



Eliminate Gerrymandering with Proportional Representation

by Howie Hawkins, GPNY

Gerrymandering is one of the anti-democratic features of the exclusionary single-member-district, winner-take-all plurality elections that are predominant in the United States.

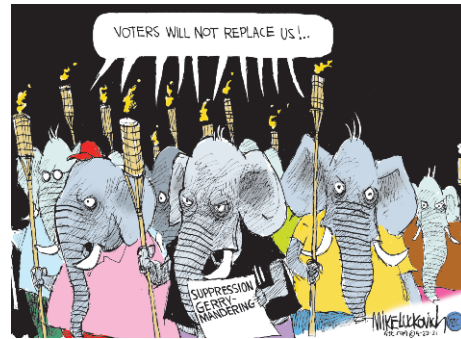
Gerrymandering is when politicians draw election district lines for partisan advantage. It gives the party with the power to draw the lines more representation than their votes would justify if representation were proportional to the vote each party receives. Incumbents gerrymander district lines to include more of their supporters and make their reelection a foregone conclusion. With gerrymandering, the politicians pick their voters, instead of the voters picking their politicians.

For example in Wisconsin, as a result of partisan gerrymandering by Republicans after the 2010 census, in 2018 Democrats won 54% of the statewide popular vote in assembly races but only 36% of the seats. The 46% minority vote for Republicans won them 64% of the seats thanks to gerrymandering.

Because Republican voters are overwhelmingly white, partisan gerrymandering also yields racial gerrymandering. Racial gerrymandering is illegal under the 15th Amendment, but U.S. Supreme Court decisions since 2013 have made the legal remedies against racial gerrymandering enacted under the Voting Rights Act of 1965 impossible to enforce.

In 2013, in *Shelby County v. Holder*, the Supreme Court gutted the pre-clearance provision in Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act that had required pre-approval by the Department of Justice of changes in voting procedures in jurisdictions with a history of voting discrimination. Section 4, which defined those jurisdictions, was ruled unconstitutional. Within hours of the *Shelby* decision, states previously covered by the pre-clearance provision started enacting laws—some of which had previously failed to pass pre-clearance—that are designed to suppress the vote of racial minorities, such as photo ID requirements and voter roll purges.

In 2019, in *Rucho v. Common Cause*, the Supreme Court ruled that partisan gerrymandering was constitutional. In 2021, *Brnovich v. Democratic National Committee*, the Supremes ruled that in order to strike down a voting procedure on the grounds of racial discrimination, a plaintiff had to prove racist intent, not only effect, rendering relief under



Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act for racial discrimination far more difficult.

Democrats have been nervously complaining that Republicans, who control both legislative chambers and the governorship in 30 states, are busy gerrymandering state legislative and House districts in the states they control to their own partisan benefit. But Democrats are gleefully doing the same in states they control like Illinois, Maryland, New York, and Oregon. When the dust clears on gerrymandering this year, the partisan impact may be “slightly less biased in the GOP’s favor than the last decade’s,” when Republicans maxed out partisan bias in redistricting after the 2010 census.

Proportional representation would not only create an inclusive democracy ... it would also render gerrymandering impossible.

Which major party may be winning the partisan gerrymandering battle does little to change the disenfranchisement of Greens and the over 40% of voters who are not affiliated with either major party. We are excluded from electing our own representatives by the single-member-district, winner-take-all voting system. Under this system, most districts are non-competitive one-party districts. Members of the major party that is the minority in a single-member district are also excluded from electing people who represent their political viewpoint.

Partisan gerrymandering only makes the problem of non-competitive elections worse. Over 90% of House districts and over

95% of state legislative districts are non-competitive one-party districts. As a result, tens of millions of us are perpetually represented by politicians we oppose with no hope of changing our representation by voting.

Redistricting can easily game single-member district lines for partisan gain, but not in multi-member districts using proportional ranked-choice voting (RCV). In fact, the only way to end partisan bias and non-competitive one-party districts is to have proportional representation from multi-member districts. RCV in multi-member districts yields proportional representation of all political viewpoints no matter where the district lines are drawn.

