



Excitement and Some Concern About a Proposed LWVUS Concurrence

The LWVUS Board has recommended a national concurrence with a “Voter Representation / Electoral Systems” (i.e. Voting Methods) at its 2020 convention. LWVUS is lacking a Voting Methods program position, and we may finally be able to fill this void!



The proposed concurrence has the following position-in-brief:

Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable and enhance representation for all voters.

The position-in-full elaborates on the features of election methods (i.e. voting methods) that the League would support, including “compatible with ... vote-by-mail” and “auditable” – important features of Colorado’s elections. We are also pleased with:

The League supports systems that elect policy-making bodies – legislatures, councils, commissions, and boards – that proportionally reflect the people they represent.

Our only concern is with the bullet point: “Require the winner to receive a majority of the votes for executive and other single seat offices.” We have two objections:

1. *How is majority defined?* Single-winner Ranked Choice Voting (aka instant-runoff voting or IRV) often claims a majority winner, but in both the Maine 2nd congressional district and the San Francisco mayoral contests in 2018, more people voted for the losing

candidates than for the victors! The voting math calls into question a “majority” requirement when there are more than two candidates.

2. *Is a so-called “majority” even **desirable**?* The gold-standard winner is the candidate who beats every other candidate in head-to-head contests. A “majority” requirement can hide information when conducting sequential plurality elections and thereby prevent the election of a gold-standard winner. For instance, with candidates D, U and R, candidate U may beat candidate D and also beat candidate R in pairwise contests, but in a 3-candidate plurality or IRV contest, U could get only 30% of the vote and R and D could each get 35% of the vote. U – the best candidate – would lose! Other methods, such as approval voting, aim to find a winner most acceptable to the largest numbers of voters and do not seek to find a majority at all.

No voting method is perfect. Each has its pros and cons. That is why our state position “supports gaining on-the-ground experience with alternative voting methods...”

When considering a position at the national program, we should note the criteria spelled out on page 5 in the LWVUS [Impact on Issues 2018-2020](#):

League positions at the national level are by their very nature broad and general in scope: they are guides for acting.

Including the “majority” requirement in a national program position could sully the League’s reputation for integrity and accuracy while preventing Local Leagues from supporting better voting methods. The LWV of Red River Valley supported the adoption of approval voting in Fargo in 2018. The measure passed with almost 2/3 of the votes, but the proposed “majority” requirement would have forced the Local League to oppose the measure or at least remain neutral.

We’d like to propose an easy resolution for our concern with the “majority” requirement. Concur with all but the “majority” bullet point. (Alternatively, we could ask for concurrence with our state’s Voting Methods position.) Note that small changes are permissible in concurrences. For instance, LWVCO concurred with the LWVBC Voting Methods position in 2017, but with the addition of a clarifying statement.

The LWVBC Voting Methods team discussed the pros and the single con of the proposed concurrence at a LWVCO convention caucus in May. To see the slides and read the entire proposed concurrence, go to [our website](#). If you have further questions, please reach out to an LWVBC Voting Methods Team member you know or email us at vmteam@lwwbc.org.

Submitted by the LWV of Boulder County Voting Methods Team