

Alleviating the faults of IRV as a 'stand-alone' change: comments on Reilly and Richie's articles from *Tom Paine* magazine. They are arguing for plain vanilla IRV and are dismissive of other frameworks. I intersperse my comments in their articles, arguing for a merged sense of four changes: arguing for proportional representation with majoritarian allotment and with IRV and by district, as solving *the four issues*, respectively, of: low voter turnout, first round marginalization and second round least favorite outcomes, why IRV should only be used when 100% of the voting populace is enfranchised or the outcome is debilitating instead of affirmative, and why district allotment elections by bioregional are important and why district allotment is a step in that direction.

I discuss the limitations with IRV as a long term scheme because of its 'sponge effect' on reducing the scale of popular support to winning parties in the first round, as parties coup wins in the second rounds and thus are less and less the voter's first choices. Plain vanilla IRV thus is in some ways much worse than plain vanilla majoritarian frameworks (because it lowers the voter appeal strategies of parties to gain a majority in the first round), though it has benefits of making other voter choices more durable, even though they are always going to be marginal. However, I do promote IRV as understood as a Trojan Horse IRV, that sets up more voter choices that has effects later on widening choice, and widening pressure for making the first round more important, something IRV demotes.

Most of my comments to Reilly detail the low voting turnout is left unsolved in IRV. Most of my comments to Richie are critiques against seeing structural changes as separate pieces, instead of something capable of being unified. Richie discusses various changes as endemically separate structural changes, while I find that only a merging of various frameworks of proportional representation, majoritarian first rounds, IRV, and district elections as one entity and one goal will lead to the sustainable state. I discuss the rationales for this interaction between these four factors, as well as describe a plan on promoting the POIs into 'taking the bait' for structural change. Richie critiques partisan structural change, though I am all for it particularly because partisan structural change yields a more competitive unpartisan outcome in this situation, whether for district

allotment of electoral votes or for IRV. I remind Richie that it is existing POIs that are going to attempt to shore themselves up with IRV, instead of a 'public pressure' for IRV that will structurally be important. I suggest the strategy as one of less informing the public exclusively, and more baiting particular state POIs to take the route of district and IRV frameworks by themselves, because their state level changes will have federal level effects on widening voter choice.

This is a particularly clear response, that outlines many critiques of the previous bioregional letters, with particular reference to bioregional letter #6.

In comments to Richie, the issue is how partisan intentions of the parties of incumbency (the POIs) can lead to unpartisan outcomes. Both Reilly and Richie fail to see this and typically frame partisan changes as entirely ungermane to structural change. However, I argue that these partisan intentions actually lead to unpartisan outcomes. Both Reilly and Richie have a very static sense of structure typical of most political science analysis. I critique this as missing the point: partisan party changes are the only way to get structural change, and partisan changes of the POI can have unpartisan and affirmative effects for widening voter inclusions to 100% unintentionally if the POIs get competitive (as parties should be), or making particular districts and states more competitive amongst the POIs if electoral congress seats are allotted to districts thus making third/fourth parties votes more meaningful on the local level and thus making the POIs more representative to hold on to districts or making it easier for an 'upset' in a POI gerrymandered district.

REVITALIZING THE CREAKING EDIFICE OF U.S.
DEMOCRACY
Reforms Largely Missed the United States

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The extraordinary nature of the 2000 presidential election exposed a number of weaknesses in the U.S. electoral system: from the partisan structure of electoral administration and antiquated voting machinery, all the way to the constitutional provisions of the Electoral College. But possibly the most significant long-term effect of George W. Bush's minority victory over Al Gore -- made possible, in part, by "spoilers" such as Ralph Nader taking some 3 percent of the potential Democrat vote in key states -- will be on the case for reform of the plurality or "first-past-the-post" U.S. electoral system. In particular, the 2000 election results have focused attention on possible reforms that would ensure majority victors and negate the problem of spoilers by enabling voters to express their degree of preference between all candidates. Such a system -- "instant runoff voting" (IRV) -- has been used for many years in countries such as Australia (where it is called "preferential voting") and Ireland ("alternative voting"), and is increasingly being adopted in other democracies as well. It appears to be, in short, an idea whose time has come.

The key appeal of IRV is that it requires an absolute majority of support -- that is, more than 50 percent -- for victory.

The problematic point about IRV as a long term 'goal' however, is that it allows the continued practice of appealing to only 50% of the population. Effectively leaving 50% out of the picture remains an election option for all parties. Parties are encouraged to either go for niche votes, or become the object of 'magnetism votes' because of fear of the other sides, instead of proactive desire to see a particular party. This mostly explains the high votes for Al Gore in 2000 for instance, the fear of Bush was running against Bush—and many voters went Democratic despite wanting to vote Green as their first choice.

In the present context, plus, a particularly unrepresentative and unwanted party can get elected through the default second choice arrangement of IRV in a plurality split, and thus have even less of a mandate to 'rule' than at present in a majoritarian context. IRV thus becomes a cheap version of the fusion laws for unrepresentative parties, whereby third party voters of whatever stripe aid the less representative parties by default only in fear of the other choices instead of voting their conscience, thus institutionalizing a duopoly of unrepresentative positional parties that is more secure. IRV sets up the 'two sponges' routine, lots more niche parties in the 50% maximum voting context to win, and two sponge parties soaking up fear instead of representation as well as winning with endemic plurality wins.

I pose that the only long term goal of a representative republic is to facilitate 100% of the voting populace. This is unable to be achieved with majoritarian voting or with IRV, because both institutionalize only 50% of the voting populace as the cut off for winning. IRV thus, is rather majoritarian at

heart. It is the limitations on the electorate's parties of having to appeal to only 50% of the populace instead of 100% of them than sets up a positional duopoly, with third parties feeding votes to the party sponge closest to their views (with IRV) or feeding the party opposite their views (the way plurality vote outcomes work in 50% majoritarian contexts).

