US

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cambridge



Plan E

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Plan E is a City Manager form of government with nine Councillors and six School Committee members elected at large by Proportional Representation (PR) for a two year term. After members of the Council take the oath of office in January, they elect one of the nine to serve as Mayor.

The City Council is the lawmaking body, appointing a City Manager, City Clerk, and City Auditor.

The City Manager is the chief administrative officer of the city carrying out policies of the City Council for an indefinite term.

The Mayor is the official head of the city for all ceremonial purposes, the presiding officer of the Council when it is in session, and the chairman of the school Committee.

APPENDIX 7

“Abstracts of Political Science Literature Commenting on Municipal Electoral Structure”

The following abstracts of writings by political scientists on the topic of municipal electoral structures are not intended to be exhaustive of the literature in the field. Rather they are an initial effort to present a cross section of such writings and research specifically dealing with at-large, single district and mixed electoral structures. Those wishing to read for themselves the entire works of the authors cited should review the list of citation references at the end of the paper that can be used as a starting point for further research on this topic. Christian Gunter, Graduate Student at the Evans School of Public Affairs, University of Washington.

Executive Summary:

Political scientists have thoroughly studied the link between election structures and the impact these structures have on the representation of certain groups and the implementation of public policy (Banfield and Wilson 1963). Historically, electoral structures were designed to remedy political or social problems within municipalities, often transitioning between different electoral models. For instance, at-large systems were largely created during the reformist “good government” period of the early 1900s to eliminate the assumed negative influence of political machines often associated with ward or district elections. These electoral reformers were also intended to bring in more business-orientated council members (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

More recently, single-district or mixed electoral structures have been considered as a means of enhancing opportunities for representation of certain racial or ethnic groups in local government structures. Those researchers interested in further municipal electoral reform have shifted their focus to mixed electoral structures which combine structural aspects of both at-large and district or ward structures.

Like many municipal governments, the electoral structure of the Seattle City Council has changed a number of times, utilizing both the district/ward and at-large forms.

Nationally, most large cities utilize some form of mixed or district election structure for city council elections. The modern trend associated with changes in electoral structure

seems to be heading towards district election structures and away from at-large elections (Ebdon, Carol and Brucato 2000). Interestingly, western cities tend to use district elections less often. The research and analysis evaluating the different impacts of at-large, district and mixed electoral systems provide some clear analysis, but also seems to be conflictory and fragmented. When evaluating at-large municipal electoral systems the following aspects are often raised both by critics and supporters:

Positive Aspects:

1. City-wide interests and regional goals are advanced
2. Focus on “universal” rather than “particularistic” issues and less likelihood of undue influence and infighting between neighborhood political interests
3. Increase in benefits for the Central Business District (CBD)
4. Greater efficiency in resource allocation and lower levels of corruption

Negative Aspects:

1. Less attention given to neighborhood concerns
2. Lower likelihood that local, less affluent or recognized candidates will be elected
3. Decreased proportions of representation of racial groups and women
4. Potential for higher campaign costs

The current study of possible electoral options for the Seattle City Council highlights a number of important issues and potential areas of conflict which often surface in academic literature evaluating electoral reform and should be considered as the advisory panel moves forward. These issues include, but are not limited to:

1. The role electoral structures play in improving the geographic and demographic accountability and representation of residents and neighborhoods.
2. The ability of certain electoral structures to ensure equal and efficient allocation of public resources.
3. The level of public accountability produced by each structure.

4. The impact of different electoral structures on the creation and implementation of public policy.
5. The monetary costs associated with running for office under each structure.
6. The type (socio-economic) of candidates each structure produces.¹
7. The costs and benefits associated with altering electoral systems.
8. The impact of the outcome concerning the transition from at-large to district elections—specifically who wins politically, economically and socially and who loses.²

This paper provides a cursory summary of the varied non-partisan, academic research and literature relating to the different impacts of district, at-large and mixed electoral structures on representation (of geography, gender and race), accountability, candidate qualifications and campaign financing and incumbency.

General Overview: The following sections are organized by theme. Each section includes abstracts or summaries of research conducted by the author(s) noted. It is important to recognize that some authors have been included in numerous sections because their research sheds light on a number of topics included in the overview.

Proportion of at-large, district and mixed electoral style used:

James Svara (1977): Svara examines a number of general tendencies relating to electoral structures. First, non-partisan cities often employ at-large elections. However, almost half of the partisan elections he examined were held at-large and a third of the non-partisan elections were combined with the ward and district/at-large constituency types. Likewise, a number of at-large systems were found in partisan cities and almost 50 percent of these used a mixed or combination system (Svara 1977).

According to Svara (1977), the most common electoral form is the non-partisan at-large system. This form was found to be the most popular when examining cities with

¹ According to Joel Liske (1989), it is common knowledge that upper-status candidates are favored at all electoral levels, particularly in non-partisan, at large setting.

² Unfortunately, little comparative research has been done on this topic.

populations over 10,000. The second most common electoral form is the district non-partisan and third is the partisan district model. For cities with populations over 500,000 in 1972, 50 percent used a combined system, 38 percent used district systems and 13 percent used at-large systems (Svara 1977). For cities with populations between 100,000-500,000 in 1977 such as Seattle, 30 percent used districts, 32 percent used combined/mixed and 38 percent used at-large. Svara concludes that as cities decrease in size, at-large structures are used more often. In the West, at-large non-partisan systems are more likely to be used (Svara 1977).

Class and culture:

Helig and Mundt (1984): Helig and Mundt (1984) conclude that the reform movement and at-large elections have historically been neither ethnically or socially neutral. Thus the battle of the "reformer" versus the "political machines" was often viewed as a conflict between cultures, and especially classes. Likewise, the reform movement took root in cities, which typically went through the urbanization and industrialization process later, such as cities in the West and South (Helig and Mundt 1984).

Geography:

David Berman and Bruce Merrill (1976): Berman and Merrill (1976) note that municipal at-large electoral systems were intentioned to be insulated from partisan politics found in national politics and designed to operate on an efficient, businesslike basis under the leadership of those "concerned with the common good" of community, rather than neighborhood or geographic interests. Under this theory, the ability to construct public policy beneficial to a larger geographic area is often mentioned when discussing the value of at-large systems. This is especially true when discussing city economic development policy (Berman and Merrill 1976).

Under at-large systems, city policy is created and implemented which aims to benefit the entire city, including the Central Business District (CBD), an area that may not have a strong residential constituent base (Berman and Merrill 1976). The conflict with the at-large system arises when examining the ability of at-large council members to effectively

address local neighborhood or district concerns when they do not represent a specific district (Berman and Merrill 1976).

Carol Ebdon and Brucato (2000): Ebdon and Brucato note that district elections have been found to increase the value of geographic representation, but the trade off for efficiency is unknown (Ebdon and Brucato 2000). However, Eric Anderson (1989) concludes that district elections actually increase attention to special interests, often associated with certain neighborhoods.

Welch and Bledsoe (1988): Welch and Bledsoe suggest that district council members are more likely to focus on a narrow geographic constituency, while at-large members tend to focus on citywide and business constituencies. According to Welch and Bledsoe (1988), the interests of council members elected by single districts have led to greater levels of conflict (especially geographic) compared to councils elected at-large. They also note that studies suggest that citizens generally favor district elections when compared to at-large elections and that voting participation is higher there (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

The LBJ paper (1984):³ The LBJ paper asserts that geographic representation necessarily improves under district election systems. Geographic representation improves more dramatically in cities that adopt single-member district systems than for those that adopt mixed systems when transitioning from at-large systems.

The LBJ paper (1984) also concludes that at-large systems tend to give disproportionately large shares of representation to areas that are upper-middle class and white. However, the LBJ paper (1984) also notes that the impact on the representation of neighborhood interests is ambiguous at best. Generally, with the switch from at-large to district elections, many neighborhoods and special interest groups feel that they have gained access and power by having a specific council member to address neighborhood issues. However, others in the LBJ survey felt that they had lost power when they had fewer council members to lobby (LBJ 1984).

³ The paper, "Local Government Election Systems," published by the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs will be referred to as the LBJ paper in this summary.

Representation:

Racial representation:

Research of the middle and late 1970s, revealed that at-large city council election procedures resulted in a dramatic under-representation of blacks and of Latinos. Recent studies have reached conflicting conclusions as to whether electoral arrangements or socioeconomic factors are the major influence on how proportionately blacks and Latinos are represented. Studies also suggest that voter attitude towards the candidate plays a significant role in whether or not minorities are elected. Under the current at-large system, the Seattle City Council has enjoyed a far more racially diverse council than the population as a whole.

