

Democracy's Tragedies

The Northwest has been ripped apart for 30 years by repeated reversals of environmental laws. Hasty logging in times of lax regulation lays waste to resources. Erratic limits on logging bankrupt the workers and small businesses. A **political pendulum** swings, cutting down forests and species, families and communities.

Old ways of adding up votes fail to represent large groups in many places. In North Carolina, there were enough black voters to fill two election districts. But they were a 25% minority spread over eight districts. So they won no federal representation; for over 100 years they were invisible as voters.

More stories inside . . .

What's Wrong? – after George H. Hallet Jr.

Our defective voting rules come from the failure to realize there are different types of election, which require different methods of voting. “We try to carry over to more complicated situations a method which is suitable only for deciding the simplest sort of issue; that is, whether a question with only two possible answers will be answered yes or no... For such an issue a simple majority election is, of course, sufficient.”

But as soon as three candidates run for one office, the situation becomes more complicated. Then a yes-no vote is no longer suitable.

double vote

Some Ethical Goals for Voting Rules

Elections

- Give voters **real choices** of candidates who can win, by electing **fair shares** of reps from all major groups.
- This encourages a wide variety of candidates, discussion of issues and **turnout of voters**.
- Reduce wasted votes** and thus end weak mandates. Reduce the influence of **spoilers** and gerrymanders.
- Reduce **negative ads** and polarization of voters. Reduce the payoffs from private **campaign funding**.

Legislation

- Give fair representation to all major groups, so the council will enact laws with **real majorities**.
- Elect a **central chairperson** with wide appeal to be a swing vote between the reps from interest groups.
- Reduce the chances for agenda manipulation:** Detach poison-pill and free-rider amendments.
- Give all reps equal **funds** for projects and agencies. Make each rep's spending visible to constituents.

Online pages list more benefits of each rule.
The workshop shows how they meet those goals.

half vote

half vote

single vote