

# PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION 101

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In the United States we use a single-member district, winner-take-all system for our elections. The United States, Canada, and Great Britain are the only Western democracies that continue to use this arrangement. Other democracies use Proportional Representation.

## **BASIC CHARACTERISTIC OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION (PR) SYSTEMS**

PR systems are used only when electing multiple candidates in a single district.

Then PR systems divide up the seats in these multi-member districts according to the proportion of votes received by the various parties or groups running candidates.

For example: When electing members of the US House of Representatives Colorado can be viewed as a single district. Using the following hypotheticals Colorado would award its seven representatives in the following manner:

- If Party A received 60% of the vote it would get 4.2 members, rounded to 4
- If Party B received 30% of the vote it would get 2.1 members, rounded to 2
- If Party C received 10% of the vote it would get .7 members, rounded to 1

Proportional Representation can be tailored to meet the preference of the electorate. Below is a description of the two most commonly used methods.

### **Party List Voting**

Over 80% of the PR systems used worldwide are some form of party list voting. With this system, states would not have to draw district lines.

There are two types of list systems used in Party List Voting:

- In closed list system, the party determines the order in which the candidates are listed and elected; the voter simply casts a vote for the party as a whole.
- In the open list form of party list voting, voters are allowed to express a preference for particular candidates, not just parties. It gives voters some say over the order in which candidates are elected.

### **Mixed-Member Proportional Voting**

This proportional representation system is one of the least used. However, in recent years it has generated a great deal of attention and is now receiving serious consideration by those involved in electoral design.

A double ballot is used in this system. On one part of the ballot, voters choose a district representative. This part of the ballot is a single-member district plurality, or winner-take-all contest to select the person who will represent the district in the legislature. In most cases half of the seats in the legislature are selected on this part of the ballot. On the other part of the ballot, the remaining seats are selected by proportional representation.

Source: Fair Vote website