

ADVANCE OF DEMOCRACY OR DESTABILIZING IDEA?

ADVANCE OF DEMOCRACY

ADVOCATE: Theodore S. Arrington, Professor, Department of Political Science, University of North Carolina at Charlotte

SOURCE: Testimony during hearings on “H.R. 1173/States’ Choice of Voting Systems Act” before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on the Constitution, September 23, 1999

DESTABILIZING IDEA

ADVOCATE: Abigail Thernstrom, Senior Fellow, Manhattan Institute

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While in Wonderland, Alice from *Through the Looking Glass* by Lewis Carol met two porcine twins, Tweedledum and Tweedledee. The two perpetually squabbled, but seemed little different and made little sense. As Carol described the encounter:

“I know what you’re thinking about,” said Tweedledum [to Alice]; “but it isn’t so, no how.”

“Contrariwise,” continued Tweedledee, “if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn’t, it ain’t. That’s logic.”

“I was thinking,” Alice said politely, “which is the best way out of this wood: it’s getting so dark. Would you tell me, please?”

But the fat little men only looked at each other and grinned [having no idea of the way].

Some critics charge that the Democrats and Republicans are akin to Lewis Carol’s duo: looking much alike, arguing incessantly, and having no clue how to get out of the woods. Research shows that such charges are at least partly unfair. For example, a majority of the members of the two parties are usually on opposite sides of controversial votes in Congress.

Still, despite their differences, the Republicans and Democrats are both centrist parties. The two parties may differ on matters such as corporate taxation, but Democrats are not Socialists, and Republicans do not argue for dropping the corporate tax rate to zero. Instead, the two parties disagree within a narrow range of options.

Why does the United States have a two-party system, when some other countries have multiparty systems? For example, 12 parties are represented in Denmark’s Folketing, 38 in India’s Lok Sabha, 19 in Brazil’s Câmara dos Deputados, and 13 in the National Assembly of South Africa. Understanding why there is a U.S. two-party system requires an understanding of the impact of the U.S. single-member district system. Single-member district means that seats in legislative chambers are divided geographically with one representative holding the seat for each geographic area. Thus if your state has 10 seats in the House of Representatives, the state is divided into 10 congressional districts.

To see why this process promotes a two-party system, consider the following hypothetical scenario. Your state has ten seats in the House, divided into ten districts. In each,

four parties run candidates: the Democrats, Republicans, Monarchists, and Socialists. In seven districts the Democrats get 40% of the vote, the Republicans 30%, the Monarchists 20%, and the Socialists 10%. In the other three districts, the Republicans get 40%, the Democrats 30%, the Monarchists 20%, and the Socialists 10%. Statewide, this gives the Democrats 37% of the cumulative vote, the Republicans 33%, the Monarchists 20% and the Socialists 10%. Yet the congressional representation would be 7 Democrats, 3 Republicans, and zero Monarchists or Socialists. The 30% of the electorate who voted Socialist or Monarchist received no voice in Congress.

An alternative system uses proportional representation. There are many ways to set it up, but here let us consider a simple model. Under it, your state's ten seats would all be decided in a single statewide vote. Each of our four parties would list ten candidates, and the voters would cast their vote for one of the lists, not for individual candidates. Given our above vote, the state's delegation would be 4 Democrats, 3 Republicans, 2 Monarchists, and 1 Socialist. The parties would decide who on the lists would serve. This approach encourages a multi-party system because minor parties are rewarded with legislative seats and survive.

It is important to note that the single-member district, plurality election system is not the only factor promoting a two-party system. Some analysts believe that having a strong presidency with a fixed term also does that because it focuses politics on building a centrist electoral coalition large enough to capture that office. By contrast, many countries with a proportional representation system have a parliamentary system in which the majority party or majority coalition of parties in the parliament selects the prime minister. That official only serves as long as he or she has the support ("confidence") of a majority of the members. If the prime minister loses that support, then the government "falls" and new parliamentary elections are held.

Yet another possible cause of the two-party system is the generally non-ideological orientation of Americans. When a 2002 survey asked Americans to ideologically categorize themselves from extremely liberal through middle of the road to extremely conservative, only 38% had a distinct ideological orientation (the 6% who saw themselves as extremely liberal or conservative and the 32% who identified as liberal or conservative). By contrast, 62% were not ideological or barely so (the 19% who responded slightly liberal or conservative, the 22% who said middle of the road, and 21% had not thought about themselves ideologically enough to answer). What is unclear is whether Americans cluster around the center because that is their fundamental orientation or do so because they seldom have any dramatically different choices presented to them. Certainly there are minor parties, but they have so little chance of success and are so generally ignored by the media that their message is muted. Furthermore, it is not uncommon to hear people say that they would not "waste" their vote by casting it for a minor party candidate. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in a circular cause-and-effect cycle that keeps minor parties on the periphery of American politics.

