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To the Editor:

As the President of the League of Women Voters of Vermont, I have been following closely the debate on Instant Runoff Voting (IRV).

The Vermont Senate is currently considering using IRV for Vermont's U.S. House race in 2008. As proposed, the instant runoff voting (IRV) system before the legislature gives voters the option to rank candidates in order of choice: first, second, third, etc. If a candidate wins a majority of first choices, the election is over. If not, the top two candidates advance to an instant runoff election, based on the other choices on the ballots cast for the candidates who were eliminated. This guarantees the election of the candidate who gets the majority of the votes. Under this system, the instant runoff count would only be necessary if there were no immediate winner – and it would take less than one day to do, at a cost of perhaps \$12,000. That's a small price to pay for majority rule.

Voters of all educational backgrounds have been using IRV ballots effectively. In Burlington's first IRV election for mayor in 2006, 99.9% of ballots were valid. Landslide majorities found the system easy and supported its implementation statewide.

Majority voting is the aim of IRV, without the time, expense, and drop-off in participation inherent in a traditional runoff. Rutland's recent mayoral race was won with 33% of the vote. That means that 67% of the voters voted for someone else. Without IRV, we will never know whether the mayor did indeed have majority support or if the majority of voters preferred another candidate.

These results help explain why IRV has averaged 66% support in the last eight cities which voted on it. It's high time for majority voting in Vermont.

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