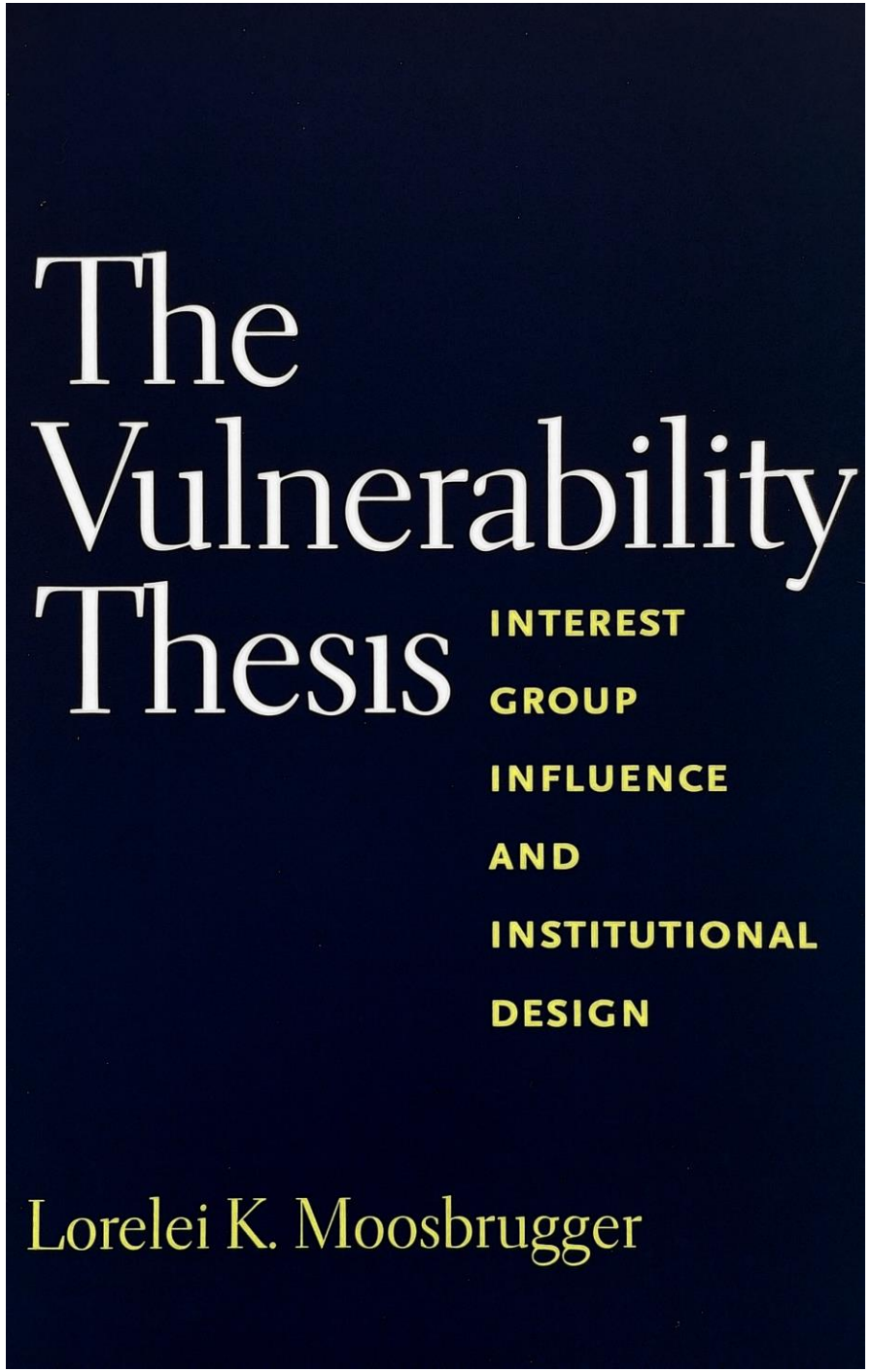
Why is everyone talking about Ranked Choice Voting?

Lorelei Moosbrugger, Ph.D.
League of Women Voters of California

Convention 2023

San Francisco, May 19-20, 2023



The way we elect our representatives – our "electoral system" – also creates incentives for politicians to respond to the desires of concentrated interests *rather than voters* –

– and simultaneously makes it nearly impossible for voters to counteract the influence powerful groups, even when voters constitute a majority of the electorate.

Plurality Elections *(whoever gets the most votes wins)*

The root of democratic evils..

► **Plurality elections foster two-party systems** –

- Limit choice to the two major parties, because third parties have no chance of winning (Duverger's Law).
- Generate incentives for voters to vote strategically rather than sincerely.
- Rationalize partisan gerrymandering to guarantee safe seats.
- ***Reduce*** **voter turnout** – due to lack of choice and foregone outcomes.

- **Do not require that candidates win *majority* support.**
- ***Preclude*** **minority representation within districts.**

Encourage
Participation
&
Minority
Engagement

Minimize
wasted votes

Promote
sincere voting

Require
majority rule.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CALIFORNIA

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Home › Our Work › Positions › Position on Electoral Process

Position on Electoral Process

Share:

State or National: State

The Issue:
Electoral Process

Position in Brief:
Support electoral systems at each level of government that encourage participation, are verifiable and auditable and enhance representation for all voters.

Details:
LWVC promotes an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive. We encourage electoral methods that provide the broadest voter representation possible. Whether for single or multiple winner contests, the League supports electoral methods that:

- Encourage voter participation and voter engagement
- Encourage those with minority opinions to participate, including under-represented communities
- Are verifiable and auditable
- Promote access to voting
- Maximize effective votes/minimize “wasted” votes
- Promote sincere voting over strategic voting
- Require the winner to receive a majority of the votes for executive and single seat offices
- Are compatible with acceptable ballot-casting methods, including vote-by-mail

Part I

What is Ranked Choice Voting?

And who is “everyone”?

What is Ranked Choice Voting?

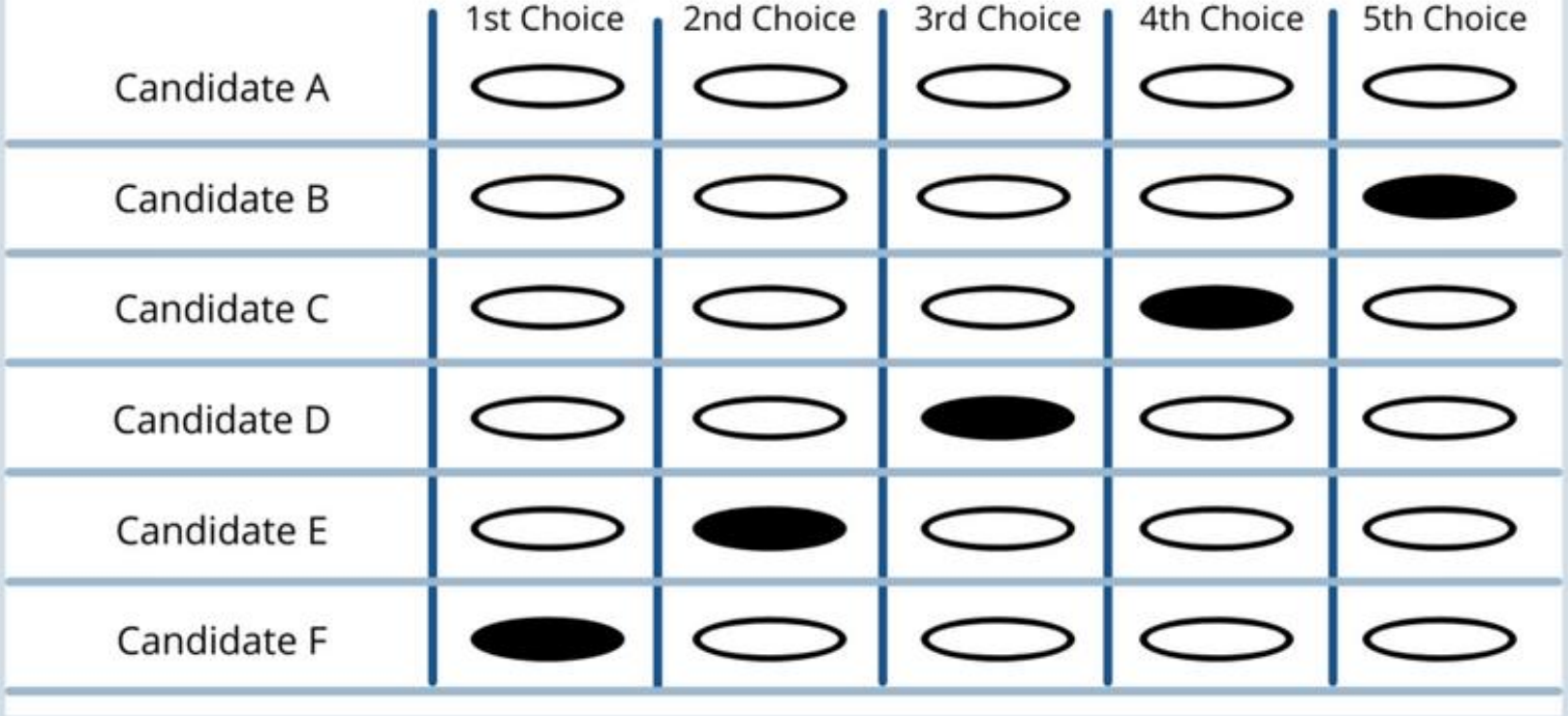
An alternative to our plurality electoral system..

Any voting system that allows voters to rank candidates on a ballot according to their preferences – first, second, third – and so on…

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Explore Ranked Choice Voting for DC!

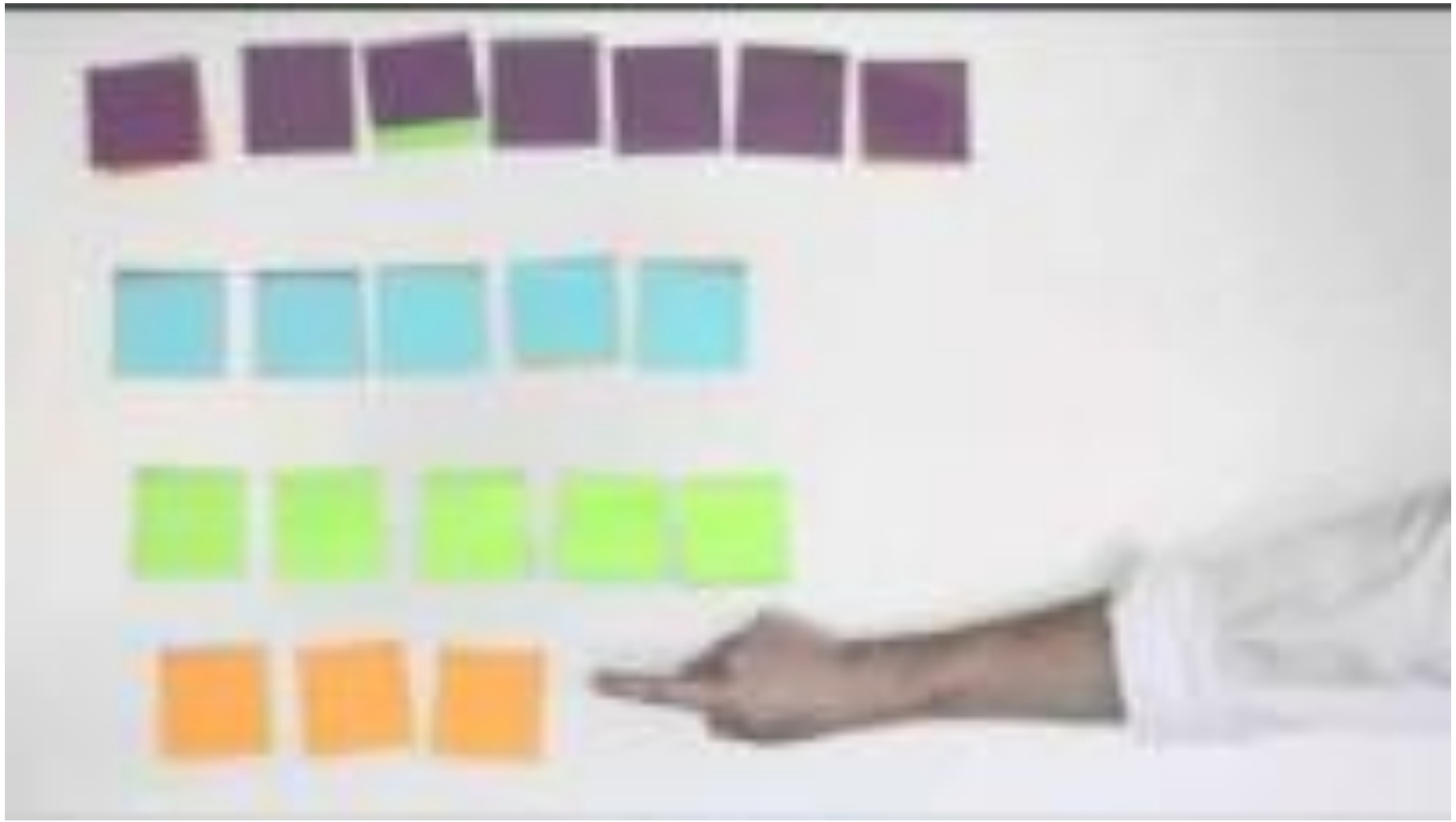
Rank up to 5 Candidates.
Mark no more than 1 choice in each column.



