



The Center for
Voting and Democracy

6930 Carroll Ave., Suite 610
Takoma Park, MD 20912 – (301) 270-4616
(301) 270-4133 (fax) · info@fairvote.org

FairVote Board Chair Krist Novoselic on Democracy

I promote election reforms like choice voting not because I like explaining thresholds or transfer values. I want to see election rules that accommodate political association. People coming together provide the balance to the concentration of power by big money interests. And things are quite out of whack these days. To restore a balance we need ballots and ways of counting them that are more sophisticated

The 21st Century is about communication. The convergence of technology and our democracy makes space for more voices. As voters try to make the jump from digital democracy to our 18th century electoral system, they should see the gap. Proportional voting is here to accommodate the movement towards real choices and new voices.

- [Dawning Digital Democracy](#), August 2011

Longer term, it's time to look past partisanship and toward proven solutions for giving voters the power in every election to determine their own representation no matter who has drawn the lines. Several American cities use systems of "shared representation."

For example, if there are five seats on a city council, 20% of voters can come together to elect one of the five seats. A 51% majority of voters will elect a majority of seats, but not all of them, thereby creating room at the table for new voices. At the state level, we could have a fewer number of larger districts, each with three or four legislators who collectively speak for the majority and minority of constituents.

There are longstanding, constitutionally protected ways of holding these alternative voting elections. Illinois in fact had just such a system from 1870 to 1980. With cumulative voting with three legislators per district, nearly every voter in the state had both Democrats and Republicans representing them.

As the two major parties had constituents in every corner of the state, representatives had more incentive to work across party lines, and independents and third parties had more ability to hold the major parties accountable. A 2000 commission led by former Democratic Rep. Abner Mikva and former Republican Gov. Jim Edgar, both of Illinois, found that loss of the system increased partisanship and reduced voter choice.

As Thomas Jefferson said, we need "Equal rights for all but special privileges for none." Gerry-mandering gives electoral privileges to a few, and in ways that are hidden from view. Let's open the window on redistricting in 2011 - and then explore how best to give voters real power over their representation.

- [Milwaukee Journal Sentinel](#), July 2011,
["Redistricting need not be political blood sport"](#)

Voters may be hostile towards incumbents, but there's also a weariness with our political system itself, especially the negative campaigning that's fueled by record-breaking amounts of special interest money. People may be fed up with lawmakers but they're still looking for leadership. In their search for answers, many are not only listening to celebrity commentators - they're literally flocking to them. But is it politics or merely entertainment? Was Jon Stewart's Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear a live comedy show or an actual political rally? And the same can be asked of Glenn Beck's Restoring Honor event last August - was it a rally or a TV host in front of an outdoor audience?

I think both events were showbiz but we can't discount that those attending are looking for something new to belong to... The United States is supposed to have a two party system to represent this dichotomy, but the major parties were not featured at the rallies....

[Moving forward], a key ingredient is ballot laws to accommodate the new forms of participation. States need to change election rules to use majority and /or proportional voting systems. Our current system is built for two - and even under current levels of new association, it is starting to fail and deliver undemocratic outcomes.

Both Stewart and Beck are not endorsing any new kind of political association. But if either did get behind an effort, judging by their successful rallies, they could make an impact... I'm sure the folks had a good time at the respective rallies. But now that they've gone home, don't forget that there's still a hunger to be fed - the desire for a new kind of politics that's inviting and not alienating. Those who can find a way to meet that need through harnessing the power of social networking will own the new politic

- [Next Step Beyond Honor and Sanity?](#) Nov. 2010

FairVote Board of Directors: Krist Novoselic (Chair) ○ Edward Hailes (Vice-Chair)

John B. Anderson ○ Katie Ghose ○ Hendrik Hertzberg ○ Malia Lazu

Pete Martineau ○ William Redpath ○ Cynthia Terrell ○ David Wilner