Joel Liske (1989): Liske's findings support several conclusions including the critical importance of political legitimacy in urban elections.⁴ The most important predictors of electoral success are those that measure the candidates' relative political acceptability. In approximate rank order, they are the candidates' political following, political resources, civic endorsements, and personal achievements (Liske 1989). Next, the results show that two different voting models are necessary to explain the calculus of candidate choice: one for first-time candidates and a second for incumbents and former losers.

For first-time candidates, the key credentials are name familiarity and partisan and newspaper endorsements (Liske 1989). In subsequent campaigns, what appears to be decisive are the size of their political following and the racial and partisan coalitions that coalesce around them, rather than the electoral system. Finally, the results suggest that a candidate's political following may play a role in local elections similar to the stabilizing function of party identification in national elections (Liske 1989).

⁴ The study by Joel Liske (1989) analyzes the dynamics of urban voting behavior and the worth of different political credentials in council elections. Data for the analysis are drawn from Cincinnati, Ohio, a city whose electoral system is representative of the majority of American cities of over 25,000 population that currently employ nonpartisan, at-large elections. The data consist of a sample of 103 council campaigns that were waged in five successive elections over a ten-year time span.

Welch and Bledsoe (1988): Welch and Bledsoe conclude that a central criticism of at-large electoral systems is their inability to elect minorities in numbers which sufficiently reflect racial proportions of the general population. In the 1970s, many southern cities altered their election structures from at-large to districts to remedy the discrimination against African Americans and Latinos that the at-large system produced (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

They also note that the federal, district and appellate courts, have ruled in *Paige v. Gray* (1971), *Beer v. United States* (1976) and *Bolden v. Mobile* (1976), that at-large systems are unfair to blacks. In each case, the courts decided in favor of single district elections but did not rule at large systems unconstitutional (Welch and Bledsoe 1988). According to Welch and Bledsoe (1988), district elections have been shown to produce a significantly higher representation of blacks in large cities (Welch and Bledsoe reference Campbell and Feagin 1975; Gelb 1970; Jones 1976; Karnig 1976; Karnig and Welch 1979, 1981; Robinson and Dye 1978).

Helig and Mundt (1984): Helig and Mundt state that at-large electoral systems tend to be biased towards any geographically concentrated minority which cannot gain substantial voting support from the majority group. They also note that the transition from at-large to single district elections in the 1970s, was more likely in cities where blacks constituted the major minority group. They also conclude that switching from at-large to district elections often results in an increase in the number of black candidates (Helig and Mundt 1984 also reference Mundt 1979; Helig 1978; Davidson and Korbel 1981).

When looking at the transition from at-large to single districts elections, Helig and Mundt (1984) also conclude that the actual size of the city council has a positive impact on the number of minorities elected to the city council. The size of the city council is especially relevant in cases examining Latino representation.

LBJ paper (1984): The LBJ paper concludes that minority representation on city councils as a proportion of the population improves under single district representation,

compared to mixed or at-large electoral structures (when examining trends in the 1960s and 1970s). The LBJ paper (1984) notes that the changes from at-large to single district council elections in San Antonio, Fort Worth and Richmond produced city councils that more accurately reflected the racial compositions of the cities they represented. LBJ survey respondents felt that the single-member district structure provided for a higher level of representation of minority interests and issues than the previous at-large system (LBJ paper 1984).

Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta (2000): Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta (2000) note that the impact of local election structures on Latino representation is less clear cut and varies from region to region. They conclude that at-large election systems generally disadvantage Latinos, resulting in under-representation on city councils (Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta 2000). They also conclude that at-large elections tend to submerge minority populations in all elections when compared to district elections (Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta 2000).

According to Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta, this conclusion is also supported by Kobel and Davidson (1981), Helig and Mundt (1984), Polinard, Wrinkle and Longoria (1990,1991). However, more recent research by Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta (2000) indicates that Latino candidates are increasingly becoming more likely to win in at-large elections, especially with more racially polarized districts. Interestingly, higher voter turnout of Latinos did not help elect Latino's in at-large elections (Bezdek, Billeaux and Huerta 2000).⁵

Susan Welch (1990): Welch concludes that although at-large elections represent blacks much better than they did a decade ago, there is still a small gap between the representation afforded to blacks by at-large and district systems. Welch (1990) notes that although mixed electoral systems more equitably represent blacks generally, blacks are drastically underrepresented in the at-large seats in mixed structures (Welch 1990).

⁵ Taebel (1978) and Davidson and Korbel (1978) also show that Latinos are disadvantaged by at-large elections.

Davidson and Korbal (1981): Davidson and Korbal state that at-large elections historically dilute or diminish minority representation. Specifically, they note that the mere presence of minority officials does not insure minority representation (Davidson and Korbal 1981).

Richard L. Engstrom and Michael D. McDonald (1982): Engstrom and McDonald examined the relationship between the use of at-large elections and the representation of minorities. They conclude that at-large electoral structures under-represent blacks, compared to district-based electoral systems (Engstrom and McDonald 1982). Although district elections are often gerrymandered, black communities can statistically expect proportionate representation under these systems (Engstrom and McDonald 1982). They also find significant differences between the representation of blacks on city councils in the South compared to other areas in the country, suggesting the possible presence of regional bias.⁶

Representation of Women on City Councils:

Similar to race, political scientists and civic leaders have often questioned the impact of at-large and single-district electoral structures on the proportion of women elected to city council positions. A major surge in the election of women to city councils occurred in 1974 and the proportion of women elected to city councils has gradually increased since then. By the early 1990s, women held over 20 percent of the city council seats in medium and large cities. However, this figure was still below the proportion of women in the population as a whole at that time (Welch and Bledsoe 1993). Interestingly, the proportion of women on city councils is higher than those in state legislatures and other levels of government (Welch and Bledsoe 1993).

Nicholas Alozie and Lynne Manganaro (1993): Alozie and Manganaro conclude that electoral structure alone is not a significant explanatory factor in understanding either the

⁶ It is important to note that Engstrom and McDonald found that the electoral structure begins to have a discernible impact on the level of black representation once the black population reaches 10 percent of the total municipal population. While one socioeconomic variable, the relative income of the city's black population, is found to affect the election of blacks, its impact is greater than that of the electoral structure only when the black population is less than 15 percent.

presence of women on city councils or the extent of women's representation on these legislative bodies. Bledsoe (1993) echoes the assertion of Alozie and Mananaro, by concluding that women are just as likely to hold either district or at-large office.

However, Alozie and Manganaro (1993) also note that the size of the legislative body has a significant effect which, except among district election cities, largely improves the likelihood of electing a woman to the council. Other results indicate significant regional disparities exist when examining the proportion of women elected to city councils – favoring the Midwest and West over the Northeast and South (Alozie and Manganaro 1993).

Charles Bullock and Susan McManus (1991): Bullock and McManus surveyed 946 American cities with populations in excess of 25,000 in 1980. Their research showed very little correlation between election structures and the presence of women on their city councils. Their evidence also failed to sustain their initial hypothesis that women would be elected more frequently in cities where the city council position is more valued (Bullock and McManus 1991). Finally, women serve somewhat more frequently in the West (Bullock and McManus 1991).

Accountability: City Council Responsiveness to Constituent Issues

Helig and Mundt (1984): Helig and Mundt find that the lower socio-economic status of a council member's constituency was generally linked to the member's view of themselves as an "ombudsman." Unsurprisingly, the more constituents residing in a legislative district often increase the demand for service (Helig and Mundt reference Joannes 1980). Helig and Mundt (1984) also conclude that political culture itself may impact the level of constituent service demanded (Helig and Mundt reference Elling 1979).

Welch and Bledsoe (1988): Welch and Bledsoe reveal that council members elected from districts spend more time (approximately 4 percent) focused on constituent services compared to those elected from at-large districts. They conclude that city council members elected in single-member districts are often exposed to direct community

pressures associated with geographic districts and demands for personal attention, which are often unknown to at-large councilmembers.

Thus, election from a geographic district is shown to be strongly and positively linked to first term council members attention to constituent services (Welch and Bledsoe 1988). According to Welch and Bledsoe (1988), district-elected council members spend 30 percent more time on constituent service than at-large council members. However, other factors can determine the amount of focus on constituent services which that be considered according to Welch and Bledsoe (1988). These include the impact of “localism,” region, party intensity, and the politics of actually getting re-elected (Welch and Bledsoe 1988).

Creation of Policy:

Clark (1968), Lineberry and Fowler (1967): Clark, Lineberry and Fowler conclude that political structure does play an important role in determining policy output in cities, but they disagree on the actual level of the impact on public policy. Lineberry and Fowler (1967) found “reformed” cities with at-large systems to have lower levels of taxing and spending than unreformed cities.