Ranked Choice Voting ensures the winning candidate has majority support

How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHRPMJmzBBw&t=7s

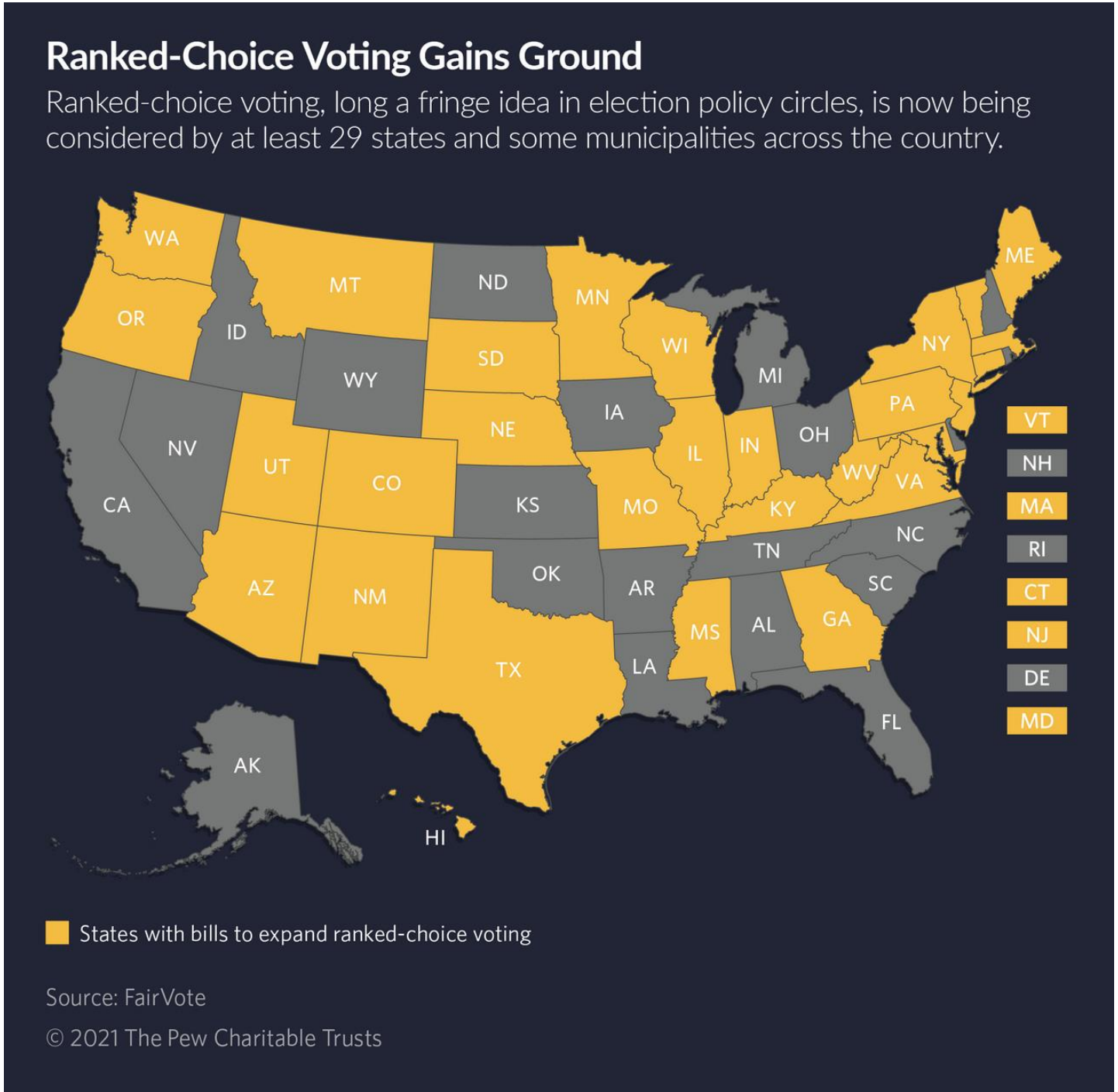


Benefits of Ranked Choice Voting

- **Requires that candidates win a *majority* of votes.**
- *Reduces* wasted votes.
- **Promotes *sincere* voting.**
- *Increases* voter turnout.
- ***Encourages* voter engagement <u>on the issues</u>.**
- *Reduces* negative campaigning.
- **Superior for mail-in balloting.**

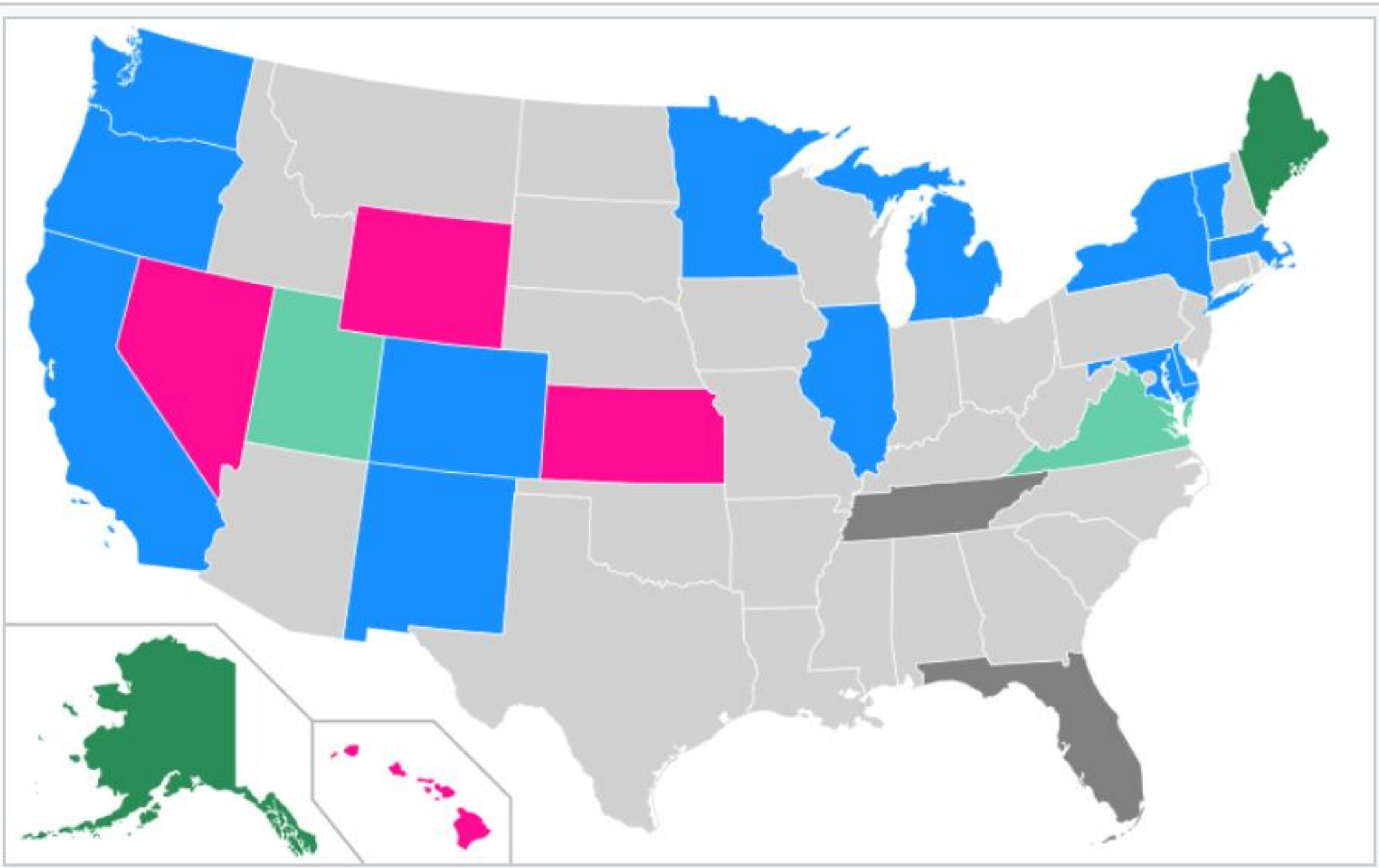
Who’s everyone?

(besides the League of Women Voters D.C.)



In 2021, ***twenty-nine*** states were considering bills to expand Ranked Choice Voting as an alternative to Plurality elections.

FairVote
Pew Charitable Trusts (2021)



Part II

Why do we have to change the way the we elect politicians?

POLITICS • THE D.C. BRIEF

Think the System Is Broken? You're Not Alone

"Two-thirds of adults in the U.S. believe the political system needs overhauled, if not overthrown"

Plurality Elections *(whoever gets the most votes wins)*

The root of democratic evils..

► **Plurality elections foster two-party systems** –

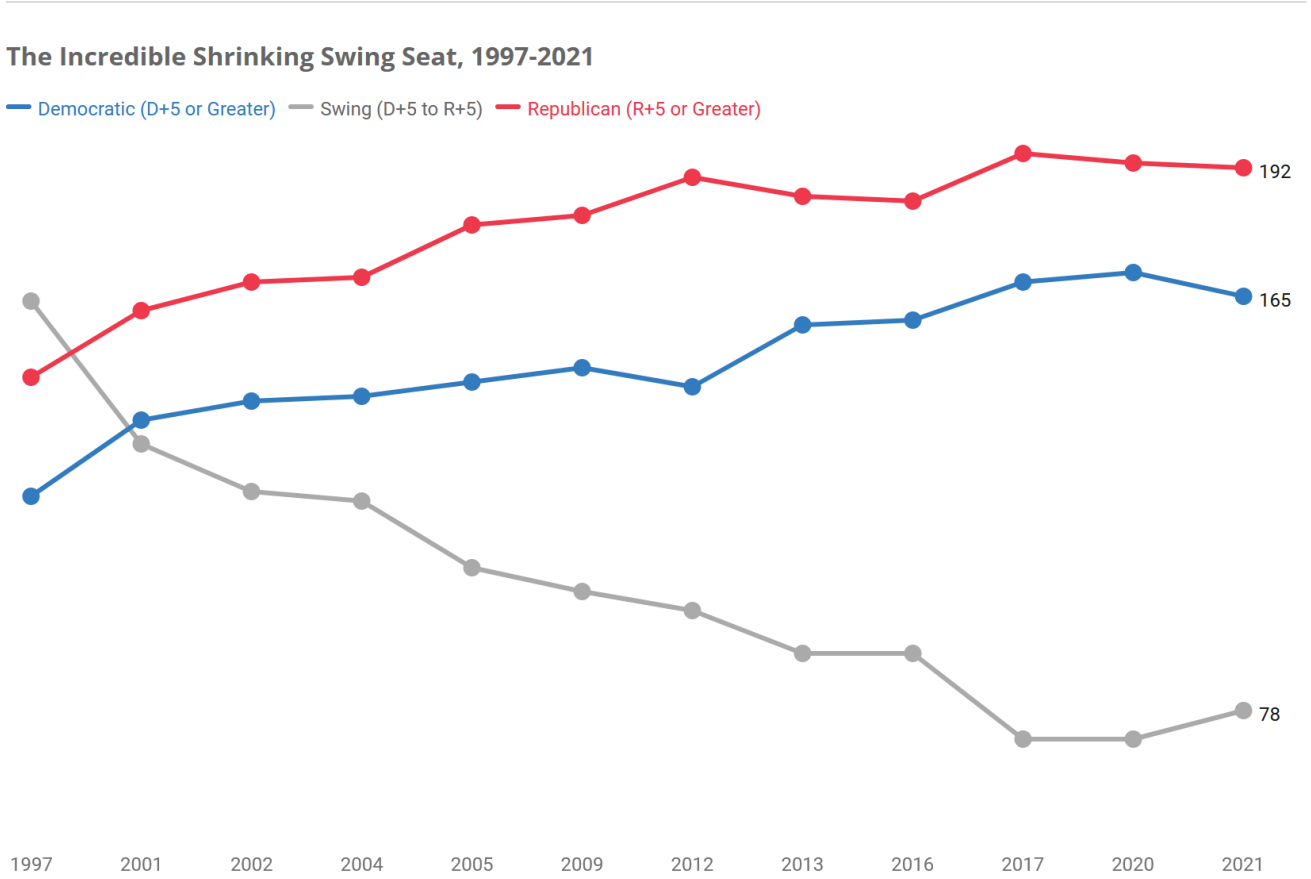
- Limit choice to the two major parties, because third parties have no chance of winning (Duverger's Law).
- Generate incentives for voters to vote strategically rather than sincerely.
- Rationalize partisan gerrymandering to guarantee safe seats.
- ***Reduce*** **voter turnout** – due to lack of choice and foregone outcomes.

