Can We Improve the Way We Vote?
Voting Methods in the U.S.

All Voting Methods

- Winner-Take-All or First Past the Post
- Semi-Proportional Representation
- Proportional Representation
Countries using First-Past-The-Post
Problem: Vote Splitting

Oregon Governor’s Race, 1990

45.7% Roberts

40.0% Frohnmayer

13.0% Independent: Mobley
Oregon Governor’s Race, 1990

Problem: The Spoiler Effect

Roberts: 45.7%
Frohnmayer: 53.0%
Independent: Mobley

Map of Oregon showing the results of the election.
Problem: Vote Splitting

Washington State Treasurer, 2016 Primary

- Duane Davidson: 25.09%
- Michael Waite: 23.33%
- Marko Liias: 20.36%
- John Paul Comerford: 17.97%
- Alec Fisken: 13.24%
Problem: Vote Splitting

Washington State Treasurer, 2016 Primary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Votes</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 Rep's</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Dem's</td>
<td></td>
<td>51.57%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Percent of the Vote
Winner-Take-All?

We need Majority Rule
AND
Minority Representation
Semi-Proportional Representation
Cumulative Voting

Cumulative Ballot

You may offer up to 3 votes.

1 2 3

- Joe Smith
- Henry Ford
- Jane Doe
- Fred Rubble
- Mary Hill

RESULT:
3 votes for Ford

Cumulative Ballot

You may offer up to 3 votes.

1 2 3

- Joe Smith
- Henry Ford
- Jane Doe
- Fred Rubble
- Mary Hill

RESULT:
2 votes for Ford
1 vote for Doe
1 vote for Hill

Cumulative Ballot

You may offer up to 3 votes.

1 2 3

- Joe Smith
- Henry Ford
- Jane Doe
- Fred Rubble
- Mary Hill

RESULT:
1 vote for Ford
1 vote for Doe
1 vote for Hill
Cumulative Voting

- Was used from 1870 until 1980 to elect members of the Illinois House of Representatives
- Sometimes used as a remedy to settle VRA lawsuits
- Voters who are in the minority can concentrate their votes to elect a candidate of their choosing
However...

- Cumulative voting is vulnerable to vote-splitting. It requires coordination and strategy to prevent diluting a community’s vote.
- The benefits that cumulative voting can offer are more effectively achieved through a fully proportional voting method.
Case study: Yakima County, WA Washington VRA Challenge

• 48.7% people of color, yet only one Latino Commissioner has ever been elected
• Districted (primary) + at-large (general) creates insurmountable barrier
Yakima, WA: Majority-Minority Districts
Ranked-Choice Voting
Single-winner ranked-choice voting

- Voters rank all the candidates (1\textsuperscript{st} choice, 2\textsuperscript{nd} choice, 3\textsuperscript{rd} choice and so on...)
- Does any candidate have a clear majority (>50%)?
- If not...eliminate candidate with fewest votes, and count those voters’ second choices
- Repeat the process until a candidate has a clear majority
Multi-winner ranked-choice voting
(Proportional Representation)

- Combination of multi-member districts and preferential voting (usually ranked choice voting)
- Same ranked-choice ballot!
How are ballots counted?

- Have any candidates reached the threshold?
  - If not, eliminate the candidate with the fewest votes
- Distribute surplus votes according to second choices
- Repeat until all seats are filled!
- **Big takeaway:** NO WASTED VOTES, since surplus votes are transferred
What are the Benefits of RCV?
Benefits of Proportional Representation

- Holistic rather than engineered diversity - winning candidates don’t only come from neighborhoods where they are the majority!
- Lower entry barrier for new candidates
- Better proportionality
With Ranked-Choice Voting You Have More Choices
Ranked-Choice Voting...

Promotes more Civil, Issues-Focused Campaigning

June, 2018 Mayor’s Race, San Francisco
Yakima County Proposed Remedy #1: SMDs + Ranked-Choice Voting

- Drop the primary in favor of RCV
- Use districts in the general
- Why was RCV important?
  - Even with a majority-minority district and top-two primary, vote splitting is still a problem
Yakima County Proposed Remedy #2: Proportional Representation
Yakima County Proposed Remedy #2: Proportional Representation

- Vote for anyone, regardless of where you live
- Don’t have to redistrict every 10 years
- Elect a County Commission reflective of the community without incentivizing segregation
Yakima, WA: Population Dispersion

### Racial Balance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Native</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
<td>47.7%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 1</td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region 2</td>
<td>66.1%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Region 3</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>69.9%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
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### VAP Balance
Yakima County, WA: Washington VRA Challenge

Yakima County Population %

Under the current system:

Using RCV:

Figures represent candidates of choice of the identified community
Where are People Already Using Ranked-Choice Voting?
Local Options Bill for Ranked-Choice Voting

- Will allow local jurisdictions to use RCV
- HB 1722 & SB 5708 (will have a new bill number in January, 2021)