Morgan and Brudney (1985): Morgan and Brudney conclude that there is a slight tendency for reformed, at-large systems to have lower spending – although Clark (1968) and Liebert (1974), and Morgan and Pellissero (1980) found political structure to have no bearing on policy output or spending.

LBJ paper (1984): The LBJ paper suggests that single member districts encourage the city to address geographic or neighborhood interests. However, the paper also concludes that under district elections, city council members still adequately address citywide issues, balancing neighborhood and citywide interests. This is especially true for those council members elected under mixed systems. The paper also speculates that cities which shifted from at-large to district elections witnessed an increase in the openness of the policy decision-making process, including the creation of new voting coalitions (LBJ 1984).

Helig and Mundt (1984): Helig and Mundt note some evidence exists which suggests that at-large electoral structures may restrict policy and decision making to the "safe issues." According to Helig and Mundt (1984), this focus may be due to the fact that at-large councils either produce councils that support the dominant community or majority group's values, or that they produce councils whose members are controlled by a "ruling elite." Helig and Mundt (1984) also conclude that district elections tend to increase the use of coalitions and that there is little evidence to suggest that district elections "slow down" the administrative or policy process.

Campaign Costs and Resource Allocation:

Welch and Bledsoe (1988): Welch and Bledsoe (1988) conclude that the importance of money in winning campaigns screens out candidates at every level, regardless of which electoral structure is used. The key to campaign costs seems to be the size of the city, the competitiveness of the race and the number of voters that must be reached (Welch and Bledsoe 1988). Welch and Bledsoe reference Ingalls (1984) who concludes that campaign spending is first or second in importance in predicting outcomes in a variety of types of local elections. They also note that, regardless of electoral structure, the competitiveness of the local race will increase the amount of money raised and spent. Similarly, Helig and Mundt (1984) state that district elections have no clear impact on campaign spending levels and do not affect voter turnout.

David R. Morgan and John P. Pelissero (1980): Morgan and Pelissero tested the basic hypothesis that reformed cities (with city manager, at-large elections, and nonpartisan ballots) tax and spend less than unreformed communities. Eleven cities with populations of 25,000 and larger, which significantly changed their political structure between 1948 and 1973 were compared with 11 cities that made no electoral changes. Morgan and Pelissero (1980) found that over an 11-year period, variations in fiscal behavior were virtually unaffected by changes in city government structure.

The LBJ Paper (1984): The LBJ paper provides conflicting results when examining the impact of electoral structures on resource allocation and service delivery. In cities such

as Dallas, San Antonio, Charlotte and Fort Worth, survey respondents suggested that the service delivery was more equitable under district systems than under at-large systems. However, other respondents in Richmond noted that there was no change. The LBJ paper (1984) also did not find consensus from respondents from current at-large systems on the "equity and effectiveness" of resource allocation and policy-making.

Helig and Mundt (1988): Helig and Mundt (1988) conclude that there is little evidence to suggest that electoral structures have any impact on resource allocation and spending. However, they also note that district elections do have an impact where new city facilities are placed (Helig and Mundt 1988).

Candidate Profiles: Within district and at large elections

Carol Cassel (1985): Cassel's comparison of council members elected by district and at-large showed that those elected at-large were of higher occupational status, though the differences were not significantly large. She also concludes that although the nonpartisan ballot is essentially a regional phenomenon, non-partisan (most frequently within at-large) electoral structures tend to elect council members who are older and more likely to be attorneys or professionals with higher incomes, levels of education and social standing than those elected within partisan elections (Cassel 1985).⁷ Bledsoe (1993) reinforces this point by concluding that city council members elected at-large have consistently higher income and education levels when compared to those council members elected from district elections, which is especially true in larger cities.

Timothy Bledsoe (1993): Bledsoe notes that council members in the West are often considerably wealthier than council members from other areas. He reveals that 42 percent of council members in the West are from the highest income bracket (Bledsoe 1993). According to Bledsoe (1993), partisan councils attract younger more politically active politicians and that younger candidates tend to be found in urban areas. Bledsoe adds that unlike district elections, at-large electoral structures provide greater opportunity

⁷ These findings also reflect work done by Feld and Lutz 1977. Cassel (1985) also concludes that non-partisanship tends to benefit Republicans.

for lateral entry into political office and therefore lessen the need to initiate an early political career (Bledsoe 1993).

Electoral Structure on Conflict or Consensus:

Chester Newland (1995): Newland notes that district electoral structures in municipalities often increase the amount of conflict among council members, which may also impact the relationship of these members to the mayor or city manager. Therefore, while not formally driving the policy making or legislative process, the introduction of district elections does divide the electorate and those divisions may be mirrored in the policy process (Newland 1995).

Electoral Structure on Partisan politics:

Welch and Bledsoe (1986, 1988), Bledsoe (1993): Research in the early 1960s found that Republican candidates benefited from the presence of nonpartisan ballots in municipal elections. Welch and Bledsoe (1988) also reiterate this point, although they note that city politics is often thought of as the home turf of Democrats. Their nationwide sample of almost 1,000 city council members revealed that partisan biases within nonpartisan electoral structures remain under some circumstances, but the changing nature of urban politics and the growth of new political forces, appear to have substantially mitigated these biases (Welch and Bledsoe 1986). Although many city council electoral structures are non-partisan, most elected council members carry a partisan banner and the difference between the proportions of strong partisans in non-partisan and partisan elections is very small. Regional differences also impact the partisanship of city council races, with the Northeast exhibiting the highest level of partisanship, followed by the West (Bledsoe 1993).

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APPENDIX 8

Districts vs. At-Large: The optimal municipal council structure in Seattle

By: Charles T. Koon

The shortcomings of implementing a district system in Seattle outweigh the benefits. Empirical evidence gathered from Seattle's historical electoral patterns, statistical comparison between neighborhoods, and other cities that have changed from at-large elections to districts supports a finding that implementing districts will not satisfy the desired changes stated by the people of Seattle.

Seattle's history of civic governance

Seattle and its citizens have always had a strong drive to maintain a representative body that was responsive to the needs of the citizenry and effective at governing. The ward (or district) system has a checkered past throughout the United States and in Seattle specifically. Between 1865 and 1910 the city went through five different forms of governance before deciding on its current design. The previous forms included pure at-large elections, pure ward elections, and a mix of the two with a bicameral council.

An ungainly structure and lack of centralized power plagued the bicameral council in Seattle. At a time the council held 30 members, and 30 standing committees, many of which had overlapping jurisdiction. In his book on the history of Seattle Richard Berner describes the failure of Seattle's bicameral council:

Information as to the deficiencies in the 1890 freeholders' charter is meager. The usual charges of 'vice and extravagance' seem to have been prominent . . . The various commissioners therein provide for, particularly the police commission, seem to have been lacking in effectiveness, and it was thought authority was not sufficiently centralized . . . In 1893 the then city treasurer, Adolph Krug,

defaulted in a large sum and left the city. He was captured, tried, convicted and sentenced to the penitentiary for seven years.ⁱ

The ward system was eliminated under allegations that it promoted pork barreling instead of sound policy decisions. There were also rumors and allegations of corruption and kickbacks with the ward system, many of them regarding construction projects.ⁱⁱ

The current form of nine at-large councilmembers was established in 1910 and implemented in 1911. A charter amendment in 1946 changed the term of office from three years to four.

Districting proposals

The most recent attempt for changing the structure of the council was in 1995. A proposal to implement districts was put on the ballot and failed by a 55-to-45 percent margin.ⁱⁱⁱ While this proposal is a major change to the city's governing structure, the ballot measure was short and simple. It is re-printed in its entirety below:

Shall the charter of the city of Seattle be amended to require that the city council create nine council districts to require that candidates for the city council reside in the district which corresponds to the council position sought, and to require that each council member be elected by the voters in that district, replacing the current at-large system?

The question of districting Seattle is not new. It has appeared in the public forum a number of times during the current council's tenure. Each time the citizens of Seattle have voted to maintain the current system of nine at-large councilmembers.

The arguments for districts

The proponents of districting during the 1995 campaign argue that districting would increase councilmembers accountability to neighborhoods, the cost of campaigns

for council would be reduced, and an increased focus would be brought on neighborhood-specific issues.^{iv} These assumed effects of districts are reasonable, however, after examining cities that have made the change to districts it becomes apparent that these desired results are not guaranteed.