POINTS TO PONDER

- How do the two advocates differ on what adoption of a proportional representation system would mean for the representation of minority groups?
- What are the variations on a proportional representation system that Theodore S. Arrington presents?
- Consider that while the two advocates focus on the effect of proportional representation on racial minorities, the system might have an impact on the representation of any group that is underrepresented in comparison to its percentage of the population.

Proportional Representation: Advance of Democracy

THEODORE S. ARRINGTON

My concern as a political scientist, expert witness, and political activist has always been to further the process of representative government. I ask: what can we do which will make the system more effective and accurate in translating votes into seats on governmental bodies? I certainly want the majority to rule, but I believe that minorities are entitled to a seat at the table, a voice in the legislature. When I say “minorities” here I am not necessarily referring to racial or language minorities which are protected by the Voting Rights Act [of 1965]. The minority that needs representation in any particular state or region on any particular governing body may be a partisan, religious, ideological, ethnic, or some other kind of minority. I believe in a full and fair representation for everybody. And when I speak of “representation” I mean simply that voters have somebody they would choose speaking for them in government bodies.

PROBLEMS WITH SINGLE-MEMBER DISTRICTS

One might ask, “Where’s the beef?” The single-member district system has served our country well for over two hundred years. In many cases it continues to provide full and fair representation for the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislatures, and many local units of government. I would be the first to argue against wholesale changes in our methods of election, but the demands of the current era may be different from the demands of the past. Specifically I believe that two changes have made single-member districts less effective in providing full representation.

First, there seems to be increasing diversity of race and ethnicity, life style, living conditions, religion, ideology, language, and values in America. This change may be a product of immigration or perhaps increasing diversity in the media. Second, these diverse groups are often not concentrated geographically. Where once people could be said to identify their interests by where they lived, this is increasingly uncommon. Especially in our urban areas, people with very different values and concerns may be living near each other. Although people may group themselves into neighborhoods based on shared concerns and values, only in the very largest cities can such neighborhoods become most of a congressional district. In most urban areas many neighborhoods must be combined to form a district. Thus the concerns of minorities may be sublimated or submerged.

Single-member districts work well to represent minorities when they are large enough and geographically concentrated enough to win at least one district. But minorities that are geographically dispersed may not be able to win any district in a state and may therefore never be able to elect a candidate of their choice even when they are numerous and cohesive in their voting.

Recent changes in court rulings on the Voting Rights Act illustrate this point. In the original *Gingles* case [*Gingles v. Edmisten*, a 1984 U.S. District Court case involving redistricting in North Carolina], which defined the application of the Voting Rights Act, the court gave three “prongs” which must be proven to show that an at-large election system is in violation of the

Voting Rights Act. One of these was that the protected minority must be large enough and geographically concentrated enough to form a majority in a single-member district. “Geographically concentrated” was not defined. Initially this was taken to mean that any geographically contiguous area could be a district. Since then, however, the *Shaw* case (also litigation from North Carolina), and its progeny have further refined what “geographically concentrated” means. In doing so, the courts have declared a number of Congressional districts which were designed to provide representation for racial minorities to be unconstitutional.

The practical effect of *Shaw* [*Shaw v. Reno* (1993), in which the U.S. Supreme Court rejected creating districts based on race to promote the election of minority representatives] is to make it impossible in many states to provide representation for racial minorities through the drawing of single-member districts. In New York City or Atlanta there are enough African-Americans concentrated in one area to form one or more Congressional districts in which they could choose their representative. In North Carolina, to take a contrary example, this is not the case except perhaps in the northeastern portion of the state. In the Piedmont area of North Carolina there are more than enough blacks to form a majority in a congressional district, but they are dispersed across several geographically distinct urban areas.

I wish to emphasize here that I am only using the example of racial minorities because the Committee members will be familiar with the developments in this area. What is true of racial and language minorities is also true of other kinds of minorities as well.

