I strongly favor getting rid of "first past the post" (FPP) ways of determining winners of elections. Among alternatives are Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) which, in its best-known form is not perfect; there are a number of alternatives that do slightly better, but RCV is usually pretty good and no voting system can be perfect. I am strongly opposed to STAR and, frankly, bewildered that anybody purporting to favor equity would support it. STAR is in stark violation of what I consider to be the cardinal principle of fair elections that each voter's preference should count the same as each other voter's preference. Because STAR is based upon how passionate voters are about candidates, the passions of a few can outweigh the preferences of the many. Here is an example. Consider an election with three candidates, who I will suggestively name Donnie, Bernie, and Joe. For simplicity, assume that there are 20 voters—multiplying that number by any constant does not change the point of the example. Nine voters are true believers in Donnie and give him five stars, while giving both Bernie and Joe zero stars. Three voters are true believers in Bernie and award him five stars. They detest Donnie and give him zero stars. Joe is regarded as a poor second-best and receives 2 stars from these voters. Finally, eight voters see the benefits and flaws of both Joe and Bernie, and on margin prefer Joe to Bernie, giving the former three stars and the latter two stars. These voters give zero stars to Donnie. Note that in an FPP election, Donnie wins, with 9 votes against 8 for Joe and 3 for Bernie. In an RCV election, Bernie is the gets the fewest number of first choices and Joe beats Donnie in the instant runoff, 11 to 9. In STAR, Bernie gets a total of 31 stars (15 from Bernie supporters, 16 from Joe supporters, and none from Donnie supporters), Joe gets a total of 30 stars (24 from Joe supporters, 6 from Bernie supporters, and none from Donnie supporters), and Donnie gets 45 stars (all from his own supporters). In the automatic runoff, Donnie (highest number of stars) loses to Bernie (second-highest number of stars). So Bernie wins even though 8 of 11 voters who see a difference between the two prefer Joe. Preferences, not passions, are what elections should be about.

James Kahan