Proponents of districts assert that if a councilmember is accountable for only one district, then the citizens in that district would know exactly who to contact and have a clear conduit for their requests and opinions. A 1995 editorial by Ed Striedinger states "After being elected from the district in which they reside, elected council members would then answer to the voters in their district"^v. This is correct, but the current structure of the council allows for a similar level of accountability; instead of knowing who to contact based on geography, a constituent knows who to contact based on their complaint. Any complaint can be directed to the appropriate committee chair, allowing the citizenry to voice their concerns to the best councilmember for the job.

The ever-rising costs of political campaigns are a national concern. Proponents of districts for Seattle argue that a districted campaign would be cheaper than a citywide campaign. "City Council campaigns now cost more than \$100,000 because of the necessity to campaign citywide. District campaigns would be much cheaper."^{vi} The hope is that this would allow for a greater diversity of candidates, and increased opportunities for people currently excluded because of the exorbitant costs of running a campaign. However, evidence contradicts this: "Voter and Candidate Reaction to District and At-Large Elections Buffalo, New York" by Michael V. Haselswerdt investigates at-large campaigns and districted elections. In the study Haselswerdt states, "Generally speaking, candidates for district councilman seats substantially outspend their

at-large counterparts on the basis of dollar per registered voter". Although each district was 1/9 of the population of Buffalo, some of the district councilmembers spent nearly the same total amount on elections as their at-large counterparts.^{vii}

When a councilmember is elected by a small group of neighborhoods instead of the entire city, a councilmember would focus more of their attention and funds towards their home neighborhoods. Neighborhood activists believe that this is the best way to allocate funds. However, there are two fundamental questions to ask: one, is this necessarily a good thing particularly in light of Seattle's history of corruption during the ward (district) era in the early part of the 20th century and, two, who will decide what neighborhood projects, receive priority attention?

A case study of the impact of District elections in Raleigh, North Carolina examined the changes in city politics after the city changed from at large elections to district elections. In the study it was noted that a coalition of community groups became a powerful political party in the city after it changed from at-large to districts.^{viii} Potentially a single organized neighborhood group or coalition, could dictate what candidates get elected from their districts by acting as an electoral political party. This was the case in Raleigh, and it could easily be the case in Seattle. Raleigh, as well as Seattle, officially has nonpartisan elections. Seattle has nonpartisan elections because of voter mandate, the district system could create de-facto partisan elections. The two unintended effects of districting: unchanged costs of elections, and the potential for the formation of city-specific political parties work against the aims of districting proponents.

Given the sometimes-heated debate and emotional attachment to local political issues, implementing districts in Seattle could cause a fracturing of the city, and the

Council's power. When finding funding for neighborhood programs Councilmembers would be pitted against each other, and neighborhoods would be pitted against each other. Joni Balter points to a possible negative outcome when she states: "District elections lift the power of the mayor at the council's expense"¹⁸. Assuming that the mayor would still be elected at-large, the mayor would be given a sort of moral authority over the council because he would be considered the voice of the entire city, whereas the council would be perceived as only the voices the individual districts. Whenever the council would come to disagreement, the mayor would have a great deal of leverage over the council with his veto powers. The mayor would have a greater effect over what policy gets put into place under the district system.

Furthermore, it is possible that any citywide policies would not be as streamlined as they are today. In order to pass legislation through a districted council, it is likely that the policy would turn into a sort of 'Christmas tree' where a number of councilmembers would get to amend the proposal to include their own parochial interests. Consider the model of the US Congress, the almost constant complaint of pork barrel legislation and charges of juicy add-ons in exchange for votes. Given the current context of major budget shortfalls, and anti-tax initiatives the negative impact of a district system becomes starkly apparent.

Arguments for the At-large system

The at-large system of election has merits which should be addressed: the at-large system avoids parochialism and encourages a focus on viewing policy from a city-wide perspective, citizens have a broader pool of whom they can contact, and the at-large system has served Seattle well. Brewster Denny sums up these advantages when he

stated: "The city of Seattle in its modern history probably had had the most successful record in the country of attracting outstanding people to run for its City Council and, for the most part, and excellent record in selecting the best of these"^x. A Councilmember elected at-large tends to think of the impact a policy will have on the city as a whole, and approaches legislation with the goal of achieving the long term best interests of the city. District councilmembers are motivated to focus their attention on a specific region of the city, and not necessarily take a broader and more objective perspective. This can be seen by the change in legislative output in Raleigh, where the policy changed from being oriented around developing planned growth in the city's fringe to policy focused on the neighborhoods inside the city.^{xi}

Concentrating on neighborhood needs is not wholly undesirable; but given the vital role Seattle plays in regional and statewide economies, a provincial attitude towards policy could be devastating. The policy set forth by the council has impact on all levels of government, other cities inside the US, and internationally. If a councilmember's policy decisions are focused only on the needs of a few square miles of Seattle, then the councilmember is not acting responsibly as a member of the Seattle city council.

As stated before, increased accountability to citizens is possible through the current at-large system; if a citizen has a complaint right now they can bring their complaint to any and every member of the council because they have voted for each one. Proponents of districts state that in order for a citizen to be heard it is necessary that a citizen have 1 allotted councilmember to contact. This model of government assumes the worst of the governing body. Richard Childs, the father of the council-manager plan wrote, "Dismal mediocrity of council membership, is the usual result of ward elections"^{xii}

The Seattle City council has a long history of being progressive, and equitable in representing the city. It had its first female members in the 1920's and has had a great deal of ethnic diversity in it's membership. Implementing districts assumes the worst of the councilmembers; that they have no sense of civic duty. District elections will cause the council to drop to the lowest common denominator.

A districted system demands that each councilmember be an expert in all fields and all issues in order to be responsive to their geographically based constituency. In order to achieve such a level of authority on so many topics, a councilmembers office would have to increase its staff significantly. Seattle's current council system, however, allows for greater expertise in specific policy areas and issues, as well as demanding greater cooperation and collaboration with other members. This leads to more objective analysis of policy and political differences and motivations become secondary.

Statistical Findings

Methods-

As part of this analysis the electoral patterns in the city, demographic data of households, and neighborhood representation was tracked. The initial step in this process was establishing the location of residence for each member of the Seattle City Council, and measuring how many years they spent on the council since 1911 (the year that at-large elections were implemented). This information is available in various public records (council membership records on-file at the city clerks office, old city directories, property tax records, and income tax records). The specific addresses of the councilmembers will not be published at the council's request. This data was used to plot the electoral patterns

of the city over the past 90 years. This information is shown on maps, where electoral patterns are broken down by decade.

Although the city has no defined neighborhoods, the Seattle department of Neighborhoods has defined the city into 12 districts. For this project the Delridge district was combined with West Seattle. Using the 11 Department of Neighborhoods districts as the definition for a neighborhood, council representation was tracked to neighborhoods. Data regarding Seattle's population was gathered from the census department's 2000 population census. The census tracts were grouped into the 'neighborhoods' as defined above, so that population statistics and demographics could be generated.

Results-

Election trends indicate that there is a discrepancy between the population of neighborhood area, and it's level of representation in the city. However, there is no clear correlation between the median income of a neighborhood, the size of it's minority population, and inequities in the level of representation in the city council. In the past 40 the trend of councilmember turnover has increased, implying that the power of incumbency has decreased.

Conclusion

In his essay "The Local Election System in Virginia's Cities & Towns" Timothy G. O'Rourke wrote that the role of councilor is one that requires the greatest care and thought. It is not sufficient for a councilmember to just be the voice of the people, because sometimes the people cannot reach a consensus, and sometimes what the people

want is not in their own best interest.^{xiii} The City of Seattle has tried wards before, and abolished them because they were an inefficient and troublesome form of governance. The people of Seattle have since consistently voted down districts, and this fact should be taken into consideration. The district system is not in the public interest and makes producing streamlined policy almost impossible.

The nature of representation inequity in Seattle has no demographic base, the 11 districts used in this study significantly different from one and each other. This reflects the nature of Seattle. In a very short distance the demographics of an area can change radically. Some unique geographic quality of Seattle causes a lack of homogeneity in the spatial makeup of its population. This uniqueness makes it very difficult to attempt to create multiple equal districts inside the city.

Presently there is a plurality of citizens that believes the council needs to be more responsive to the needs of specific neighborhoods. But as we have seen, shifting the electoral policy to single member districts is not a course of action that will satisfy the needs of neighborhoods in the long run. A public forum should be created to discuss this supposed need for change and alternative methods for creating greater elected accountability and responsiveness. There are other options that could satisfy the citizenry, which need to be explored.