Full representation, appeals to and inclusions of 100% of the voting population as important in an election, can only be done by setting up a context where all parties are required and are benefited by appealing to 100% of the voting populace, instead of only required to appeal to 50% of them (that vote that is) in majoritarian contexts, to appeal to less than 50% to get elected in IRV contexts.

It is simply not possible to get elected as a candidate if opposed by the majority.

It certainly is possible, and it is more likely, because the IRV plurality voting sets lower thresholds of appeals of parties to win the election than majoritarian voting.

By enabling voters to express their preferences among candidates, rather than just their first choice, the system mitigates the effects of "vote-splitting" that proved such a problem at recent U.S. elections with the rise of minor parties like Nader's Green Party. IRV also enables aligned candidates to engage in cooperative behaviour, so that distinct but related interests can be aggregated.

IRV enables candidates to engage in co-optive behavior, and sit on their unrepresentative appeals because out of fear of other candidates, and of voting one's conscience, the second choice will typically go to the sponge parties that represent nothing particularly except the votes that are thrown to them in the second round. This institutionalizes less than majoritarian outcome appeals of parties, and mandates to rule are less than 50%. This is hardly optimal, and it is even less optimal than the low 50% appeals that are institutionalized in majoritarian voting practices.

Under IRV, any candidate achieving an absolute majority of first-choice votes is immediately elected. However, if no candidate has over 50 percent of the first preferences, the lowest-ranking candidate is eliminated and his or her ballots are then counted for the candidate as listed next on each ballot. This process continues until a majority winner emerges. (For more information on how IRV works, please see John Anderson's article).

Because of the potential impact of these lower-order preferences IRV presents candidates with a strong incentive to try to attract as many secondary preferences as possible from other candidates.

Yes, this is what will make the context even more representative. However, unlike what Mr. Richie says, candidates have little incentive to appeal to anyone else, and can actually shrink their party's representative base of support, because second round votes will go to them (or someone anyway). All they have

to do is wait as a sponge party and soak up votes without soaking up any sense of representation.

It also means that supporters of candidates with

a small but potentially crucial vote share (such as Nader) can vote for these candidates without "splitting" votes from related major parties like the Democrats, as these votes are likely to come back to the major party via the voter's second preference votes (this is one reason for Nader's endorsement of the IRV system). In sum, IRV aggregates common interests while ensuring a majority victor -- two crucial elements that are lacking in the current U.S. system.

IRV calls this a majority victor, though this is a plurality win—an even lower estimation of confidence in the first round votes. Plus, this fetish with appealing to only 50% of the voters as important is a relic of majoritarianism, which is defunct. IRV keeps the spirit of barely half of the voters as a whole 50% as important somehow, when it is 100% that is important. Both IRV and majoritarian voting have this in common: they effectively institutionalize the capacity of all parties to ignore 50% of the population. While IRV allows for token voting of third parties potentially up'ing the voting populace past 50%, with district gerrymandering favoring particular established incumbent parties, IRV is likely only to allow these unrepresentative parties to absorb more of the votes in a particular district, without having to be more representative.

Although invented by an American, Professor W.J. Ware of Harvard College, in 1873, for most of this century IRV has been used overseas -- typically in countries that had a strong cultural and political similarity with the United States. In Australia, for example, the U.S. Constitutional model served as a guiding light for reformers, and IRV was part of a package of progressive democratic innovations seen as being at the cutting edge of democratic best-practice when Australia became an independent federation 100 years ago. Several Canadian provinces also used IRV for their provincial elections earlier this century in Alberta, Manitoba and British Columbia. Around the same time, IRV was adopted for presidential elections and by-elections in Ireland. And in Britain, there have been ongoing attempts by progressive forces to introduce IRV throughout the twentieth century -- culminating recently in a government inquiry recommending the adoption of a form of IRV for parliamentary elections. Last year, the first elections for the new mayor of London were held under a form of IRV, resulting in the victory of a popular independent candidate.

These cases post-dated the move to electoral democracy in the United States by about 100 years. Although invented by an American, IRV was adopted in foreign countries as part of a series of grand democratic experiments that drew inspiration from the shining example of the U.S. itself. However, while other countries were making these electoral advances inspired by American ideas, the reform movement largely missed the U.S. itself. Indeed, in this one area of electoral innovation, the eighteenth century heritage of the U.S. political institutions shows through, as the practical advances of democratic elections -- including the abolition of property qualifications for voting, the introduction of mass suffrage, secret ballots, proportional representation and the like -- all took place in the nineteenth century, by which time the U.S. had been operating as a functioning (if limited) democracy for over 100 years. While most of these reforms were enacted in the United States, IRV and other forms of choice voting were not.

In recent years, IRV has been adopted in "divided societies" like Fiji and Bosnia with the aim of introducing some incentives for compromise into the political processes of these nations.

The aim was the stabilization of unrepresentative parties, through the above arguments about endemic second choice rulers being more unrepresentative by default.

The use of IRV as a mechanism for conflict management hinges on its propensity to encourage cross-partisan cooperation and centrist policies. Under IRV, candidates who wish to maximize their electoral prospects must attract the second preference votes from voters who will use their first choice elsewhere.

These parties can simply coup these votes. There's nothing about attracting second round votes. The election is for attracting first round votes. If people can vote second rounds, then particular parties can avoid first round voters more securely.

To attract

such support, candidates need to move to the center on policy issues to attract floating voters, or to accommodate "fringe" issues into their broader policy package. In this way, electoral incentives can promote policy concessions: as a small numbers of votes can make the difference between victory and defeat for a major candidate, the interests of minorities are given greater weight.

