

Do you recognize any of these symptoms of an unhealthy democracy?

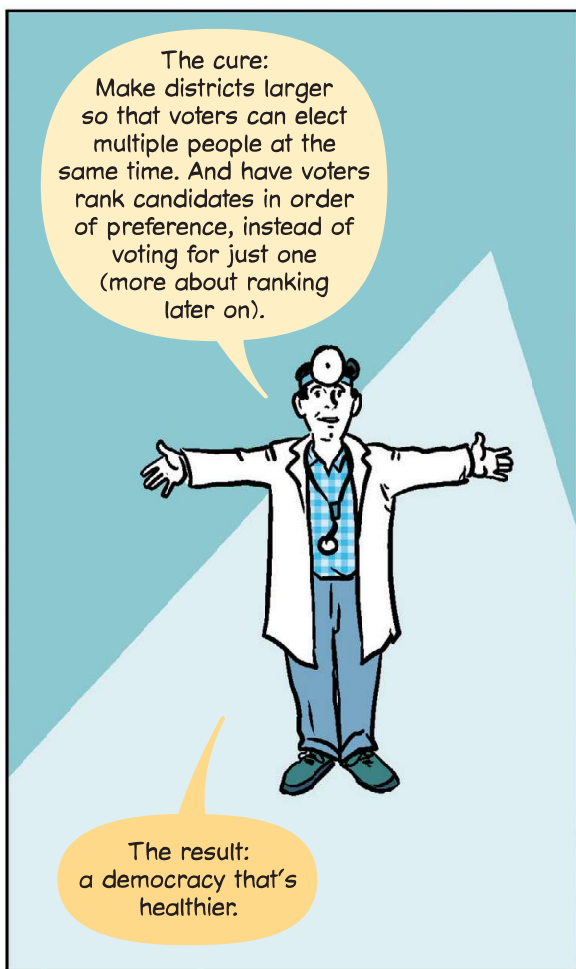
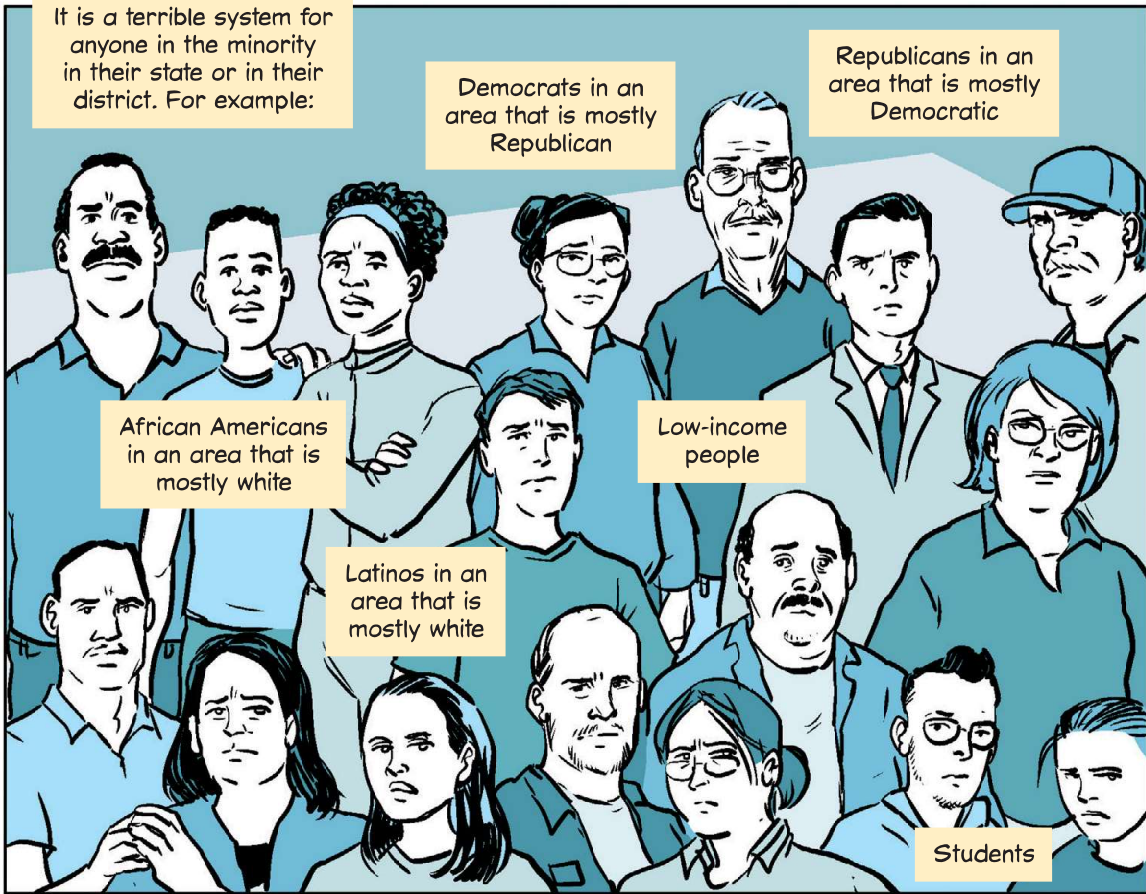
- Voting for a candidate you're not thrilled about because they are "the lesser of two evils."
- Primary and runoff elections that few voters participate in.
- Low voter turnout in general.
- Elected officials that don't have much diversity of race, ethnicity, income, or political views.
- Negative attack ads everywhere.
- Politicians running for office unopposed and unaccountable.

