Make Democracy Better

November 2025

This document is about better representation in Congress. If you can accept:

- An end to the two-party winner-take-all voting system in America;
- A system where votes cast for non-winning district candidates are counted towards voting power in the House of Representatives (or in a State legislature);
- A system where Members of small political parties are fairly represented; and
- Voting power in the House that is based on the popular vote rather than by the number of Members;

Then read on.....

A principal cause of the political and cultural divisions in the United States is the winner-take-all electoral system that locks out the diversity of views of 300 million Americans, and forces adherence to two strongly oppositional political camps, and to the totality of their policy platforms. It's one reason that most Americans no longer trust their elected officials to represent them fairly and has, to some degree, made the system become susceptible to extremist views.

An electoral system should give voters a more diverse choice of political parties and individuals that have a realistic chance for representation at the national and State level. Western European democracies have adopted various forms of proportional representation (PR), in which voting power in their legislative bodies reflects accurately the diverse views of its citizens. In the United States, Ranked Balloting has been seen by some as an option for change. However, ranked ballots have significant drawbacks, and do not guarantee that representation in Congress will accurately reflects people's true preferences.

This document presents a new alternative that overcomes the drawbacks of the current electoral system in the United States, and of various ranked ballot and PR systems, by giving every voter representation in Congress based on their first preference, without asking them to compromise at the ballot box, and achieves proportional representation in Congress or State Legislatures. It is an electoral method called ***Simple Vote PR****.*

It's Time to End the 18th-Century Two-Party System: Electoral Reform for the USA

It is hard to imagine that in a country of 330 million people there is room in Congress for just two political parties – one right-wing party and one left-wing party, and that enables just one or two "Independents" to be elected.

Other than the Democratic Party and the Republican Party, no other political party has any chance of success in achieving a voice in Congress. For all intents and purposes, voters – Whether they are Republicans, Democrats or Independents − must accept the entirety of the official world view of the Republican Party, or the entirety of the Democratic Party's official views. Animosity between some Republicans and Democrats and within each of the two parties is severe. In Congress, compromise is exceedingly difficult, and frustrations abound. Many deep divisions have risen in communities across America.

Many people who vote for the Republican Party dislike some of its policies but, in the overall, consider the Democratic Party worse. For example, some who vote Republican would support strong action against climate change, which is not a priority of the Republican Party, but feel the party's policies on immigration are more important. It may be that there are many people who vote for the Democratic Party who do not like its 'pro-choice' agenda on abortion, and vote Democratic simply because they cannot stomach most policies of the Republican Party. Examples of poor representation abound, such as the lack of any power for native Americans in Congress. Small parties and new parties are locked out of both the Senate and the House of Representatives, as are many different points of view of Americans.

The problem is fundamental and, by and large, can be attributed to the 'Founding Fathers', who contrived the American Constitution in the context of the 18th century political system of England, where there was one political party in power, and one party in "Loyal Opposition", in a much simpler world. It seemed to work, with an electoral system that is "winner-take-all", where the votes of losing candidates in an election count for nothing. The world is far different from 300 years ago, yet the U.S.A. has failed to follow the democratic modernizations that have occurred in many countries in the world.

Many millions of Americans feel that their government is no longer responsive to their needs, and feel they are not making progress or are otherwise being left out of the 'American Dream'. Dissatisfactions have led to a flood of misinformation and "conspiracy" theories in the public media that threaten respect for traditional points of view, for institutions, and even for democracy. Even violence is seen by some as an option.

It has become necessary to implement a fundamental electoral reform that will strengthen democracy immensely, and enable more people to feel that they have a fair voice in government that is heard, and that better reflects their views.

Where Progress Has Happened

The principal examples of positive electoral reforms are today's European countries, which after World War Two and the fall of Communism had to re-invent their systems of government. With the notable exception of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, these democracies have adopted electoral systems based on **proportional representation (PR)** in government, in which the representation and voting powers in national and regional legislative bodies reflect, to a very large degree, how people voted. Proportionality means that, for example, a political party that wins 15% of the overall popular vote in a national election has 15% of the votes in its national legislative body, or close to it.

