

# ***LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA***

## **A Study of Voting Systems Applicable to Santa Monica's Non Partisan At Large, Multi-Seat, Multi-Candidate Governing Bodies**

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# A STUDY OF VOTING SYSTEMS

## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA

### SECTION ONE

#### **Scope:**

A study of voting systems for electing legislative bodies at the municipal level.

#### **Focus:**

The focus will be a comparison and evaluation of different voting systems, including plurality/majority, semi-proportional and proportional systems that have been or could be used in at-large municipal elections in the City of Santa Monica.

### INTRODUCTION

In view of the fact that alternative voting systems have recently become an issue state and nationwide, we feel that it is important to consider voting systems as they apply to Santa Monica elections. Voting systems as described and discussed in this paper refer to the method of *casting* and/or *counting* the votes in any election.

The term 'voting system' also encompasses the cultural and sociological forces that impinge on and shape election competition. We will only touch upon these forces in this report.

This paper will consider City Council, School Board, Rent Control Board and College Board of Trustees elections in Santa Monica. All systems chosen and studied are discussed in terms of relevance to Santa Monica elections. Santa Monica elections are currently non-partisan, multi-seat, at-large, plurality elections.

## DEMOGRAPHICS

### Santa Monica

Santa Monica is a small city bounded on one side by the Pacific Ocean and surrounded on the three other sides by Los Angeles. It is one of the most densely populated urban areas in California. The following demographics are taken from a Rand Report prepared for the City of Santa Monica, Human Resources Division, March 2000.

Population: 90,000 (59,305 registered voters as of Oct. 2000- per City Clerk's Office).  
 Area: 8.3 sq. mi.  
 Median Age: 38 (ages 30-49 constitute almost 40% of population)

#### Race:

White	71%
Latinos	16%
Asians	8%
Blacks	4%

Median Income: \$48,934

*FOR A MORE DETAILED LOOK AT SANTA MONICA, SEE APPENDIX A.*

## POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Santa Monica has a seven-seat City Council elected in a 3/4 pattern for a four-year term. It has a City Manager form of government. The Mayor is elected from the sitting Council for a period of one year. The Rent Control Board has five seats, elected in a 2/3 pattern. The College Board of Trustees has a seven-seat board, as does the School Board, and both have the same 3/4 staggered elections for four-year terms.

Elections in Santa Monica are influenced by various slates or factions. Opponents may view these as sources of exclusion, the narrowing of the public political agenda to a small range of issues, and impediments to participation by independent candidates. Proponents may maintain that they provide the necessary organization to promulgate platforms, focus on important issues, provide an opportunity for groups and individuals to participate in the public process who might otherwise be excluded and provide funds to candidates who might not otherwise be able to afford to run for office. The tendency has been for two slates or factions to run in opposition, and for a handful of unaffiliated candidates to run as well. The backing of an organized group greatly increases a candidates chances for election.

## **SECTION TWO**

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE SYSTEMS STUDIED**

We have chosen to study the following five systems, based on their applicability to at large, multi-seat non-partisan elections: Plurality, Approval, Cumulative, Limited and Single Transferable Vote (sometimes called Choice). In addition, we have provided information on Instant Run Off Voting (IRV), (a single seat system), in Appendix B.

#### ***FIRST PAST THE POST/PLURALITY VOTING***

This is the system currently being used in most areas of the United States.

##### **Description:**

Plurality or majoritarian voting is probably one of the oldest methods of choosing leaders. It is also probably the simplest and perhaps the most widely used form in the United States. One person, one vote, and the most votes win. It can be used in a single seat district or in an at large election. In either case voters have as many votes as there are open seats. The candidates with the most votes win.

##### **History:**

This concept of choosing leaders goes back to Greek and Roman times, and came to the United States with the British colonists. The Constitution discusses issues concerning the right to vote, and establishes the Electoral College, but leaves the methodology of it up to the states. In general, the states have patterned after the national system and use this method. According to Pippa Norris in her study “Choosing Electoral Systems”, 83 out of 150 countries were found to use this system. Most, but not all, of those countries have come under the influence of Great Britain at some time.