The more seats up for election in a multi-member district, the more proportional the results will be. The winning threshold for a 3-seat district is 25% plus one vote. A party or political viewpoint with 20% support would not get representation. If the districts were nine seats each, the winning threshold would be 10% plus one vote. The 20% party would get two of the nine seats.

Proportional representation would not only create an inclusive democracy in which all political viewpoints get their proportional share of representation in legislative bodies, it would also render gerrymandering impossible.

Greens should be promoting proportional RCV to end partisan and racial gerrymandering at the state and federal levels. If there is not a bill in your state legislature, demand that your representatives introduce one. We do have a bill to support in Congress, the Fair Representation Act (H.R.3863), which would require proportional RCV for House elections and single-seat RCV for Senate elections. The bill only has seven co-sponsors. Most progressive Democratic leaders like Pramila Jayapal and “The Squad” are not among them. No Senator has introduced companion legislation.

Every Green running in a House or Senate race should make this bill a campaign issue and demand that their opponents pledge to support the Fair Representation Act. Make news with their responses. If they respond by supporting it, declare victory. If they refuse to support it, raise hell.

See FairVote.org for more information about how proportional RCV works.



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HIGHLIGHTS Spring 2022

Green Governance

by Cam Gordon, GPMN and 4-term Minneapolis City Council Member

This January I concluded a 16-year run as the sole Green Party City Council Member in Minneapolis. As I did so, I also ended my experiment in Green governance.

When I took to the campaign trail in the early 2000s, I was convinced that Green values provided a solid foundation for governing. As a founding member of the Green Party of Minnesota, I was already familiar with the Green Party. In 2005 in my campaign for City Council I told the voters, “Our values of social and economic justice, grassroots democracy, nonviolence and ecological wisdom offer a clear compass to help strengthen what works in our city and lead us to creative solutions for the future.” That November, once elected, I had the opportunity to test my theory.

For the next four terms I relied on the 10 key values to guide my work. While it was often an uphill journey with mixed results, using them, and working with others, met with some success.

Our work on **Grassroots Democracy** led to Minneapolis being the first city in Minnesota to successfully pass and implement Ranked Choice Voting. It helped expand early voting and improve and diversify neighborhood groups. It led to expanded representation on city advisory boards, and the creation of new ones including the Housing Advisory Committee, the Bicycle Advisory Committee, the Energy Vision Advisory Committee, the Food Council, and the Green Zones Task Forces.

Our focus on **Social and Economic Justice** helped pass the state’s first local minimum wage law, the wage theft ordinance, and requirements for safe and sick time off. It helped repeal New Jim Crow laws like “lurking,” and pass a resolution calling out institutional racism and committing to end it. It resulted in a Racial Equity Action plan, a new Office of Race and Equity and a required Racial Equity Assessment for all

Council Actions.

To prioritize **Ecological Wisdom**, we declared a climate emergency, adopted a Social Cost of Carbon, and designated environmental justice Green Zones. We invested in clean energy, green roofs, trees, and pollinator-friendly landscaping practices. We expanded recycling and composting and approved a Zero Waste Plan. We passed a Complete Streets policy and transportation plan resulting in a network of protected bikeways, dedicated bus lanes and an array of pedestrian safety improvements.

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The value of **Nonviolence** helped the City take a public health approach to violence prevention, the development of a Youth Violence Prevention Plan, the creation of an Office of Violence Prevention, and the use of mobile behavioral crisis teams as an alternative response to 911 calls.

Green values influenced the well-publicized passage of the Minneapolis 2040 comprehensive plan in 2019, prior to the pandemic and police murder of George Floyd. This was a high point for a “progressive” surge in Minneapolis politics that peaked with the election of a clear progressive majority to the Council in 2017. During that time, the Council approved a new mission statement and goals that, like the 2040 Plan, had racial equity, social and economic justice and environmental sustainability front and center. The City’s mission statement we passed that term begins with, “Our City government takes



City Council members Cam Gordon, Lisa Bender, and Alondra Cano join protestors to call on Governor Mark Dayton to “release the tapes” in the police shooting death of Jamar Clark. Photo: Tony Webster

strategic action to address climate change, dismantle institutional injustice and close disparities in health, housing, public safety and economic opportunities...”

