Dear Members of the League of Women Voters of the District of Columbia,

Members who participated in our November educational meetings on DC Electoral processes participated in lively discussions that no doubt will continue at the second round of three meetings in January. That’s when Leaguers will decide what, if any, positions LWVDC wants to take on: 1) plurality versus majority election systems, 2) Instant Runoffs or Subsequent Election runoffs, and 3) open versus closed primary elections.

The League develops its positions by “consensus,” which, for electoral processes, will be based on discussions at the January meetings. Study leaders will present the conclusions to the Board for adoption.

For those of you who may have to miss the consensus meetings, remember your views are important, we are still interested in your views on the subjects we will discuss in person. This is not a “vote” but your input can help us gauge the strength of consensus. Our positions are much stronger if we can say that a high percentage of our members participated in the development of our position. If you cannot attend any of the January meetings, please send your response and other any other guidance you may have to Abigail Nichols either at 1325 18th St., NW, Apt. 803, Washington, DC 20036 or to abigail_nichols@hotmail.com. We need to hear from you by January 24th, 2015.

January Consensus Meetings

**Thursday, January 15th at 7:15 pm near Tenley Metro.**
On street parking is available. Please contact Kathryn Ray at 202-244-0770 or kcrdlb@gmail.com to RSVP and get directions.

**Saturday, January 17th at 9:45 am in upper Northwest.**
On street parking is available. Location is not metro accessible. Please contact Marie Richardson at 202-829-3721 or lwvdc1920@gmail.com to RSVP and get directions.

**Wednesday, January, 21st at 10 am near Dupont Metro.**
Parking is available. Please contact Abigail Nichols at 202-331-9757 or abigail_nichols@hotmail.com to RSVP and get directions.

Please bring your copy of the Consensus Questions and the Study Guide to the Discussion Meeting of your choice.
**Consensus Questions**

**Plurality or Majority Vote Requirement to Win an Election?**

**Background**

To win an election in the District currently, a candidate need win only 1 vote more than any other candidate. In many primaries and general elections there are multiple candidates for a given office. Consequently, candidates frequently win primaries or office with well under 50%, and sometimes the winner has only 20-30% of the vote. This fact combined with the low turnout for DC elections means that only a small percentage of citizens participate in electing officials. On the other hand, most jurisdictions that require a majority vote often find they need a run-off process of some sort.

1. LWV, District of Columbia should take a position on plurality or majority vote requirements to win an election in the District.
   - Yes
   - No

2. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should continue its plurality system of determining the outcome of primaries and general elections.
   - Yes
   - No

3. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should establish a specified plurality (such as 40% or 45%) as a requirement to win an election.
   - Yes
   - No

4. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should change the requirements so that a majority vote is required to win an election.
   - Yes
   - No

**Instant Runoff or Subsequent Separate Election?**

**Background**

When jurisdictions require a majority to win an election, there often is no clear winner in the first round. Majorities can then be achieved through either an instant runoff, otherwise known as ranked choice voting, or a subsequent second or runoff election. Although ranked choice voting is a new idea to many, cities such as San Francisco, Oakland, and Minneapolis are very satisfied with this system. Advocates point to advantages that include assuring a true majority, avoiding the costs of a second election, and ensuring early outcomes. They note that having a second election contributes to voter fatigue.
and increased costs for the candidates and the jurisdiction. Opponents of ranked choice voting note that a second or runoff election gives voters an opportunity to reflect on their choices and candidates the opportunity to clarify their positions. They also point to the need to provide more voter education for ranked choice voting.

1. If the League adopts a position supporting majority requirements, should the League then adopt a position choosing between instant runoffs and subsequent runoff elections?
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

2. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should adopt ranked choice voting (instant runoff) to determine an election winner if the first round of voting does not result in a majority.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

3. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should use second round separate runoff elections to determine an election winner if the first round of voting does not result in a majority.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

4. If the League determines that the plurality requirement for winning a DC election should stand, Ranked Choice Voting could still be an option. LWV, District of Columbia believes that the District should adopt Ranked Choice Voting for primaries and general elections.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

**Closed or Open Primaries?**

**Background**

Basically, there are 3 options for primaries. In a “closed primary” (current DC practice), a voter can cast a ballot only for the political party with which they are affiliated. In an “open primary,” a voter may select the party ballot they wish to vote for without affiliating with the party. In a “top two or top four primary,” voters receive ballots with all candidates for office, and they may vote for whomever they wish without regard to party preference. Subsequently, in a “top two” primary, the two candidates getting the most votes are on the ballot for the general election. Some have proposed that this type of primary would be more effective and representative if it were a “top four primary.” Independents constitute about 17% of the District’s registered voters, and they get no vote in the current process.

1. LWV, District of Columbia should take a position on open or closed primaries.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No

2. LWV, District of Columbia should support the current practice of closed primaries.
   - [ ] Yes
   - [ ] No
3. LWV, District of Columbia should support adoption of open primaries.
   - Yes
   - No

4. LWV, District of Columbia should support adoption of top 2 or top 4 primaries.
   - Yes
   - No

5. LWV, District of Columbia believes that changing the primary structure would increase voter participation.
   - Yes
   - No

Future Studies on the Elections Process?

Current League of Women Voters, DC positions include the following:

- Support for the initiative process, proving ample time for voter information and voter education, provided they are confined to even-year elections. (Adopted 1985)
- Support for voting by mail in specific circumstances. (Adopted 1985)
- Requirements for the Board of Elections and Ethics to maintain an up-to-date list of registered voters. (Adopted 1985)
- Support for public financing of local election campaigns. (Adopted 1974)

Do you think the League of Women Voters, DC should study other aspects of election processes with the hope of reaching consensus?

- Yes
- No

What would you propose we study about the election process?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

Study materials


For more information


Consensus Questions

We will structure our consensus meeting around the questions found on the following pages.