##### **Supporters say:**

- It provides a clear cut choice for voters
- It gives rise to coherent parliamentary opposition
- It excludes candidates from extremist parties from winning
- It supports broad based parties
- It provides for a stronger, more responsive government
- It favors stability and decisiveness
- It creates a link between the representative and the constituent
- It allows for the choice of a person, not just a party

##### **Opponents say:**

- It excludes minority parties from participation and representation
- It creates “wasted” votes
- It is not responsive to public opinion
- It may result in a winning candidate getting only a minority of the vote

**BALLOT DESIGNS FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS***Plurality*

There are four seats to be filled. There are twelve candidates.

**Directions to voters:**

Place an X next to the candidates you prefer. You may vote for up to 4 candidates

<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	
<b>Sylvia Plath</b>	
<b>Ernest Hemingway</b>	
<b>Maya Angelou</b>	
<b>Mark Twain</b>	
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	
<b>Robert Frost</b>	
<b>Edgar Allan Poe</b>	
<b>Eugene O'Neill</b>	
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	
<b>James Baldwin</b>	

## ***APPROVAL VOTING***

### **Description:**

Approval Voting is a procedure in which citizens can vote for, or approve of, as many candidates as they wish in multicandidate elections. Thus, if there are five candidates, running for three open seats, voters are not restricted to voting for just three candidates. The voter may vote for as many candidates as he/she wants. However, only one vote can be cast for every approved candidate; votes cannot be cumulated and several cast for one candidate. The candidates with the most votes and presumably most acceptable to the most voters, wins the election. The winner is simply the candidates approved by the largest number of voters. Very similar to what we now do in Plurality Voting.

### **History:**

Approval voting is a relative newcomer to voting systems. Conceived independently by at least five different sets of people in the late 1970's, the name Approval Voting was coined by Robert J. Weber, Professor of Decision Sciences at Kellogg Graduate School of Management, Northwestern University. Several excellent books have been written about testing the viability of the concept by using a variety of mathematical models.

### **Where Used:**

The Secretary-General of the United Nations is elected via Approval Voting. Approval Voting was used in 1990 in Oregon in a statewide advisory referendum on school financing, which presented voters with five different options and allowed them to vote for as many as they wished. The National Academy of Sciences, and many colleges and universities use it from the departmental level to the school-wide level. Several different scientific and engineering societies use Approval Voting as well.

### **Supporters say:**

- It gives the voter more flexible options.
- It helps elect the strongest candidates.
- It will reduce negative campaigning.
- It will increase voter turnout.
- It will lead to the selection of candidates with the most widespread support among voters
- It will give minority candidates a better chance to gather support.
- Approval Voting is eminently practical.

### **Opponents say:**

- Approval Voting does not allow ranking of candidates that other voting systems offer.
- Approval Voting could encourage a proliferation of candidates.
- Approval Voting could create significant inequities among voters.

## BALLOT DESIGNS FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

### *APPROVAL*

There are four seats to be filled. There are twelve candidates.

#### **Directions to voters:**

Place an X next to any of the candidates that meet with your approval.

You may vote for up to 12 candidates

<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	
<b>Sylvia Plath</b>	
<b>Ernest Hemingway</b>	
<b>Maya Angelou</b>	
<b>Mark Twain</b>	
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	
<b>Robert Frost</b>	
<b>Edgar Allan Poe</b>	
<b>Eugene O'Neill</b>	
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	
<b>James Baldwin</b>	

## *CUMULATIVE VOTING*

### **Description:**

Cumulative Voting is a semi-proportional system used in at-large elections. In this system each voter casts as many votes as there are seats. The unique aspect of Cumulative Voting is that the voter may distribute (cumulate) his votes. For example, in an election with 5 open seats, the voter may divide his/her five votes as he/she pleases, giving all to one candidate or giving 2.5 to two, or 3 to one candidate and two to another or any other way he wishes, depending on the number of candidates he/she chooses to support.

### **History:**

Cumulative voting does have some history in the United States. It was used in the Illinois State Legislature from 1870 - 1980. In recent years it has been seen as a solution to gerrymandered districts which are now finding disfavor in the courts. One of the main purposes of this system is to elect minority candidates in a situation where that may not be possible with plurality voting.

### **Where Used:**

Today Cumulative Voting is used in at least 17 cities, counties or school districts. In 1987 a group in Alamogordo, New Mexico went to court citing violation of the Voting Rights Act, asking for cumulative voting instead of plurality. The intent was to provide minorities an opportunity to be elected by eliminating single seat districting, and allowing minority voters to cumulate their votes to minority candidates. Other cities in Texas and Alabama have also used Cumulative Voting with apparently successful results in getting minorities elected.

