

Submitted on May 27, 2022

On the agenda for the meeting of June 3, 2022 is, "Adopting a new voting method for the county (e.g. STAR, Ranked Choice Voting, Approval Voting) and eliminating primaries."

I am strongly in favor of eliminating primaries with a fair voting system that is simple and equitable, while expressing as closely as possible the true preferences of the electorate in a manner that each person's vote carries the same weight as each other person's vote. Among the three example options in the agenda, Ranked Choice Voting (RCV, in the version also known as Instant Runoff Voting) is the clear preference. STAR, because the votes of a minority of passionate believers can outweigh the more nuanced views of a majority of voters, violates the principle of each person's vote being of the same importance; moreover, this characteristic of STAR leads to strategic exaggeration of true preferences. Approval voting too easily degenerates into a cynical "choice among the least bad options" that is also characteristic of the current "runoff between the first two candidates past the post" system. Yes, RCV is not perfect (Professor Kenneth Arrow proved many decades ago that there is no such thing as a perfect voting system), but it does a good job the great majority of the time and has the important advantages of being relatively simple to understand and having seen lots of use. (Note: Yes, I know all about Burlington, Vermont, and it is an outlier--and is no reason to employ passion-based ballots). (Note: I personally favor variations of RCV that are superior to the Instant Runoff Voting current method, but the explanation of why delves into mathematics beyond what most people understand and I don't believe that the ideal should be the enemy of the good.) I am prepared to discuss my position if that is desired.

James Kahan