

A Resolution to Support the Judicial Panel’s Implementation of Ranked Choice Voting in USG Elections

Joseph Warnimont (for himself, Kurt Shaffer, Sophie Chang, and Noah Bidna) introduced the following resolution to the Oversight Committee where it passed.

* * *

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government represents all undergraduate students at The Ohio State University, and

Whereas the Undergraduate Student Government conducts its elections via a one-person-one-vote per seat, winner-takes-all system,^{1,2} and

Whereas this system is known as first-past-the-post (FPTP)³ or plurality voting,⁴ and

Whereas over 45 countries around the world use FPTP, including federal and state elections in the United States,⁵ and

Whereas FPTP, while intuitive, is a flawed voting system that frequently results in unrepresentative election results and that, in some situations, discourages voters from casting ballots for their preferred candidate, and

Whereas, ideally, victors in an election will have won greater than 50% of the votes cast, indicating that a majority of voters approve of them, and

Whereas in single-winner elections with more than two candidates running, victory by a plurality rather than a majority is not uncommon, and

Whereas over the 50 elections held since USG was founded in 1967, 36 resulted in a winner who received less than 50% of the vote,⁶ and

Whereas of the 14 elections where the winner was voted in with a majority, two victors had been unopposed on the ballot,⁶ and

Whereas in the most extreme example, the winner of the 1991 USG election only received 24.4% of the vote,⁶ and

¹ USG Const. art. II, § A, cl. 2. “The President shall be elected annually by the undergraduate student body for a term of one year.”

² Election Bylaws of USG. art. III, § C, cl. 2.

³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-past-the-post_voting

⁴ <http://www.fairvote.org/glossary>

⁵ <http://www.idea.int/esd/type.cfm?electoralSystem=FPTP>

⁶ Presidential Election Results: Undergraduate Student Government (1967-present)

41 **Whereas** under FPTP, even if a voter supports multiple candidates' views, they may only cast a
42 single vote, and

43
44 **Whereas** an election with several candidates with similar platforms and ideas would split votes
45 among themselves, hurting any individual's chance of winning, and

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47 **Whereas** this discourages candidates with similar views from running, limiting voter choice, and

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49 **Whereas** FPTP forces voters to consider how other voters will vote ("tactical voting"),⁴ resulting
50 in votes cast for "the lesser of two evils" rather than votes cast for a voter's true favorite
51 candidate, and

52
53 **Whereas** these flaws are inherent in and inseparable from FPTP as a voting system, and

54
55 **Whereas** voting systems without these problems exist, most notably Ranked Choice Voting
56 (RCV), also known as preferential voting,⁴ and

57
58 **Whereas** in a single-seat RCV system, known as Instant Runoff Voting (IRV),⁴ voters rank their
59 choices of candidates in order of preference, ranking as many or as few candidates as they wish,⁷
60 and

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62 **Whereas** after the first round of counting votes, any candidate receiving a majority of votes wins
63 the election, and

64
65 **Whereas** a majority of votes in a single-seat RCV system is defined as 50% of voters plus one,
66 and

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68 **Whereas** if no candidate has received a majority, the last-place candidate is eliminated, and
69 votes cast for them are distributed to those voters' second choice candidates, and

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71 **Whereas** this process is repeated until any candidate has won a majority of votes or there is only
72 one valid candidate left, and

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74 **Whereas** multi-seat RCV elections, known as Single Transferable Vote (STV),⁴ have the
75 modification of requiring a different threshold for victory but overall follow the same process as
76 IRV elections,⁷ and

77
78 **Whereas** student governments at over fifty colleges around the United States use forms of RCV
79 in their elections,⁸ including at the University of Minnesota,⁹ University of Iowa,¹⁰ and
80 Northwestern University,¹¹ and

81

⁷ http://www.fairvote.org/rcv#how_rcv_works

⁸ http://www.fairvote.org/rcv_in_campus_elections

⁹ MSA Const. 3rd Amend. "The President and Vice-President shall be elected using instant runoff voting..."

¹⁰ UISG Elections Code. art. VI, § B, cl. 2. "The Presidential Election will be conducted using instant run-off voting."

¹¹ ASG Code. App. A, § 9, cl. c, cl. 2. "The Schulze method shall be used for positions with 3 or more candidates."

82 **Whereas** USG already uses runoff elections to elect officers internally,¹² and
83
84 **Whereas** the Inter-Professional Council¹³ and the Council of Graduate Students¹⁴ here at Ohio
85 State use runoff elections to elect their officers, and
86
87 **Whereas** voters in Maine chose to adopt RCV for state elections in November 2016;¹⁵
88
89 **Therefore, Let it Be Resolved** the Undergraduate Student Government General Assembly
90 strongly encourages the Judicial Panel to implement Ranked Choice Voting in USG Presidential
91 and Vice Presidential elections, in a process similar to the language attached to this resolution.
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95 Oversight Committee Vote: Passed.

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98 Floor Vote: Passed.
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103 _____
104 Gerard Basalla
105 President

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103 _____
104 Danielle Di Scala
105 Vice President

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108 Date Adopted: ____11/30/16____

Date Terminated: _____

¹² Standing Rules of the GA. art. XIV, § C, cl. h, cl. ii. “To be elected, a candidate shall receive a simple majority vote of those members of the General Assembly present.”

¹³ IPC Elections Bylaws. art. II, §B, §3, cl. d.

¹⁴ CGS Bylaws. art. II, §2, cl. H.

¹⁵ <https://www.boston.com/news/politics/2016/11/10/maine-became-the-first-state-in-the-country-to-pass-ranked-choice-voting>

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111 Example Bylaws Language for Ranked Choice Voting
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113 For the purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:
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115 "Ranked Choice Voting" means a method of casting and tabulating votes that simulates the ballot
116 counts that would occur if all voters participated in a series of runoff elections with one
117 candidate eliminated after each round of counting. In elections using the Ranked Choice Voting
118 method, voters may rank the candidates in order of preference.
119

120 "Advancing candidate" means a candidate who has not been eliminated.
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122 "Continuing ballot" means a ballot that is not an exhausted ballot.
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124 "Exhausted ballot" means a ballot on which there are no choices marked other than choices for
125 eliminated candidates.
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127 For the offices of USG President and Vice President, the ballots shall be counted by the method
128 of ranked choice voting, prescribed herein:
129

130 1. The initial round of counting shall be a count of the first choices marked on each ballot. If any
131 candidate receives a majority of the first choices, that candidate shall be declared the winner,
132 pending ratification.
133

134 2. If no candidate receives a majority of first choices, there shall be a second round of counting.
135 The last-place candidate shall be eliminated, and all the continuing ballots shall be recounted.
136 Each continuing ballot shall be counted as one vote for that ballot's highest ranked advancing
137 candidate.
138

139 3. If no candidate receives a majority at the second round of counting, there shall be a third round
140 of counting, continuing in the manner prescribed above.
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142 4. The process of eliminating the last-place candidates and recounting all the continuing ballots
143 shall continue until one candidate receives a majority of the votes in a round. The candidate who
144 receives a majority of the votes in a round shall be declared the winner, pending ratification.
145

146 5. When a ballot does not list a preference for any given round, it shall not be counted in that
147 round or any subsequent round.
148

149 6. If there are not sufficient second and lower choices for any candidate to receive a majority, the
150 candidate with the highest number of votes shall be declared the winner, pending ratification.
151

152 7. When a ballot becomes an exhausted ballot it shall not be counted in that round or any
153 subsequent round.