A second problem is that the single-member district system forces us to choose between representation and competition. Whenever someone complains about the

lack of competition in congressional elections, I remind them that we are electing a House of *Representatives* not a House of *Competitors*. Nevertheless, competition for office is an important value, and the lack of competition for congressional office should be a concern for all of us. If one draws a set of districts in such a fashion as to form districts that are relatively homogeneous, one will provide for a good deal of representation. The representative will be able to know the interests of his or her constituents to a high degree, and to vote in accord with their desires. But such districts will naturally be noncompetitive especially in a partisan sense. Competition within the primary rarely if ever provides a substitute for vigorous two-party contests. On the other hand, if one draws districts to maximize competition, there will necessarily be a very large minority in each district which feels alienated from the system having voted for candidates who consistently lose. Each district would be diverse and it will be impossible for one representative to satisfy more than a large fraction of his or her constituents in voting on controversial issues. The congressman might, however, serve almost all of them in terms of constituency service, providing information, etc.

A third problem with the single-member district system is that the drawing of districts has such a drastic impact on the process of translating votes into seats that the practice of gerrymandering [manipulating the boundaries of districts to favor a political party or candidate] has become more of a threat. It has become accurate to say that it is the legislators who choose the voters rather than the voters who choose the legislators. Of course, state legislatures draw congressional districts, but the point is still valid as congressmen have friends and allies in the state legislature and exert much influence there. The art of gerrymandering has been greatly aided by the rapid devel-

opment of geographic information systems which allow anybody to draw many alternative districting schemes in a short period of time. I define gerrymandering in the traditional way as being an effort to draw the districts in such a fashion as to misrepresent. That is, to distort the process of translating votes into seats so that some group will receive more seats than their votes would entitle them to while some other group would receive less. Gerrymandered districts might not be oddly shaped.

A related problem with single-member districts is that one may be forced to decide which kind of minority one wants to represent. Drawing the districts one way may provide fair representation for urban and rural interests, but provide an unfair partisan balance. Drawing the districts another way makes the partisan divide fair, but might result in having all districts dominated by urban interests. Drawing a set of districts which represent a diversity of cross-cutting interests may be impossible. In other words, the district drawer has to decide what kinds of interests deserve representation and which ones do not. Again, the politicians choose the voters instead of the voters choosing the politicians.

Some individuals argue that one should draw districts without regard to any interests—use natural boundaries and be as compact as possible. But as Justice White once observed, this can result in districts which are egregious gerrymanders or obviously unfair. He called it a “politically mindless approach.” Geography is not destiny...at least not any longer in our urban and suburban nation.

MULTI-MEMBER DISTRICTS

Although there are no multi-member congressional districts, various forms of proportional or semi-proportional election systems are in use in local governments throughout America. Such systems are also

in wide—indeed, almost universal—use throughout the world. From the examples of these systems in the U.S., I conclude that semi-proportional systems can provide a remedy for some of the problems noted above.

First, semi-proportional systems provide a method of representing minorities that are numerous enough to elect a representative but too dispersed geographically to form a majority in a single-member district. This is a remedy for the “*Shaw* problem.” But it is applicable to much more than providing representation for racial or language minorities. There are many examples of partisan or other minorities in regions of some states that lack representation. In general, we would expect that multi-member districts with semi-proportional systems should provide a more accurate and efficient method of translating votes into seats. Diversity in representation could be enhanced by multi-member districts and semi-proportional voting systems.

Second, multi-member districts with semi-proportional voting systems allow us to combine *both* representation and competition. It is possible for a far larger majority of the voters to feel that they supported someone who represents them. Yet competition is also increased. Contrary to the myths that many Americans—including some Supreme Court Justices—have about semi-proportional systems, they are not characterized by “immobilization.” Rather, such systems are more likely to have vigorous competition than single-member districts.

Third, multi-member districts are less subject to gerrymandering than single-member districts, although the problem does not go away completely. Semi-proportional voting systems are “open” in the sense that the voters decide how to group themselves politically in terms of the candidates they support. Voters may decide that they are Republicans, or farmers, or Presbyterians

when they vote and combine their votes with others of a like mind.

SEMI-PROPORTIONAL ELECTION SYSTEMS

I am sure that the Committee members have an intuitive grasp of what a multi-member district would be like, but may not have an idea of semi-proportional election systems. Proportional methods of election, such as the “single transferable vote” system have their advocates, and I hope some of them testify today. But I think the American system of government would be better served with two the semi-proportional systems that I have studied. I favor these systems for two reasons. First, because they do not require the voter to do anything unusual, allowing a ballot layout which is simple, straight-forward, and familiar to the voter. And, second, existing voting equipment can be programmed to count the votes with these methods easily and cheaply.