### **Supporters say:**

- It is a semi-proportional system that meets most court ordered requirements where a current voting system has been ruled in violation of the Voting Rights Act.
- It has been successful in electing minority candidates
- It is a fairly simple system
- It is usable in an at-large election
- It will give more diverse representation than plurality

### **Opponents say:**

- It allows for bullet or bloc voting
- It may be viewed as unfair by some voters.
- It may hurt women candidates when bullet voting occurs
- It turns voting into a "game"
- It tends to polarize and divide rather than reach out and unify
- It is not clear that it works well in large state or national elections
- It requires a strong education, registration and get out the vote effort
- It is not clear that it is the method of voting or above effort that is successful
- It works best when there is a large un-represented minority
- It works best with limited number of minority candidates
- It wastes more votes than other proportional systems

## BALLOT DESIGNS FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS

### *CUMULATIVE*

There are four seats to be filled. There are twelve candidates.

#### **Directions to voters:**

You may vote for up to 4 candidates. You may cast one vote for each of four candidates. Or you can distribute your 4 votes in any way you wish B 2 votes for each of two candidates, 1 vote for one candidate, and 3 for another, or all 4 votes for one candidate etc. Place the number of votes you want to give to the candidate(s) next to the name(s).

<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	
<b>Sylvia Plath</b>	
<b>Ernest Hemingway</b>	
<b>Maya Angelou</b>	
<b>Mark Twain</b>	
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	
<b>Robert Frost</b>	
<b>Edgar Allan Poe</b>	
<b>Eugene O'Neill</b>	
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	
<b>James Baldwin</b>	

## ***LIMITED VOTING***

### **Description:**

Limited Voting is basically a subset of plurality/majoritarian voting (First Past the Post). The difference is that in Limited Voting, the voter has a limited number of votes. That is, if there are five open seats available, the voter has fewer than five votes to distribute (4, 3, 2, or 1). It is counted the same way as plurality voting.

It is used in multi-member, at-large elections. It gives an advantage to minority candidates that is not available in plurality systems. It usually will elect the majority candidate, but there is a better chance for minorities to get in, particularly if the minorities present a large, unified group. It is subject to bullet voting, and, as is the case in any system, it can be manipulated. The more votes allowed, the less chance of getting a minority elected.

Limited Voting would have a weakening effect on slate politics, as a full slate of candidates could not be voted for by one voter. This might encourage voting across a diverse spectrum of candidates.

### **History and Where Used:**

In the United States, this system grew out of the Civil War, when it was feared that one party would dominate the elections. It was used in Spain and Portugal in the 19th and early 20th centuries and in parts of the United Kingdom in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has also been used in recent years in Alabama, Georgia, Arizona, and North Carolina.

In *McGhee v. Granville County*, the county proposed a Single Member District solution, but the Federal Court ordered Limited Voting. However, in *Thornburg v. Gingles*, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals reversed the district courts and ordered the acceptance of Single Member District. Lately, courts have steered away from Single Member Districts and been more in favor of Cumulative or Limited Voting.

### **Supporters say:**

- It is a simple, easily understood system, and close to Plurality in method.
- Cost would be small, as it is counted basically in the same way as Plurality.
- It offers minorities a better chance to get elected
- It offers more proportionality than plurality
- It can be used in multi-member/at-large elections.

### **Opponents say:**

- It encourages bullet voting, which can be perceived as unfair and manipulative.
- It is a crude system for securing minority representation and doesn't guarantee that each group or party will be fully represented in proportion to its voting strength.

**BALLOT DESIGNS FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS*****LIMITED***

There are four seats to be filled. There are twelve candidates.

**Directions to voters:**

Place an X next to the candidates you prefer. You may vote for up to 2 candidates

<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	
<b>Sylvia Plath</b>	
<b>Ernest Hemingway</b>	
<b>Maya Angelou</b>	
<b>Mark Twain</b>	
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	
<b>Robert Frost</b>	
<b>Edgar Allan Poe</b>	
<b>Eugene O'Neill</b>	
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	
<b>James Baldwin</b>	

## ***SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE (OR CHOICE VOTING)***

### **Description:**

The Single Transferable Vote is a system of preference voting first developed by Thomas Hare in the 1800's. However, today it is not a single system but rather a variety of closely related systems.