The exact opposite occurs. "Fringe" voters are absorbed, their votes are couped, without a particular party having to demonstrate to them any representative quality for their vote. These parties get it automatically.

There is a long history of both these types of behavior in Australian elections, where IRV has facilitated coalition arrangements between like-minded parties, making elections a centrist contest for the middle ground, while simultaneously encouraging major parties to incorporate strong minority interests (for example, green issues) into their policies. In fact, IRV in Australia has been accurately described as a system for choosing "the least unpopular candidate" and rejecting extremism of any ideology, presenting the major parties with strong incentives to keep their focus on the middle ground at all times. In contrast to the U.S. experience, victories achieved by splitting a more popular opponent's voter base are rare, as aggregating rather than dividing interests is usually a more reliable strategy for electoral success. In addition, "preference swapping" -- the use of negotiations between major and minor parties for reciprocal second-preference support -- has become a well-established practice of Australian politics. This has encouraged the development of "arenas of bargaining" across party lines -- with important mediating influence on the political process and, over time, on the wider political culture.

Would the introduction of IRV in the United States also mirror the Australian experience of moderating political rhetoric and promoting coalition? It is notable that, despite the pervasive influence of U.S. practices and a culture of highly adversarial political rhetoric, "attack advertising" has never been a feature of Australian politics. One reason may be that the possibility of gaining secondary preference votes means that highly aggressive advertising is ultimately self-defeating. Also, it is likely that a change to IRV would produce similar incentives for coalition and cooperation across

party lines when campaigning. But the clearest effect of introducing IRV in America would be the majority victory provision, especially at a time when increasing numbers of candidates means an increasing number of minority victories under plurality rules -- even at the level of the presidency.

IRV fails to set up a majority victory. A majority victory is getting only 50% of the voters in a particular election (instead of 50% of all voters, which would be much higher). IRV sets up less than majority victories, endemically. It is only in the second rounds that sponge parties coup votes. IRV makes elections into a survival of the least representative party candidate, because of the way second/third rounds of voting keep heaping votes to this abstract 50% only vote threshold.

A final issue is the level of complexity of IRV compared to one-shot systems like the current plurality model. While IRV certainly asks more of voters -- they get to rank-order all candidates standing, or as many as they choose -- there is little evidence that this results in a greater number of invalid ballots. In fact, the invalid ballot rate in Australia and Ireland is on par with the U.S., at about 3 percent of all votes. IRV is, however, difficult to run with the antiquated hole-punch voting machines made infamous by the last presidential election. Like all mass elections, it also works much better if administered by an independent, non-partisan electoral commission.

There is a strong link between a non-partisan electoral administration, the updating of voting machines and electoral equipment, and reform of the electoral system. In fact, there is a strong case that the primitive voting machines used in the U.S. (but long abandoned in comparable Western democracies) has effectively retarded the options of updating the electoral system away from a crude first-past-the-post choice. But with a jump to electronic voting, this could be surmounted relatively easily. The reform of electoral administration and the reform of the electoral system should be seen as complementary processes necessary to revitalize the once-inspirational -- but now creaking -- edifice of U.S. democracy.

All said, there is one democratic benefit to IRV: it is the first step on a bridge for bringing third/fourth party choices for voters systemically into the picture. This widens the democratic debate on policy and governmental direction. However, IRV fails to let that get institutionalized in any way, this plurality of voices. Rule thus moves by default to groups that less than 50% of the populace want, instead of groups that more than 50% of the populace want.

There are various structural changes that are required. For the informal party interaction, I would promote IRV at this point, keeping in mind everything I have said against it, because it does bring out more durable voter choices in parties. However, IRV does reduce the importance of third party outcomes simultaneously, because it has the idea of 50% instead of 100% of the electorate as important.

To get 100% of the electorate involved in elections, party contexts of voting should be such that all parties coup wins the wider their appeals, instead of the 'spongier' their appeals. IRV or in majoritarian voting institutionalize very low voter appeals by parties in themselves.

Only a proportional representation framework—where all parties are convinced that some of their vote will matter and thus voters will have many choices—combined with a majoritarian allotment framework—where all parties are convinced that they personally should appeal to 50% of the electorate, will lead to competition to include up to 100% of the voters as important. As with IRV, it is with majoritarian voting: only a certain percentage of voters are important instead of voters in general. Proportional representation makes all voters important. Majoritarian allotment makes each party compete avidly for all of the votes, because slack in vote 'getting' will always lead first choice party voters to have their second choices sent to another party that wins 50% or more of the vote.

What do I mean by majoritarian allotment? It is simple. All parties are rewarded for appealing to 50% of the vote in the first round, unlike IRV which rewards parties for appealing to less than 50% in the first round. There are two outcomes:

- (1) If a party wins 50% of the voters in a proportional representation context, that is a strong mandate for a particular party, because proportional representation assures that 100% of the voting populace is competed for and important, instead of only 50% competed for with majoritarian voting, or less than 50% competed for with IRV.
- (2) If the election outcome is a plurality split because of the proportional representation framework, then an IRV allotment kicks into play. However, because of the proportional representation base, this IRV allotment kicks into play when 100% of the voters are in play. With the plain IRV framework, the plurality second choice round kicks into play only as a way to heap votes from 50% of the populace around to a second round winner, making their mandate appeal even less than 50%.

The majoritarian allotment 'carrot' keeps parties competitive for 100% of the voters, instead of with IRV competitive for their second choice votes. Proportional representation with the majoritarian allotment actively enfranchises 100% of the voters at every election. Proportional representation up's the ante to 100%, while the majoritarian allotment holds out for each party that an appeal for 50% of the population (of 100%) will coup them significant gains. Thus, each party strategy is to appeal to and to assemble a majority of voters, instead of coupling plurality wins by default in majoritarian or in plain vanilla IRV frameworks.