The first of these methods is called “limited voting.” Suppose a state were divided up into triple-member districts. North Carolina, for example, could easily be divided into four three-member districts. Suppose further that each voter could only vote for two people. This would provide minority representation in each district. This method of election is used by a wide variety of local governments, concentrated in North Carolina and Alabama.

The second method is called “equal allocation cumulative voting.” Suppose again that the state is divided into triple-member districts. Each voter has three votes. But if the voter should vote for only two people, each would receive 1.5 votes. If the voter found only one candidate worthy of his or her vote, that candidate would receive three votes. This method was used in Illinois for the lower house of the state legislature until relatively recently, and is used in one form or another in various local elections in the south, espe-

cially in Texas. I prefer “equal allocation” cumulative voting to systems which require the voter to allocate the votes two for this one and one for that one. Few voters evidently take advantage of this flexibility, and it greatly complicates the layout of the ballot. I prefer systems which allow voters to do exactly what they already are accustomed to doing: vote for a candidate or don't.

Evidence from systematic scientific studies of these voting systems in use in the U.S. show that voters understand how these systems work. These systems provide meaningful minority representation, while still allowing majorities to form and be elected. Competition is increased as well.

In some countries proportional representation systems produce too much diversity in the legislature with very small minorities controlling policy. This is a problem in Israel, for example. But if the multi-member congressional districts are held to three- or four- or even five-member districts, this problem is avoided. To win a seat in a three-member district a minority must be of substantial size and vote cohesively. Very small minorities will not be systematically represented.

Nor am I concerned that multi-member districts and semi-proportional systems will harm our two-party system. The reasons why we have a two-party system and other countries have many parties are not completely understood. In any case, the single-member district system has not produced a two-party system in Canada or Great Britain, and is probably not the major factor in producing our unique party system. My own view is that the election of presidential electors by plurality vote within each state is the glue which holds our two-party system together along with tradition and various provisions of state law.

STATES RIGHTS

I am well aware of some of the reasons for the congressional mandate that states use

single-member districts. In the early 1960s I was living in New Mexico. At that time the state had two democratic congressmen, both elected at-large. It was common knowledge that this was a form of a gerrymander. It was thought that if the state were districted into two, the district with Albuquerque would elect a Republican. Indeed, when the state acquired a third congressional seat and was districted, the Republicans won two of the three seats, and have held at least two since.

However, such abuses can be prevented without restricting the states from experimenting with multi-member districts *with proportional or semi-proportional voting methods*. I recommend that state legislatures

be required to use proportional or semi-proportional voting systems if they choose to use multi-member districts.

I would oppose requiring states to use multi-member districts or any particular form of voting. Our states are the great laboratories for reform. This is one of the most important features of our federal structure. The Congress should free the state legislatures to experiment with these proportional or semi-proportional systems. If the experiment proves successful, other states will follow. If the experiment is not successful it will be abandoned. I recommend that we allow states the right to use a variety of methods to choose congressmen. No more than this is needed, no more is wise at this time.

Proportional Representation: Destabilizing Idea

ABIGAIL THERNSTROM

Here are my thoughts on the proposal to allow states to use districting systems other than single-member districts to elect representatives to Congress.

The current system works well. If it ain't broke, don't fix it.

[Advocates of proportional representation] argue, of course, that repair is, in fact, needed—that states should not be forced to elect members of Congress exclusively from single-member districts. The process of congressional redistricting involves many disruptions and much uncertainty, they argue. But where political interests are at stake, that is inevitable. They point to the costs of litigation, but those costs have been the consequence of attempts to draw ludicrously gerrymandered districts in an effort to create a maximum number of safe black seats. That expense, in other words, was a self-inflicted wound. Now that such race-driven redistricting has been ruled unconstitutional, the legal expenses associated with line-drawing should go down.

Advocates of proportional representation] also suggest that increased racial polarization is the price America pays for single-member districts. The attempt to draw such districts in such a manner as to give minority voters a *chance* to elect the “representatives of their choice...has heightened racial divisions.” This is a difficult argument to understand. The Supreme Court [in *Reno v. Shaw*, 1993] forced North Carolina to redraw Congressman [Mel] Watt's district, and its black population dropped from 57 percent to 36 percent. With a majority-white constituency, Mr. Watt was compelled to forge a biracial coalition. Such coalitions

do not increase racial polarization; they reduce it. Any system of elections that encourages biracial or multiethnic coalitions is a plus. America is still too racially divided; every device that brings us together should receive a very warm welcome.