What PR Would Mean for the USA

Proportional representation in the House of Representatives would produce fundamental improvements to American democracy. The Democratic Party and Republican Party could likely each become two or more separate parties with distinct representations, reflecting different views from the left, center, and right. Other parties could be directly represented in Congress if they meet minimum popular vote thresholds for representation – for example, if a Green Party, a Libertarian Party, a rural party of some sort, a Christian-based party, a 'Progressive' party or some other party garners at least 2% of the national popular vote, they would have political representation.

The diversity of America would no longer be ignored or absorbed into the compromise of only two 'big tent' parties. There would be a blossoming of political freedom. More "Independents" would become electable. More views and new policy directions would be considered in legislation. Negotiation and compromise on legislation would become the normal process because, in all likelihood, no single political party would be able

to pass legislation on its own. Seemingly oppositional parties may find common ground on certain issues. Legislation that is passed by the House would have true majority of support not only of sitting Members, but of the voting public. That, in turn, reduces today's widespread feelings that Congress does not work for them.

It is time for the United States of America to adopt an electoral system based on proportional representation (PR) in the House of Representatives. Importantly, it is something that can be done **without a constitutional amendment*** .

It is unknown whether a majority of House Members will agree to adopt a system based on PR, even if a majority of Americans want it. Implementing PR requires that the current Members of the House of Representatives (or Members of a State legislature) be more inclined to place the betterment of democracy over personal self-interest. There would likely be states and regional views that support it, and there are numerous current Members of the House that are "fed up" with the status quo, and perhaps want their views to be more respected. Change would most likely have to come from the 'grassroots', people pressuring their Congresspeople, putting forth new political parties in elections, and taking what legal actions may be possible. Notably, the electoral system proposed and described below suggests that Members of the House of Representatives would be elected using the current electoral system – something that can widen support for the proposed reforms.

Some Proposals for PR

Numerous electoral systems that are based on achieving proportional representation have been devised and implemented around the world. One common mechanism is to greatly enlarge electoral districts and have three or more politicians represent each district in Congress. Voters at the ballot box would be asked to rank a (sometimes long) list of candidates from various political parties and, generally speaking, the winners could be described as being the least disliked candidates. It is possible that a ranked ballot system could result in a distribution of political parties across the country that better reflects how people voted, but would not achieve proportionality. Moreover, votes cast for non-winning candidates are discarded. Importantly, the elected Representatives would be a compromise, and most likely not be the candidate or party that most voters really wanted to win.

Another electoral system known as a Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP) asks voters to cast two votes – one for their preferred candidate for the district, and another for their preferred political party. Normally, in aggregate, the number of seats by political party using this system would not reflect the overall proportional distribution of parties that voters preferred, and additional Members of parliament are therefore appointed (not elected) to offset discrepancies between the two. In Germany, which uses the Mixed Member system, toughly half of all Members of the Bundestag are appointed, to ensure that representation by party in its Reichstag (the parliament) closely matches the way people voted for political parties.

Each of these common mechanisms for producing PR has drawbacks that would not be acceptable to most American voters. Another electoral system, new and as yet untried – known as **Simple Vote Proportional Representation (SVPR)** – can be more acceptable to the voting public.

How It Would Work – Simple Vote PR

Simple Vote PR avoids the complexities of other PR systems that assume that the One Vote Per Member tradition in a legislative body must be continued. The Simple Vote PR method achieves full proportionality, yet

- Does not require that voters rank numerous and often unfamiliar candidates in each district and avoids the complex calculations that are required to determine winners in every district. Simplicity is of great importance.
- Does not involve changes to electoral district sizes or result in more than one elected Representative per district.
- Keeps almost all Members of the House directly elected.

With Simple Vote PR, the representation of political parties in the House of Representatives (or State legislatures) will mirror the way people voted in a national election, without changing the basic single-vote single-Member winner-take-all system of how candidates are currently elected. It achieves proportionality at the federal (or State level in State elections) by adding to the voting power of Representatives of under-represented parties. A voter's vote at the ballot box counts directly towards the determination of voting power in the House whether his or her choice of candidate is elected or not. SVPR's focus is not on proportionality at the district or State level, but at the national (Congressionsl) level (or state level in state elections) after the total popular vote by political party in an election is tabulated.