- **Do not require that candidates win *majority* support.**
- ***Preclude*** **minority representation within districts.**

The vast majority of general election seats (357 of 435) are "safe" for one of the two major parties.

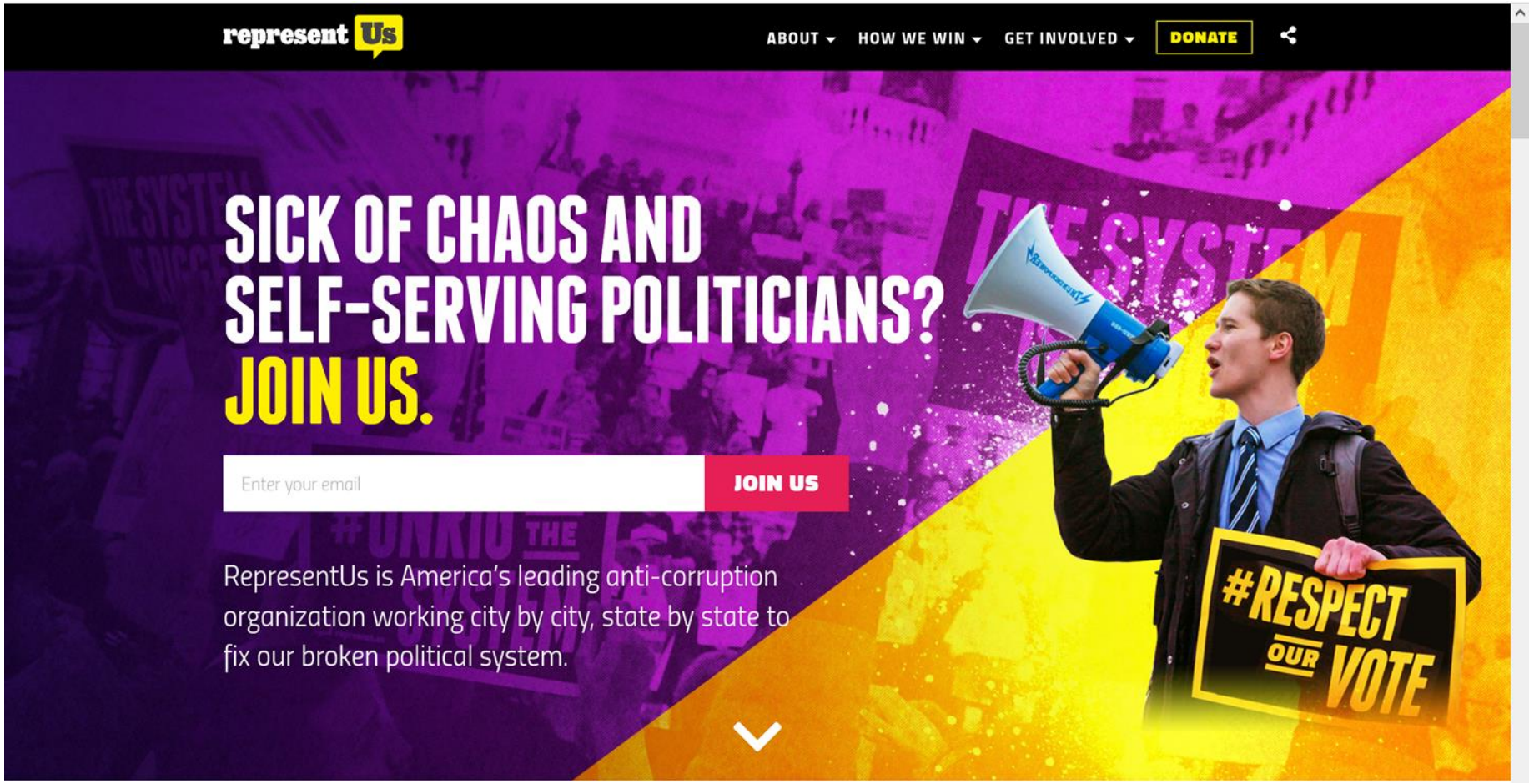
THE COOK POLITICAL REPORT WITH AMY WALTER

About Us | Ratings | Analysis | Charts | Cook PVI



… 82% of general elections to the House are "not competitive" – and it's worse in most state races.

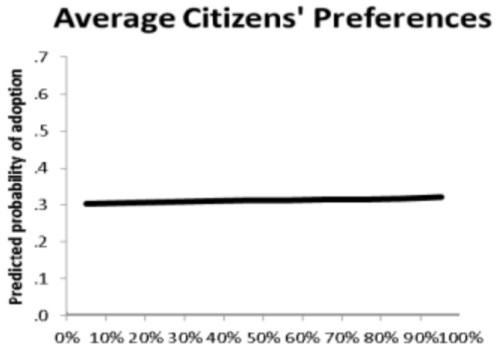
Without meaningful competition, voters cannot hold *their* politicians accountable.



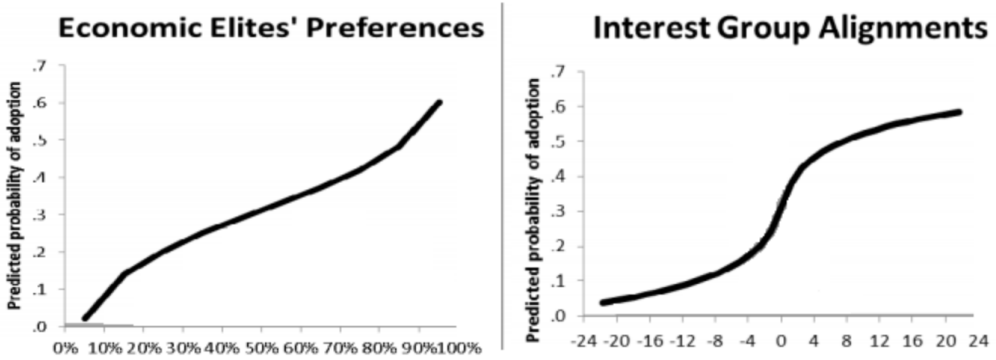
Politicians are not representing the voters at all – they serve the lobbyists and special interests who fund their campaigns.

Research shows that politicians respond to the demands of interest groups and elites, not voters…

Gilens and Page (2014)



In contrast, the next charts show that as more and more economic elites and interest groups want a certain policy change, they do become more likely to get what they want:

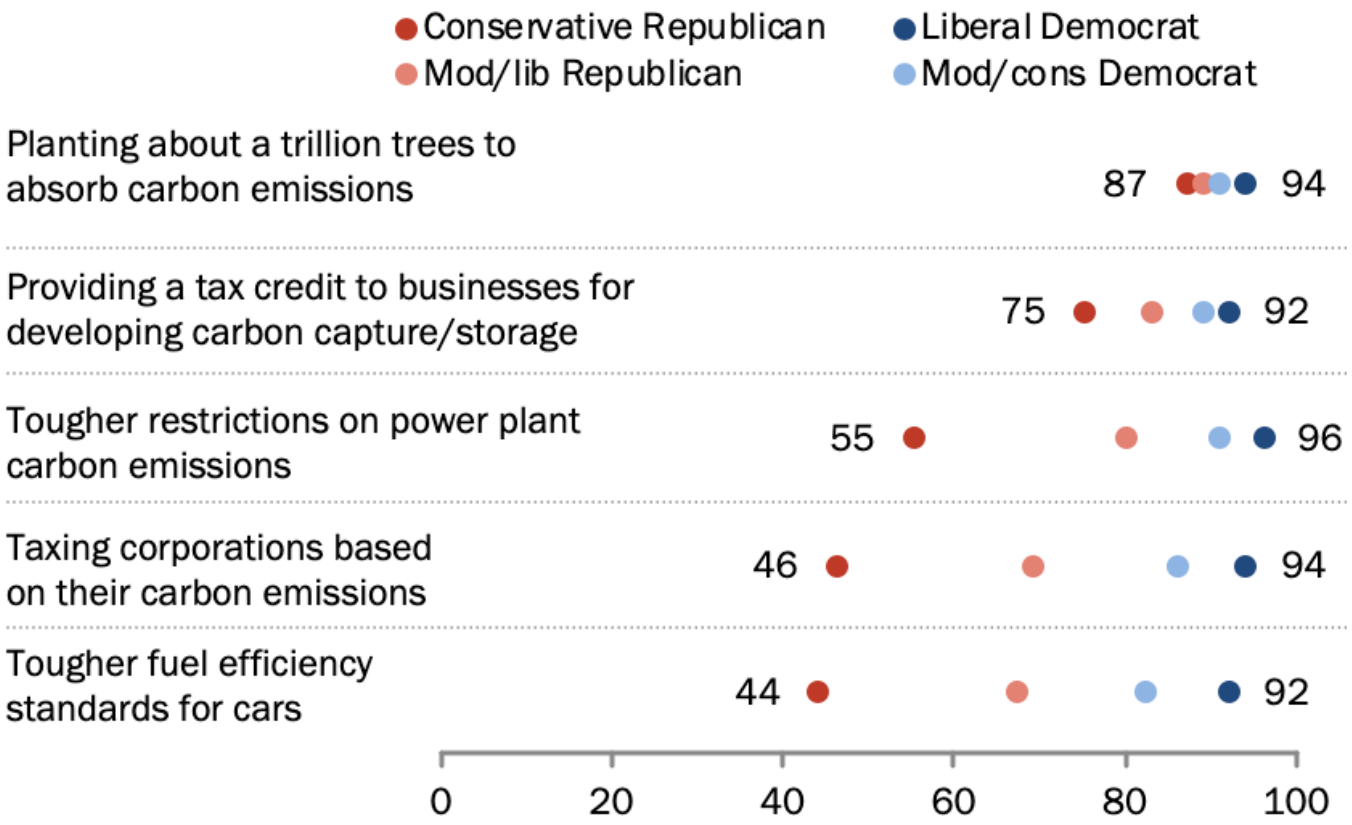


*** "This first [graph] shows that as more and more average citizens support an issue, they're not any more likely to get what they want. …**

* [the second graph shows] if fewer than 20 percent of wealthy Americans supported a policy change, it only happened about 18 percent of the time. But when 80 percent of them were in support, the change ended up happening 45 percent of the time. There's no similar effect for average Americans.

Majorities of moderate Republicans back policies to address global climate change

% of U.S. adults who favor each of the following proposals to reduce the effects of global climate change



Note: Republicans and Democrats include independents and others who lean to each of the parties. Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey conducted April 29-May 5, 2020.
"Two-Thirds of Americans Think Government Should Do More on Climate"

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Re: Climate Change

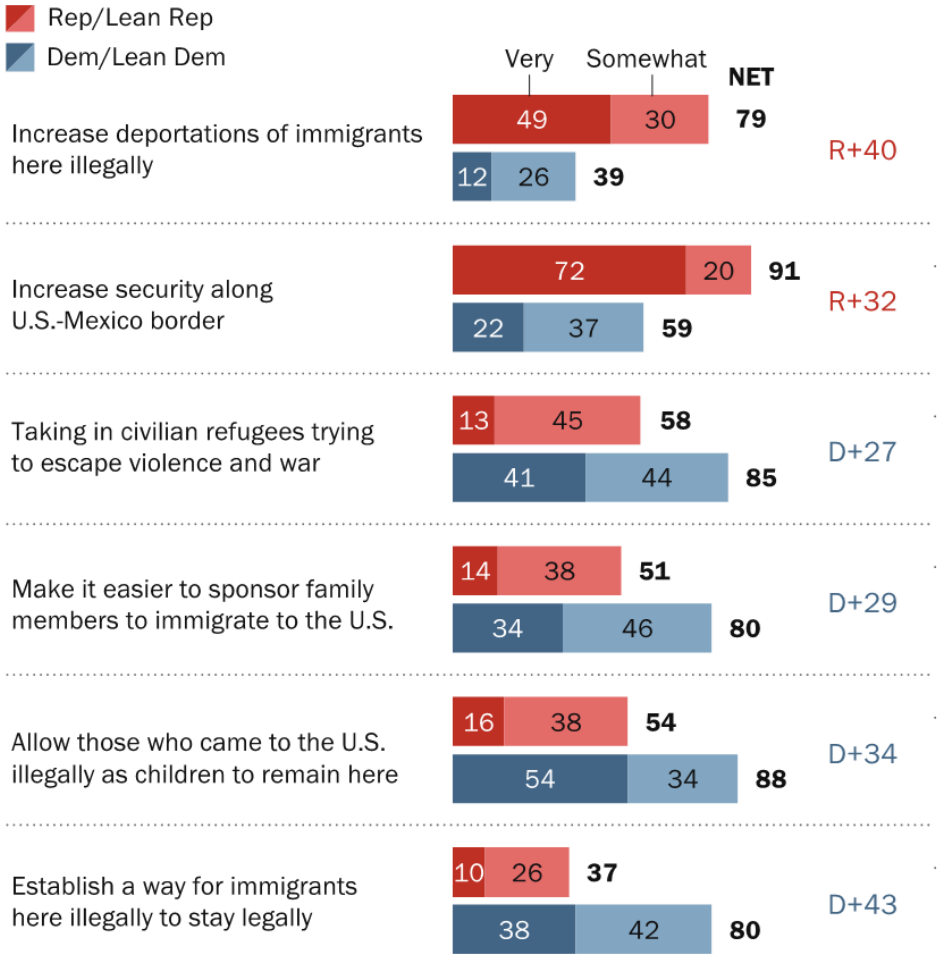
Large Majorities of *Republicans* want politicians to address climate change.

