

THERE ARE BETTER WAYS TO VOTE: Approval and None-of-the-Above (NOTA)

Suppose there is a carload of five people trying to choose a restaurant to have dinner together. They decide to vote. Which method of voting is fairer?

Give each person one vote. Each can choose a single restaurant from among the several choices. Those whose choice didn't win are at the mercy of the others. There would be no opportunity to say anything about their alternate choices, if they had any.

Let each person vote for as many choices as they consider acceptable.

This way, there is a better chance that most of the people will be pleased by the outcome and that they endorse the restaurant that won. It might not be their first choice, but it's a tolerable choice that was worth voting for. Or, if none of their choices won, at least their complex opinion was heard.

This simple example is from Bradly Lehman's website (<http://www-personal.umich.edu/~bpl>). In several articles he explains why he's disillusioned and doesn't vote anymore.



He explains that the "one person one vote" system that we use now (called Singular Plurality) is inherently flawed. Mathematicians also confirm that by ignoring how voters would rank the other candidates, it opens the floodgates to unsettling, paradoxical results... the Florida presidential election comes to mind. They also prove that objectively there are better ways to measure the will of the people.

The second method used in the restaurant example is a simple and fairer way of voting. It's called approval voting. Each approved candidate receives one vote and the candidate with the most votes wins. Approval voting is used to elect the Secretary General of the United Nations and many scientific and engineering societies also use this method.

So, I found it interesting to learn recently that one of our long-time Libertarian members, Jon Asfour, was involved in attempting to bring a variation of approval voting to Gainesville back in 1990!

Jon and local Libertarians proposed that a permanent ballot category 'NONE OF THE ABOVE' (NOTA) be placed on the ballots below the names of the candidates for each office. If no candidate received a majority, all candidates who received fewer votes than NOTA would be removed and a new election would be held. Furthermore, if NOTA received a majority of votes cast, none of the candidates could win.

It was an interesting and well thought-out proposal that was considered by the Alachua County Charter Review committee... but, obviously didn't pass.

Jon's going to be at our General Meeting next Tuesday (8/5) to tell us about NOTA and why he thinks it still has potential.

We'll also distribute example ballots and vote on our favorite restaurants by different methods. I think this fun exercise will be instructive and confirm that fairer elections can only come about if we change the way we vote!

Join our listserves! Announcements and lively discussion!

Meetings and special announcements:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/alachualp/>

Unmoderated discussion:

<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ACLibertarians/>

Calendar

ACLP General Meeting:
Time: August 5, 7:00 PM.
Topic: Alternative Voting Methods
Location: Unitarian Universalist Church, 3 blocks N of 39th Ave on 34th St.

ACLP Business Meeting
Time: August 19, 7:00 PM
Location: Hunter's Run Club House, 2600 SW Williston Rd.

More information at
www.alachualp.org

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