

**Alternative Voting
(or "Instant Runoff Voting")**

**Michael D. Martinez
Department of Political Science
University of Florida**



Michael D. Martinez

- B.A. (1977) and A.S. (1976) Southeastern Louisiana University
- M.A. (1980) University of New Orleans
- Ph.D. (1985) University of Michigan
- U. F. Dept of Political Science
 - Faculty member, 1985 to present
 - Interim Chair, 2002-2004
- Research on Political Behavior
 - American Journal of Political Science, Journal of Politics, Political Research Quarterly, Political Behavior, Canadian Journal of Political Science

Outline

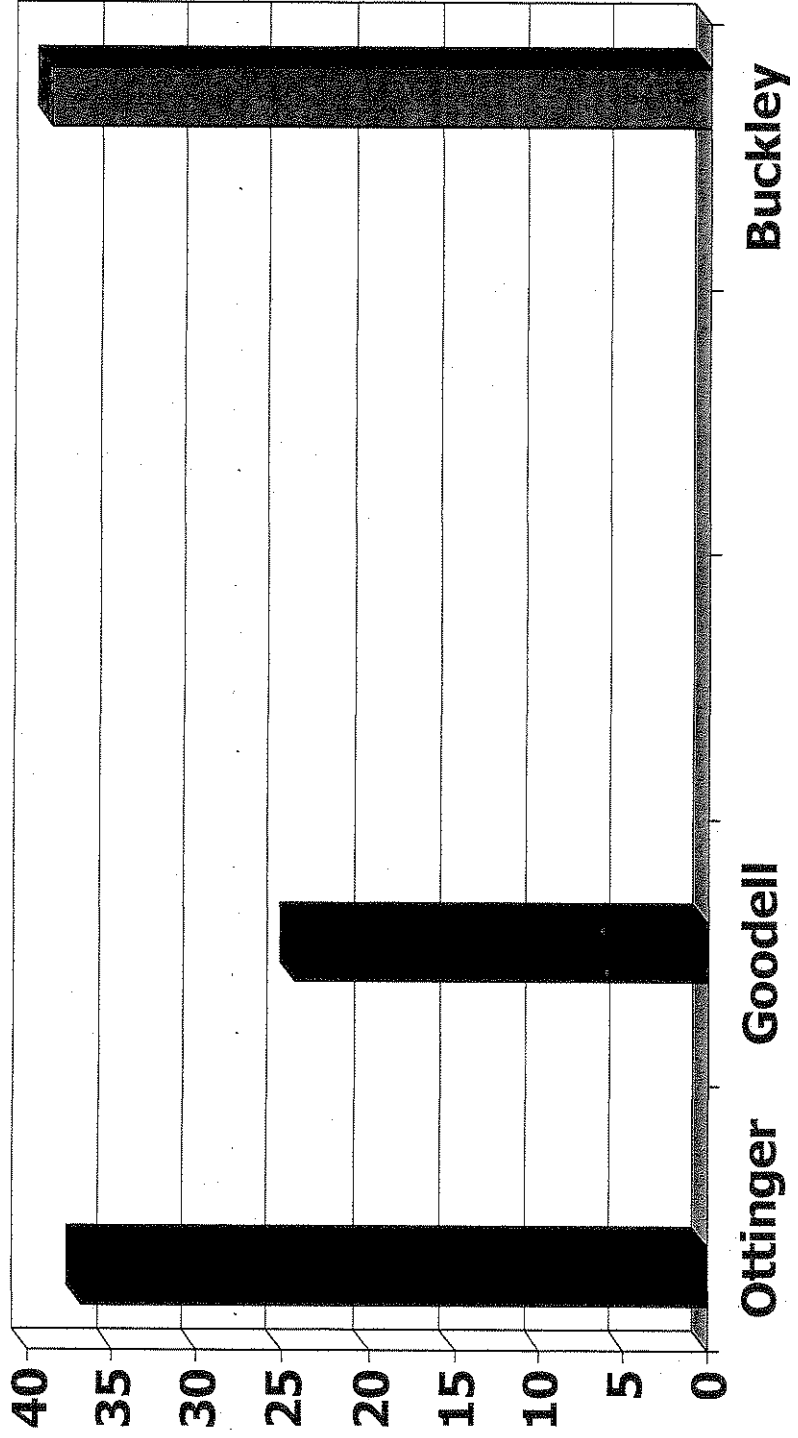
- Problems with Plurality Voting
- What is Alternative Voting?
- Where is Alternative Voting used?
- Why use Alternative Voting?
- Why not use Alternative Voting?
- What are the politics of Alternative Voting?
- Implementation Questions
- Alternatives to Alternative Voting
- Educating the Public

Plurality Voting

- "First-past-the-post"
- Simple: one person, one vote, most votes wins

Plurality Voting (without runoff)

1970 U.S. Senate Election in New York



Plurality Voting (with sequential runoff)

- Currently used in Gainesville City Elections
- Strategic voting still possible
- Financial costs and uncertainty to ...
 - ... Elections staff in preparing for and conducting runoff election.
 - ... Candidates in raising funds to run campaign.
- Lower turnout (“dropoff”) in runoff elections.