In conclusion, vote for IRV presently. Though full representation of 100% of the population fails to be served by IRV. Plain vanilla IRV is to get the parties competitive and to institutionalize more informal party choice for voters moving out of a majoritarian context where party choice was demoted. However, to enfranchise 100% of the voters as important in a first round win, instead of only 50% of the voters with majoritarian frameworks (or even less with IRV in the plurality win frameworks of second rounds which become endemic and make the existing parties less representative), proportional representation with the 'carrot'

of a potential majoritarian allotment keeps open the option of assembling majorities in parties as popular mandates, instead of minority mandates in majoritarian voting or IRV voting. That plurality splits are thrown into a plurality context is fine as long as 100% of the voting population is enfranchised. It is far from optimum to throw elections into plurality contexts when only 50% or less than 50% appeals are the de jure way for installing leadership in the state.

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further comments on Reilly:

REVITALIZING THE CREAKING EDIFICE OF U.S. DEMOCRACY Reforms Largely Missed the United States

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The extraordinary nature of the 2000 presidential election exposed a number of weaknesses in the U.S. electoral system: from the partisan structure of electoral administration and antiquated voting machinery, all the way to the constitutional provisions of the Electoral College. But possibly the most significant long-term effect of George W. Bush's minority victory over Al Gore -- made possible, in part, by "spoilers" such as Ralph Nader taking some 3 percent of the potential Democrat vote in key states -- will be on the case for reform of the plurality or "first-past-the-post" U.S. electoral system. In particular, the 2000 election results have focused attention on possible reforms that would ensure majority victors and negate the problem of spoilers by enabling voters to express their degree of preference between all candidates. Such a system -- "instant runoff voting" (IRV) -- has been used for many years in countries such as Australia (where it is called "preferential voting") and Ireland ("alternative voting"), and is increasingly being adopted in other democracies as well. It appears to be, in short, an idea whose time has come.

The key appeal of IRV is that it requires an absolute majority of support -- that is, more than 50 percent -- for victory. It is simply not possible to get elected as a candidate if opposed by the majority.

IRV in its institutionalization of second round winners endemically, assures that less than 50% of the voters want a particular party. This is the opposite of what Dr. Reilly says because he fails to take into account that people vote against candidates as much as for candidates, and that fear of other candidates typically is a large deciding influence in election outcomes. IRV's plurality second round election framework, drops the bar even lower and allows far less representative

first choice parties to get into power. This is the sponge effect I describe above. IRV basically demotes first round voting win strategies entirely, and thus, demotes a party's representativeness in the aggregate for an assembled second choice win by default.

By enabling voters to express their preferences among candidates, rather than just their first choice, the system mitigates the effects of "vote-splitting" that proved such a problem at recent U.S. elections with the rise of minor parties like Nader's Green Party. IRV also enables aligned candidates to engage in cooperative behaviour, so that distinct but related interests can be aggregated.

IRV does mitigate vote splitting of the majoritarian framework, however it mitigates against representative parties as well as keeps 50% or more of the electorate's choices from being acted upon, as second round voting keeps parties coupling votes that no one would give them in the first round. It's a form of vote theft: after voters vote their consciences and a plurality outcome is registered, the candidate that wins is the one least liked by all instead of the one most liked by all. Candidate appeals thus can be even more unrepresentative, and they can wait for second round coups to garner 'enough' votes instead of attempt to win them in the first round by being more representative.

Under IRV, any candidate achieving an absolute majority of first-choice votes is immediately elected.

However, IRV sets up a framework where parties would demote first round wins (thus, appeals for widespread representation in the first round) as an option.

However, if no candidate has over 50 percent of the first preferences, the lowest-ranking candidate is eliminated and his or her ballots are then counted for the candidate as listed next on each ballot. This process continues until a majority winner emerges. (For more information on how IRV works, please see John Anderson's article).

Because of the potential impact of these lower-order preferences IRV presents candidates with a strong incentive to try to attract as many secondary preferences as possible from other candidates.

Instead of attracting them, they get them by default. If they actually attracted voters they would win an majority of votes in the first round. IRV's second round voting in a context that maintains the fetish that only 50% of the population of voters is important (instead of 100%) sets up winners as being the most repugnant first choice winner. IRV sets up 'who is the least unrepresentative elections' instead of 'who is the most representative elections.'

It also means that supporters of candidates with a small but potentially crucial vote share (such as Nader) can vote for these

Whitaker, Mark. 2001. "The Bioregional Letters, #16: Response to Reilly and Richie."
www.sit.wisc.edu/~mrkdwhit/bioregionEC.htm

candidates without "splitting" votes from related major parties like the Democrats, as these votes are likely to come back to the major party via the voter's second preference votes (this is one reason for Nader's endorsement of the IRV system). In sum, IRV aggregates common interests while ensuring a majority victor -- two crucial elements that are lacking in the current U.S. system.

IRV aggregates uncommon interests, united only in their second round fear of other parties. Candidates get elected who are the least unrepresentative. Plus, the appeal to only 50% of the population is maintained in IRV, which is a flaw. IRV should only be used in a context where 100% of the population is appealed to, otherwise, winning parties will have smaller and smaller first choice round mandates to rule.

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comments on Richie

MEDDLING WITH REFORM

Watch Out for Partisan Electoral Reform

Rob Richie is executive director of the Center for Voting and Democracy.

