

# Better Voting Methods

Jan Kok

# Outline

Plurality Voting, and its many problems

Better Methods: Score Voting, Approval Voting

How do we get a better method implemented?

# Plurality Voting: Our “Usual” Method

Vote for one candidate for each office.

Whoever gets the most votes wins.

## Treasurer

*Choose one :*

Demi Cratt

Rhea Publican

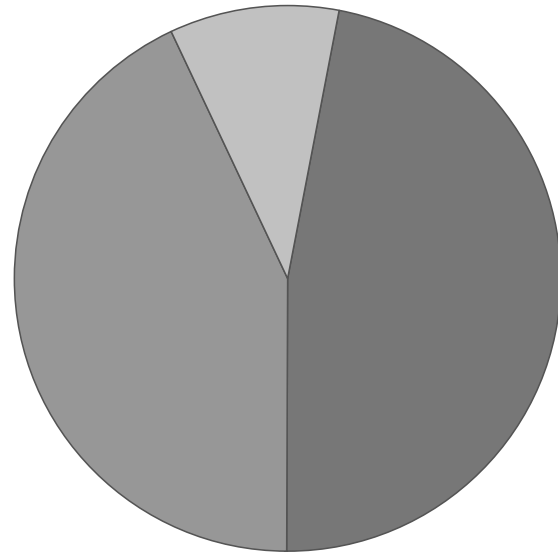
Ima Green

Lee Bertarian

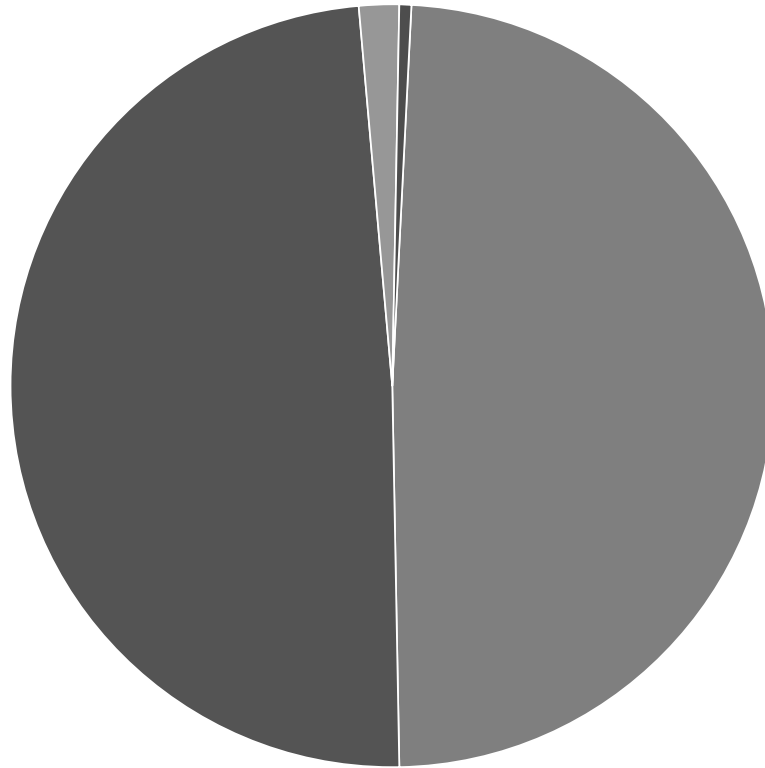
# Plurality Voting: Problems

OK when there are just two candidates, but breaks down with more than two.

Voting for third party candidate is likely to be contrary to voter's interest.



# Florida, 2000



# Plurality Voting: Problems

The two-party duopoly is perpetuated.

Third parties are ignored. Their ideas are not discussed.

The true level of support for third parties and their ideas is hard to measure.

# Plurality Voting: Problems

Similar candidates “split the vote” and hurt their common interest.

Thus, the hostility of the Democratic party toward Nader, for example.

In order to have a chance of winning, politicians are forced to work within one of the two major parties – even if their values don’t match well their chosen party.

# Plurality Voting: Problems

Straight plurality can elect a “fanatical” candidate.

Runoff elections alleviate the problem, but are expensive, and may not choose the best mainstream candidate.