With Simple Vote PR, if a political party wins, for example, 10% of the overall national vote but elects just 5% of all seats in the House, that party would have two votes per Member, to bring its voting power in the House into line with its share of the popular vote.

Additionally, the most under-represented parties, which may even elect no one but win, say, 3% of the overall national vote, are entitled to 'Top-Up' Members who are then given their fair share of House votes.** The total number of votes in the House of Representatives would always exceed the number of Members, and most Members would have more than one vote in the House, including fractions of a vote. The number of Top-Up seats can be limited to a range of 10 to 30 seats (or other as may be approved). The number of Top-Up seats would be pre-determined by legislation prior to a general election. An example of the steps taken to achieve the final Simple Vote PR outcome is shown below. The Simple Vote PR method is fully described at www.makedemocracybetter.com.

This type of proportional representation is possible because the US Constitution speaks to the number of Members in the House of Representatives, does not specify that each Member has exactly one vote in Congress, and provides flexibility in how they are elected.

It should be kept in mind that **any electoral system that is based on PR inevitably involves more complexity** than a simple counting of seats by party. However, with **Simple Vote PR**, voters cast just one vote for a candidate at the ballot box. The final outcomes in terms of voting power in the House of Representatives and votes per Member of the House are instantly computed with the use of technology. Numbers can be rounded as may be decided, or left as calculated. SVPR can be viewed or tested using an interactive file (Excel format) that can be downloaded from www.makedemocracybetter.com. Users enter a few parameters (thresholds for representation, the number of elected Members and Top-Up Members) and any scenario of votes and seats won by party, and the SVPR outcome can be instantly seen. All the calculations necessary to achieve proportional representation are at the national (or State) level. There are no complex mechanisms are at the district level (such as occurs with ranked ballot systems).

Simple Vote PR does not change how party primaries are conducted. Candidates for an election are determined by parties as currently done, unless reforms are implemented at the State level or by the parties involved.

Proportional representation, used by almost all advanced western democracies, reflects the fairness of representation and voting power that most Americans want. **The Simple Vote PR** formula reflects those desires, in a way that is simple at the ballot box. Most importantly, maintaining the current winner-take-all electoral system that exists in the United States is damaging to the health of its democracy, and its future. In today's two-party system, fundamentally opposed parties can switch being in or out of power from one election to the next, with public policies lurching from one direction to another.

The illustration on the following page is an example that provides a summary of outcomes based on a scenario of parties, seats and popular votes using the current system to cast ballots, and the changes that would occur with the Simple Vote PR electoral system.

THE SENATE. Proportional representation would be more difficult to achieve in the Senate because fundamental change would require a constitutional amendment. Article 1 Section 3 of the US Constitution states "The Senate of the United States shall be composed of two Senators from each State…… and each Senator shall have one Vote.".

However, after some of the new parties represented in the House of Representatives become significant parties in the USA or in some states, they may field Senatorial candidates that may be able to win against traditional Democratic and Republican party candidates. In such instances, when there are more than two candidates in a Senatorial election, a candidate may win with less than 50% of the popular vote in the state. A ranked ballot system that voters are willing to accept can be used to determine winners in each state; that would not require a constitutional amendment.

Over time, it should become apparent that electoral reform in the Senate would be beneficial for democracy.

The need for dramatic change and improvement from the current 18th-century system defined in the constitution is both urgent and necessary.