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- ⁱ Berner, Richard C. Seattle 1900-1920 From Boomtown. Urban Turbulence to Restoration. Charles Press, Seattle 1991 p.112
- ⁱⁱ Berner, Richard C. Seattle 1900-1920 From Boomtown. Urban Turbulence to Restoration Charles Press, Seattle Wa 1991 p.112
- ⁱⁱⁱ Cameron, Mindy. "Maybe it's time for district elections in Seattle politics" Seattle Times 31 Dec. 2002: B6
- ^{iv} "Ballot issues" Seattle Times 3 Nov. 1995 p. 10
- ^v Striedinger, Ed. "Yes on Charter Amendment 1" Seattle Post Intelligencer 29, Oct. 1995: E1
- ^{vi} "Ballot issues" *ibid*
- ^{vii} Haselswerdt, Michael V. "Voter and Candidate Reaction to District and At-Large Elections Buffalo, New York" Urban Affairs Quarterly 20 (1984): 31-45
- ^{viii} Clary, Bruce B. and Williams, Oliver J. "The Impact of District Elections: A Case Study" State and Local Government Review. 14 (1982) : 61-67
- ^{ix} Balter, Joni "If we aren't in a fix, don't break it" Seattle Times 10 Jan. 2002: B6
- ^x Denny, Brewster C. "Charter amendment 1: Don't Balkanize Seattle" Seattle Times 2 Nov. 1995; B5
- ^{xi} Clary and Williams, *ibid*
- ^{xii} O'rourke *ibid*.
- ^{xiii} O'rourke, Timothy G. "The Local Election System in Virginia's Cities & Towns" The University of Virginia News Letter 68 (1992) : 1-7

APPENDIX 9

October 20, 1975

DON'T BREAK THE CITY COUNCIL INTO DISTRICTS (Vote Against Alternate Section 420)

On November 4, 1975, Seattle voters will decide: (1) whether or not Seattle will have a new city charter and (2) if the proposed new charter passes, whether or not the current system of electing nine Councilmembers at-large will be replaced by a "mixed system" of electing three Councilmembers at-large and six by districts. While the eight undersigned Seattle City Councilmembers have different views on the proposed new charter, we are unanimous in opposing the proposed mixed system of electing three Councilmembers at-large and six by district. The people of Seattle will be best served by a City Council with all members elected on a city-wide basis.

For the following reasons, among others, we urge you to keep the current system of at-large City Council elections by voting against Alternate Section 420 (three Councilmembers elected at-large and six by districts):

- (1) Councilmembers elected on a city-wide basis are much more responsive to the needs of the entire City of Seattle than would be Councilmembers elected by district. This is important because the vast majority of the significant issues decided by the City Council normally impact directly or indirectly a wide variety of communities in Seattle. The parochial pressures placed on Councilmembers elected by district would seriously hinder their ability to judge which policy or program best serves the public interest of all Seattle residents. These pressures would encourage "logrolling," whereby Councilmembers would decide issues on the basis of trading favors ("your district's swimming pool for my district's park"), rather than on the basis of overall City needs.
- (2) Perhaps the best education we received for service as Councilmembers were the city-wide campaigns we waged to be elected. Our campaign appearances brought us in personal contact with thousands of Seattle residents from a wide variety of groups located in all parts of the City. Had each of us run from only one district, we would not have had the broad exposure to Seattle and the City's residents -- their ideas, concerns, and problems -- that we received as city-wide candidates. This broad campaign exposure is critical to our effectiveness as Seattle City Councilmembers.
- (3) While serving on the City Council, we have continued to visit and maintain contacts with a wide variety of groups and individuals throughout the City. The incentives to continue this broad exposure to Seattle residents from

all parts of the City would be much less were we each elected from only one district. Moreover, residents from all parts of Seattle who want access to a Councilmember can currently choose from among nine Councilmembers whose election they can directly influence. Under a district system of elections, residents from a district who feel uncomfortable about contacting their district's Councilmember would have no other Councilmembers to contact who would be directly accountable to them.

- (4) It is critical that Seattle's government maintain a balance of power between the Mayor and the City Council. Election of Councilmembers by district would seriously reduce the Council's ability to "check and balance" the Mayor. The Mayor would be able to play Councilmembers elected by district against each other much more easily than Councilmembers elected at-large.
- (5) It is also important to maintain a separation of powers between the Mayor and the City Council. The Mayor should be responsible for administration and the Council should be responsible for policy-making and legislative oversight of the Executive Branch. Electing Councilmembers by district would seriously undermine this separation of responsibilities, since Councilmembers would be pressured by many to become involved as "mini-Mayors" in the administration of City projects affecting their own districts.
- (6) Some people claim that a Councilmember elected from a particular district would be more concerned about, accountable to, and representative of everyone living in that district. This claim is based on a false assumption: That there is a greater community of interests among people within a particular geographic district than among various groups of people within the entire city. If Seattle were divided into six geographic districts as proposed, there would be as many different citizen interests within each district as there would be among districts. The views and interests of Seattle citizens depend on a wide variety of social, economic, and personal factors, not just on where they live. Moreover, the responsibilities of a Councilmember, as well as his or her particular aptitudes and interests, do not divide neatly by geographic district.
- (7) Some people argue that City Council elections should be held by district to lower the cost of city-wide campaigns and to otherwise "open up the system" to qualified candidates. However, the relatively low expenditure limit (ten cents per registered voter) for Seattle City

Council races already provides a reasonable opportunity for a wide variety of qualified candidates to seek office and assures "people-oriented" campaigns. Moreover, reducing the size of the electorate would also significantly reduce the number of people interested in contributing to or working on a particular campaign. Most important, elections by district in other cities have often led to two devices for influencing elections which are the antithesis of an open political process: the "Chicago-ward" political machine and the "gerrymandering" of legislative districts. Neither ward politics nor gerrymandering would serve the public interest in Seattle.

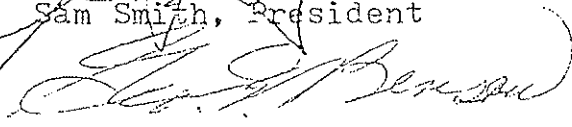
- (8) The proposed "mixed system" of elections (three Councilmembers elected at-large and six elected by district) is an unsuccessful attempt to compromise between those who favor at-large elections and those who favor district elections. Unfortunately, the compromise "mixed system" demonstrates the truth of the saying that "a camel is a horse made by a committee." The proposed compromise is even worse than a pure district system of elections. In addition to the problems created by a district system, the "mixed system" would create an unworkable and divisive Council with some members (the three elected at-large) "more equal" than others (the six elected by district). Moreover, the proposed process for districting and redistricting would be subject to intense political pressures and "gerrymandering." Under these circumstances, it would be very difficult, if not impossible, to establish district boundaries fairly and objectively.

Don't break the Seattle City Council into districts on November 4th. Keep Seattle in one piece by voting against Alternate Section 420!

SEATTLE CITY COUNCILMEMBERS



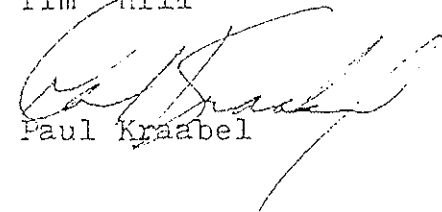
Sam Smith, President




George Benson



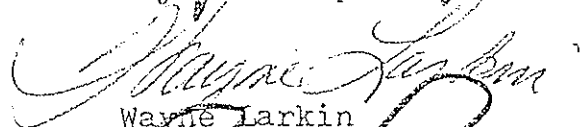
Tim Hill



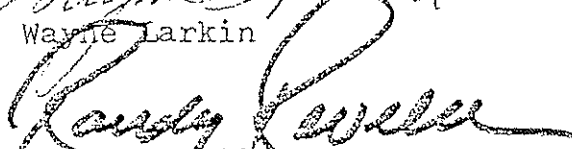
Paul Kraabel



Phyllis Lamphere



Wayne Larkin



Randy Revelle



Jeanette Williams

Appendix 10

SUMMARY OF PUBLIC TESTIMONY

The Panel held two public hearings one on June 23rd and one on June 30th, where they received testimony verbally and through e-mails. In total, 30 people gave verbal testimony.

At least four broad areas of concern, all of which the Panel previously identified, were articulated by those giving public testimony at the public hearings.

1. Those elected "don't represent me" -- districts or preference voting would result in my vote being more "powerful" or my interests and values being represented.
2. The cost of campaigning for election is too great—and district elections would let the "little" guy have a chance. Under this topic they clearly wanted more campaign expenditure restrictions, but provided no input on how the City might limit campaign spending.
3. The current Council is not responsive, and a change to districts or preference voting would increase responsiveness.
4. The current Council has favored downtown at the expense of the neighborhoods. A district or preference voting system would balance investment across the City.