The basic design is that the voter marks the ballot with his preferences in numerical order (number 1 as first choice, 2 as second and so on). After all the first place votes are counted, and a candidate(s) has been declared elected, if there are remaining seats to be filled, the votes are redistributed to the remaining candidates, according to the preferences, or ranking, indicated by the voters.

The number of votes needed to win are determined by a formula which is called the quota, and is almost always the “droop” formula. This formula takes the number of seats available plus one, and divides that into the number of votes cast, you then add one to the quotient. That is the number of votes required to be elected.

In establishing the system of voting there are two aspects to the choices to be made.

### **Aspect One: Method**

- A. Number of Choices:
  - 1. Equivalent to the number of open seats.
  - 2. Equivalent to the number of candidates.
- B. Placement of Names On The Ballot
- C. Counting of Votes:
  - 1. Top to bottom: votes from candidates who are declared elected are redistributed to the remaining candidates according to their second choice.
    - a) may be “surplus” votes (i.e. over and above quota), or
    - b) may be all of winners’ votes distributed proportionally.
  - 2. Bottom up: In this case the candidate with the fewest number of votes is declared a loser, and his/her votes are redistributed up.
  - 3. Alternating: first recount goes from the winning candidate, next from the losing one.

### **Aspect Two: Other Factors:**

- 1. Constituency size
- 2. Political Structure - political parties tend to dislike it due to loss of power.
- 3. Size of voting district
- 4. Size of electorate
- 5. Casual vacancies

### **History:**

Party list systems and the Single Transferable Vote (PR/STV), sometimes called preference voting or choice voting can deliver representation to 90% or more of the voters, yet they are little understood in this country. Many people believe them to be strange ‘European’ ways of voting. But PR/STV was developed in nineteenth century England (also the source of plurality voting practices). Furthermore, in the Progressive Era, PR elections were used in 22 cities in the United States. In a curious case of omission and neglect, their history was lost for decades. Myths grew up round PR to explain and perhaps to justify its repeal in 21 of the 22 cities that used PR for local elections. Only in Cambridge, Massachusetts have council elections by PR survived.

As Barber in “The True Experience of PR in American Cities” says, “The social, economic and political context for the adoption of PR is critical for understanding its electoral outcomes in American cities. The idea of proportional representation is rooted in late eighteenth century debates about democracy. In both the United States and France, revolution was in the air, and ideas about voting and representation emerged from resistance to reigning oligarchies. Popular demands for participation in governance stimulated fears that majority tyranny would replace the tyranny of the minority. French political theorists and mathematicians such as Mirabeau, Condorcet, and Saint Just.

Saint Just understood that suffrage was the key to democracy, and that different methods of casting votes would have different consequences. They developed a variety of electoral systems that would produce majority rule but would also ensure minority representation. The educated minority was their principal concern.”

**Where used:**

Countries in which various forms of Single Transferable vote are used include:

Australia  
Malta  
Ireland

Cities in the United States in which various forms of Single Transferable Vote have been used include:

Ashtabula, Ohio 1917  
New York, NY 1936  
Cambridge, MA currently used  
Oxford, OH 1993

**Supporters say:**

- It assures that nearly all voters elect someone they chose to represent them - if not their first choice, then at least their second or third.
- Ensures that all parties and other groups have an opportunity to receive their fair share of seats - minorities as well as majorities.
- It allows a geographically dispersed minority to elect a candidacy
- It produces a governing body that represents all segments of the electorate.
- It causes elected officials to appeal to and be accountable to a greater number of voters than is the case with plurality
- It is more representative and democratic than the results of single-member districts and traditional at-large systems.
- It enhances the opportunity of all candidates to be elected, especially women and minorities.
- It assures majority rule, but provides for minority representation.
- It has the potential to provide a higher voter turnout.
- It results in fewer “wasted” votes.

**Opponents say:**

- It is complicated, costly and time-consuming to administer and count.
- It promotes instability by allowing minor parties and candidates to win seats.
- It is difficult to explain to voters, who may be suspicious and suspect manipulation by a system they do not understand.

**BALLOT DESIGNS FOR DIFFERENT SYSTEMS**

*SINGLE TRANSFERABLE VOTE*

There are four seats to be filled. There are twelve candidates.