Republicans want tougher restrictions on carbon emissions from power plants..

Republicans want tax credits for carbon capture and storage.

Republicans prioritize border security as very important immigration goal; Democrats more likely to view path to legal status as very important

*% who say each is a **very/somewhat important** goal for U.S. immigration policy*



Note: See topline for full question wording.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Aug. 1-14, 2022.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Re: Immigration

Majorities want change:

91% of Republicans *and*

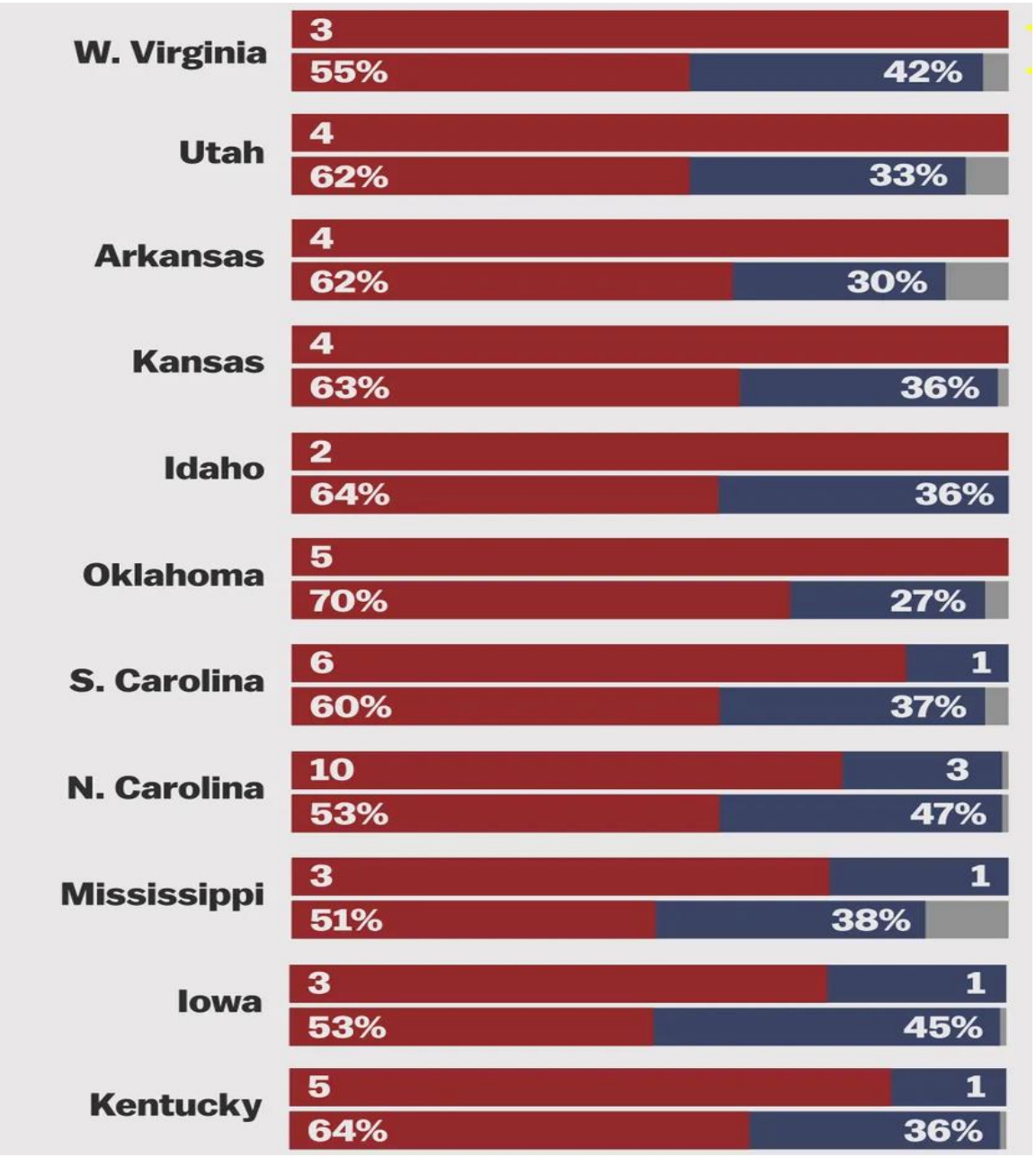
59% of Democrats want to see increased security along the U.S.- Mexico border.

Majorities - on both sides – want to:

- allow those who came to the U.S. illegally as children to stay.
- make it easier for family members to immigrate to the U.S.
- take in civilian refugees trying to escape violence and war.

Plurality elections limit *Representation*

When only one representative is elected per district, minorities – **ethnic, racial, religious *and ideological*** – are left without any representation at all.



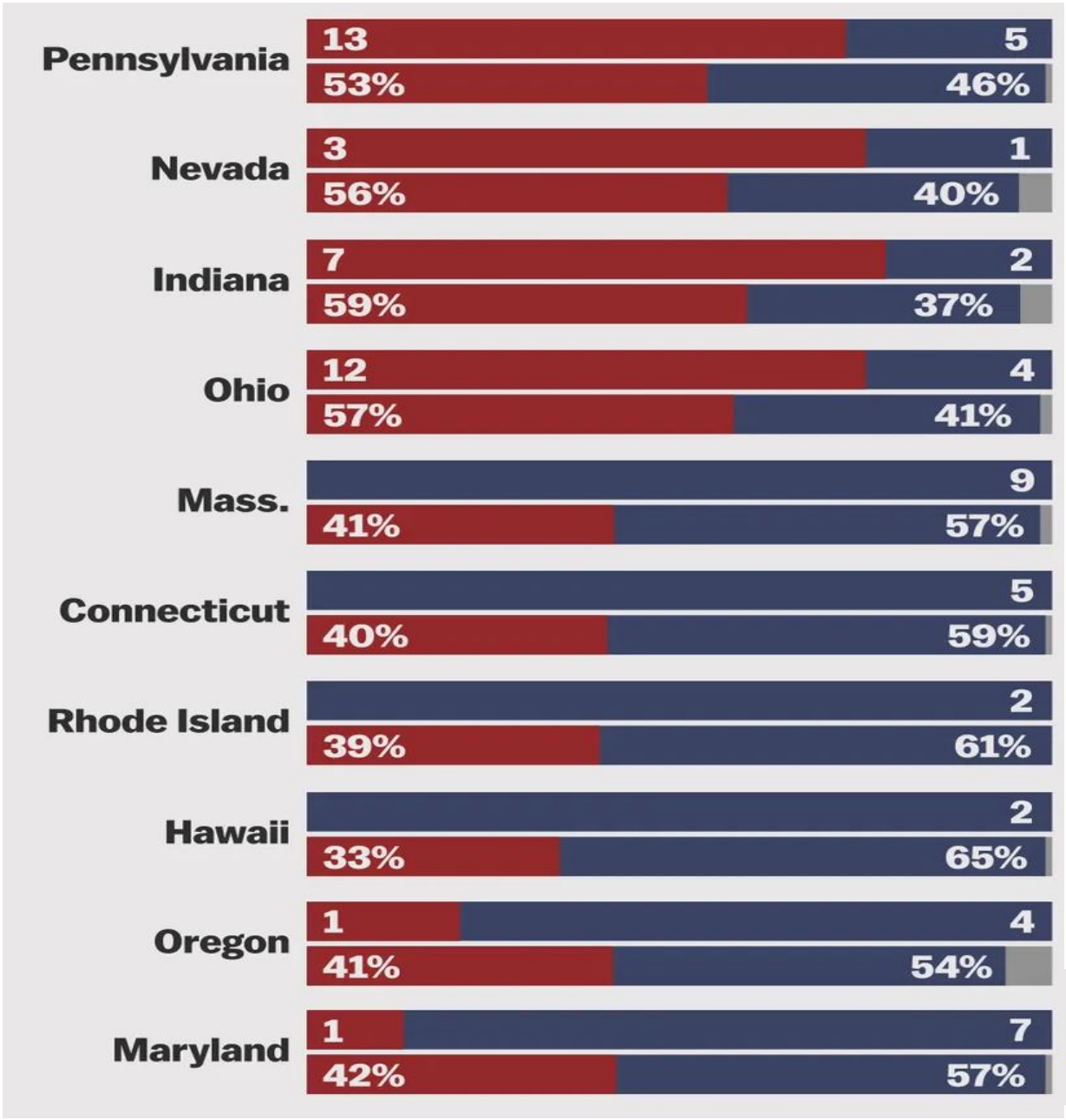
2014 Data

2022

Iowa (4)	43%
Oklahoma (5)	30%
Utah (4)	32%
Arkansas (4)	30%
Nebraska (3)	35%
Idaho (2)	31%
West Virginia (2)	32%

Large minorities of Democrats go without any representation.

2014 Data



2022

Massachusetts (9)	30%
Connecticut (5)	42%
New Mexico (5)	45%
New Hampshire (2)	45%
Rhode Island (2)	42%
Hawaii (2)	31%

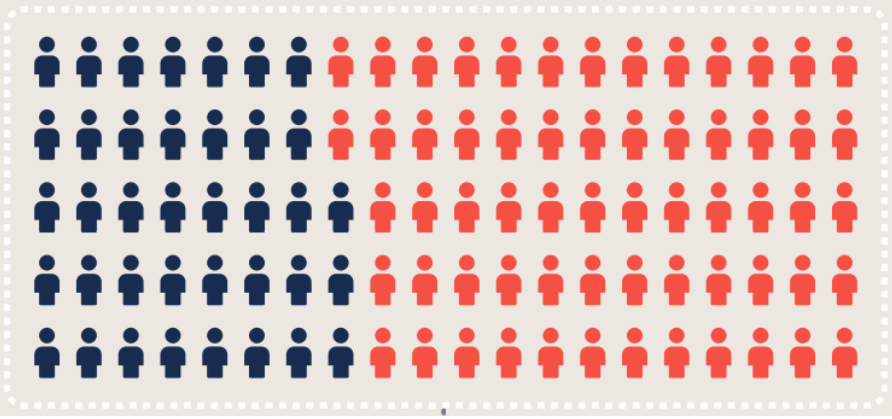
Large minorities of Republicans go without any representation.

VOTE SHARE VS SEAT SHARE

With winner-take-all elections, a single political party can sweep an entire House delegation, even if a substantial share of the electorate votes for another party. Under proportional representation, delegations would more closely reflect the preferences of each state's electorate.

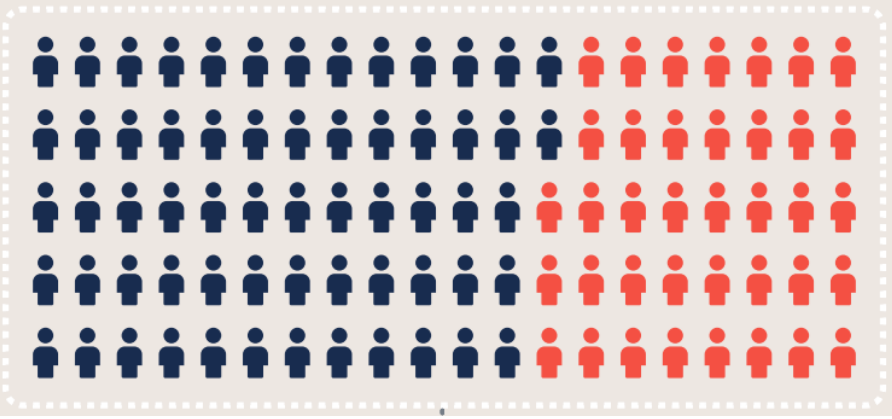
Oklahoma

1/3 Votes Cast (D) | 2/3 Votes Cast (R)



Massachusetts

2/3 Votes Cast (D) | 1/3 Votes Cast (R)



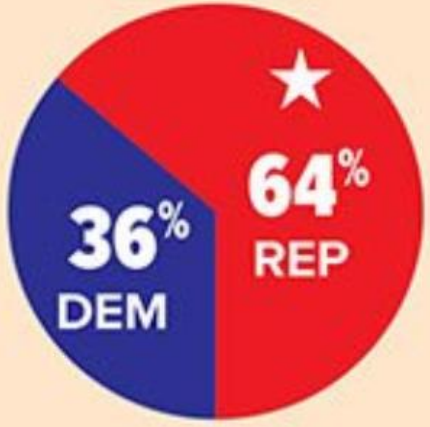
How the people voted

Democrats won the popular vote for all statewide races and the Assembly.
But they are denied proportional representation in the Assembly.