A summary of testimony received at the public hearings is included in the Panel minutes.

The attendees at both hearings were asked to vote on a ballot for their choice of election systems.

The results are shown on the following page:

TALLY FOR BALLOT ON ELECTORAL SYSTEMS FROM ATTENDEES OF THE
PUBLIC HEARINGS


<u>Type of Electoral System</u>	<u>Preference by Ranking</u>					
	<u>1st</u>	<u>2nd</u>	<u>3rd</u>	<u>4th</u>	<u>5th</u>	<u>6th</u>
June 23 Tally						
At-Large Positions	0	0	2	1	2	4
At-Large/No Positions	0	0	2	1	2	0
At-Large/Choice/Proportional	7	0	1	1	0	0
Geographic Districts	4	2	1	1		1
Mixed/Districts/At-Large By Position or No Position	1	1	2	2	2	0
Mixed Districts At-Large/Choice Voting	1	9	1	1	0	0
Total	13	12	9	7	6	5
June 30 Tally						
At-Large Positions	0	0	1	2	1	5
At-Large/No Positions	1	1	3	3	2	
At-Large/Choice/Proportional	10	2	1	1	0	0
Geographic Districts	2	0	2	0	2	4
Mixed/Districts/At-Large By Position or No Position	0	1	2	5	3	0
Mixed Districts At-Large/Choice Voting	0	7	2	0	2	0
Total	13	11	11	11	10	9
Overall Tally						
At-Large Positions	0	0	3	3	3	9
At-Large/No Positions	1	1	5	4	4	0
At-Large/Choice/Proportional	17	2	2	2	0	0
Geographic Districts	6	2	3	1	2	5
Mixed/Districts/At-Large By Position or No Position	1	2	4	7	5	0
Mixed Districts At-Large/Choice Voting	1	16	3	1	2	0
Total	26	23	20	18	16	14

Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections
June 23 Public Hearing for Comment on Draft Report
Council Chambers, Municipal Building, Seattle, Washington

1. Michael Taylor
2. Jay Saucedo
3. Monica Leigh
4. Don Alexander
5. Dick Nelson
6. Curt Firestone
7. Dennis Ross
8. Stewart Wechsler
9. Zander Batchelder
10. Robert Hill
11. Anne High
12. Jay O'Connor
13. Susan Harmon

June 30 Public Hearing for Comment on Draft Report
New Holly Gathering Together Hall, Seattle, Washington

1. Nancy Eitreim
2. Jonathan Gardner
3. Lori Glenn
4. Marjorie Rhodes
5. Herm Ross
6. Bernadette Logue
7. Carolee Coulter
8. Joe Szwaja
9. Mark Perry
10. David Nixon
11. Ann Manly
12. Robert Hill
13. Robert Yoder
14. Roger Baker
15. Steward Wechsler
16. Michael Weisman
17. Andrew Noel



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SEATTLE

June 30, 2003

Testimony to the Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections

I am Nancy Eitrein testifying on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Seattle.

Our focus is on voters and would be voters. We want them to be informed and we want them to vote.

There are many factors which help us decide whether or not to vote.
Among them are:

1. Ease of registration
2. Knowledge of issues
3. Diversity of candidates
4. Diversity of those elected
5. Responsiveness to all voters
6. Simplicity
7. Stability

Our studies of the election process date from 1963 through 1996.

A position which was first studied and adopted in 1975 and studied and re-adopted in 1996 was that Council members should not be elected exclusively by district.

We are aware of the wish for neighborhoods to have a Council member they feel is responsible to them. We are also aware that most of the issues which come before the Council affect the whole city. Think of the Council committees -- most all discuss issues which affect the whole city.

We do not want Council members discussing these issues on the basis of what they can bring to their neighborhood. Seattle has strong neighborhood organizations whose roles we have supported. They are not without influence in Council deliberations.

You will note that our position states that Council members should not be elected exclusively by district. To us this does not eliminate plans which may include a combination of approaches which might help to achieve other goals such as diversity, responsiveness, and stability.

Any plan, however, which is a variation of our support for at-large elections should also achieve our goal of simplicity.

Nancy Eitrein, President

1402 Eighteenth Avenue • Seattle, Washington 98122

Phone: (206) 329-4848 • Fax: (206) 329-1273

e-mail: lwvseattle@aol.com • Web: <http://www.scn.org/civic/lwvseattle/>

From: Jules James <lakeunionmail@earthlink.net>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/25/03 4:54PM
Subject: Web Feedback: Elections Advisory Panel

Dear Folks:

I have read the draft Elections Advisory Panel report.

I am strongly of the opinion our current system of electing City councilpersons is the best possible at this time.

Geographic districts effectively dis-enfranchise voters. I live in Eastlake. But it is likely my geographic district would be considered Capitol Hill. NO. The majority of my local political issues are shared with others of the Lake Union basin. "My" Capitol Hill district councilperson is likely to be publically representing a liberal, gay and non-caucasian consititency. That is not me.

The other basic concept of geographic districts is conceptually flawed. Basic services that the city should provide must come through beaucratic channels. If the request for filling a pothole has become a political favor -- the basic implication of district representation -- our city has just insitutionalized political corruption.

"Proportional representation" -- it all its various manifestations -- seems just PC code for hyphenated-diversity. If we want one hyphenated each Gay, African, Asian, woman, Hispanic, ADA, "Progressive", Business and liberal Republican, than just label the seats clearly. Don't hide intent.

For more valuable election change at City Hall, I offer two proposals:

1. Return to an elected City Treasurer. We currently do not have any elected official who can stand alone against the mayor.
2. Mandate all bond and levy elections to be held during the primary of the mayorial election years. This would allow us to consider our executive officer candidates against real-world priority considerations.

Thank you for your considerations on this matter.

Jules James
26165 Franklin Avenue East
Seattle, WA 98102

From: Richard Morrill <morrill@u.washington.edu>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/26/03 11:15AM
Subject: Web Feedback: Elections Advisory Panel

Re: Seattle Districts

From: Dr. Richard Morrill, University of Washington

Thanks for the opportunity to share some thoughts by email. I'm a retired professor of political geography, and involved in issues of representation and redistricting for over 30 years, having been part of several major cases, beginning with Prince vs. Kramer, in 1972, here in Washington, and including cases in Mississippi, California, Indiana, Illinois and North Carolina.

There are basically 5 choices for local government elections (1) simple at large, as Seattle has; (2) at large with proportional representation; (3) single member districts (the norm in the United States); (4) at large multi-member districts; and 5) multi-member districts with proportional representation. A variant is nomination by districts and election at large.

It is probably accurate to say that among political scientists and geographers concerned with fair representation and the practice of democracy, the preference ranking would be 5, 2, 3, 4 and 1. That is, the academic community overwhelmingly prefers some form of proportional representation, as the only means by which significant minority interests have a reasonable chance at representation. But we know this is a hard sell in the US, although PR has been widely prescribed by courts, as for county commissions, school districts, small cities and the like, many in the south, in order to obtain some fairness in racial representation. Personally I'd like to see a Seattle with three districts, north, central and south, with 3 members each elected by cumulative voting. Why not do it right?

However, the issue at hand is the current at-large system and election by 9 single member districts. Single member districts (winner take all) are not great, and tend to lead to serious vote versus representation imbalances, but even so is vastly more democratic and fairer than the current at large system, almost universally condemned by students of government as the most undemocratic, discriminatory and elitist possible system. The map of who has served on the council, especially for long periods, over the last 40 years, attests to this unfair elitism. The at large system was evolved in the Progressive era (1910-1920) as an antidote to corrupt ward politics, but the long term effect has been to perpetuate election and reelection of an articulate, affluent, consensus representation – often excellent persons, but profoundly undemocratic, because it disenfranchises minority interests and constituencies, geographic as well as substantive. "Parochial" is not pejorative but what democracy is all about, not area-wide blandness. The best government comes out of the conflict of interests and the negotiation of solutions. It is certainly time to learn to live with the real diversity that Seattle is.

From: K Peterson <staffgage@yahoo.com>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/27/03 12:49PM
Subject: Web Feedback: Elections Advisory Panel

Seattle City Councilmembers,

I have reviewed the draft Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections report, and favor the proportional representation method described as Choice Voting, Preference Voting, and Single Transferable Vote.

It is important for the Council to support purchase of voting machines by King County that will accomodate this method, and that will provide a voter verifiable paper audit trail (a printed ballot). Currently, the Secretary of State's plan doesn't require paper ballots with touch-screen voting machines. The comment period for the state's plan to implement the Help America Vote Act (funding machine purchases) ends on Friday, July 11. I urge the Councilmembers to comment individually if not as a group.