These are telltale symptoms of a common illness in America: single-member districts with winner-take-all voting rules.

Let me explain.



*When more than two candidates are running, even less than 50% of the vote can be enough to win.

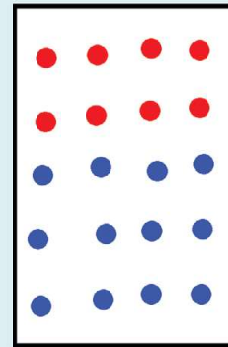
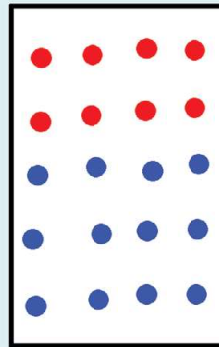
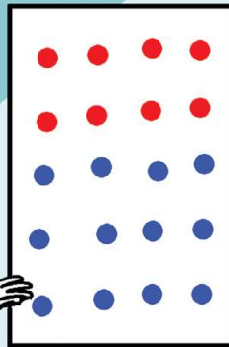


proportional representation

Here's an example of how to make democracy healthier.

Suppose your state has three congressional districts, using the traditional, winner-take-all voting rule.

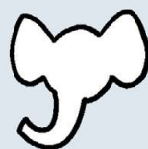
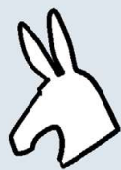
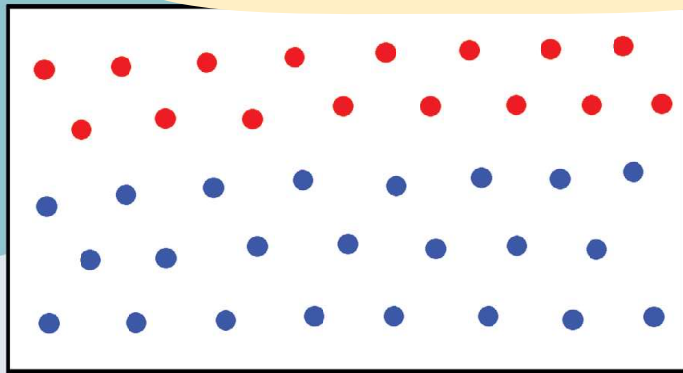
Each district's voters are 60% Democrats and 40% Republicans.



The result? Three Democrats elected.

Republicans are 40% of the voters but are completely shut out of power. That's unfair and undemocratic.

But if you combine the three separate districts into one big district, let voters rank candidates in order of preference, and elect three people at the same time, the three people elected better reflect the interests of the voters as a whole.



In this case, two Democrats and one Republican.