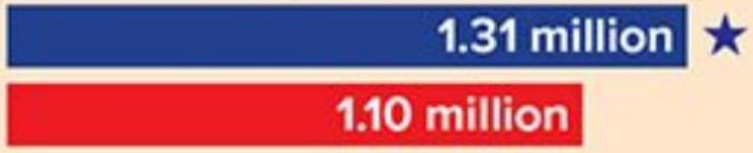
★ = winner

State Assembly popular vote

State Assembly seats won



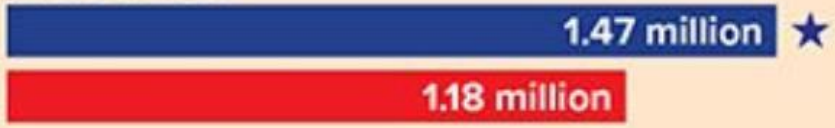
State Assembly popular vote



State Assembly seats won

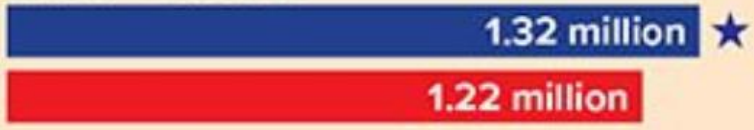
Governor

U.S. Senate

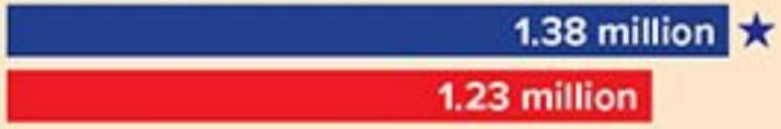


Attorney General

State Treasurer



Secretary of State



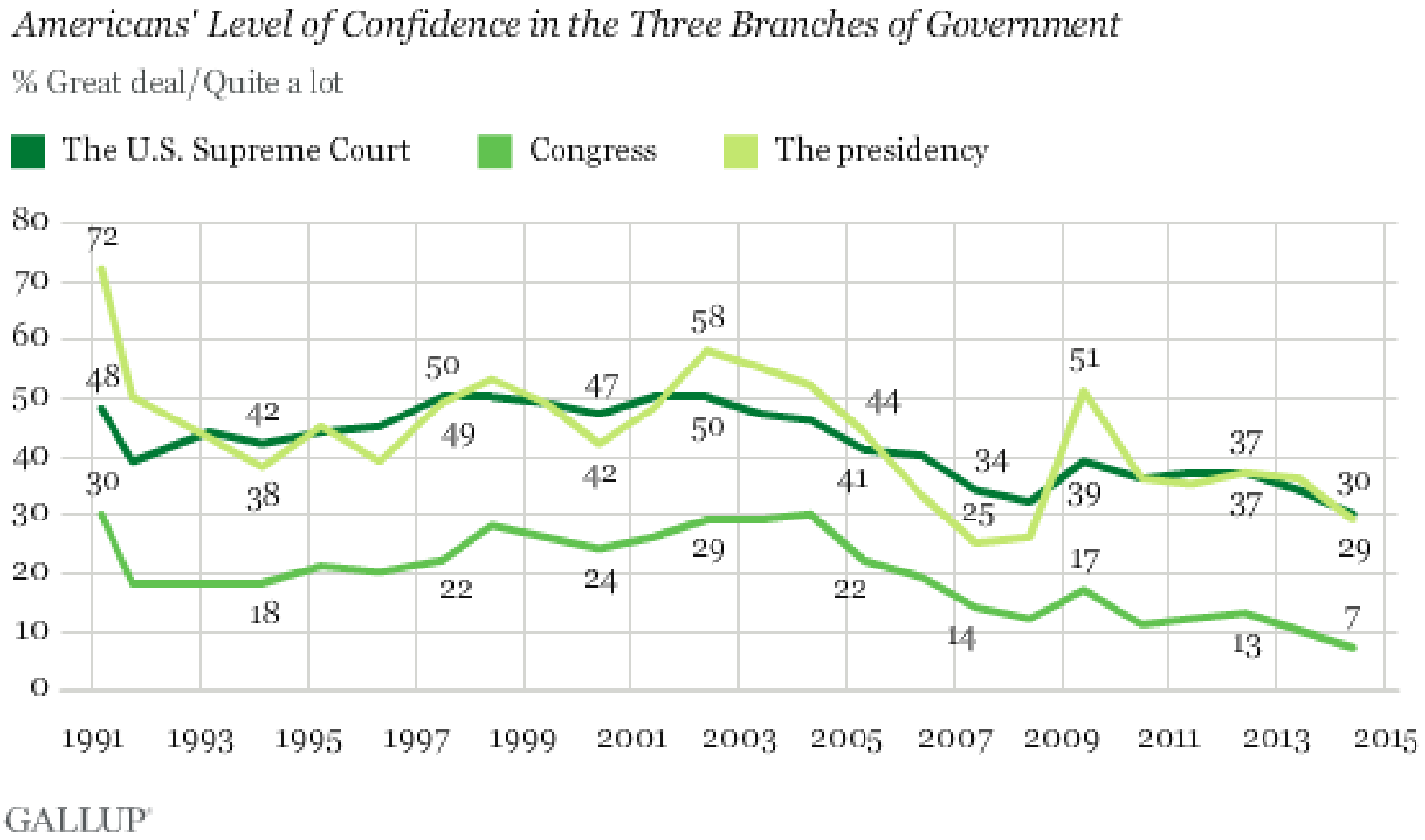
2018 Data

American democracy isn't working

for minorities or majorities…

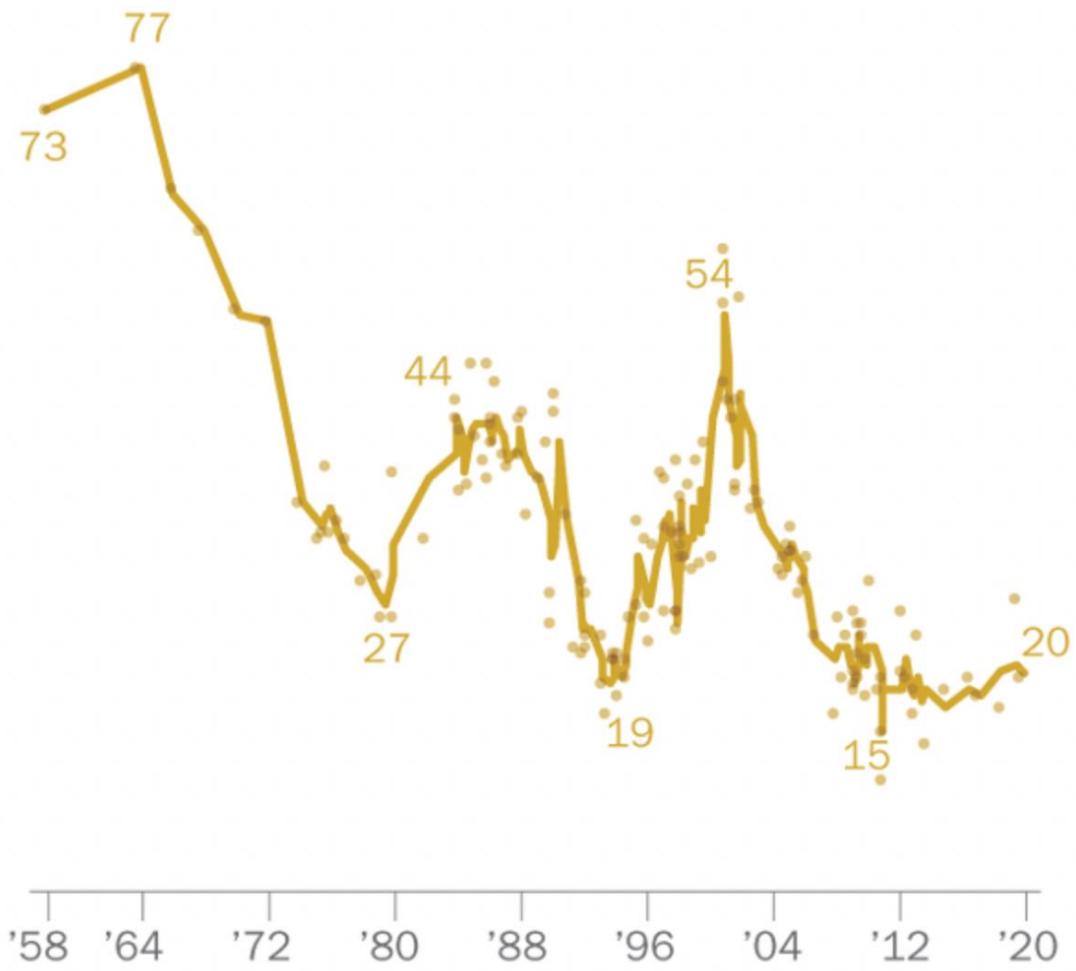
The problems associated with single-member districts and plurality elections threaten democratic legitimacy.

Americans have lost confidence in government (1991-2015)



Public trust in federal government near historic lows for more than a decade

% who say they trust the federal government to do what is right just about always/most of the time



Pew Research Center

SUPPORT FOR DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVES BY AGE

Support for democracy and alternatives, by age. | Data: 2018 American Institutional Confidence Poll; figure by Sean Kates

But wait, there's more …

Ironically, **plurality elections** do not do the one thing they are (theoretically) supposed to do – they **do not moderate politics**, they do not encourage parties or politicians to move to the center.

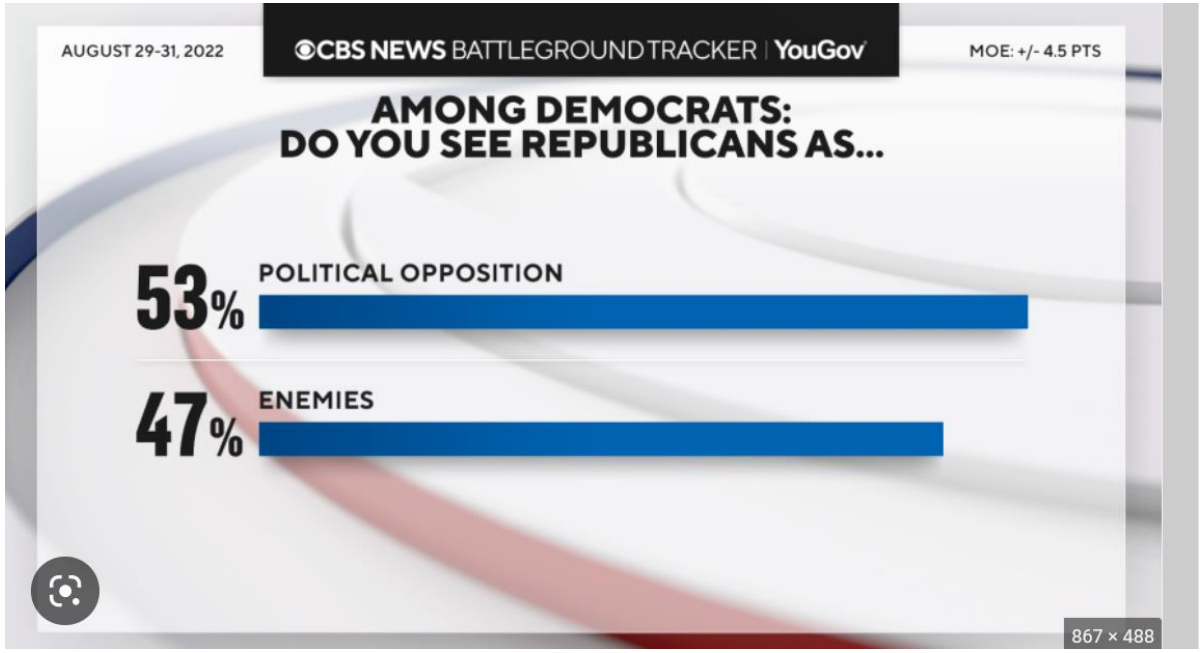
In fact, the reverse is true.