One of the biggest lessons I learned along the way, however, is that the values are not only useful in determining what I worked on and why, but also in guiding the way I worked.

First was the need to be **Future Focused**. Especially in the early years, even as I was on the end of losing votes, I needed to keep long term goals in mind. I was constantly planting seeds, articulating my hopes, making my intentions and goals known, and thinking about how some small action today could be laying the track for moving us in a better direction. This might take the form of a brief comment, or a small question during a staff report. Later it might mean building that into a staff direction to get a report, that might

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initiate a study session, then a pilot program and ultimately (sometimes years later as in the case of Rent Stabilization) a new city law or the creation of a new program.

As an elected official it was also my obligation to represent all the people in my ward. To do that I had to place my faith in grassroots democracy. I worked to be accessible, and share my views and reasons for supporting and opposing things. I listened, talked, and sometimes argued my points. I brought people together and was open to delaying action to get more input and address concerns. Increasing public participation and working to be accountable was key to winning acceptance and support.

A challenging value to put into practice was **Respect for Diversity**. As an elected official I often faced political diversity. The diversity of views and approaches in community, among staff and among elected col-

leagues can be significant. There is both diversity of style and substance, and as you learn to appreciate each person's priorities and perspectives it becomes easier to adjust one's own approach to working with them. By respecting the diversity of concerns, a policy proposal may be improved as well as more likely be implemented in the end. Sometimes respect for diversity meant just accepting the difference, respecting the individual and the relationship.

The value of nonviolence helped me stay calm and rational even when being passionate. It reminded me to separate the issue or the policy from the person, and be willing to cooperate and be compassionate even with adversaries. The value of **Feminism** helped me to resist the tendency towards using power and domination and remember the benefits of sharing power with others and letting others lead. Finding myself

in a government body with protocols clearly inherited from a social system based on domination and control of others, it was a challenge to forge more humane and cooperative ways to work. The value of **Decentralization** helped me to conserve my influence and energy, to be willing to yield to, trust, step aside or join community members, staff, neighborhood associations and other colleagues – especially when their efforts didn't conflict with, or supported, my values.

If there is a Green way of governing, for me, it was based on fully and publicly owning, using and relying on our key values proudly and openly both on the campaign and at work when I was in office. It was based on using them to guide not only what I did and why I did it, but also, mindfully, to guide how I did it.

Greens think globally, run locally 2021 election year-in-review

by Mike Feinstein, CAGP

At least 113 Greens in 18 states ran for public office in 2021. Among them, seven ran for state and federal office—four in regular elections in New Jersey, one in a Pennsylvania special election and two in the California gubernatorial recall.

But with regular state and federal offices almost exclusively held in even-numbered years in all states except New Jersey and Virginia, most Greens focused on running in local elections in 2021, with an emphasis on social justice and the environment.

Of the 106 Greens who ran for municipal and county office, 52 were elected. Among them were ten for city council, 12 for school board, and a mayor and a community college board member. Seven more were elected to fire protection districts, library boards, water boards, sewer boards and health districts. In Pennsylvania, a sitting township supervisor who wasn't a Green when elected in 2019 joined the Green Party in 2021 while in office.

By the end of 2021, at least 133 Greens hold office in 18 states.

Maine Success

Perhaps the greatest Green electoral success story of 2021 was in Maine. Green Party members **Anna Treverow** and **Scott Harriman** won city council races in Portland and Lewiston, the state's first- and second-most populous cities; while another 17 Greens

were elected in smaller towns around the state.

Overall Maine Greens won 19 of 23 races statewide in 2021, including six of nine for select board and 11 out of 12 races for school board. Currently at least 48 Maine Greens hold local elected office across the state. In a state with 43,000 registered Greens and over 300 small towns and villages with local government bodies, Maine presents one of the best opportunities for Greens to win local elections and gain governing experience. In turn many of these local officeholders are

potential future Green candidates for higher office.