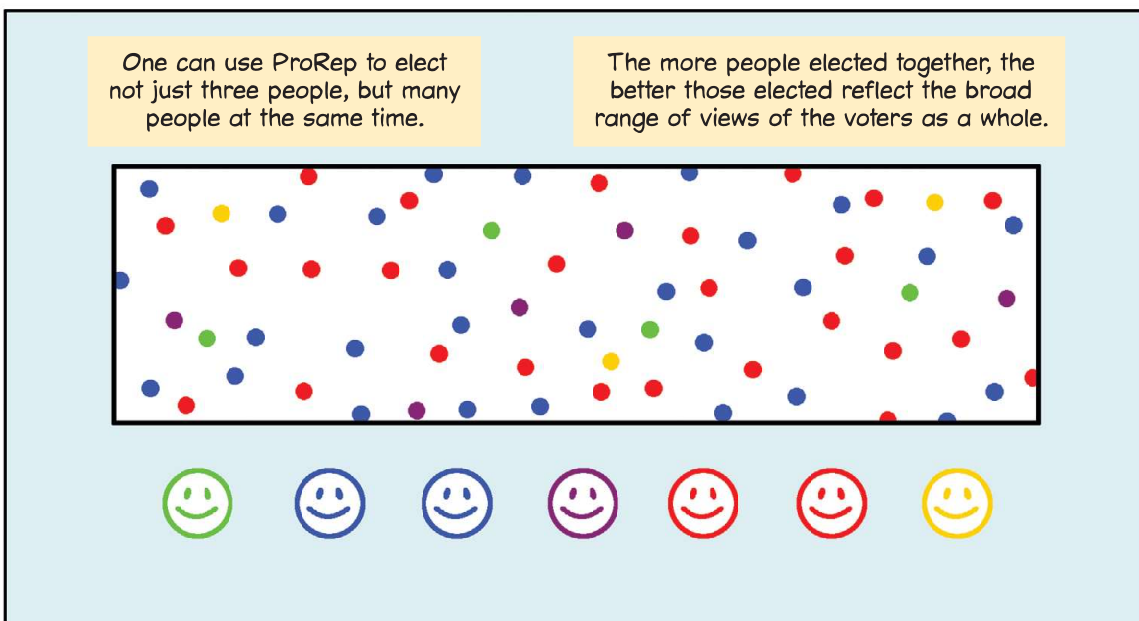
Likely, one of the Democrats will be more moderate. And all three representatives will work together better because they are representing the same people.





More than 300 places across thirty U.S. states use variations on this system, or have done so in the past. The consistent results: elected officials that better represent the people electing them.

Alexander County Schools	Delaware County	Heath	Lancaster County	Perquimans County
Allegany County	Euclid Board of Education	Nueces Canyon Consolidated Independent School District	Lebanon County	Perquimans County
Ansontown School District	Fairfield	School District	Loachapoka	Perry County
Ansontown School District	Faunsdale	O'Donnell	Lowndesboro	Philadelphia
Arnot School District	Forest County	O'Donnell Independent School District	Lycoming County	Pickensville
Beaufort School District	Franklin County	Olton	Madrid	Pike County
Beavertown School District	Fulton	Olton Independent School District	Manchester	Pine Apple
Benson School District	Fulton County	Peoria	Manchester School District	Providence
Berks County	Glastonbury	Port Chester Village	Mansfield	Robeson County
Bladen County	Glastonbury School District	Post Independent School District	Mansfield School District	Rutledge
Bladen County Schools	Goshen	Poth	Marlborough School District	Schuylkill County
Blair County	Greene County	Poth Independent School District	Martin County	Silas
Bloomfield School District	Greenwich	Riviera Independent School District	McKean County	Simsbury School District
Bridgeport School District	Hamden	Ropes Independent School District	Mercer County	Snyder County
Bristol	Hartford	Roscoe	Middletown	Somerset County
Bristol School District	Hartford School District	Rotan	Monroe County	South Windsor
Bucks County	Huntingdon County	Rotan Independent School District	Montgomery County	South Windsor School District
Butler County	Indiana County	Sisseton Independent School District	Montour County	Southington
Calera	Jamesville	Springlake-Earth Independent School District	Myrtlewood	Southington School District
Cambria County	Juniata County	Stamford Independent School District	Naugatuck	Sullivan County
Canton School District	Killingly School District	Sudan Independent School District	Naugatuck School District	Susquehanna County
Carbon Hill	Kinsey	Sundown Independent School District	New Britain	Tioga County
Centre County	Lackawanna County	Wagner School District	New Britain School District	Tolland
Chester County	Lake Park	Yoakum Independent School District	New Canaan	Tolland School District
Clinton City Schools		Yorktown	Newington	Torrington
Conecuh County			Newington School District	Torrington School District
Coventry			Northumberland County	Toxey
Cromwell School District			Norwich School District	Trumbull School District
Cumberland County			Orville	Tyrrell County
Darien			Pennington	Tyrrell County School District
Dauphin County				Union County



A ProRep system makes elections more competitive.

