

An Open Letter from the Georgia Green Party to The Honorable Roy Barnes, Governor of Georgia

We write with great enthusiasm for an opportunity to work with you on a matter of great significance to the health of Democracy which the People may -- with your help, enjoy for the coming decade. We understand that it has not been often that we have found ourselves with an opportunity to work together -- Greens and Democrats on the same issues.

We write to urge you to supplement your Call to the Georgia General Assembly to explicitly authorize this Special Session to consider systems of proportional representation. And we hope that we might be able to work with your office and this Assembly to craft a constitutional resolution to the opportunity before us. But first we must distinguish our position from the House map now heading on your desk.

As the Georgia Green Party, we say:

YES to Multi-Member Districts, But NO to Single Member Posts.

Georgia Greens are excited to hear of your advocacy in this reapportionment process for multi-member districts. Though, we must caution you and this Assembly that the Green Party considers the House map constitutionally flawed where it creates multi-member districts with single member posts, particularly in combination with single member districts. But it doesn't have to be that way. Multi-member districts are a necessary component of proportional representation, election systems which our Party has long used for internal elections and advocated for public ones. We'd like to take this opportunity to urge the Assembly to adopt PR, as well.

Use of PR by Georgia for General Assembly elections would require only a legislative act for House races, but a constitutional amendment for Senate races.

Proportional representation and instant run-off are about voters preferences and are as easy as ranking the candidates 1-2-3 Proportional Representation resolves elections without the added public expense of run-offs, depressed turn-out and additional fundraising demands.

Last session, Secretary Cox initiated, the Assembly passed and you signed a bill to authorize the equipment upgrades, now practically mandated by the *Bush v Gore* decision of the Rehnquist (?) Court. The only thing more required to craft this constitutional solution of which we speak is (1) voter education and (2) you, 91 and 29 Members.

Kerrie Dickson

Badili Jones

The Reapportionment process has traditionally been about incumbent public officials choosing their voters before their voters have an opportunity to choose them. You have an opportunity to do this in a way that advances the cause of democracy and meaningful participation. If you will lead the way, we will be happy to work with you.

But first allow us to point out that proportional representation is:

in the interest of the majority party

Use of PR by Georgia in the 2000 Presidential election would have changed the result, including the occupant of the White House. Although, the Republican ticket received 55% of the Georgia vote, they received 100% or 13 of 13 possible Presidential Electors. Had those electors been allocated proportionately - had 6 Georgia electors been named to support the ticket preferred by 43% of Georgia and a plurality of US voters - it would be a Gore-Lieberman, not Bush-Cheney administration in D.C. right now.

in the interest of the minority party

If the numbers hold out with higher voter turn-out in Republican districts, the Republican caucus could soon name a Speaker.

Of course if their vote mattered in deciding the outcomes of races, as they will with proportional representation, many voters who currently sit out elections can be expected to participate. While our turnout rate rarely crests above 50%, nations and states which use proportional representation enjoy voter turnout numbers of 70 to 90%.

in the interest of the independent parties

An independent political party which can garner sufficient support in a multi-member district to top the "winning threshold" can gain a seat in a deliberative body. A "winning threshold" is explained further in the sample election on the reverse.

in the interest of the people

Proportional Representation eliminates the wasted vote syndrome (caused by *packed* districts and winner take all rules), the spoiler effect (witness the impact of Nader's 97,000 Florida votes on the systems' ability to deliver the Presidency to the plurality slate) and other "my vote doesn't matter anyway" excuses which depress voter turn-out. PR gives the other half of registered voters a reason to come to the polls. And isn't it the People of Georgia who we are supposed to serve in this process, anyway?

Co-Chairs, Georgia Green Party

How it works:

There are many forms of PR. This is just a small example using one form called Choice Voting. You may find that with your own small sample size elections, that ties occur that would be best resolved by coin flips. With larger samples, this possibility disappears.

Let's elect some ice cream. Shall we select one half gallon of ice cream or three quarts? Which flavors do we want?

When nominations are closed, six flavors have qualified. Voters now rank as many candidates as they want, starting with #1 for most preferred, etc. When the votes are tabulated, they look like Table 1, to your right.

A winning threshold is calculated and the first preference votes are tabulated. In Choice Voting, a Winning Threshold is calculated as:

The Winning Threshold is equal to (the number of votes cast + 1) divided by (the number of seats to be filled + 1).

That is to say:

If we are to buy one half gallon, the Winning Threshold would be six votes.

If we are to buy three quarts of ice cream, the Winning Threshold would be three votes.

Any candidate supported by a winning threshold or more of voters is declared a winner and excess votes are transferred to next preference candidates at fractional values. Any additional winners are declared and their surpluses transferred. Then the candidate with the lowest number of votes is declared defeated, and those votes cast for them are transferred at full value to the next most preferred candidates, until all the seats are filled.

If we were choosing one winner as we do in Senate races where the Georgia constitution mandates single member districts, the tabulation would continue until some candidate, in this case, Your Favorite Flavor, has won a majority of the un-exhausted ballots. If we were to use instead a multi-member district with proportional representation, and let that district name its three favorite flavors, the winners would be Your Favorite Flavor, Peach Shertbet and Rocky Road.

Tabulation for One Winner - -

Round #1:

The winning Threshold is calculated to be six votes. In this small example, Vanilla garnered no First Preference Votes and is declared defeated.

Round #2:

Next, Butter Pecan is declared defeated and

its one vote is transferred at full value to support the next most preferred candidate indicated on that ballot, or Rocky Road, in this sample.

Round #3:

Your Favorite Flavor, Rocky Road and Peach Sherbet are tied, although they each lack three votes of a simple majority. Chocolate is declared defeated next, and its two ballots are transferred at full weight.

Table 1: Demonstration of Choice Voting

Voter#	YourFavorite	Chocolate	ButterPecan	Vanilla	RockyRoad	PeachSherbert
1	1	3	2	4	6	5
2	2	3	4	5	6	1
3	3	4	5	6	1	2
4	4	5	6	2	1	3
5	5	6	1	2	3	4
6	6	1	2	3	4	5
7	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	6	5	4	3	2	1
9	2	1	4	3	6	5
10	1	3	5	6	4	2
11	2	4	6	5	3	1
	3	2	1	0	2	3

Round #4:

Your Favorite Flavor and Rocky Road are now tied, with four votes each. Peach Sherbet is now declared defeated, and its ballots are re-distributed.

Round #5:

When the ballots are re-tabulated, Your Favorite Flavor has garnered six votes, sufficient to win and Rocky Road is defeated.

Tabulation for Three Winners - -

Round #1:

The winning Threshold is calculated to be three votes. Your Favorite Flavor and Peach Sherbet have garnered the support of a winning threshold of ballots and are declared elected. In this small example, Vanilla garnered no First Preference Votes and is declared defeated. There is only one of the three seats left to fill.

Round #2:

Next, Butter Pecan is declared defeated and its one vote is transferred at full value to support the next most preferred candidate indicated on that ballot, or Rocky Road. Rocky Road has now won three votes and is also declared elected. With all three seats filled, the election is over and the remaining candidate is defeated.

A number of voters equal to the number of seats times the winning threshold helped elect candidates of choice. Only the few votes remaining did not actually help elect someone.

Want to learn more about Choice Voting and other forms of Proportional Representation? Link to the Center for Voting and Democracy at: <http://www.fairvote.org/> or please ask our Green Party Legislative Advocates at the Capitol. We're eager to help democratize Georgia's elections.