A Green Mayor

The highest office a U.S. Green was elected to in 2021 came in Illinois—**Peter Schwartzman** for Mayor of Galesburg. With his election, Schwartzman joins **Bruce Delgado**, six-time elected Mayor of Marina in Central California, as one of two current sitting Green mayors in the U.S. Together they are among 32 directly elected Green mayors in U.S. history.



On the campaign trail: Anna Treverow (right) won a seat on the Portland, Maine City Council.

Green Youth Organization Goes Global

by Garret Wassermann, GPPA

From January 14th–16th, 2022, the Global Young Greens (GYG), an emerging new youth organization dedicated to green politics loosely affiliated with the Global Greens global federation of national Green Parties, met online for its regular Congress.

Representing the Young Ecosocialists, the youth caucus of the Green Party of the United States, were three elected delegates: **Austin Bashore** (Ohio), **Matthew Skolar** (New Jersey), and **Blaizen Bloom** (Virginia).

Delegates attended talks and discussions on topics including a report back from the GYG delegation about the COP26 global climate change summit, and how Young Greens should respond to the failure of COP26 to produce significant international action. Discussion also concerned how the global COVID pandemic can be viewed with a feminist lens in which historically marginalized people are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. Delegates also discussed forming a GYG political platform, and approved a number of amendments to the GYG organizational charter.

Bloom enjoyed the experience and shared an optimistic message for other youth Greens: "At times it can be difficult to be hopeful in a world that seems so resistant to change.



Austin Bashore, Blaizen Bloom and Matt Skolar at the GYG Digital Congress 2022 in January.

Yet, if there's one thing I got from this Congress, it's to not give up hope. Meeting with fellow Young Greens from nations as near as Canada and far as India provided a valuable insight. I learned from their own struggles and successes, but more importantly I was shown that we aren't alone in this fight. We are unified within this global struggle for justice and I'm confident that we will win!"

In attendance were delegates representing Green Parties from across the Americas, Europe, Africa, and Asia/Pacific Islands. According to the Global Greens, over 100 countries now have a Green Party, with hundreds of Greens elected to national parliaments and governing bodies around the world. For more information, go to globallyounggreens.org

Hijack of Montana Ballot Line

by David Schwab, WIGP

In 2018, members of the Montana Green Party were surprised by news that people they didn't know were petitioning to put Green Party candidates on the state ballot. Then it happened again in 2020, and although the real Montana Green Party publicly disavowed the effort, it was powerless to stop it.

As it turned out, the bogus Green campaigns and petition drives were organized by Republican-linked operatives, leading to a lengthy scandal and court battle in 2020 detailed by the independent Montana Free Press in an article titled "How Montana's Green Party found itself at the center of a political circus. Again."

The Montana Green Party made a public statement via Facebook on February 12th, 2020 disavowing the petition drives and associated campaigns. Yet the

fact that the MTGP had nothing to do with the effort, and indeed denounced it publicly as a fraud, hasn't stopped detractors from pointing to headlines like "MT GOP financed Green Party ballot qualification in Montana" to argue that the Green Party willingly takes money from, or otherwise conspires with, Republican operatives.

Under current law, all these ballot shenanigans are legal. For example, while new campaign finance disclosure laws in Montana revealed how Republicans were funneling money through a group called "Montanans for Conservation" to fund their bogus Green petition drives, neither the actual Green Party nor anyone else could stop them from doing it.

The root of the problem is the first-past-the-post election system (in which the highest fraction of the vote wins even

if it's less than a majority), which tends both to perpetuate a two-party system and to incentivize those parties to try to divert voters who otherwise would support their main established rival into smaller parties. Both Democrats and Republicans have frequently engaged in these kinds of tricks, and if they aren't hijacking the ballot lines of Greens or Libertarians, they can do it to lesser-known parties like Legal Marijuana Now or invent new parties like the Women's Equality Party.

The real solution to the problem of ballot hijacking is to replace first-past-the-post voting with ranked-choice voting. Under ranked-choice voting, if a voter's first choice doesn't win, their vote can still count for their second choice, which eliminates the "spoiler" effect that ballot hijackers seek to exploit. Ranked-choice voting can list many benefits leading to its adoption in a growing number of municipalities and states, and we can add to that list that it would put an end to the reprehensible practice of ballot hijacking.