A National Election for the House of Representatives	Electoral Results				Adjustments Made by Simple Vote PR					
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
	Total Popular Vote	No. of Members Elected	% of Popular Vote	% of All Seats	Best Seats/ Vote %	Total House Votes	Top-Up Members	Total Members	Avg. House Votes per Member	% of All House Votes
Lincoln Republicans	25,000,000	125	15.4%	28.7%	√√	125.0	0	125	1.0	15.6%
Democratic Party	40,000,000	135	24.6%	31.0%		200.0	0	135	1.5	25.0%
America First Party	30,000,000	90	18.4%	20.7%		150.0	0	90	1.7	18.8%
Progressive Democratic Party	25,000,000	65	15.4%	14.9%		125.0	0	65	1.9	15.6%
Green Party	15,000,000	8	9.2%	1.8%		75.0	7	15	5.0	9.4%
Libertarian Party	20,000,000	5	12.3%	1.1%		100.0	11	16	6.3	12.5%
New West Party	400,000	1	0.2%	0.2%		2.0	0	1	2.0	0.3%
First Americans Party	3,000,000	2	1.8%	0.5%		15.0	1	3	5.0	1.9%
New Morality Party	2,800,000	0	1.7%	0.0%		0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0%
Communist Party of America	400,000	0	0.2%	0.0%		0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0%
Other Party	400,000	0	0.2%	0.0%		0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0%
Other (non-winning) parties*	100,000	0	1.7%	0.0%		0.0	0	0	0.0	0.0%
Total for All Eligible Parties	162,100,000	431	101.3%	99.1%		792.0	19	450	1.8	99.1%
Independents	660,000	4	0.4%	0.4%		7.0	0	4	1.8	0.9%
Total for the Election	162,760,000	435	101.7%	100.0%		799.0	19	454	1.8	100%

A As reported by all jurisdictions participating in the election. Voters cast their vote based on their true first preference, without compromise.

B As elected under current electoral systems, almost exclusively 'winner-take-all'.

C The popular vote for each party divided by the total number of votes cast in the election.

D Normally, the winner-take-all electoral system produces both over-represented and under-represented political parties.

E "√√" marks the party with the highest percent of all seats won compared to its share of the total popular vote. This is the ratio to which all other parties are raised, and is the first step in determining the total number of votes in the House of Representatives.

F The Lincoln Republican's 110 seats divided by its percent share of the total popular vote determines the total number of Votes in the House. This total is then multiplied by each party's percent share of the total popular vote. This achieves full proportional representation in terms of voting power in the House.

G In this example, legislation has pre-set the number of Top-up seats at 20, and that the total number of seats in the House would be increased by 20, to 455, rather than reducing the 435 elected seats to create Top-Up seats. Any combination of directly-elected seats and Top-Up seats is possible,

H Directly-elected Members plus Top-Up Members.

I Total number of House Votes (the House Vote Entitlement) for each party divided by the total number of that party's Members. Using an average is the basic formula, but party Leaders can adjust the votes of its Members to reflect internal priorities.

J The percent of House Votes mirrors each party's share of the total popular vote, i.e. proportional representation. Note that "Independent" Members have a House Vote equal to the average for all parties.

Simple Vote PR: Outcomes and Impacts

1. The electoral system of the United States that allows for only two points of view to be represented in the House of Representatives (Republican and Democratic) in a diverse country of 330,000,000 people is changed to enable a wider diversity of opinion and thought to be represented by more political parties.
2. The tradition of exactly one vote in the House of Representatives for each of its Members is ended. Most Members are given additional votes, including fractions of a vote, to reflect the overall percentage of the national popular vote received by the party that they represent. The number of votes in the House will always exceed the number of seats. No Member of the House will have less than one full vote in the House.
3. Voting power in the House is defined by the House vote entitlement carried by each party, rather than by the number of seats held by parties. All parties carry a House vote entitlement in proportion to each's overall share of the national popular vote in the most recent election.
4. Strategic or compromise voting at the ballot box is unnecessary (No more "There's no sense in voting for her, because she doesn't have a chance of winning"). Every vote cast at the ballot box for a candidate representing a political party counts towards Congressional voting power of every voter's first choice.
5. Voter participation is likely to increase as the choice of political parties and the knowledge that every vote counts become known.
6. With Simple Vote PR, the counting of ballots in districts is simple. There is no ranking multiple (and sometimes unfamiliar) candidates in districts, nor are there multi-member districts that can confuse voters

as to who represents them in their district. Unlike PR systems in which voters cast separate ballots for a preferred party and preferred candidate, SVPR assumes the two choices will be the same, as Members normally vote in line with party direction. (A ranked ballot system is compared to Simple Vote PR at the end of this document.)