Let's call it "Floridamok" -- the protracted partisan battle that yielded Electoral College victory for George W. Bush despite Al Gore's half-million ballot lead in the national popular vote. The resulting furor has spurred a national reexamination of the quirky Electoral College system by which we elect our presidents.

But reformers, beware! Partisans from both major camps can see opportunity in the outrage inspired by Bush vs. Gore -- the chance to hijack the reform impulse and manipulate it to their own advantage.

We can see the partisan mind at work in a recent National Review article. "Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform has an idea for giving the GOP presidential candidate a leg up in 2004," it reports. Norquist is the renowned conservative strategist whose group, ATR, is to some observers synonymous with GOP.

According to the article, Norquist's suggests that Republican-controlled states like Michigan, New Jersey and Pennsylvania -- all of which gave their electors to Al Gore in 2000 and to Bill Clinton in 1992 and 1996 -- switch to allocating electoral votes by congressional district (rather than the current state-wide winner-takes-all system). That would assure that Republicans would win at least some electoral votes in those states in 2004.

Norquist's suggestion reminds us that individual states are vested by the Constitution with the sole power to decide how electoral votes are allocated. Electoral reform will be hammered out in the state houses, subject as they are to control by one party or the other -- and to partisan shenanigans.

The question is whether statehouse leaders will take advantage of the current reform climate to seek to benefit one party over others or to benefit all voters and the nation as a whole.

THE FIXES

There are several potential fixes to the presidential election system.

The most obvious one is scrapping the Electoral College in favor of direct election by popular vote, just as we elect nearly every other office in the nation. Direct election is a pre-condition to full political equality in presidential elections. Only direct election can ensure that all votes count equally no matter where people live. Only direct election can provide clear incentives for campaigns to give at least some degree of attention to every voter instead of only those in selected states.

Despite these advantages and consistent majority support in the polls, however, direct election is for the moment unlikely. Such a significant Constitutional change would take strong bipartisan support -- currently not in evidence -- to address some small-population states' mistaken worry that they would be ignored in national elections under a direct vote.

But individually, states can take three significant steps to mend the Electoral College without ending it: instant runoff voting (IRV), allocation of electoral votes by proportional representation (PR), or allocation of votes by congressional district. There are important differences, including the degree to which each reform creates partisan advantage. Norquist, according to the National Review article, is a proponent of the latter because of the advantage it would bring to the Republicans.

Of the three proposals, instant runoff voting is least subject to partisanship and would do the most for a state's voters. It would maintain winner-take-all allocation of electors, but at least ensure that the winner has a clear majority by simulating a traditional runoff election.

Contrary to what Mr. Richie says, IRV winners are clear minority choices, judging from the first round, and they are rewarded for being minority choices by getting votes anyway in the second round. However, IRV is useful for bringing more voter choice into the election picture. Plus, the stimulus of even less representative policy frameworks from even more minority appeal candidate wins that IRV institutionalizes, will set up a context where the expanded disenfranchised party bases will press for more structural change because of IRV's outcomes. This, ironically is the benefit of IRV, instead of what Richie describes it mistakenly as a 'majority win.' Since IRV sets up even more minority wins than the majoritarian context, it gets the wider enfranchised party base (because of IRV) more active in other structural change issues which are more important, like districting, allocations of seats per capita in the state, or proportional representation with a majoritarian allotment (see above.) The contexts IRV set up (less representative first round wins while simultaneously bringing more parties into play) are like a fire under itself, that sets the stage for further changes that are more important.

Here's how IRV works: Rather than just vote for a single candidates, voters have the

option to rank the candidates in order of preference: first choice, second choice, third choice. If a candidate receives a majority of first choices, he or she wins. But if not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated -- thus failing to advance to the runoff -- and a second round of counting occurs. Ballots cast for the eliminated candidate would then count for the voters' second choice, just as if those voters had come back to the polls for a runoff election. Rounds of counting continue until one candidate wins a majority of valid ballots -- which always will happen by the time the field is reduced to two, just as in a traditional runoff election.

Instant runoff voting would eliminate all talk of "spoiler" candidacies. It would create the situation where, as independent presidential candidate John Anderson has put it, a voter can vote for his favorite candidate without fear of electing his least-favorite candidate.

Instead, IRV sets up a context where the second least-favorite typically wins. However, the benefit of IRV is that it lets more voter choices of parties into play, which has further importance since IRV is only step one toward setting up a sustainable state framework.

Well-tested from decades of use in Australia and Ireland, IRV would only require states to purchase modern voting equipment that can allow voters to rank-order the candidates -- purchases many states expect to do anyway in the wake of the controversy in Florida. It already is under serious consideration for presidential elections in such states as Vermont (where the proposal is supported by the League of Women Voters, Grange and Common Cause, among others), Alaska (where it will be on the statewide ballot in 2002) and New Mexico.

A second reform, proportional representation, allocates electoral votes in proportion to the statewide popular vote rather than by the current "winner-take-all" method. Supported as a national change by both Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Richard Nixon, and already used in most presidential primaries and in legislative races in most well-established democracies around the world, proportional allocation would ensure that more voters can help the candidate of their choice win electoral votes. If a candidate were to win 40 percent of the popular vote in the state, that candidate would win 40 percent of the state's electoral votes -- a truer reflection of voter intentions than the funhouse mirror generated by winner-take-all. A minimum threshold of support necessary for candidates to win electoral votes could be set to allay concerns about splinter candidates gaining electors despite having no chance to win.

Actually, it is beneficial to split the electoral vote in a proportional representation context. This gets third parties onto the federal political stage, and gets them corporate media visibility, a visibility that typically is the key to getting to voters. Proportional representation in the electoral congress (by state electors) assures that the presidency appeals to many different parties, instead of to only one party. Because of the power of the position in a presidential framework (different than a parliamentary framework), the presidential context should have a wider than partisan appeal.