**Directions to voters:**

Number the candidates in the order you prefer B with 1 being your first choice. You may vote for up to 12 candidates

<b>Emily Dickinson</b>	
<b>John Steinbeck</b>	
<b>Sylvia Plath</b>	
<b>Ernest Hemingway</b>	
<b>Maya Angelou</b>	
<b>Mark Twain</b>	
<b>Edith Wharton</b>	
<b>Robert Frost</b>	
<b>Edgar Allan Poe</b>	
<b>Eugene O'Neill</b>	
<b>Louisa May Alcott</b>	
<b>James Baldwin</b>	

### **SECTION THREE**

#### COMPARISON OF DIFFERENT SYSTEMS IN REGARD TO SELECTED CRITERIA

The following observations are predicated by the understanding that there is no one “best” voting system. Every situation can be improved by one or more of the systems studied. Although there is little evidence of a current pressure for change in Santa Monica, there is growing awareness of and interest in the availability of other systems. The past election and climate of concern seems to offer an unparalleled opportunity to provide education to our community.

#### **We selected the following twelve criteria to act as qualifiers in drawing our conclusions:**

1. Increase voter participation
2. Encourage effective interactions between constituents/representatives
3. Raise the level of political campaigns/focus on issues
4. Promote stable and effective government
5. Easy to use, administer and understand
6. Encourage minority (racial, gender, economic) diversity
7. Provide a reasonable range of voter choice
8. Produce fair and accurate community representation
9. Maximize effective votes/minimize wasted votes
10. Minimize cost of changing systems to city/county
11. Encourage majority rule
12. Discourage fraud and political manipulation

The following is a discussion of the interaction of the systems and the qualifications. They are not listed in order of importance.

#### **Increase Voter Participation:**

While proponents of several of the systems claim to increase voting participation, it is not clear how valid the claim is. Factors that may enter in are: (1) Any change will cause awareness and increased interest. (2) In some cases, the change in voting system was accompanied by a strong registration and get-out-the-vote effort, particularly in minority communities. (3) Other elements, such as “hot” issues or quality of candidates may also be as decisive in determining voter turnout as the system itself. (4) Not voting may be due to factors as simple as that their parents didn’t vote. However the alternative systems seem to make more of an effort to reach out to new voters than Plurality does.

#### **Encourage effective interactions between constituents/representatives:**

Interaction comes from both constituents and representatives feeling a trust and commonality on issues. It is possible that Cumulative Voting would create more interaction, due to the possibility of a candidate receiving more than one vote from a constituent. Limited Voting also would lend itself to interaction because out of a choice of 5, with only 3 votes allotted, the candidate/incumbent would want to strive to get votes from his/her own constituency, but from others as a second or third choice. Single Transferable Vote may encourage interaction at the beginning of a term, but since shifting coalitions are common in this system, the constituency could change from issue to issue. Plurality works better in smaller districts or communities than in larger ones, but more of the

electorate may feel disconnected. Approval Voting may encourage less responsible voting and therefore would be the least effective in this category.

**Raise the level of political campaigns/focus on issues:**

One of the criticisms of today's elections is the focus on individuals (often resulting in "smear" tactics) rather than on reasoned discussion of issues. Any system that encourages discussion rather than attack methods would raise the level, and presumably result in more interest. Systems such as Single Transferable Voting seem to offer a better chance of cooperation before the election, in that the candidates see the possibility of attracting the second or third votes of other candidates. Cumulative, Limited and Approval Voting also offer a chance to divide the votes in such a way that may benefit more than one candidate.

**Promote stable and effective government:**

Plurality and Limited voting look to be more stable and effective. Cumulative voting is variable due to the vote aggregation, which may vary from election to election. Single Transferable Voting is the least stable, due to the need for coalition formation after the election.

**Easy to use, administer and understand:**

It is clear that the Plurality system is the most understandable. It is simple, direct, and currently in use in most elections in the United States. It is familiar and seems to reflect the idea of one man one vote better than other systems.

Limited Voting is also easily understood and administered however there may be a slight perception of unfairness. If there are 5 seats why do I have only 3 votes? How much of a factor this would be, would probably depend on the situation at the time. A continuing heavy weighting of the vote to one faction of the public may make this a desirable alternative.