Not only do voters have more candidates to choose from, but there are more candidates who are "viable"—who have a chance of winning.

THERE'S ROOM FOR MORE THAN JUST TWO!

And ProRep eliminates gerrymandering, since the shape of a large, multi-member district doesn't have much effect on who gets elected.

SIGH... I SHOULDN'T BE.

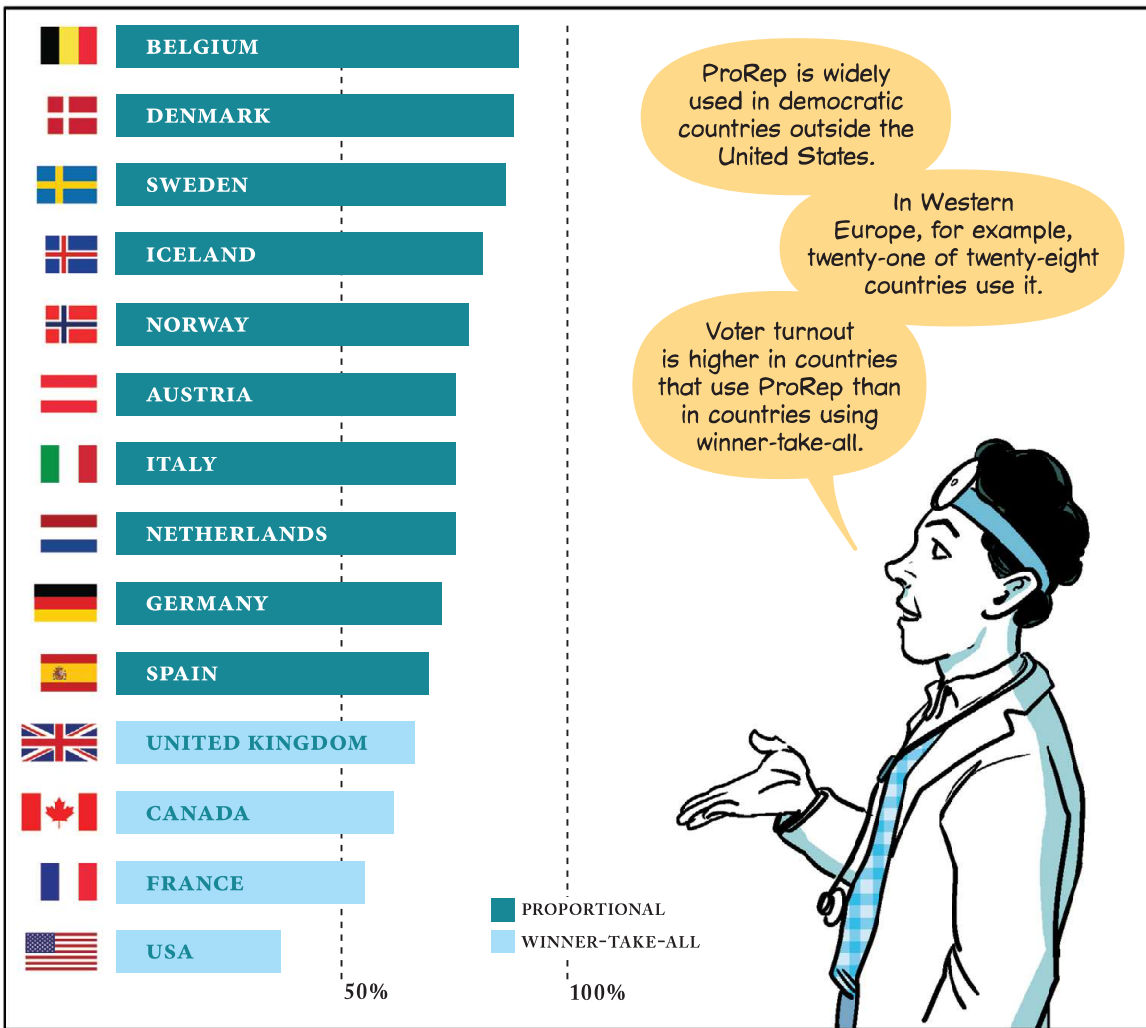


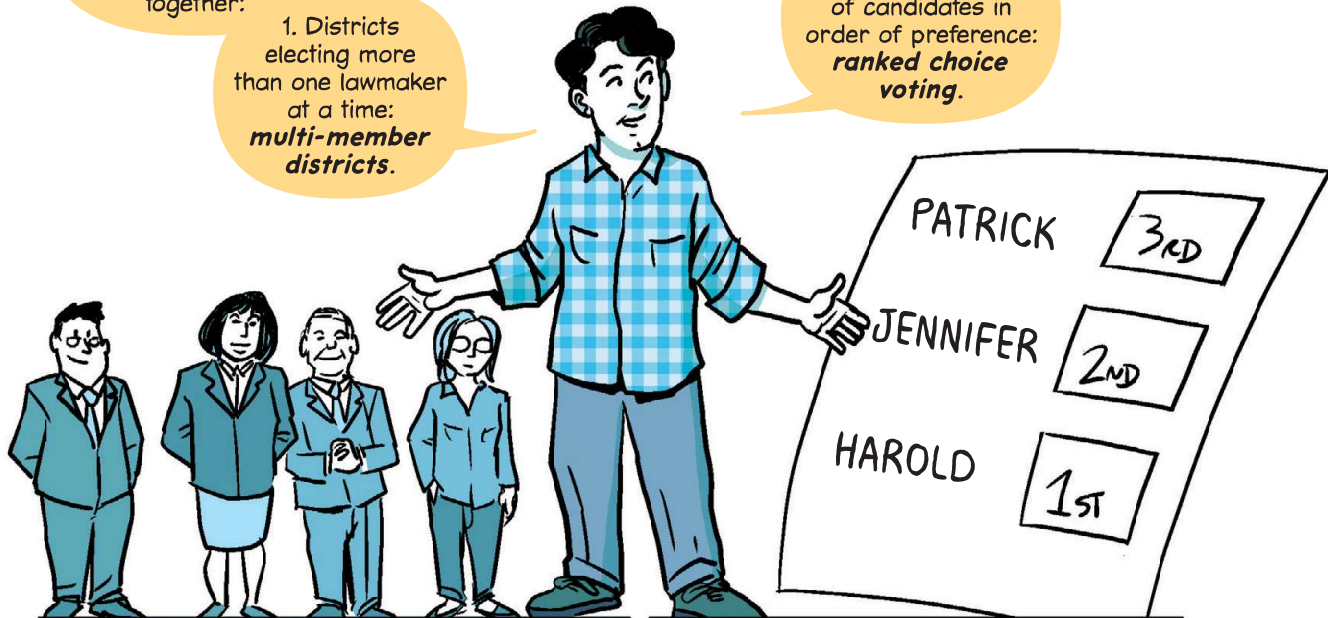
Chart courtesy of Sightline Institute

ranked choice voting

I described earlier how a common form of proportional representation has two parts that work together:

1. Districts electing more than one lawmaker at a time: **multi-member districts.**

2. Voters ranking their choice of candidates in order of preference: **ranked choice voting.**

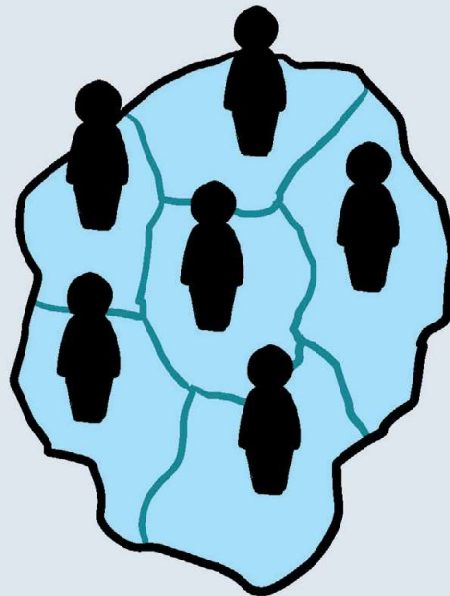


Democracy works better with both of these parts in place.