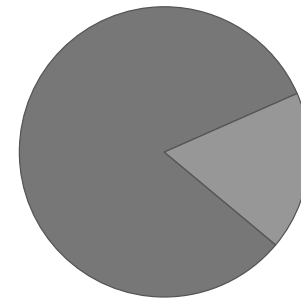
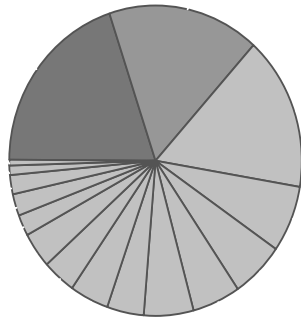
Jospin – socialist, Prime Minister

Chirac – corruption scandals while mayor of Paris

Le Pen – anti-Semitic, xenophobe



# Plurality Voting: Problems



“Vote for a Crook,  
not a Fascist!”



# Score Voting

How people might have voted in 2004

Republican: Bush=10, Peroutka=2, Badnarik=2, others=0

Democrat: Kerry=10, Nader=2, others=0

“Anyone but Bush” Green: Cobb=10, Nader=9, Kerry=9, Bush=0, others=?

“Sincere” Green: Cobb=10, Nader=8, Kerry=1, Bush=0, others=?

Jan: Badnarik=10, Cobb=9, Nader=9, Peroutka=5? Brown=2? Kerry=1, Bush=0

# Score Voting: + and –

++ FAMILIARITY: Practically everyone has filled in feedback forms where you rate something on a scale of 0 to 5.

++ FAMILIARITY: People are familiar with Olympic scoring which is similar.

++ FAMILIARITY: People are familiar with the idea of scores used in schools.

# Score Voting: + and -

+++++ Solves pretty much all the problems with plurality voting.

+++ In particular, there is **NEVER** any reason NOT to give the highest score to your favorite candidate.

+++ Alternative parties are not squeezed out – alternative viewpoints would be more widely discussed.

# Score Voting: + and -

++ Easy and cheap to implement: can be handled by existing voting equipment.

+ Expressive: With ranked voting, does the vote Cobb>Kerry>Bush mean that the voter likes Kerry a lot or just a little better than Bush? Voters who want to vote sincerely can express their true opinions of *all* the candidates.

# Score Voting: + and -

- “Most voters will vote 0’s and 10’s, so why bother with the other scores?”
- Dilemma for strategic voters when there are *three* close frontrunners. Do you give the lesser-evil candidate a high score or a low score?
- Approval Voting and Plurality Voting are simpler.

# Score Voting: A couple versions

Blanks count as zeros

Simplest and “safest”

Blanks don't count in average

Doesn't penalize candidates who are not well-known by voters.

In practice, this version is more complicated in several ways. A detailed discussion would take AT LEAST 10 minutes. So, avoid discussion of this option when time is limited, and focus on the blanks-as-zeros version.



# Approval Voting

Vote 0 (disapprove) or 1 (approve) for each candidate.

Whoever gets the highest average score wins.

## Treasurer

*Vote 1 or 0 for each:*      1 0

Demi Cratt                      ○ ○

Rhea Publican                ○ ○

Ima Green                      ○ ○

Lee Bertarian                 ○ ○

# Approval Voting

Vote for as many candidates as you “approve” of.

Whoever gets the most votes wins.

“Plurality done right”

## Treasurer

*Choose one or more :*

Demi Cratt

Rhea Publican

Ima Green

Lee Bertarian

# Approval Voting: + and -

+++ Easy to understand.

+++ Easy to change from Plurality to Approval.

+++ Avoids almost all of the problems with Plurality.

Third party supporters must decide when to drop support for major party.

Other voting systems can give more information about voter preferences.

# Majority Defeat Disqualification Approval (MDDA)

Solves the three-frontrunner dilemma with Score and Approval voting

Rank only the candidates you approve of 1st, 2nd, 3rd... (Ties are allowed)

## Treasurer

	<i>1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup></i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup></i>
Demi Cratt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rhea Publican	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ima Green	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lee Bertarian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# MDDA

Candidates who are ranked lower than other candidates on a majority of ballots are disqualified (unless all are disqualified, then none are disqualified)

Among the candidates who are not defeated by a majority, the one who is ranked on the most ballots (highest Approval) wins.