The congressional district plan is somewhat like a miniature version of the current statewide winner-take-all system. Already used by Maine and Nebraska, it assigns

electoral votes according to the results in each congressional district in a state, with the two Senate electors going to the overall statewide winner (states get one electoral vote for each senator and representative). Although one candidate has won all electoral votes in each election in Maine and Nebraska since they adopted the system, bigger states typically will have a mix of districts that lean strongly toward one party or another. Candidates without a chance to win the statewide vote might still be able to win certain districts. Third-party candidates would be unlikely to win electoral votes -- Ross Perot did not come close to winning any congressional district despite winning nearly a fifth of the popular vote in 1992.

Richie does bring up the point of an interesting dynamic, that with the electoral congress allocation by districts seems to minimize third party appeals, rather than proportional representation across the state because of the distributed quality of particular districts. However, the districts themselves are the issue here, their political context is a political gerrymander by the present POI (Part of Incumbency), instead of a competitive district. A more ideal framework for the sustainable state is to have these geographic frameworks based on a bioregional district pattern that would include both urban/rural interests in the same rubric, instead of halving environmental risk concern across the party borderlines and thus demoting what is a 50% context for concern of environmentalism in the United States that none of the POIs will address. This is because the districts are politically gerrymandered to split the environmental vote. See bioregional letter #6. Since there is a geographic quality to voting and to how underdevelopment is experienced in the world, this should be registered in the voting framework. What Richie implies is that this congressional district choice is separate from the proportional representation framework, when they can be merged into a fourth choice—having bioregional based districts based on proportional representation with a majoritarian allotment. This effectively addresses all three of his 'different' strategies and weds them together: the first strategy he identifies (plain vanilla IRV, with its unrepresentative outcomes, see above) is connected to the second framework (proportional representation of electors adding a majoritarian allotment in each district), when half of the overall state districts are split, then it becomes a statewide vote by proportional representation. However, when at least half of the districts are won by first round winners majorities, this electoral seat goes to a particular party. In districts that are plurality wins, IRV takes over distributing the votes to the second/third round winner. This way the geographic aspects of voting are maintained, instead of demoted in the plain vanilla IRV or in the statewide proportional representation framework for presidential electors. In short, all three 'different' frameworks can have their beneficial affirmative features integrated into play.

ENTER GROVER

The problem with the last two reforms is that, unlike IRV, they have very different partisan impacts based on whether states enact them alone or in coordination with other states.

IRV does have a partisan impact as well, as described above: the impact is that the least unrepresentative gets the win allocated, instead of the most

representative. This sets up a dynamic of less representative parties winning more and more, winners by default instead of winners by being first round representatives. Understanding this, there is little incentive given to parties to be first round representative, or little incentive to appeal to more than 50% of the population. In a competitive plurality outcome where only 50% of the voters will matter, this means winners at 25% of the popular first choice round or less. Proportional representation with a majoritarian allotment ratchets the vote to 100% of the voting population as being enfranchised, as well as sets up a dynamic where any party can appeal to gain 50% of the vote and be assured of all the seats. This makes 100% of the voting populace important, as well as makes gaining at least 50% of that 100% (thus, an actual 50% winning of confidence) important for all parties. IRV and majoritarian frameworks only make 50% of the total voters important as an optimum, and both frameworks by themselves enfranchise only 50% of the voters, as well as on top of that only consider 50% of that important. The irony becomes that the more competitive an election is in IRV or majoritarian frameworks the less any party has to appeal to win the seat. In competitive democratic majoritarian frameworks, with plurality election outcomes, the win can go to the least wanted, the one with the largest minority. IRV seeks to improve on this broken context, though it keeps the half of the broken quality—by keeping only 50% of the voters as important. Thus, in IRV, instead of plurality outcomes going to the largest minority vote like in majoritarian frameworks, it goes to the second least wanted as well as sets up a situation where since only 50% of the voters are important instead of 100%, this party can be an even more unrepresentative win in the first round than in a majoritarian context. Instead the party dynamic should be changed to reflect a competition between parties for 100% of the vote. There is a way to bring the all benefits of ideas of majoritarianism into play with proportional representation and IRV, in other words. Thus, majoritarianism only works to enfranchise 100% of the population in a proportional representation context between parties as parties compete for more than 50% of the vote amongst themselves assured that their competition will matter. If some are able to get 50% of that 100% (instead of 25% of 50% in majoritarian contested elections, that is great). However, if there is a plurality split, the limitation of IRV is that the second round winners have a strategy of using fear tactics to gain votes, instead of performing 'outreach' to 100% of the voters. In a plain vanilla IRV plurality outcome context, parties have an option to be unrepresentative and win: they can strategize to coup wins in the second round, and can dismiss the first round representation frameworks as meaningless. Thus, parties can strategize to be unrepresentative in the first round, and win by default in the second round with a low representative base of voters wanting them. There is nothing forcing them to be more representative in the IRV context. What would force them is to combine proportional representation with majoritarian allotment, with IRV as a second round option. This will ratchet all vote competition and enfranchisement to 100% of the populace, will assure majoritarian pressures in the first round of voting between all parties (which IRV demotes), as well as assures that plurality outcomes will be decided amongst 100% of the voters that the parties have competed for, instead

of decided from among only 50% of the voters that the parties have competed for (in plain vanilla IRV.)