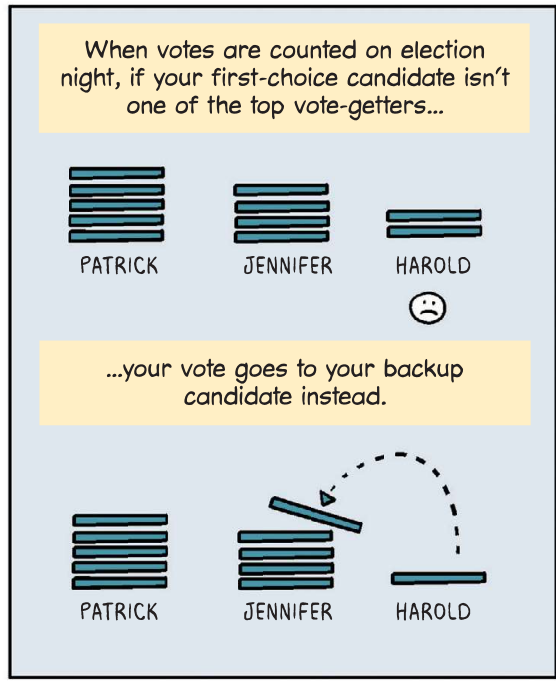
But governments can use ranked choice voting **without** multi-member districts, and it's still a big step forward in making our democracy work better.



All elections for Congress, and most other elections in America today, use single-member districts: One person is elected from each district.



In the rest of this chapter, I'll be describing ranked choice voting (RCV) as it's used in single-member districts.



With RCV, you can express your true preferences. You don't have to hold your nose and vote for a candidate that you're not excited about, but that you think is more likely to win.

I love them, but they don't stand a chance. I can't waste my vote.



You can proudly vote for the candidates you like the most.

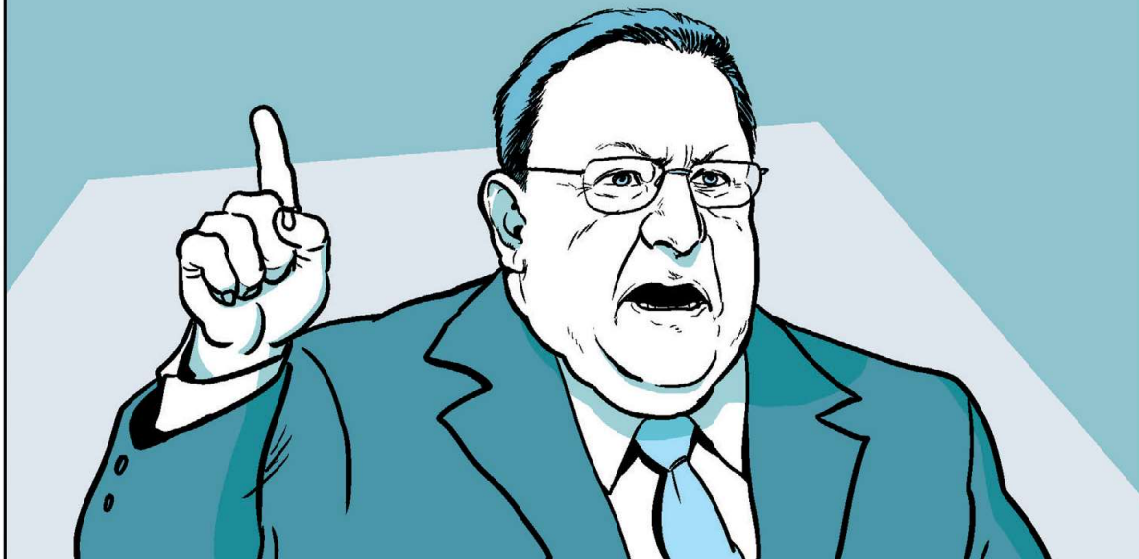
Over twenty U.S. cities have RCV elections.

- Amherst, Massachusetts
- Basalt, Colorado
- Benton County, Oregon
- Berkeley, California
- Cambridge, Massachusetts
- Carbondale, Colorado
- Easthampton, Massachusetts
- Eastpointe, Michigan
- Las Cruces, New Mexico
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- New York, New York
- Oakland, California
- Payson, Utah
- Portland, Maine
- Saint Paul, Minnesota
- San Francisco, California
- San Leandro, California
- Santa Fe, New Mexico
- St. Louis Park, Minnesota
- Takoma Park, Maryland
- Telluride, Colorado
- Vineyard, Utah