In addition, the black voters in the first and twelfth districts of North Carolina have not been deprived of a “*chance*” to elect the representatives of their choice. Indeed, the only time black voters have *no chance* to elect the representatives of their choice (who may be white, of course) is when whites are a majority and refuse to support anyone who can pick up black votes. In an earlier era, there were such settings. But America has changed—as is so well illustrated by the victories of Mr. Watt and Ms. [Eva] Clayton [elected in 1992 as the first black members of Congress from North Carolina in a century]. In 1998, in his 36 percent black district, Mr. Watt won with 56 percent of the vote. Sixty-two percent of the voters cast their ballots for Ms. Clayton in her 50 percent white district. They will undoubtedly argue that they had an enormous advantage as incumbents, but they were not incumbents in the newly-drawn districts in which they had to run.

Doors are wide open to black candidates today; everyone knows Colin Powell would have had massive white support had he chosen to run for the presidency. In 1999 our problem is not bigoted white voters (a relatively small minority), but a paucity of black candidates willing to test the biracial electoral waters. If Mr. Watt and Ms. Clayton are serious about wanting to narrow the racial divide, they should

encourage other potential African American candidates to build biracial or multiethnic coalitions in settings that are not safely majority-black.

Increasingly, that will become essential. Black voters are becoming more residentially dispersed. Over 30 percent now live in suburbia; segregation is down in central cities as well—contrary to conventional wisdom. The proposed legislation would undercut the incentives currently built into the single-member system to form such biracial and multiethnic coalitions—incentives that will grow stronger as black voters become less residentially concentrated.

With demographic change, Mr. Watt and Ms. Clayton may worry that safe black seats—majority black constituencies—will be harder to create. And they may believe that multimember districts will better allow the perpetuation of racial gerrymandering to maximize black officeholding. Indeed, race-conscious line drawing is not confined to single-member districts; racial considerations can play a dominant role in setting the contours of, say, the three multimember districts that a particular state might contain. But such gerrymandering is not in the interest of either white or black voters.

In a series of recent voting rights decisions that was precisely the Supreme Court's point. Such gerrymandering is not in the public interest. As Justice [Sandra Day] O'Connor put it in *Shaw v. Reno*, contours obviously drawn with race in mind suggest racial stereotyping. They reinforce "the perception that members of the same racial group—regardless of their age, education, economic status, or the community in which they live—think alike, share the same political interests, and will prefer the same candidates at the polls." In other words, individuals—not races—differ. Assume otherwise, O'Connor suggested, and racial lines are likely to harden.

Such racial gerrymandering is not in the public interest, but if the voting rights section of the U.S. Department of Justice continues to believe that the Voting Rights Act is an instrument with which to maximize black officeholding (reflecting the conventional wisdom in the civil rights community), then race-conscious multimember districting will most likely be transformed from a mere option—as advertised—to a full-blown entitlement on the theory that anything less would "dilute" the black vote. And thus single-member districts won't even be a choice in those states in which multimember districting is advantageous to black congressional candidates.

Suppose the consequence of leaving the current system unchanged is a disproportionately low number of blacks and Hispanics in Congress. That is, suppose the black membership in Congress does not reflect precisely the black proportion of the U.S. population. (Indeed, as long as almost all African American members of Congress are Democrats, the black proportion will reflect Democratic Party strength rather than the black presence in the American population as a whole.) Is there something wrong with black underrepresentation by the measure of proportionality?

To begin with, answering, yes, assumes that only black officeholders can represent black interests. And yet would anyone argue that only whites can represent white interests? Such an assertion would correctly be viewed as racist.

In addition, the purpose of an electoral system is not to mirror the population precisely, but to produce officials who can govern. The current system not only creates incentives for reaching across racial and ethnic lines during campaigns, but also forces compromise among various political factions. From multimember districts, the next step will be to cumulative voting, which will encourage a multiplicity of parties,

some of which will be racially defined. There will be a David Duke party [Duke is a segregationist leader and former Grand Wizard of the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan] and a black nationalist party, and blacks and whites will both be the losers. In order to govern, representatives from a variety of warring parties will have to create shifting coalitions, but such temporary post-election alliances will inject instability into a system that now works well.