There is only one way to make sure parties compete for 100% of the populace. This is with proportional representation. There is only one way to make sure that parties take the first round seriously, instead of becoming reliant on second round default wins, which makes the party capable of being less representative than even in the majoritarian context. This is with proportional representation with a majoritarian allotment. There is only one way to make sure that IRV second rounds are competitive amongst 100% of the population, instead of only with 50% of the population (as in plain vanilla IRV). This is with proportional representation, with a majoritarian allotment, with IRV instituted as the second choice round framework for plurality elections amongst 100% of the voters. There is only one way to make sure that the geographic frameworks of voter information can be registered. This is by ungerrymandered congressional election district allotment of presidential votes along competitive party bioregions instead of by gerrymandered POI frameworks. Thus, these four frameworks can be merged as a route to the sustainable state.

Whatever genuine civic support there might be for them, state leaders are unlikely to pursue them on mere philosophical merits lest they put their state at a disadvantage in national elections. That's because any reform likely to guarantee a more-equal division of electoral votes in one state could lead presidential candidates to divert their attention to competitive winner-take-all states where campaign energy could swing a state's entire bloc of electoral votes.

And in turn, thus making every vote important in all states. I'm unsure of Richie's point. This is without taking into account that this makes all states more important in general—that making all states more competitive geographically makes every states more competitive and important between parties.

This is common in Republican presidential primaries, which now use a mix of approaches but are generally moving toward statewide winner-take-all allocation in order to compete with other winner-take-all states.

More importantly, reforms that allocate electors proportionally or according to congressional districts are vulnerable to political manipulation at the state level.

Allotment by bioregional congressional district solves that issue, and because of the uneven quality to the world's and to state's development, bioregional inclusions set different rural/urban interests in the same district as well as reflect the environmental polity framework of systemic risk and environmental health that they all materially share, regardless of their present philosophical differences (which are abetted by and influenced by the gerrymandered districts and POI framework, instead of some underlying differences, see bioregional letter #6). Richie takes the gerrymandered districts at present and confuses this with the importance of geographic local and inclusive representation in the abstract

because of the degree of uneven development should be registered. Certainly I agree with him that the existing districts are POI districts. However, the issue is what can be done about changing this, and integrating this variation instead of paving it over.

Although there are well-intentioned reformers who support these changes, they also draw the attention of deeply partisan strategists - enter Grover Norquist.

Suppose one party controls both the legislature and governor's mansion in a winner-take-all state. But suppose also that this party's presidential candidate has a good chance of losing the state. State leaders suddenly can become interested in "fair" allocation of electoral votes because half a loaf -- some proportion of the state's electors -- is better than none at all.

The benefit to this is that it makes the state overall institutionally more competitive for voters, as the two parties ratchet lower and lower percentages of what is required to win into the picture. Thus, it sets up third party wins when the duopoly context of majoritarian voting becomes very competitive. Example—Minnesota's governorship of Jesse Ventura. Plus, it's a structural change that makes particular districts more competitive for third parties and makes more and more politics localized to particular geographies, making leadership more and more representative of the particularities of an area instead of clientelistic to an area. More and more geographic context of voting is important. Allotment by gerrymandered districts is another Trojan Horse that will yield affirmative feedback into changing the context of how voters adjudicate between candidates, and candidates will find that they have to work harder to be more inclusive and less party partisan the more proximate they are to the voters. Richie missed the point of the outcome of the change, and concentrated instead on the intention of the change, which I agree he identified. The unpartisan outcome is different than the partisan intention.

Given the partisan nature of how congressional districts are created in redistricting, allocation by congressional district is particularly problematic. Most districts strongly favor one party or the other, often due to political gerrymandering to protect congressional incumbents (the 98 percent re-election rate for incumbents in 1998 and 2000 is no accident).

Present frameworks, yes. However, even in this gerrymandered context, to create more proximate frameworks of electoral college allocation is to change the parties that instituted the change themselves. It changes their dynamic of appeal, since there will subsequently be a pressure in particular districts to institutionalize IRV (the 'fire' under other structural change), because they find that the districts that they allotted for themselves suddenly can be spoiled by particularly durable minority party voting, thus tossing them out of the picture on the district level. Richie has yet to address this subsequent dynamic and pressure towards district based IRV, which subsequently will allow for more voter choice of parties on the district level, further minority party wins in second rounds, and further calls for additional structural changes. Of course, I recommend proportional

representation with majoritarian allotment and IRV context for second round on a bioregional district based framework—because this is the only context that creates a party strategy base that makes all compete for 100% of the vote, in particular areas, to gain majorities.

Problems with the congressional district approach are exemplified by Pennsylvania, one of Norquist's proposed targets. Over the last three elections, Democratic candidates won the state's twenty-three electoral votes by comfortable margins. But Democratic voters are relatively concentrated in a few areas, and there is a decidedly Republican tilt in congressional districts. In 1996 Bill Clinton ran behind his statewide vote average in thirteen of twenty-one districts. And despite Gore's victory in the state in 2000, George W. Bush probably won a majority of the districts in 2000 (presidential results by district will not be available until this spring).

This Republican edge exists now even before Pennsylvania's Republicans have a whack at redistricting later this year. By tweaking a few districts here and there, they could (and probably will) enhance their control of more districts. This makes it quite possible that under a congressional district allocation method of choosing presidential electors, a Republican candidate could win most of the state's electoral votes even when losing the statewide popular vote. Michigan Republicans might have a similar opportunity, given that they control redistricting and Democratic votes are heavily concentrated in Detroit.

Thus, you see, this sets up more contention between the Democrats and the Republicans for other changes, like IRV connected to this framework, which is an affirmative direction. The more parties compete, the more of the voters are enfranchised. District allotment that 'halves' states is thus beneficial to the voter, as well as beneficial to expanding voter party choice, because the split states thus are more likely to have POI parties that refuse to work with each other, thus, yielding third/fourth party choices more meaningful as well as yielding to voter disgust with parties that do such shenanigans, while simultaneously giving them third/fourth party options and openings in competitive party contexts. This will lead to POI pressures toward IRV Trojan Horses, as what has happened in several states that are in this competitive duopoly context. Richie as well as most authors typically equate structural intentions with structural outcomes. However, these are two different topics, and structural outcomes can be different than structural intentions, particularly when it comes to allotment by congressional district and IRV frameworks, which change the POI dynamics themselves, instead of are handmaiden to them.