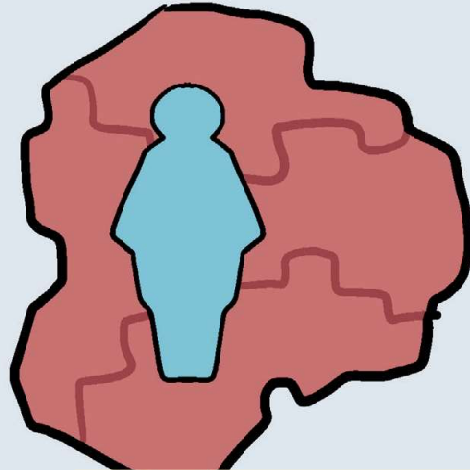
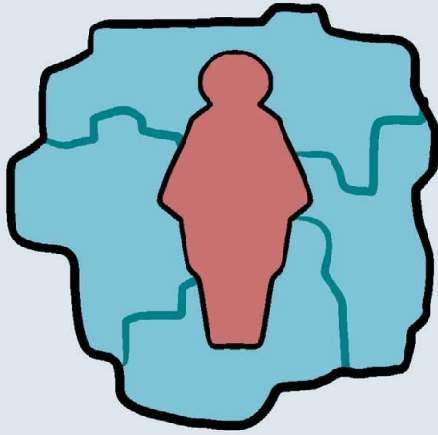
The state of Maine uses RCV to elect state officials and members of Congress.

Maine had a long history of governors—Democrats, Republicans, and independents—winning without a majority.

For example, in 2010, Paul LePage became governor with less than 38% of the vote while his four opponents split the rest.



Vote splitting like this happens all the time throughout the U.S., electing leaders that don't represent the majority of voters.



Ranked choice voting solves this major democratic problem.

State and local governments can save money with ranked choice voting. RCV can eliminate primary and runoff elections, which typically attract only a small number of voters who don't reflect the population as a whole.

With RCV, there can be just one election.

For this reason, it's sometimes called "instant runoff" voting.



And results from California show that in cities with RCV, more women and more people of color run for office and win.

positive campaigning

With our current election system, there are usually only two candidates with a chance to win, so attacking one's opponent is effective.

Negative attacks can turn off a candidate's supporters so that they'll stay home and not vote.

BAH!

In a two-way race, your opponent losing a vote is as good as you gaining one. So there's a lot of incentive for negativity.

We see the effects everywhere in politics with corrosive attack ads that, taken together, decrease voter engagement and participation in civic life.

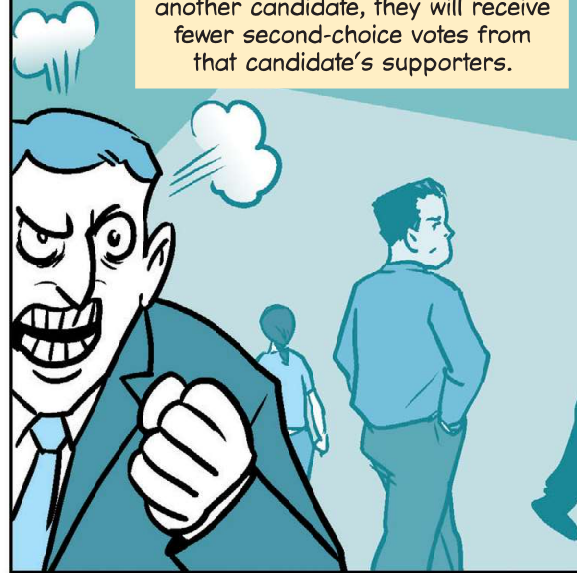
RCV changes the strategy.

With RCV, candidates have the best chance to win if they both appeal to their core supporters and also seek the second-choice votes of people who support other candidates.



So candidates have an incentive to broaden their appeal.

They also have an incentive to stay positive because if they attack another candidate, they will receive fewer second-choice votes from that candidate's supporters.



Voters in RCV cities are more satisfied with campaign conduct and see less candidate criticism and negative campaigning.

RCV also encourages a broader public debate during campaigns.

Nontraditional candidates can't be easily dismissed as "nonviable," as they are in our current system, so more candidates have their ideas taken seriously.



In 2016, Maine voters passed a ballot measure to adopt ranked choice voting and became the first in the country to use RCV to elect their members of Congress.



They are leading the way in helping to build a healthy American democracy.