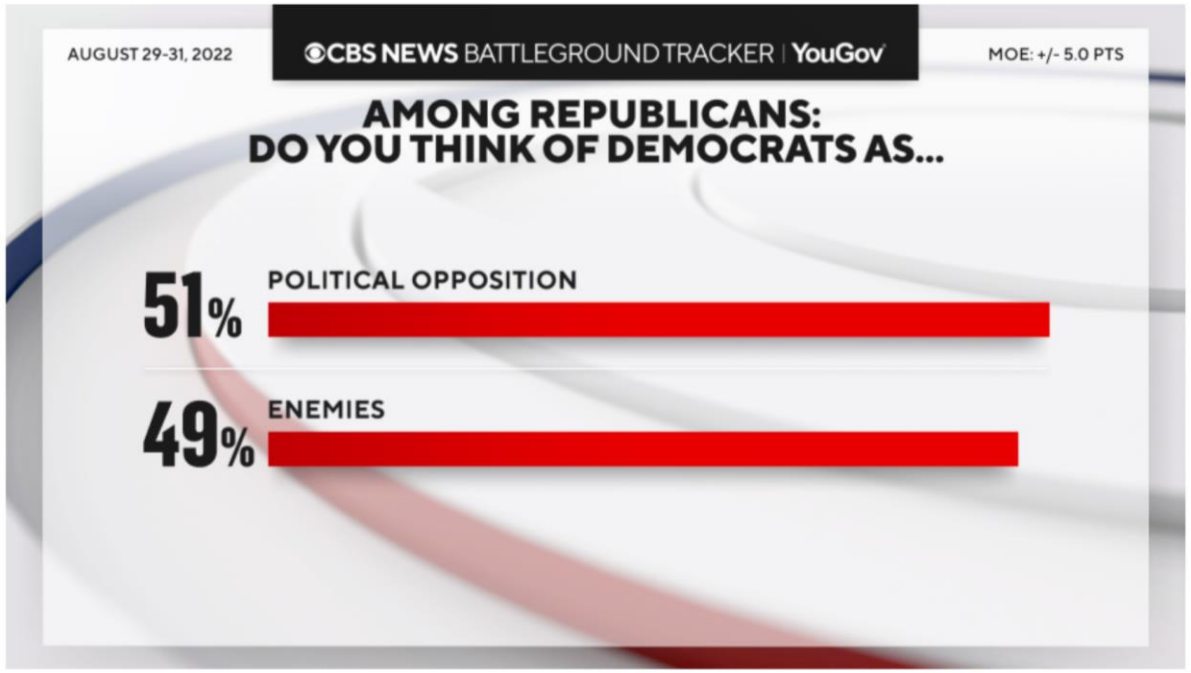
Plurality elections foster *Polarization*

- The most effective campaigns are emotional – attacking the other candidate personally and generating fear.

- **Negative campaigns make sense because they *reduce turnout* for the opposition.**

- As a result, we don't just disagree over policy, the motives of other side are depicted as evil.





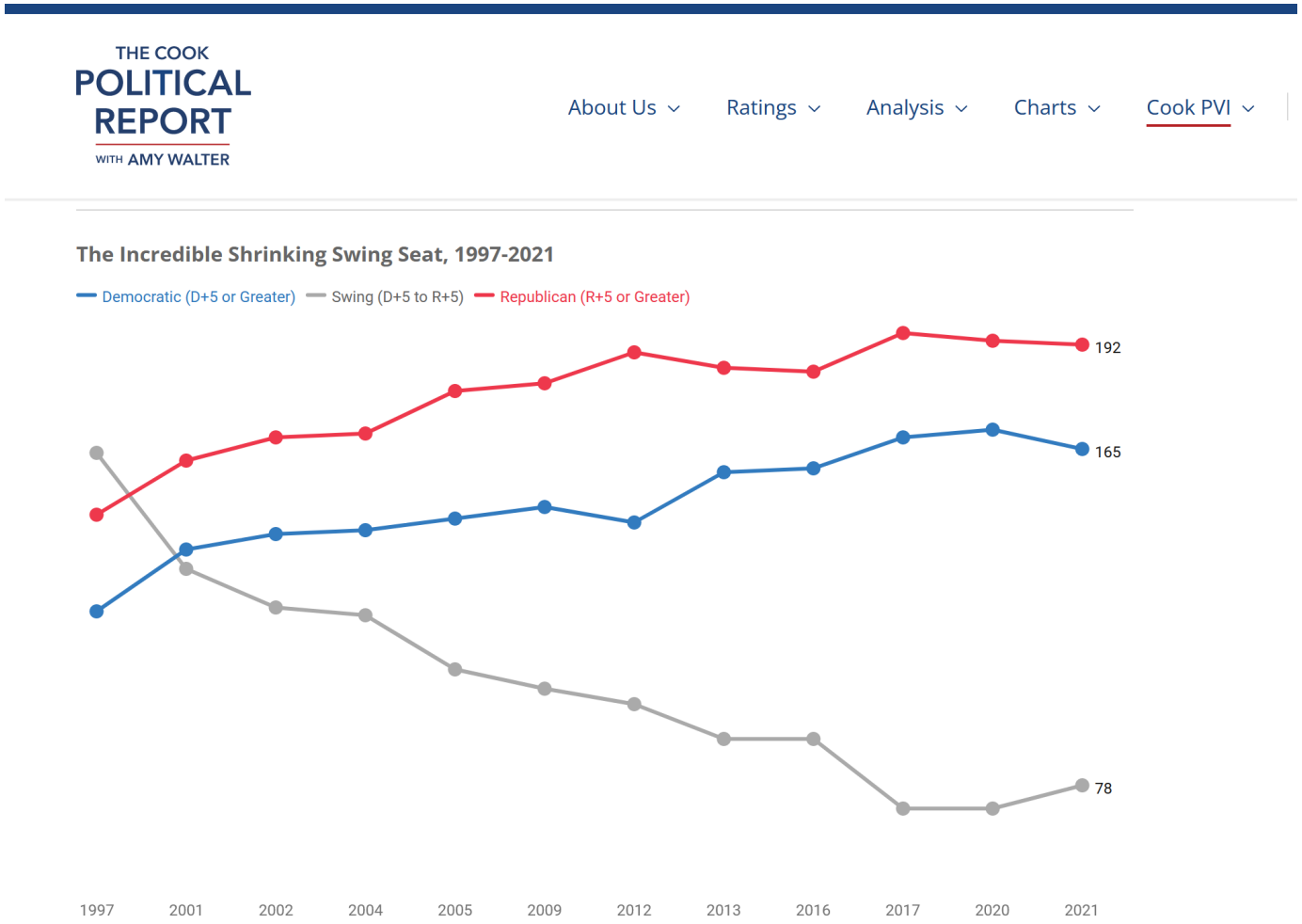
Nearly half of Democrats and Republicans see the other side as <u>enemies</u>.

"*that is, if they win, <u>your life or entire way of life may be threatened</u>* "

vs. Opposition: "*that is, if they win, you just won't get the policies you want*"

CBS Poll August 29-31, 2022
Adults in the U.S. YouGov

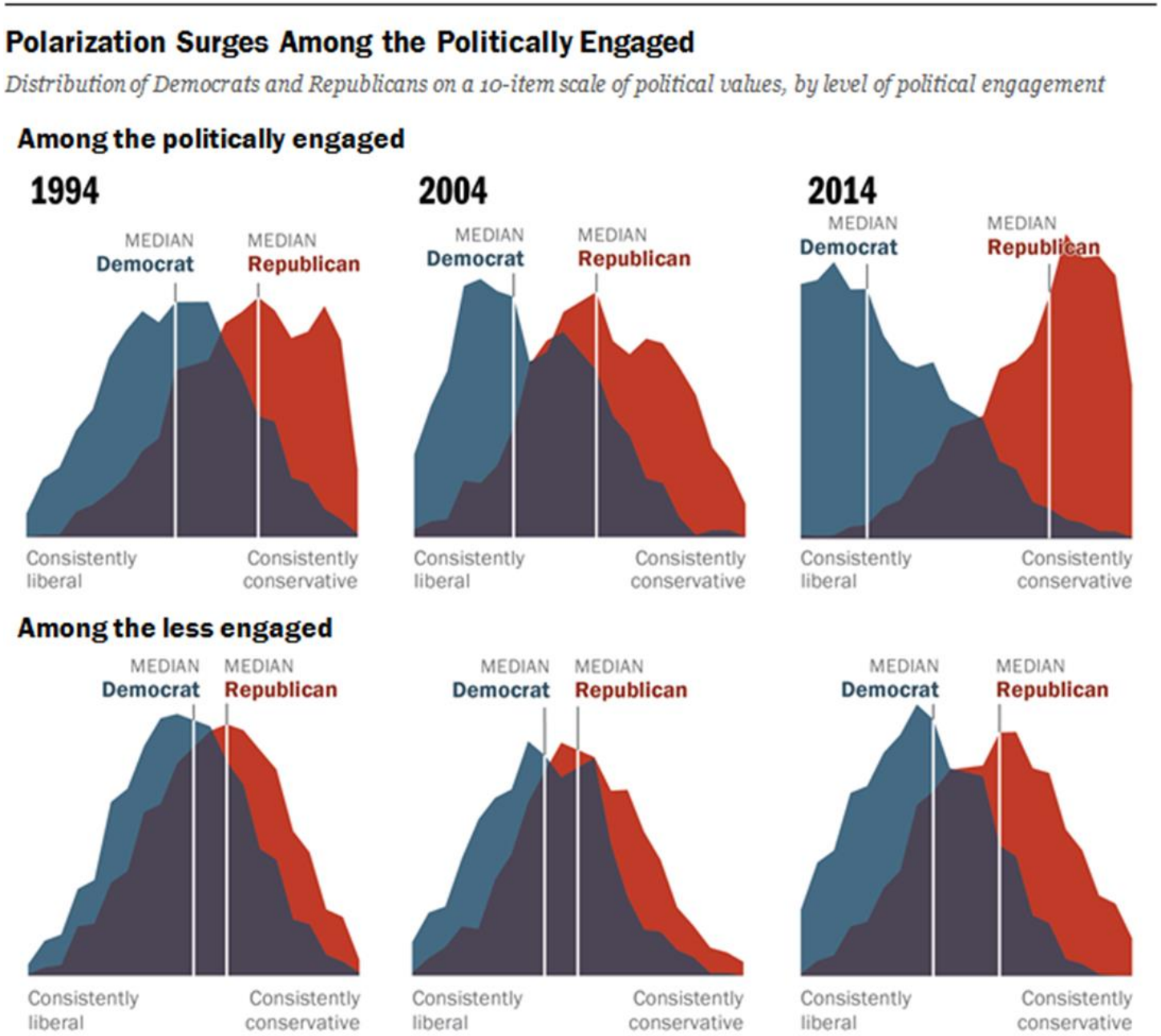
Why? “Safe seats” are dangerous for democracy.

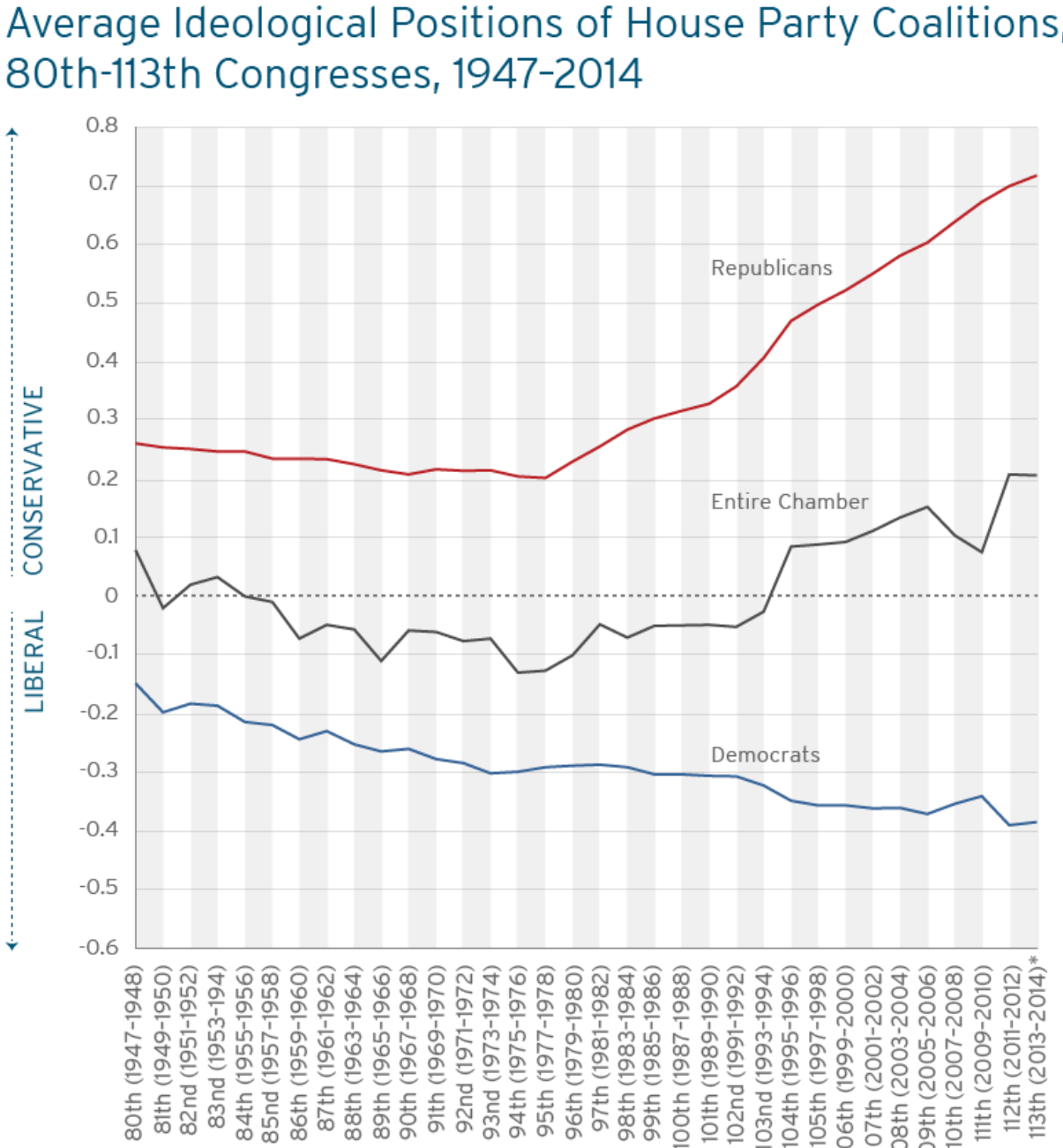


When the general election is “safe” for one of the two major parties – <u>the only election that matters is the *Primary*</u>, and that is