7. Proportional representation in the House of Representatives will increase the diversity of representation. Voters will have an effective choice in favour of parties that they see as being more representative of their views. New parties that may form around segments of society have a better chance of representation. Small national and regional political parties can become realistic choices for representation in Congress if they can generate a few percent of all national votes cast in an election. As a respect to democracy, a 2% or 3% national minimum is recommended. Conservative, 'Progressive', ethnic, racial, environmental, native and other groups registered as political parties can gain representation and votes in Congress that have previously been denied to them with America's winner-take-all two-party system.
8. States will continue to conduct elections using ballots that identify both candidates and their political affiliations, subject to federal laws; however, measures will need to be in place to ensure that all political parties and their candidates can be registered and are included on the ballot.
9. Except for a few Top-Up Members, all Members of the House are directly accountable to voters in their district.
10. Representation by gender, ethnicity, culture or other component of society is indirectly supported by competition from new parties, and a recognition by existing parties that the votes of all parts of society count directly towards voting power in the House. For example, if a party claims to support the Black community but is seen by voters as not well representing their concerns, it will lose votes from that community.
11. The two-party system that dominates America today can result in dramatic reorientations of public policy with a few changes in votes in a few states will become rare. In a closely-contested national election, small factions within parties will exert less undue influence on party policies; the various factions will have the opportunity to form their own parties and gain voting power in the House based on their national popularity.
12. The label of States being "Red" States or "Blue" States may remain for elections and governance within a State, but will have little impact on the work of the House of Representatives.
13. Negotiation and compromise on legislation becomes the norm because no single party is likely to have an absolute majority of votes in the House. Votes of third and fourth parties become important, and will tend to prevent extremist or polarizing legislation. Diverse political parties with different policy platforms can agree with other parties to approve legislation that benefits their constituencies.
14. The practice of adjusting the geographic boundaries of electoral districts to enhance the voting power in the House by a political party ("gerrymandering", "redistricting") would no longer have a significant purpose, as voting power in the House of Representatives is determined by the overall national (or state in state elections) popular vote. The practice may be abandoned, and over time, a non-political agency may redetermine district boundaries across the country for federal elections, in a similar manner as is the case in Canada and other Western democracies.
15. Members who decide to change their party affiliation between elections to the House have no effect on House vote standings; the total House vote entitlement remains with the party that the Member has abandoned, in accordance with the party's share of the popular vote in the most recent general election, as modified by elections held to fill vacancies. A Member will not voluntarily leave his/her party caucus because he/she will have no vote. However, Members removed from a party by its caucus sit as Independents, and are given a House Vote Entitlement equal to the average for all Members of the House. Parties may use other disciplinary measures within the party.

16. If there is a special election to fill a vacant seat during a session of the House, the popular vote results of that election replace those of the previous election, and the overall voting power in the House is recalculated. Normally, the change would be very minor.
17. The tradition of a single Majority Leader and his/her roles would change, because no single party is likely to have a 50%+ House vote entitlement. Instead, the Speaker of the House would be elected by a majority of votes in the House (based on House vote entitlements), almost always with the support of several political parties.
18. The Speaker of the House may direct that procedures in the House be determined by a committee comprised of Leaders of political parties, and that decisions of all committees be based on a majority of House vote entitlements.

* Constitutional Summary: Article 1 Section 2 states that the House of Representatives shall be composed of Members chosen every second Year by the People of the several States, and that the number of seats is determined by census, and that states determine the manner by which Members are elected, except that while Section 4 of Article 1 grants the states the power to regulate the congressional election process, it also establishes that Congress can alter those regulations or make its own regulations. It is this section that can enable Congress to have seats set aside within selected states for it to be able to appoint Members on the basis that they have been elected by people. There is nothing in the Constitution for members of the House of Representatives that says each Member has exactly one vote in the House. Wherever the constitution specifies a majority or a specific majority of the House (yeas and nays), it can be defined in legislation as the 'House Vote Entitlement' based on proportional representation.

** Article 1. Section 2. of the U.S. Constitution indicates that the number of representatives from each state shall reflect, as accurately as possible, the relative populations of all the States. This would mean that Top-Up Representatives would be assigned to States to reflect that, and that those who are assigned will need to be residents of those States. Leaders of under-represented parties will have to select who becomes a Representative, based on those requirements.