What is "Alternative Voting"?

- Sometimes called "Instant Runoff Voting".
- Voters rank preferences for multiple (or all) candidates.
- Count the "first votes" first.
 - A candidate with a majority is elected.
 - If no candidate has majority, transfer the votes of last place candidate until one candidate has a majority of votes in that count.

What is "Alternative Voting"?

Write 1 beside the name of your first choice, 2 beside the name of your second choice, and so on. One candidate to be elected.

Washington, George	
Adams, John	
Jefferson, Thomas	
Madison, James	

What is "Alternative Voting"?

Write 1 beside the name of your first choice, 2 beside the name of your second choice, and so on. One candidate to be elected.

Washington, George	1
Adams, John	4
Jefferson, Thomas	3
Madison, James	2

Counting Alternative Votes

Preferences	Votes
Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison	700
Washington (no second choice)	300
Adams, Washington, Jefferson, Madison	600
Jefferson, Adams, Washington, Madison	500
Madison, Adams, Washington, Jefferson	75
Madison, Washington, Jefferson, Adams	25

Counting Alternative Votes

	First Count		
Washington	1000		
Adams	600		
Jefferson	500		
Madison	100		

Counting Alternative Votes

	First Count	Transfer	Second Count
Washington	1000	+25	1025
Adams	600	+75	675
Jefferson	500		500
Madison	100	-100	eliminated

Counting Alternative Votes

	Second Count	Transfer	Third Count
Washington	1025		1025
Adams	675	+500	1175
Jefferson	500	-500	eliminated
Madison	eliminated		

Counting Alternative Votes

	Second Count	Transfer	Third Count
Washington	1025		1025
Adams	675	+500	1175
Jefferson	500	-500	eliminated
Madison	eliminated		

Counting Alternative Votes: Elimination Alternatives

- Eliminate last place candidate on each round
- Candidate count –
 - maximum survivors of first round (eg. three)
 - Sequential runoff sets maximum at two
- Minimum Threshold – (eg., 10%)
- Percent Retention – (eg., retain the top set of candidates who combined control 50% of the vote)

Where is Alternative Voting used?

- San Francisco, California
 - (adopted by referendum in 2003)
- Berkeley, California
 - (adopted by referendum in 2004)
- Ferndale, Michigan
 - (adopted by referendum in 2004)
- Australia – lower house of Parliament
- Ireland
- Defeated in Alaska referendum (2002)

Why Use Alternative Voting?

- Saves expense (and uncertainty of expense) to election staff and candidates to conduct sequential runoff.
- Supporters of losing candidates will still feel like they have a say in the election.

Why Not to Use Alternative Voting?

- Familiarity with plurality voting
 - Federal, state, and county elections continue to use plurality voting.
- Will voters have enough information ...
 - About the electoral system?
 - About all candidates to rank them?
- Probably more spoiled ballots
- Delay and effort in counting ballots
 - And recounting ...
- Some progressives argue "Alternative Voting" is a bad substitute for "real" reform.

Politics of Alternative Voting

- Less susceptible to turnout effects
 - Currently, first election is about who has the broadest support.
 - Second (or sequential runoff) election is about who can mobilize their support one more time, plus convince and mobilize the eliminated candidates' supporters.
- Alternative voting eliminates the need to mobilize a second time.

Politics of Alternative Voting

- Probably less influence for losing candidates.
- Under sequential runoff, losing candidates might influence supporters to vote for one of the remaining candidates.
- May favor moderate candidates, who can garner the most “second” votes.
- May soften “negative” campaigning.

Politics of Alternative Voting

- Ann Arbor, Michigan
- 1973 Mayoral Election in Ann Arbor
 - Republican Stephenson wins with 47%
 - Democrats and HRP split the left
- Adopted Alternative Voting in 1975
- Stephenson filed legal challenge, but Michigan state courts upheld ordinance.

Politics of Alternative Voting

- 1975 Mayoral Election in Ann Arbor
 - First Count
 - **Stephenson (Rep.)** - 49%
 - **Wheeler (Dem.)** - 40%
 - **Ernst (HRP)** - 11%
- **Second Count:** Almost all of HRP votes transferred to Wheeler, who won the election by 121 votes.

Politics of Alternative Voting

- Ann Arbor News Reaction
 - "cunning political device"
 - "a wasteful, cumbersome experiment"
 - "an unworthy substitute for straight up and down system."
- Alternative Voting repealed in special election in 1976

Implementation Questions

Select one candidate for your first choice, another for your second choice, and so on. One candidate to be elected.

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice
Washington, George	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adams, John	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jefferson, Thomas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Madison, James	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Implementation Questions

Select one candidate for your first choice, another for your second choice, and so on. One candidate to be elected.

	First Choice	Second Choice	Third Choice	Fourth Choice
Washington, George	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Adams, John	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jefferson, Thomas	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Madison, James	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>