“The Primary Problem”

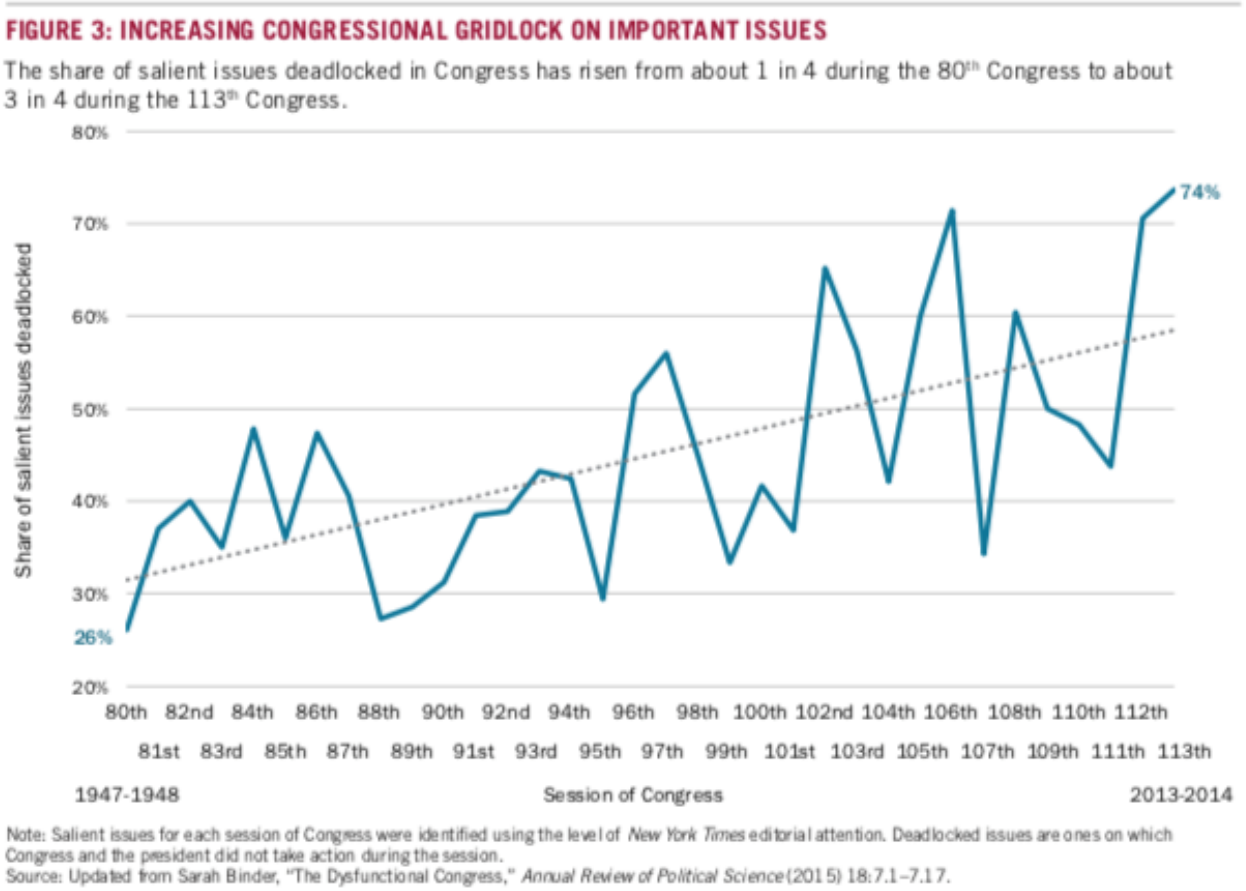
The most politically engaged Americans – the ~ 10 to 15% that vote in primary elections, **are the most polarized** – and <u>they have the greatest influence</u> over which politicians actually win office.





As the most engaged voters become more extreme, the Congresspeople we elect are getting more and more extreme as well; they too have less and less in common.

Where Does That Leave Us?



Paralyzed

by

Polarization.

74% of the issues in front of Congress are stuck in <u>Gridlock</u>.

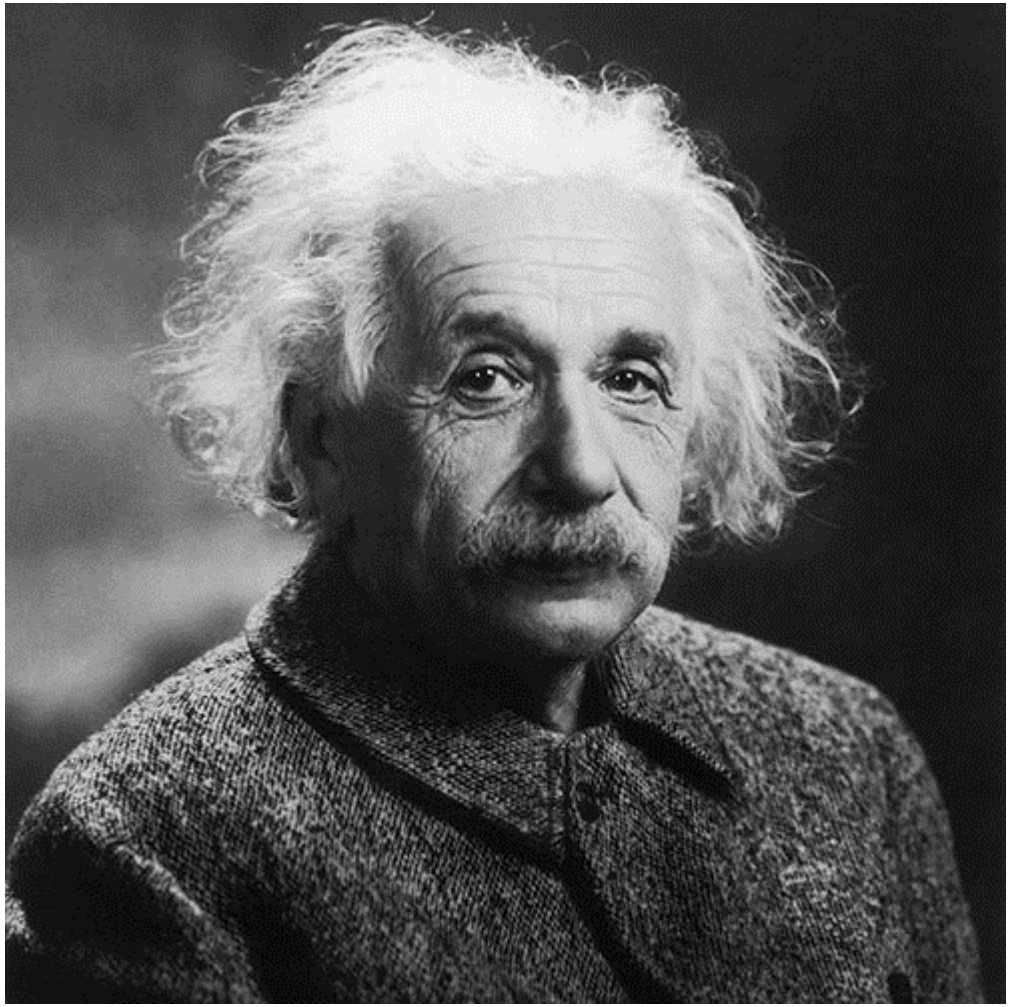
California's "top-two" (*jungle*) primary

- All candidates compete in **one non-partisan primary**.
- Voters vote for their preferred candidate.
- **The top two vote-getters compete in the general election**.

In a "one-party" state, this system fosters competition within the party.

- *However*, voters still vote strategically rather than sincerely.
- **Small parties** are still strongly **disadvantaged**.
- Minorities have no influence – and no representation.
- Parties and/or candidates may attempt to split the vote for the opposition.
- Negative campaigns still make sense for individual candidates.

Making American Democracy Work (for us)



To do the same thing and expect different results is insane...

The way we elect politicians has to change.

Part III

Making democracy work.

There's a growing consensus –

across the country *and*
across the ideological divide,

that **Ranked Choice Voting**
is the change we need..

Ranked Choice Voting

How it Works | When do we use RCV? | History of RCV in Maine | Municipal RCV

How Ranked Choice Voting Works

Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to rank candidates on the ballot in order of preference: first, second, third, and fourth. If one candidate receives a majority (more than 50%) of the first-choice votes, they win! If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and voters that ranked that candidate 1st have their vote counted for their next choice. This process continues until one candidate receives a majority of voters' choices.

AK DIVISION OF ELECTIONS SAMPLE BALLOTS

TRY OUT THE VIRTUAL MOCK ELECTION

HOW TO COMPLETE YOUR BALLOT

- What's The Problem?
- What Are The Benefits Of Ranked Choice Voting?

ELECTIONS

Nevada voters back big changes to their election system

Updated November 13, 2022 · 10:04 PM ET

By Don Clyde


JOIN, RENEW, OR DONATE NOW
CALIFORNIANS FOR
ELECTORAL REFORM
RCV
PR
GET INVOLVED
ABOUT CFER
LATEST NEWS
SEARCH
IT'S TIME TO MAKE SURE
EVERY CALIFORNIA VOTER IS REPRESENTED
We are a nonpartisan coalition of Californians who believe that all citizens deserve equal and satisfactory representation in government.
JOIN TODAY
LEARN MORE

English

CalRCV

About Us | Get Involved | Public Events | News | More | Sign in | Donate

Help expand **Ranked Choice Voting** across California

Join The Movement!

RANKED CHOICE VOTING IMPROVES OUR ELECTIONS

Our “choose-one” elections deprive voters of meaningful choices, create increasingly toxic campaign cycles, advance candidates who lack broad support and leave voters feeling like our voices are not heard. Ranked choice voting improves fairness in elections by allowing voters to rank candidates in order of preference.

LEARN MORE

Non-partisan Structural Reform Organizations

FairVote

RANKED CHOICE VOTING RESOURCE CENTER

represent Us
10 YEARS FIGHTING FOR DEMOCRACY

REPRESENT WOMEN
Parity for Women in Politics

UNITE AMERICA

VETERANS FOR POLITICAL INNOVATION

PARTNERS IN DEMOCRACY

Business For Democracy US

Organizations advocating Ranked Choice Voting on the “Left” Coast

California RCV Coalition

Oregon Ranked Choice Voting

FairVote Washington

East Coast and the (liberal) Northeast

Ranked Choice NY

New Hampshire Ranked Choice Voting

The Committee for Ranked Choice Voting (Maine)

Voter Choice Massachusetts

Voter Choice Connecticut

Rank the Vote DC

Ranked Choice VT

Mid Atlantic

Ranked Choice Virginia

Ranked Choice Virginia

MONEY OUT
MARCH ON HARRISBURG

March on Harrisburg

BetterBALLOT
NORTH CAROLINA

Better Ballot North Carolina

RANK THE VOTE
DELAWARE

Rank the Vote Delaware

FairVote

FairVote Virginia

VOTER CHOICE NJ
Raise Your Voice
Rank Your Vote

Voter Choice New Jersey

RANKED CHOICE VOTING for MARYLAND

Ranked Choice Voting for Maryland

Northern States

Utah Ranked Choice Voting

Better Elections Idaho

Ranked Choice Voting for Colorado

Alaskans for Better Elections

Ranked Choice Voting Montana

Southern States

Rank the Vote Kentucky

Ranked Choice Tennessee

Better Ballot Georgia

Better Ballot Alabama

Ranked Choice Louisiana

Open Primaries Arkansas

Rank My Vote Florida

Better Ballot South Carolina

The Midwest

Better Ballot Iowa

Better Ballot Indiana

Voters First Wisconsin

Rank MI Vote

RCV Minnesota

FairVote Illinois

Missourians for Ranked Choice Voting

FairVote

Rank the Vote Ohio

The Southwest

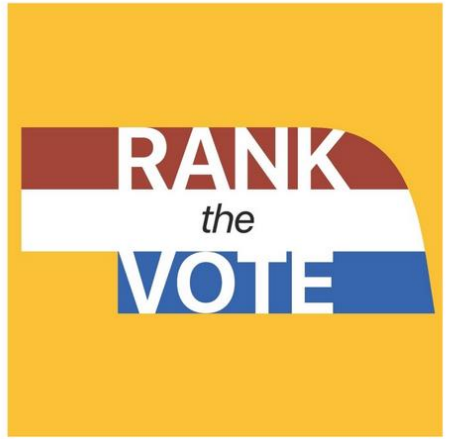
Nevadans for Election Reform

Common Cause New Mexico

Voter Choice Arizona

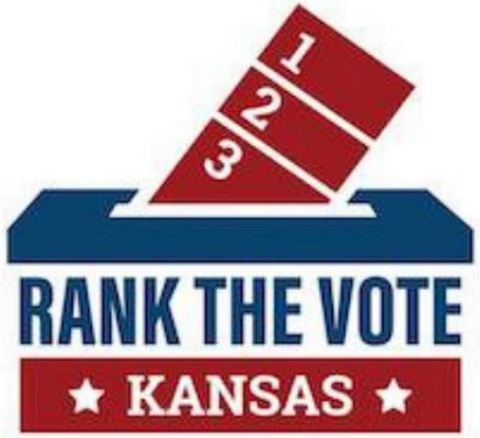
Ranked Choice Voting for Texas

The Plains States



Rank the Vote Nebraska

North Dakota Voters First



Rank the Vote Kansas

Ranked Choice for SD

Rank the Vote Oklahoma

Everyone is talking about Ranked Choice Voting!