Approval Voting is also fairly easily understood, but may be a little more difficult to administer. Also there is the possibility of no clear-cut direction. If most of the electorate simply checks off all the candidates or even most of them, it may be difficult to determine what the outcome really means.

Cumulative Voting is at face value fairly simple to understand and administer, also, indications are that once factions begin to "manipulate" the vote (by voting all 5 votes for one candidate, for example), the public perceives this as an unfair tactic.

Single Transferable Vote is the most complex of the systems. However it is only fair to point out that it is used in many countries, and the people seem to understand how to use it. It would probably take the longest to explain and put in place, and its acceptance may depend somewhat on whether the bottom up or the top down transfers are to be made. Its very complexity may lead to a perception of manipulability.

**Encourage minority (racial, gender, economic) diversity:**

Both Cumulative and Limited voting have been mandated by Federal Courts in response to Voting Rights Acts lawsuits, as an alternative to redrawing district boundaries (gerrymandering). In these cases, there was generally one relatively large minority that was deemed to be under represented. It is not clear that these remedies would be effective in a multi-minority community such as Santa

Monica. Plurality is the least likely system to encourage this kind of diversity. It is unclear what impact Approval Voting would have under this criterion.

**Provide a reasonable range of voter choice:**

Most elections in Santa Monica provide a variety of candidates under Plurality. It's believed this is at least partly due to the multi seat at-large elections, the small geographical area, and the lack of parties, although endorsement by Santa Monicans for Renters Rights (SMRR) seems to be fairly essential to winning, at least on the City Council. Limited Voting and Approval Voting may reduce the influence of slates. Since Cumulative and Single Transferable Voting do reach out to broader bases, they could provide more choice.

**Provide fair and accurate community representation:**

Single Transferable Voting offers the most proportional representation, as votes are transferred to more than one candidate. Cumulative Voting would have some of the same effect because voters could give all their votes to the one candidate that best reflected their views. Even Limited and Approval voting would offer broader representation than Plurality.

**Maximize effective votes/minimize wasted votes:**

One of the criticisms of Plurality Voting is that people "waste" their votes - that is, all votes that don't produce an elected official are wasted. Wasted votes occur in areas where there is little or no chance of one group being represented. Single Transferable and Cumulative Voting lessen the chance of wasted votes, although again some of this waste effect is mitigated by the at-large, non-party elections and small geographical area in Santa Monica.

**What would this change mean in terms of cost to city/county:**

Numbers would have to be confirmed by the City Clerk's Office in conjunction with the County (our elections are managed through the County Clerk's Office). Obviously, Plurality would require no extra money as it is already in place. Approval, Limited and probably Cumulative would be easy to install, and at minimum cost. Single Transferable Voting would depend on the stage of electronic systems the County has in place. Computers could do this easily, but tabulating the votes by hand would be difficult and time consuming. A further consideration would be how the County would feel about Santa Monica's system being different than other systems within the County.

**Does it encourage majority rule:**

Majority rule and minority representation has been the crux of the matter from the very beginning of our nation's history. It is necessary to have a majority rule in a democracy, but the minority cannot feel shut out. If you want to use the most votes as a rule, then Plurality is the choice. If you want it tempered somewhat then you would choose Limited Voting. Cumulative Voting works best when there is a single large under represented minority, and Single Transferable Vote would give the most proportional representation.

**Discourage fraud and political manipulation:**

It is our opinion that there is nothing inherent in any of the systems that would cause or reduce either fraud or manipulation. These are man-made and depend on individual integrity and honesty.

**CONCLUSIONS:**

All of the systems we have considered have been or are being used somewhere in the world, many within the United States. The system itself should represent a conscious choice by the electorate. It should be chosen with an awareness of the balance between stability and representation (extreme stability would be a tyranny; extreme “proportionalizing” would be anarchy). Most Americans are unaware of the different system and the pluses or minuses of each of them. Any change should be accompanied by close examination of several systems to see which one meets the conditions present at the time. Any offering of just one system as a cure-all is highly suspect.

At present, it is not clear that there should be a change in the current system in Santa Monica, but nothing is ever as present as change, and thoughtful, honest education of citizens is essential. Should this education take place now, or when it becomes obvious a change would be of benefit?