Congress banned at-large elections for congressional seats in 1967, but the preference for single-member districts actually stretches back much further. Moreover, at the state level there has been a dramatic decline in the use of multimember seats, largely as a consequence of actual or threatened civil rights litigation. (In 1962, 41 lower houses used some multimember districts; by the mid-1990s, the number was 12; for state senates, the number dropped from 30 to 4.) Civil rights groups have long regarded at-large voting and multimember districts with the deepest suspicion, and with litigation, threats of litigation, and a cooperative Justice Department have forced the adoption of single-member districts for elections at the state and local level across the nation. Maps were drawn, jurisdictions with at-large and multimember districts were targeted, and a sustained campaign to bring them all down was launched.

The reasoning behind that campaign was clear: Where black voters are residentially concentrated, such single-member can be carefully drawn to create absolutely safe black legislative seats. But for those of us who lived through this history, today's sudden change in sentiment—embodied in this bill—is simply incredible. A vital component of civil rights orthodoxy has been

abandoned without so much as a pretense of an explanation. If multimember districts and at-large voting are okay for Congress, are such electoral arrangements now equally acceptable in the Mississippi counties from which they were banned by the Supreme Court in its 1969 landmark decision? Can other counties and cities return to at-large elections? What is the principle here? Last I knew, even the Supreme Court had directed lower courts, who were imposing redistricting plans, to use single-member districts.

The smaller districts that the civil rights community has insisted upon have reduced the costs of campaigning, and have thus encouraged candidates with limited financial resources. Cumulative voting might solve the latter problem, but it carries with it other serious difficulties, as already suggested. Some of the problems are quite technical. For instance, could residents of a multimember district expect a member of Congress within that large district to represent everyone, or would constituency services be available only to that small minority of citizens (organized perhaps in a splinter party) who provided the needed votes? In any case, if proponents of this bill want cumulative voting, they should say so directly.

In short, Mr. Watt and Ms. Clayton were elected under precisely the circumstances that have been the staple of civil rights dreams. And they should celebrate the gains that America has made. They are black officeholders elected with substantial white support. A new chapter in American history has opened; Congress should not be tempted to close the book when the story has finally become so heartening.

THE CONTINUING DEBATE: Proportional Representation

What Is New

The United States remains solidly a two-party system. Of the 535 members of Congress in 2005, 46% were Democrats, 54% were Republicans, and only two were independents (one in each House). The 50 governors included 21 Democrats and 29 Republicans. Among the 7,382 state legislators, 50% were Democrats, 49% were Republicans, and about 1% were independents or members of another party. The strength of the two parties was also evident in the 2004 presidential election. There were 16 candidates on the ballot in one or more states, but two of them, Republican George Bush and Democrat John Kerry amassed 99% of the 118 million votes cast.

The public is divided over whether the two-party system is satisfactory. Fairly typical was the response to a survey taken in 2003 that asked, "Some people say we should have a third major political party in this country in addition to the Democrats and Republicans. Do you agree or disagree? Forty-six percent of the respondents agreed, 44% disagreed, and 10% were unsure.

Where to Find More

For excellent readings and links on proportional representation, go to a site put together by Mount Holyoke College's Douglas Amy at <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/polit/damy/> and hyperlink to [prlib.htm](#) and to [PRWebSites](#). Although Professor Amy is decidedly proportional representation, his site does include material presenting the other point of view. Another good source representing both sides is the March 1998 volume of *PS: Political Science and Politics*, which is a symposium issue on proportional representation. A proportional representation group is the Center for Voting and Democracy, whose Web address is <http://www.fairvote.org/pr/>. To explore the degree to which the parties differ (and to see where your members of Congress stand according to ideological "score cards") visit the Web sites of the Americans for Democratic Action at <http://www.adaction.org/voting.html> and the American Conservative Union at <http://acuratings.com/>.

What More to Do

It is very difficult to ultimately decide on whether or not to adopt a proportional representation system without first knowing the details of a system. So create a detailed plan that addresses variations such as a "party-list system," "single-transferable votes," and "mixed-member system." Create a plan for the House of Representatives and debate the alternatives. You might also want to consider moving away from a fixed-term, presidential system to a variable-term parliamentary system. That would tend to create even more influence for minor parties. Or, as opponents worry, such changes could destabilize the entire system and lead to short-term governments *du jour*.