# MDDA: + and -

- +++ Never an incentive to “betray one’s favorite” – unlike IRV
- + Some people prefer ranking-based methods to ratings-based methods
- New, not well known

# How MDDA solves 3-frontrunners dilemma

Suppose Left, Middle and Right are about equally approved.

34 Leftist voters vote Left > Middle

32 Centrist voters vote Middle > their-2<sup>nd</sup>-choice

34 Rightist voters vote Right > Middle

# How MDDA solves 3-frontrunners dilemma

Suppose Left, Middle and Right are about equally approved.

34 Leftist voters vote Left > Middle

32 Centrist voters vote Middle > their-2<sup>nd</sup>-choice

34 Rightist voters vote Right > Middle



# Condorcet Voting

Rank the candidates 1, 2, 3...

Winner is chosen by round-robin tournament.

## Treasurer

	<i>1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup></i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup></i>
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# Counting Condorcet Ballots

35  $A > B > C$

25  $B > A > C$

40  $C > B > A$

# Condorcet Voting: + and -

- +++ “Fanatic” candidate can’t win.
- +++ More info about voter preferences is available than for Plurality or Approval.
- Voters may still feel compelled to rank major party candidate first (lesser of two evils)
- Voting is simple, but counting method is somewhat complicated in the details.
- Relatively unknown, no track record.

# IRV Problems

40 Left>Middle

25 Middle>Right

35 Right>Middle

Middle is eliminated and Right Wins

Problem:  $40 \text{ Left} + 25 \text{ Middle} = 60$  voters who preferred Middle to the winner!

Problem: the Left>Middle voters have an incentive to vote Middle>Left, thus sending false messages about true preferences.

Note that Australia has used IRV for 80 years and still has 2-party domination.

# Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)

Rank the candidates 1, 2, 3...

Eliminate candidate with fewest votes, redistribute ballots, until one candidate has a majority.

Treasurer	<i>1<sup>st</sup></i>	<i>2<sup>nd</sup></i>	<i>3<sup>rd</sup></i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup></i>
Demi Cratt	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rhea Publican	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ima Green	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lee Bertarian	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

# Instant Runoff Voting: + and -

+++ “Fanatic” candidate can’t win.

+++ More voter preference info available than for Plurality or Approval

+ Easy to vote, fairly easy to understand counting.

O Track record: Used in Australia, etc.

-- Voters feel compelled to choose “lesser of two evils”. Australia still has two major parties.

# How many lives could have been/could be saved by a better voting method?

See CRV web page for details

Vietnam war – 1,000,000

The second US-Iraq War – 50,000

Antibiotics in animal feeds – 1 *billion*

# How to get better voting methods into use

Get third party support.

Develop a movement! Spread the word! Use Score Voting or Approval Voting in your own organizations!

Get the Democrat and Republican parties to use Score Voting for their internal elections.



# Third party support

Third parties are hurt the most by Plurality voting, therefore third parties should be most enthusiastic promoters of better methods.

Unite around Score Voting, since it gives greatest advantage to smaller parties compared with other methods.

Include voting reform in all third party platforms.

Use Score Voting (or Approval if simplicity and ease of counting is most important) for party internal elections – lead by example, practice what we preach.

# 2004 Exit poll study using Plurality, Approval, and Score Voting

# Iowa '08

Score Voting can help choose better candidates in PRIMARY ELECTIONS – candidates with broader appeal inside and outside the party.

More appealing candidates -> better chance of winning in general election.

Therefore, it's in the Democrat and Republican parties' ***own best interests*** to use Score Voting in their candidate selection process.

Focus on Iowa '08 – the nation will be watching. Free publicity for this “new” voting method.

# Ways to Help

Get informed. Visit the Center for Range Voting website, learn about Range Voting (= Score Voting), Approval Voting and other methods.

Give us your endorsement – fast and easy, but very important!

Help develop outreach materials. Help improve the website. Help with research.

Spread the word!

# Conclusions

Several alternative voting systems are available that are superior to Plurality.

Ballot and voting procedures are easy to understand.

Lesser of two evil problem can be alleviated.

Wider realistic choice of candidates available to voters.

Wider range of IMPORTANT issues discussed in campaigns.

**LEND A HAND! LET'S GET MOVING!**



<http://www.mediarebellion.com/i/hosted/cobra/Chthu%205.jpg>