Kerry Peterson

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From: Peter Roth <peterbroth@yahoo.com>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/28/03 6:59PM
Subject: Web Feedback: Elections Advisory Panel

I am commenting on the preliminary report by the Citizen Advisory Panel on Council Elections. In evaluating the various election systems that the Panel was investigating, the Panel came up with ten criteria which, in my opinion, are good questions to ask in designing a form of government and how to elect people to fill the roles in the government. Given my high regard for the criteria, I decided that my public comment would center around these ten questions. So, here they are:

1) Does the system lower election costs?

The cost of an election depends on how many people are administering the election and how many hours they work and how much they are being paid. It also depends on the equipment and other resources like paper that are used. Thus, minimizing the number of elections held will minimize the amount of human and non-human resources needed and in turn, minimize election costs. Having one election per year seems like a reasonable frequency of elections. Allowing Choice or Instant Runoff Voting would eliminate the need of primaries.

2) Does the system promote voter participation?

Voters are likely to vote when they feel that their vote will make a difference, especially if they have strong feelings about an issue or candidate. The best way to achieve this is to make sure that voters are amply educated and that campaigns are between "equals". Thus, government, with the aid of the media should hold numerous "town meetings" where all candidates' views can be expressed. In addition, money should NEVER give one candidate an advantage over another.

3) Does the system promote quality campaigning?

Quality campaigning will occur when candidates are given the opportunity to frequently meet with each other in the presence of voters so that relationships with voters and each others can be established. Also, allowing voters to rank their choices on a ballot will encourage candidates to look for ways to appeal to the widest spectrum of voters, instead of writing off certain minority segments of the populations as "lost causes".

4) Does the system promote quality candidates?

5) Does the system promote quality government?

6) Does the system promote accountability of Councilmembers?

The quality of candidates and of government ultimately rests with the people who run for office and who hold office. If people truly want to hold office because they have a mission to fulfill for the common good, then quality will be assured. If they are wanting to hold office because its a good paying job, or it boosts their ego, then quality will be severely compromised. If institutional practices are in place to "protect" office holders from the public, then accountability is nonexistent. Therefore, to weed out candidates whose motives are not pure, require all candidates to attend a good portion of meetings held by the holder of the office for which they seek. If they need financial support to do this, then they should be supported so that they can do so. Once a candidate is voted into office, institutions should be in place so that their basic needs are met, but that's it. They should not have any special titles and be addressed simply by their first name. All meetings they attend and hold should be made public. In summary, office holders should just

be treated as another "working Joe".

- 7) Does the system promote Councilmember responsiveness?
- 8) Does the system promote Councilmember accessibility?
- 9) Does the system promote broad representation?
- 10) Does the system allow for addressing diverse issues?

These can be achieved when a council has sufficient quantity, diversity and sufficient support. The smaller the council and/or its staff, the more likely that Councilmembers will not have the time to respond to and grant access to his/her constituents. If the council is not very diverse, means that possibly no Councilmembers resonate with your issue, which in turn, reduces the likelihood that you will have access to a Councilmember, much less receive a quality response from one. Diversity also has to be viewed over time. In other words, if the same people get elected over and over again, little diversity exists over time (even though a council may seem diverse in any given moment). Therefore, some form of term limits should be instituted (One of my favorites is to allow office holders to serve an unlimited number of terms, but never more than 2 consecutively). The obvious form of government that encourages the most diversity is one that uses proportional representation to elect its office holders.

Given my comments above, it is apparent that Instant Runoff (or Choice) Voting and proportional representation along with campaign (finance) reform will go a long way to optimize any form of government.

Thank you for considering my comments.

Sincerely,

Peter Roth
7415 - 5th Ave NE #208
Seattle WA 98115-5370

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<http://sbc.yahoo.com>

From: "Mark S. Anderson" <mark@meanderinc.com>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/30/03 10:53AM
Subject: Web Feedback: Elections Advisory Panel

Hi,

I hope the panel includes some recommendations with this report. In my view the status quo is just not working. You have the same majority electing all of the city council members. Districts would not lead to much change in the political make-up of the council. Proportional representation is by far the most appealing option, and the best chance of introducing some diversity of perspective into the council.

- Mark Anderson

From: "Bob Davis" <bob@ecotope.com>
To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
Date: 6/30/03 2:35PM
Subject: Proportional Representation

Greetings.

I have a number of comments on this and wonder when the comment period will end. Thanks for your help.

Bob Davis

From: "Bob Davis" <bob@ecotope.com>
To: "Nancy Roberts" <nancy.roberts@Seattle.Gov>
Date: 6/30/03 2:56PM
Subject: Re: Proportional Representation (PR)

Okay -- better do this now, then.

I helped some years ago to gather signatures for the PR council initiative and have followed the current issue.

Here's several reasons why I prefer to keep at-large voting for CCouncil but change the voting method to Proportional Rep (PR).

- 1) it encourages more people to vote, since they don't have to worry about supporting a "marginal" candidate. Even if a candidate doesn't win on first choice votes, they can still win with transferred votes. A most discouraging thing in our voting system is that your candidate can get 49.99% of the vote and still lose. Transferrable votes mean more people will vote and fewer votes will be wasted.
- 2) PR will turn out more candidates. With PR, all sorts of viewpoints can be heard during the campaign; the candidates will be much less inclined to lean so hard toward the middle.
- 3) PR will give incumbents a run for their money. Now, incumbents have a huge advantage and this makes them complacent.
- 4) PR rewards motivated neighborhoods. With districts, you would get your "own" representative, but that doesn't necessarily mean you get a better council. Years ago, when I talked to people in West Seattle about this issue, I told them they had enough numbers to elect two councilmembers under PR if they got a high turnout. They seemed to prefer having one "sure thing" councilmember, perhaps as a hedge against laziness.
- 5) PR eliminates the need for a primary, which saves money and reduces voter exhaustion. If you vote for 4 council members in one cycle and 5 in the next, you only need the top 4 vote getters in one general election and the top 5 in the next. Pretty simple to understand.
- 6) PR teaches people at the local level so they can consider how it would work at higher levels such as Congress. There's no reason why this system wouldn't work for our House races. A corollary to this would be the single transferrable vote for single candidate offices like President. Just think what would have happened in the last presidential election if we would have had the single transferrable vote (or if the electoral votes in FL had actually been split down the middle, which would have been a much truer reflection of the general vote in that state). We wouldn't have had the disgrace that followed.

Side note: there is no "sleight of hand" with preference voting. Many people seem to think it violates the "one man/one vote" rule, but it does not. Transfers are fractional and no one gets more than one full vote. This stuff got worked out with computers a long time ago.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment.

Bob Davis
Seattle

----- Original Message -----

From: "Nancy Roberts" <nancy.roberts@Seattle.Gov>
To: "Bob Davis" <bob@ecotope.com>
Sent: Monday, June 30, 2003 2:36 PM
Subject: Re: Proportional Representation

> Please email your comments to me by no later than noon, July 2. Sorry
> for the tight turnaround!

>

> >>> "Bob Davis" <bob@ecotope.com> 06/30/03 02:38PM >>>

>

> From: Bob Davis" <bob@ecotope.com>
> Sent: Monday, June 30, 2003 2:38 PM
> To: <Nancy.Roberts@Seattle.gov>
> Subject: Proportional Representation
> Priority: Normal

>

> Greetings.

>

> I have a number of comments on this and wonder when the comment period
> will
> end. Thanks for your help.

>

> Bob Davis

>

Appendix 11

Seattle City Council Electoral Systems A Historical Timeline¹

1869-1882. The City Charter provided for a Common Council that consisted of seven members elected at-large for terms of one year.

November 25, 1883 The City Charter was amended dividing the City into three wards and providing that the Common Council be increased to nine members elected for two years terms.

February 1886 The City Charter was amended to decrease the size of the City Council to eight members, elected for two-year terms, and to increase the number of wards to four.

1890-1896 **First Home Rule Charter and the Bicameral Council.** A new Freeholders Charter was adopted in 1890 that increased the number of wards to eight and created a bicameral City Council composed of a Board of Aldermen and a House of Delegates. The nine member Board of Aldermen was elected at large to four-year terms. The House of Delegates was composed of two members elected from each of the City's eight wards.

1892 The City Charter was amended to increased the number of wards to nine and provided that one member of each house be elected from each of the City's wards.

1896-1910 **Return to a Unicameral City Council.** A new Freeholders Charter was adopted in 1896 that returned the City Council to a single body with 13 members. The amendment also provided that in the election of 1898, the City Council would be composed of one member elected to a two-year term from each of the City's nine wards and four at-large members elected to four-year terms.

