

A WEIGHTED VOTE PROPOSAL

submitted by:

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If we were to focus on the executive branch, we see that the British parliamentary system we have inherited allows a prime minister to select a cabinet primarily, but not exclusively from members elected to the House of Commons. If we look to the U.S. however, we see that members of the U.S. cabinet are selected by the president, who only after being elected chooses cabinet members from among any individual citizens of the country. Would it not be reasonable for parties at the beginning of an election campaign to present a team of candidates who in their opinion would be the best people to head government ministries and sit in cabinet or a city executive committee, irrespective of their winning a local electoral ward/district? In fact shouldn't cabinet members have a more global perspective, rather than local biases favouring their personal regions? A cabinet team chosen in advance by a party could then be truly representative of a city's, province's or country's demographics, balancing regions, gender, ethnicity and all other such factors into the equation.

As it is, many voters know very little about their local candidates, but vote primarily on the basis of party affiliations and their party leader's media persona, irrespective of the local candidate's qualifications. Separating the party vote from the local vote would give voters who are familiar with their local candidates the chance to vote for the best local candidate irrespective of party affiliation. So we could allow each voter two votes – one for the local riding representative and one for the party executive team. It could work like this.

We would choose an arbitrary cut-off point, say somewhere between 5 and 10% of the popular vote. Every local riding candidate who gets more than that cut-off deserves to carry that vote to the legislative process. We could either have the candidate with the most votes, or the candidate who wins a majority through the ranked ballot method take the seat in the legislature. However, for any vote that comes up in the legislature, that elected member would have to consult with the other candidates who got more than the cut off. The vote the seated member would put forward would be weighted by the number of first-preference votes each of the candidates received. Likewise the total of all weighted votes cast by members would yield the final outcome. Such a tally would surely create a much truer representation of the will of the electorate.

In this day and age of instant communications, physical presence at a centralized location is no longer a necessity as it was in the days when our current electoral system evolved to where it is now. Local candidates who placed second, third, etc. but exceeded the cut-off could remain in their local districts and still follow the proceedings of the legislature. They could take part in local town hall meetings where local citizens could question their intentions. (The seated first place candidate could also participate remotely.) And when votes come up in the legislature, non-seated local candidates could immediately make their assessments known to the seated candidate, who would cast the net weighted vote.

On the executive side, each party with more than the cut-off percentage of the vote would seat its team members with the weight of the vote that it received in the election. If a party can command the majority of weighted votes, executive and legislative combined, it will form government. If no party can command a majority, then a run-off vote within the legislature will determine which party should govern. This would give it a virtual majority. After every vote in the legislature that the governing party loses by less than a two thirds majority, it has the option to use its initial run-off vote to over-ride that vote.

While this weighted vote concept would be much more democratic than what we have now, it could still be improved upon. Say you as a voter don't trust any of the candidates to represent your opinions in all cases. Why shouldn't you be able to cast your own votes on legislative issues? Instead of voting for one of the local candidates, you could choose to become a direct voter, and cast your ballot on say third and final reading of any bill before the legislature. Now that would be true democracy.