

## **Consensus Questions for Redistricting and Voting Methods for Representative Bodies**

The purpose of this study was to examine impartial ways of drawing legislative district boundaries and alternative ways of voting to assure the majority is represented by a majority of seats, but also to allow political minorities to be proportionally represented.

There are constitutional mandates that districts be contiguous, compact and respectful of existing political boundaries and communities of interest. However, these criteria still leave the door open to substantial gerrymandering. Vermont's use of multi-seat districts may reduce the impact of gerrymandering, but as long as winner-take-all plurality voting methods are used, the overall makeup of legislative bodies can still veer substantially away from the voting preferences of the electorate.

Go to our website, [www.lwvofvt.org](http://www.lwvofvt.org), for background information about different voting systems.

Consensus for this study will be determined through mail-in responses to the following questions. Send the completed form to Terry Bouricius, Chair, 56 Booth St., Burlington, VT 05401.

**Question 1:** The dual goals of having districts that are both highly representative of the residents (that is, a substantial majority feel well represented by their legislators), and competitive (that is, elections are close enough that voters feel their vote matters and they can hold an incumbent accountable), are inevitably in conflict in single-seat districts.

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 is not important at all, how important are each of these two goals to you?

Districts are:

Representative (few voters feel un-represented)

1 2 3 4 5

Competitive (elections are usually fairly close, so people feel their vote matters)

1 2 3 4 5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question 2:** To the extent that the two desirable goals of having a representative that:

1) lives geographically near you, or 2) that accurately reflects your policy preferences, may be in conflict, which criterion do you value?

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 is not important at all, how important are each of these two criteria to you?

Geographic proximity (your state representative lives in your town)

1 2 3 4 5

Policy agreement (your state representative agrees with your policy views)

1 2 3 4 5

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

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**Question 3:** If the only feasible way to promote both competitive elections and more fully representative delegations is to have multi-seat districts using some form of semi-proportional voting method (such as cumulative\* voting) or fully proportional representation voting method (such as ranked choice\* voting), should that be considered?

- a) In special cases where racial or language minorities are geographically diffuse, making single-seat districts an impractical way of achieving representation of these groups?  
yes\_\_\_ no\_\_\_ undecided\_\_\_
- b) In cases where other kinds of substantial minorities, such as political minorities, are poorly represented, or completely unrepresented in legislative bodies? yes\_\_\_  
no\_\_\_ undecided\_\_\_
- c) In virtually any case, in order to promote elections that are simultaneously competitive and representative? yes\_\_\_ no\_\_\_ undecided\_\_\_
- d) Never? yes\_\_\_ no\_\_\_ undecided\_\_\_

Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
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\**Cumulative Voting* is a semi-proportional voting method that has been used to settle a number of voting rights law suits to allow racial minorities to win election to municipal government bodies. In multi-seat districts, voters have as many votes as seats, but can give all of their votes to one candidate, or spread them around as they wish. This allows significant minorities to elect a proportionate minority of seats, as long as they strategically nominate or vote for a limited number of candidates. *Ranked-choice Voting* in multi seat districts works similarly to the way IRV works for single seat elections, and is fully proportional, in that like-minded voters can elect a number of seats in rough proportion to their numbers among the electorate without the need to strategically limit nominations.