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA MONICA  
VOTING SYSTEMS STUDY COMMITTEE  
2000-2001**

**CONSENSUS QUESTIONS**

1. How important is each of the criteria on page 14 as a feature of a good voting system? (You may add other criteria if you wish).
2. Next, rank the five most important criteria in order from one to five with one being the most important.
3. Which voting systems best achieve your objectives as reflected in your preferred criteria choices?
4. Should LWVSM use this study to focus a recommendation toward a specific system or as a knowledge base to draw possible future recommendations?

**Voting Systems:** Voting systems as defined and used in this report refer only to the methods of casting and counting votes. It does not include the mechanics of the voting system (see appendix for some information on mechanics) or the structure of the election system itself.

**Election System:** This is the structure, the umbrella under which the voting takes place. It includes such things as number of seats, the size of the voting district, the formation of the governing bodies.

**Mechanics:** This is the actual casting method of voting. It includes such things as the choice of hand counting, punch card, touch-screen etc.

**LIST OF CRITERIA**

1. Increase voter participation \_\_\_\_\_
2. Encourage effective interactions between constituents/representatives \_\_\_\_\_
3. Raise the level of political campaigns/focus on issues \_\_\_\_\_
4. Promote stable and effective government \_\_\_\_\_
5. Easy to use, administrate and understand \_\_\_\_\_
6. Encourage minority (racial, gender, economic) diversity \_\_\_\_\_
7. Provide a reasonable range of voter choice \_\_\_\_\_
8. Produce fair and accurate community representation \_\_\_\_\_
9. Maximize effective votes/minimize wasted votes \_\_\_\_\_
10. Minimize cost of changing systems to city/county \_\_\_\_\_
11. Encourage majority rule \_\_\_\_\_
12. Discourage fraud and political manipulation \_\_\_\_\_

### VOTING SYSTEMS POSITION

The League of Women Voters of Santa Monica supports consideration of alternative voting systems for Santa Monica elections with a special emphasis on the single Transferable Vote or Choice system. Any system adopted should produce fair and accurate community representation reflecting the diversity (racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, etc.) of the community; increase voter participation and maximize effective votes and raise the level of political campaign and increase the focus on issues, not personalities. The system should be easy for the voter to use and understand, both in terms of understanding how to vote and how their vote would be counted.

## GLOSSARY FOR VOTING SYSTEMS REPORT

<b>Approval Voting</b>	A system where a voter may simply check as many of the candidates as he would approve of for the office.
<b>Bullet/Block Voting</b>	A use of ballots where the voters cast all ballots for one candidate when they may have more than one vote, for example in a multi-seat election, they cast all their votes for one candidate. It's a concentration of a voters vote.
<b>Cumulative Voting</b>	The capacity to cast more than one vote for a favored candidate in a multi-seat election.
<b>Droop Quota</b>	Used in single Transferable Vote systems to determine how votes are awarded. The quota being the total vote divided by the number of seats plus one, and then one is added to the quotient.
<b>First Past The Post (FPTP)</b>	The simplest form of plurality voting. The winning candidate(s) being the one with the most, but not necessarily the majority number of votes.
<b>Limited Vote</b>	A plurality system used in multi-member seats wherein the voter has fewer votes than the number of seats.
<b>Proportional System</b>	Any system which consciously attempts to reduce the disparity between as group's share of the total vote and its share of the winning seats. For example, if a group wins 40% of the vote, it should gain 40% of the seats.
<b>Semi-Proportional Systems</b>	Those electoral systems which provide on average, results which fall some way in between the proportionality of PR systems and the disproportionality of plurality/majority systems.
<b>Single Member District (SMD)</b>	A district where only one candidate is elected to office
<b>Single Transferable Vote (STV)</b>	A preferential proportional representation system used in multi-member districts. To gain election, a candidate must surpass a specified quota of first-preference votes. Voter's preferences are re-allocated to other continuing candidates when an unsuccessful candidate is excluded, or if an elected candidate has a surplus
<b>Wasted Votes</b>	Those votes which did not ultimately count towards the election of a particular candidate or party

APPENDIX A:

## DEMOGRAPHICS

Additional Statistical Information on the City Of Santa Monica, taken from City Of Santa Monica Community Profile prepared by Lee Mizell, The Rand Corporation, Document DRU-2211-RC, March 2000.