Allocating electoral votes by congressional district would give a distinct advantage to Republicans if adopted nationwide, although the approach would not benefit Republicans in every state -- which is why some states controlled by Democrats, particularly in the South, could likewise seek to change statewide winner-take-all rules.

This of course is equating intentions with the outcomes once more. He misses the point about how much more competitive with each other, in a feedback loop, it makes the parties that institutionalized the change. This expanded competitive

quality makes them attempt to be more representative and makes them enfranchise more voters into elections, as well as lowering the bar for third/fourth party contexts of importance, which may lead the POIs to institutionalize Trojan Horse IRV. Once more, it is important to separate party intentions for structural change with structural dynamics and outcomes.

The Democratic vote is typically concentrated in urban areas. The Democrats, for example, won twenty-four of the twenty-six major-party congressional races with more than 80 percent of the vote in 2000. Yet nationwide, George W. Bush won more House districts than Al Gore. Combined with his victory in ten more states (giving him twenty more electoral votes than Gore under the district system), he would have won a comfortable Electoral College win with the system despite his losing popular vote. If the method had been used in 1960, Richard Nixon would have beaten John Kennedy.

Besides opening the door to gerrymandering, the congressional district method has other problems. Just like the current system, it leaves most voters in a position where their vote won't matter much in a nationally competitive election, as most people will live in a state and a congressional district that tilts strongly to one major party candidate. Thus, all the campaign resources still will be focused on a relatively small portion of the electorate -- in the swing districts and states. In addition, unless combined with instant runoff voting, congressional district allocation still means that candidates can win with less than a majority of the vote due to "spoiler" minor party candidacies.

Because particular states are more competitive with district allotment, makes all states more competitive. Plus, this changes the dynamic of elections to be more inclusive on the local level, since small parties can yield 'upsets' to the gerrymandered arrangement, by giving the gerrymandered district to another party. This leads to further POI changes, perhaps Trojan Horse IRV, which sets up further systemic changes because of the expanded voter choice that this brings. See above.

The simplest, most powerful change for electing our president would be direct election combined with instant runoff voting to ensure that the winner represents as many Americans as possible.

However, as I critiqued in bioregional letter #14, this leads to minority party outcomes because it demotes third/fourth party competitions on the federal level, the only context that can make POI parties more representative. Direct federal election would demote this competition between parties, as well as demote voter choice, thus making the existing POI frameworks less and less majoritarian and more and more minority voices of leadership.

Instant runoff voting for now can be pursued state by state. Proportional allocation of electoral votes is worth serious consideration if done all at once across the nation, but that would require Constitutional change.

Anything that makes all parties competitive for 100% of the voting populace is worth consideration period, because proportional representation that is the only base framework that enfranchises 100% of the voters. Both majoritarian frameworks and IRV frameworks demote 100% of the voters from participating, as parties can either appeal to bare minimums to get by (majoritarian frameworks), or depend on garnishing second round votes to win (plain vanilla IRV majoritarianism), and thus making first round pressures toward representativeness even lower than a 50% appeal.

Allocating electoral votes by congressional district is the most problematic reform. It shares the downsides of proportional allocation, but has the significant additional problem of perverting fair results due to partisan gerrymandering.

Once more (for the third occasion), this confuses partisan intentions with unpartisan outcomes. See above. Plus, it confuses the issue to consider that choices of change are relegated to binaries of structural change, i.e., the changes are somehow limited to one choice ("IRV or no IRV, "proportional representation or no proportional representation, "majoritarian first rounds or no majoritarian first rounds," "by district or not by districts"), when these can be merged into each other to reflect a more optimum arrangement that avoids the shortcomings of each of them.

So, when partisans like Grover Norquist suddenly take interest in this "fair" method or electoral reform, watch out. The spirit of Floridamok has not subsided, and it may distort the reforms demanded by the voting public.

Instead of the 'voting public' the one that will always demand 'reform,' it is typically always a gerrymandering decision amongst POI parties. Instead of appealing to 'the voting public' the issue is setting up contexts where partisan POIs 'take the bait', and institute frameworks in their partisan interests that have unpartisan outcomes. Only by this feint, this lure, will any meaningful structural change occur for unpartisan outcomes. Since 'the public' is what is disenfranchised presently, appeals to them are moot. Those interested in sustainability as well as 100% voter enfranchisement should be interested in seeing the POIs get more contentious and more interested in their partisan outcomes—whether on the local district level, whether by institutionalizing IRV, etc. (which has only come about because of partisan interests, I remind you, instead of public outcry). Fomenting dissension amongst the POIs can have unpartisan effects. Only they can de-institutionalize themselves, because they have a gatekeeping power on public policy once they are in power. Their attempts to shore up fading hegemony of the voting populace will lead to frameworks that demote themselves as an outcome. So, press on particular states that are contentious, one by one, instead of holding out for some mythic hope for federal wide changes. The more contentious the local gets, the more contentious the federal gets, and the more contentious the POIs, get the more likely they are to appeal to wider levels of voters, enfranchising them in the

Whitaker, Mark. 2001. "The Bioregional Letters, #16: Response to Reilly and Richie."
www.sit.wisc.edu/~mrkdwhit/bioregionEC.htm

political debate, as well as the more that voter choice for third/fourth parties will be important.