► It can fix the problems of Plurality

in **single-member district** elections –

encouraging competition *even in gerrymandered districts* –

and ***guaranteeing*** majority rule.

► It can be used in **multi-member districts**,

to ensure *minority* representation as well.

How does Ranked Choice Voting fix the problems of plurality elections?

- Guarantees Majority Rule
- Creates **Competition** (*even in gerrymandered districts*) because voters can vote *sincerely* without wasting their vote,
- Facilitates **Accountability** because voters can support a different party without defecting to the other side,
- Choice Increases Voter **Turnout**,
- *Improves* **Representation,**
- *Incentivizes* **Civility** – negative campaigns *reduce* support!

Civility

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqN6lHb4QcI&t=1s

Oakland D4 City Council election using RCV

In Ranked Choice Voting elections negative campaigning doesn’t make sense – what *does* make sense is to seek the second-preference votes from your competitors – and that changes everything!

Proportional Ranked Choice Voting

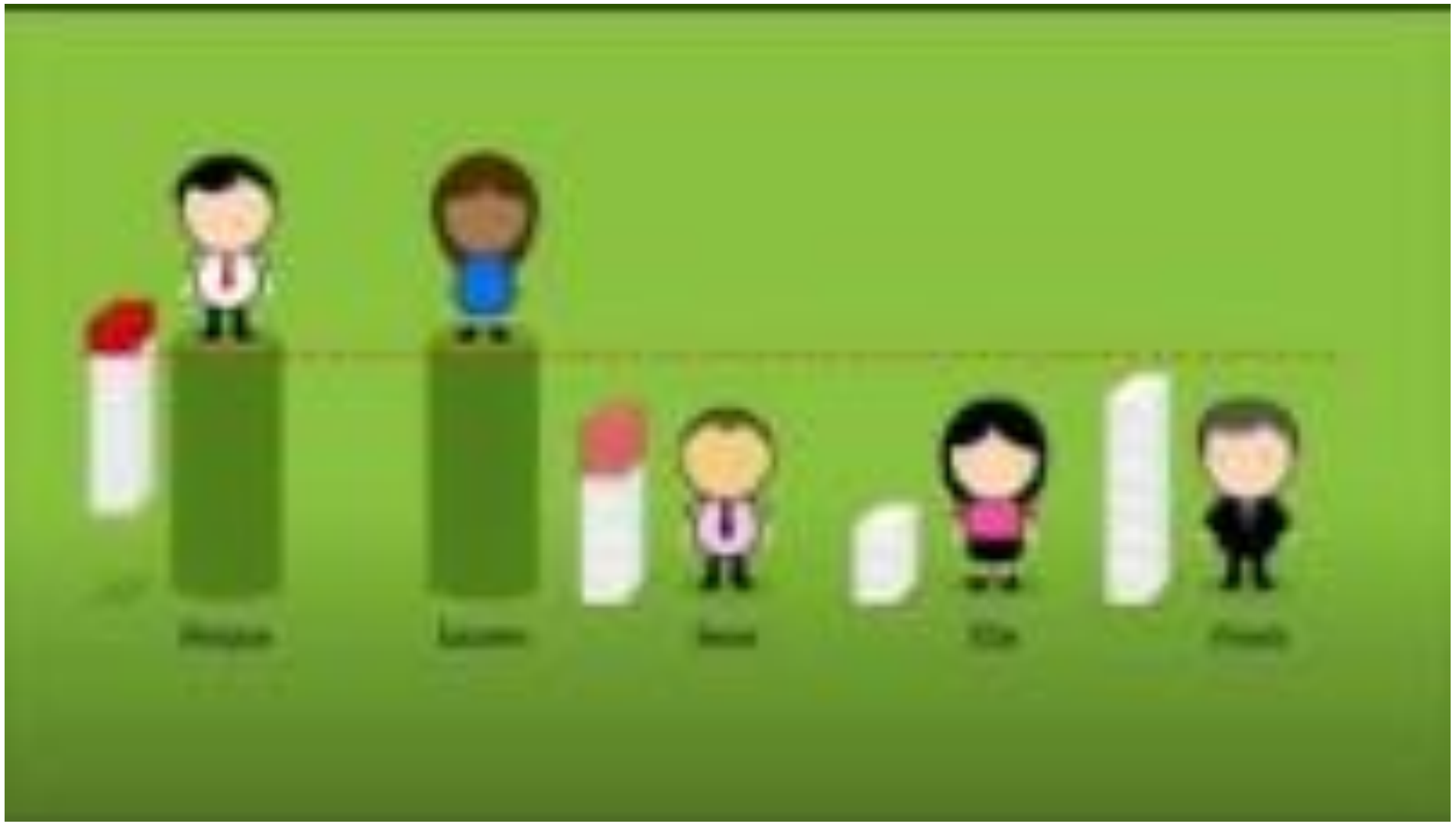
(Multi-member district example)

Voters still rank their preferences for candidates: 1 – 2 – 3 …

… but translating votes into seats is different –

Proportional Ranked Choice Voting

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xR1WWYXAH3A



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Our Coalition

Reforming California's electoral system isn't going to happen overnight. It's a big lift and the major parties have little interest in pursuing an electoral reform that distributes political power fairly. So if we want a multi-party democracy, we're going to have to do the lifting ourselves.

Fortunately, we're not alone. ProRep is building a diverse coalition of politcal parties, academics, advocacy organizations, and engaged activists intent on bringing proportional representation to California's State Legislature.

SHAPING THE DEMOCRACY OF TOMORROW · CAMPAIGNS & COALITIONS · STATEMENTS

Over 200 Democracy Scholars Call on Congress to End Single-Member Congressional Districts and Adopt Proportional Representation

SEPTEMBER 19, 2022

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, more than 200 political scientists, legal scholars, and historians from academic institutions across the United States released an open letter calling on Congress to reject the United States' winner-take-all system of elections in the wake of a failed 2020 redistricting process and adopt multi-member districts with proportional representation for the U.S. House of Representatives.

The letter's 200+ signatories include experts in fields ranging from comparative electoral politics to constitutional law. They include nine Johan Skytte Prize winners, often considered the 'Nobel Prize of political science': Robert

LWVC Position Statement (continued)

- "**The League supports electoral systems** that elect policy-making bodies–-legislatures, councils, commissions, and boards—**that proportionally reflect the people they represent**.

- We support systems **that inhibit** political manipulation (**gerrymandering**).

- The LWVC supports enabling legislation to allow ***local jurisdictions*** to explore **alternative electoral methods**, as well as supporting state election laws allowing for more options at both the state and local levels.

- With the adoption of any electoral system, **the League believes that education of the voting public is important** and funding for startup and voter education should be available. We encourage a concerted voter education process."

Summary

- **Plurality elections are bad for democracy** – they limit choice to one of two big parties, reduce incentives for citizens to vote, generate incentives for voters to vote strategically and for parties to gerrymander districts to *eliminate* competition from the other party. They are also generate incentives for negative campaigns and divisive rhetoric that distracts from issue-based competition.

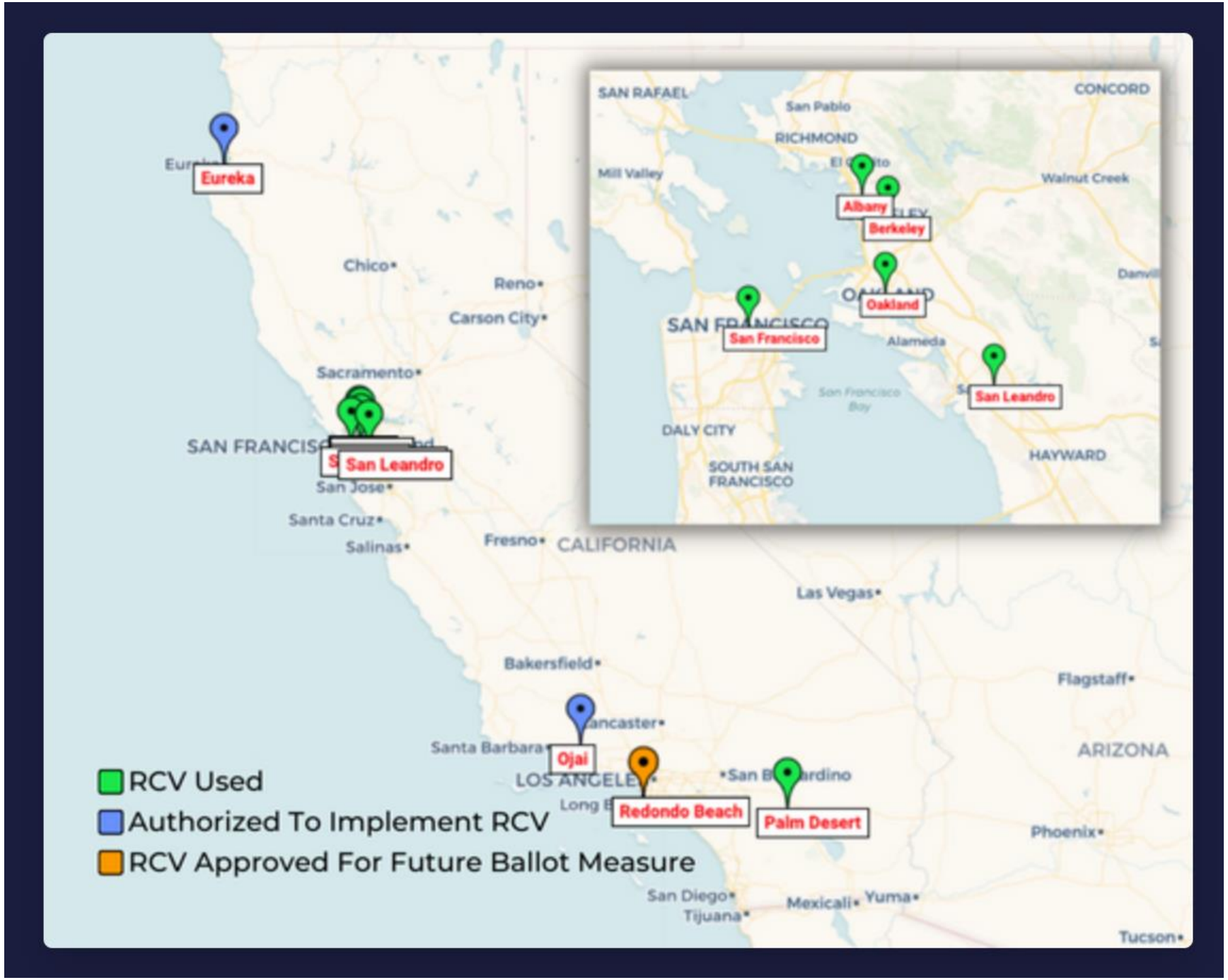
- **Ranked Choice Voting is good for democracy** – it increases party choice, generates incentives for citizens to vote and for voters to vote sincerely; it reduces the value of gerrymandering, increases meaningful competition and generates incentives for positive campaigns based on the issues.

Thank you.

For additional information and research on RCV,
opportunities to help change the way we vote, or to
add your name to the growing list of voters who want reform:

- **Californians for Electoral Reform - CfER.org**
- CalRCV.org
- **Rankthevote.us**
- FairVote.org

- ***Contact Lorelei Moosbrugger at*: 4rankedchoice@gmail.com**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