## I.

Distribution of Race/Ethnicity by the Neighborhood They Live In, All Santa Monicans, 1998

Race	Percent of Race/Ethnicity in Zipcode Area					Total
	90401	90402	90403	90404	90405	
White	3%	14%	30%	21%	32%	100%
African American	3%	2%	7%	65%	23%	100%
American Indian	7%	3%	20%	29%	41%	100%
Asian	2%	13%	24%	30%	31%	100%
Hispanic	2%	4%	9%	54%	32%	100%

Source: Los Angeles County, Urban Research Division, 1999

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## II.

Distribution of Household Income in Santa Monica by Zipcode, 1998 estimated

	<\$15,000	\$15,000- \$34,999	\$35,000 \$49,999	\$50,000 \$74,999	\$75,000 \$99,999	\$100,000+	Median
90401	22.7%	31.8%	16.4%	15.8%	7.1%	6.2%	\$31,410
90402	9.1%	13.5%	8.5%	14.1%	8.7%	46.1%	\$88,681
90403	14.7%	22.1%	14.7%	18.0%	11.3%	19.2%	\$47,777
90404	20.6%	28.6%	14.8%	19.8%	8.3%	7.9%	\$35,602
90405	13.9%	21.4%	16.4%	19.3%	11.1%	17.9%	\$47,289
Total							\$48,934
California							\$40,522
United States							\$38,885

Source: Claritas in 1999 Service Planning Area Databook, SPA-5 West, United Way of Greater LA; US Bureau of the Census

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Statistical information on the City of Santa Monica, taken from City of Santa Monica community Profile prepared by Lee Mizell, The Rand Corporation, Document DRU-2211-RC, March 2000.

No. of Homeless:	Approximately 1,000 individuals
Men	72%
White	52%
Black	24%
Latino	18%
Housing:	
Owners	28%
Renters	72%

Rent control has been in effect since 1979, but recent changes in state law have increased the amount landlords can charge, and therefore the number of available controlled units. The city has recently adopted a large budget (over \$25 million) to create affordable housing.

As of March 2000, about one-half of the rent-controlled units in Santa Monica were occupied by persons with middle to high incomes.

## APPENDIX B:

### INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING

The Instant Runoff Vote is a special case of the Single Transferable Vote (also known as the Hare System), where the number of seats equals one. The elector is presented with a slate of candidates for one position, and the elector is asked to rank order the candidates from “1” for his/her preferred candidate, “2” for the next preferred, on down to the least preferred getting the last number in order. In the final tally of votes, if the “plurality” (most frequently chosen) candidate receives a majority (50% plus 1), that candidate is the winner. If the plurality candidate receives 50% or less of the first place votes, then the candidate with the fewest first place votes is deleted and that candidates second preference votes are distributed to the remaining candidates. If no candidate yet has a majority, the elimination process is repeated until one candidate achieves a majority.

Instant Runoff achieves in one step what is sometimes a two-stage process. In many elections, a plurality win leads to a runoff election, where the two top winners, usually from the two major parties, each with less than a majority of the votes, then face each other in a “runoff” election.

IRV is a system used in single seat, multiple candidate elections. It is *not* a type of proportional representation. It is a majority system wherein a winner must receive 50% plus 1 of the votes to win. Plurality systems often result in a winner who has the Most votes, but not necessarily 50% + of the votes. IRV creates a clear winner in just one election.

It is used most often in countries with Parliamentary Governments such as Australia, New South Wales, Ireland and in London’s mayoral contest.

#### **Supporters Say:**

- It is fairer in that it gives voters a chance to have a second or third choice candidate win, rather than just discarding their votes.
- You are assured of having a candidate who is approved by 50% + of the voters
- It gives third parties a chance to vote their first choice, but rather than “spoil” the chances of their second choice. It simply shifts their vote to their second choice.
- It saves money because it doesn’t require a second election for ties.
- It promotes more issue-oriented campaigns because candidates will try to be 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> place choice
- It saves the problem of voters splitting their votes between two very similar candidates

#### **Opponents Say:**

- It is only used in single seat elections, and while that is the main type of election today, many courts have ruled that multi-seat, multi-candidate elections must be used
- It would have to approved by the Registrar of Voters B and the system put in place
- It would have an unknown cost to establish
- It is slightly more complicated than Plurality Voting

- It could be perceived as ‘unfair’ if it were used in a special election that was embedded within a multi-seat system

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