1905 The City Charter was amended in 1905 to add two new wards to the City's political boundaries, increasing the size of the City Council to 15 members.

May 1907 The Charter was amended to add two new wards to the City, increasing the Council to 17 members.

July 1907 The Charter was amended to add one new ward to the City, increasing the Council to 18 members.

1910-1946 A City Charter amendment provided for a City Council of nine members elected at large for three-year overlapping terms. The newly amended Charter also provided for non-partisan elections.

March 1946-Present The City Charter was amended at the General Election to provide that elections would be held biennially in even number years. Terms of Councilmembers were increased to four years and the President of the Council would serve for two years.

¹ Seattle City Councilmembers. City Archives. City of Seattle

STATEMENT OF ABSTENTION

There is no such thing as an election system that does not favor some interests and disfavor others; there is no such thing as a “neutral,” “objective,” or “unbiased” electoral law.¹ Every electoral system, including Seattle’s, has inherent biases for or against certain segments of the City and every electoral system promotes or neglects certain aspects of public policy.² The challenge for government and for the public is to fashion an electoral system that more fully balances benefits to all segments of the City, one that maximizes positive public policy outcomes while minimizing the negatives.

The preceding Problem Statement strongly suggests that there are inherent, systemic shortcomings in the current at-large system.³ Evidence presented to the Panel also indicates that the at-large system, while promoting a beneficial universal perspective, does so at the expense of some neighborhood concerns.⁴ This does not mean it is a bad system or that it should be replaced, but rather that it can and should be improved. The City Council seemed cognizant of this need when it passed Resolution 30509.

“The Panel should be mindful of striking a balance between geographic accountability and an elected body that is able to balance neighborhood needs with a citywide and regional perspective.”

It was therefore not surprising that in remarks to the Panel both George Griffin, spokesman for the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, and proponents for Seattle Districts Now (opponents in the current electoral debate) listed the following as “flaws” in the current system:

- The need for more accountability;
- The need for more connection to the people; and
- The need for greater measures to link government to the people.⁵

Unfortunately, the Panel was not able to fully engage in this inquiry. No funding was provided to conduct accurate and relevant citizen surveys. No local representatives of alternative electoral systems ever appeared or submitted testimony despite the fact that Spokane, Tacoma and Bellingham exist under mixed systems.⁶ No qualitative or quantitative data was ever provided on the status of other western

¹ Submitted comments of Professor David Olson, University of Washington. May 1, 2003.

² Id.

³ Majority Report, *supra*.

⁴ Olson comments.

⁵ See Panel Minutes of May 1, 2003, and April 16, 2003.

⁶ Submitted comments of Stan Finkelstein, Executive Director of the Association of Washington Cities.

cities that switched from wholly at-large to alternative systems.⁷ The constriction of time, especially given the polemics of pre-establish positions, severely limited extensive debate and thorough attempts to objectively examine and challenge asserted evidence and opinions.⁸

Given the foregoing, it is regrettable that the Council is presented with a recommendation for retaining the status quo despite the admission that a significant portion of the Panel was “not enthusiastic about the current system,” but felt obliged to accept the status quo because “no such compelling evidence was presented or found.” The more compelling conclusion is that the findings of the Panel, while representative of a tremendous amount of time and effort, are incomplete and the goal of Resolution 30509 but partially met.

In conclusion, the current system, while beneficial in many ways, has its shortcomings. Preliminary evidence indicates that there are modifications which may improve the electoral system and provide greater accountability. Given that the refinement of our electoral system so that it maximizes public policy outcomes is essential to Seattle’s success in the competition for human talent, quality of life and robust commerce, it is recommended that the Council acknowledge that aspects of the current electoral system can and should be improved. This acknowledgment should be met with the requisite commitment of open inquiry, honest debate and critical analysis to fully complete the task the Council has set for itself.

⁷ Id. Denver, Colorado and Tucson, Arizona both operate under mixed systems. San Francisco and San Diego, California as well as Phoenix, Arizona all switched from at-large to district systems within the last twenty years.

⁸ As an example, a review of Appendix 7 reveals numerous case studies which show improved government accountability when geographic components were incorporated into an electoral system. It also reveals and disproves many of the pros and cons assertion by polemics.

Comments on Citizen Advisory Committee Report

Brewster C. Denny

July 23, 2003

I concur fully with the conclusion of the majority. I particularly wish to compliment Chairman Ford and Messrs. Revelle and Valdez for their excellent drafts which became the problem statement and the recommendations section of the Report. Many good studies, important testimony, and consultation with experts contributed to our work. I especially wish to praise the excellent paper by Charles T. Koon and the work of the League of Women Voters of Seattle. The League has studied this matter thoroughly over the years and their position supports our findings and deserves special attention. Of importance to this report is their long time position in favor of public financing of municipal elections and their efforts to publicize public and broadcasted hearings and debates by Council and Mayor candidates. I understand that the Municipal League of King County, a long time public force on these issues will be preparing a position on City Council elections for the Council. The Committee devoted considerable attention to the proportional representation system and I, for one thought that the case was well made, and intriguing, although not quite ripe for prime time and presented real difficulties in adapting to our polity. I urge the Council to keep the idea in mind as they think forward on these issues.

I think the report is defective in three respects.

1. I wish the Committee's report had included more of the history, because I believe that the historical record and local experience with both districts and at large, partisan and non-partisan is quite simply overwhelmingly against election by districts. The history is also very important with respect to representation of people of color and women in elected, appointive and civil service jobs. The Charter Amendment and affirmative action activities of the late nineteen sixties, largely overlooked by the report have given us what could well be the most diverse and representative government and public service, especially public safety in the country. That work also gave us the strongest mayor system in our history. Election by district would further strengthen the Mayor at the expense of the Council – and further exacerbate a current issue of great importance and conflict in City Hall.
2. The problem statement of the report says very correctly what I, at least, believe is the principal concern of the public that supports a change in the election system: "The current electoral system contributes to the downtown being a disproportionate beneficiary of the City's public investment in facilities and services." This perceived bias deprives neighborhoods of essential investment and services. From our hearings, it is clear that this perception in its turn is rooted in the campaign financing system which, at least as perceived by those who feel disenfranchised, favors the

“establishment” and the CBD as opposed to the neighborhoods and the broad and diverse base of the electorate. The best way to meet the needs which the pro district election movement is designed to fix is not election by district but campaign finance reform. Public financing and effective use and advertising of the public television channels for candidate presentations and debates would do the job. I urge the Council to get to work on this now.

3. The Committee did not consider the other vital issue of representation in the charge given to us by The City Council to “create an elected body that is able to balance neighborhood needs with a city wide and regional perspective.” The original Metro system did an excellent job on behalf of the City and the region to clean up Lake Washington and was on its way to important work in other aspect of the City’s stake in region wide problems. But, with the failure of the City and King County to push for the adoption of the recommendations of the Metropolitan Study Commission of February 1975 and the later take over of Metro by King County vital public work just hasn’t gotten done. This failure has also contributed to the feeling of many that the system is broken and needs fixing. The failure of the King County takeover of Metro to provide such a system for the vital mid Puget Sound area, particularly in the provision and governance of major wholesale public utility functions is very high priority for the citizens of Seattle. It needs urgent attention. This City’s election system is only a part of this, of course. The public to be represented in the process is located in three, perhaps four counties. But it is an urgent matter for us all, probably this City’s highest priority. Jim Vesely, the Seattle Times editorial page editor has said it all in the attached editorial of last April 20th.

stewardship rather than political logrolling.

Metro government runs Nashville, Tenn., and Davidson County with a rather large council of five at-large members and 35 district representatives. Metro Louisville, which encompasses the city and county, does it with 26 elected members; Metro Portland, the closest example, has an elected chair, vice chair and five members, called councilors. Metro Portland is an interesting parallel to metro Seattle — regional responsibility for planning and other key issues for three counties, a population of 1.3 million and 24 cities.

Not every comparison to another city is a good one. But I see a region now split along county lines, along partisan political lines, along geographic and institutional boundaries and consumed by cancerous infighting. Instead of defining the region from the core city outward, how about a single, nonpartisan government that has true regional vision and authority?

Colleague Jim Fisher, editorial page editor at the Lewiston (Idaho) Morning Tribune, chided me for writing last week that his paper called Seattle some nasty names. It was columnist Mike Costello in the Morning Tribune who did the name calling, not the paper's editorial voice.

James Vesely's column appears Sunday on editorial pages of The Times. His e-mail address is: jvesely@seattletimes.com

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