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N.B. This page offers a survey that can help to determine how people feel about electoral reform.

A SHORT SURVEY ON ELECTORAL REFORM

Because government is intended to be By, For and Of the People, this survey asks Americans whether they would like a change in the way Congress is comprised, specifically the House of Representatives, in order to improve representation for Americans. Keeping it simple, the survey questions can be:

Do you like America's two-party political system, or do you believe that other parties should be able to have Congressional representation?

- Let's have more political parties in the House. The diversity of views and values in America is currently not fairly represented; OR
- The current two-party choice has worked for almost 250 years, and still does. Let's keep it.

Select your preference of voting system for electing Members of the House of Representatives:

- The current winner-take-all election system, where votes cast for non-winning candidates are discarded; OR
- A system in which all votes for every political party are counted nationally, and count towards voting power in the House of Representatives, even if candidates of a political party lose.

Tell us about your preference (Please choose one)**:**

- I strongly support the Republican Party.
- I support the Republican Party mostly because I don't like the Democratic Party.
- I strongly support the Democratic Party.
- I support the Democratic Party mostly because I don't like the Republican Party.
- I would like to be able to choose a different party at the ballot box.

Please tell us about yourself…
What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

In what age group are you?

- Under 25
- 25 to 49
- 50 to 64
- 65 or older
- Prefer not to say

Comparing Ranked Balloting to Simple Vote PR

Using ranked ballots for the election of Members of Congress and state legislatures has been espoused by at least two organization pressing for electoral reform in the USA. The following points compare the **Simple Vote PR** system of proportional representation (SVPR) to a ranked ballot system.

Simple Vote PR	Advantage		**Ranked Ballot System**
All candidates in district are on the ballot. Candidates are winners of party primaries or are Independents.	√	√	All candidates in district are on the ballot. Candidates are winners of party primaries or are Independents.
Voting is simple. A ballot is cast for the voter's most preferred candidate. No changes to current practice.	√		Candidates rank as many of the candidates on the ballot as they wish, in order of personal preference.
Voters do not compromise on what they truly want.	√		Voters compromise at the ballot box by accepting/selecting alternatives to what they truly want.
Voters have knowedge of the candidate or party they prefer.	√		Voters often have little knowldege of all the candidates they are ranking.
Determining the winning candidate is by simple plurality.	√		Determining the winning candidate is a complex process of elimination.
Overall voting power in the House is determined by a single national calculation.			Voting power in the House is determined by 435 separate calculations.
Votes cast for non-winning candidates count towards voting power in the House.			Votes of non-winning candidates are discarded.
Voting power in the House accurately reflects what people want. Proportional represen-tation is achieved; every vote cast counts equally towards voting power in the House.	√		Equality of votes and proportional representation are not achieved. How voters rank candidate skewes what people truly want. Achieving PR is by acident.
Representation includes multiple parties and a few 'Independents'.			Representation includes multiple parties and a few 'Independents'.
District realignments (gerrymandering) have no effect on voting power in the House, and becomes obsolete.	√		A single party in a State legislatures will often not have a majority; redistricting becomes difficult or impossible, with multiple parties having Statehouse votes.
The total national popular vote determines voting power in the House.			Voting power in the House is based on the sum of Representatives' votes.
Members of under-represented parties have more than one vote each in the House, to ensure their voting power reflects the national popular vote.	√		Each Member of the House has one vote.
Top-Up seats in the House are awarded to ensure the smallesst parties have representation and functional capability.	√		No representation is given to small parties not winning seats, even if they win millions of votes nationwide at the ballot box.
Simple Vote PR does not work for U.S. Senate elections. Membership changes as new parties win seats under curent electoral rules.		√	Ranked ballots can work for U.S. Senate elections.

Where elections are for individuals and not for a legislative body (for example, for a Mayor), Simple Vote PR does not apply.		√	Ranked balloting works well for elections for individual positions, such as a Mayor.

Visit www.makedemocracybetter.com to view the full explanation of how the Simple Vote PR electoral system works.