

January 2020 LWV of Portland Action Committee Meeting on STAR Voting by Action Chair, Debbie Aiona

Sara Wolk, executive director of the Equal Vote Coalition (www.equal.vote), spoke at the January Action Committee meeting. The coalition is an Oregon-based group working to promote a new approach to voting that is fair, accurate, and nationally viable. They have identified the STAR (Score Then Automatic Runoff) voting system as their preferred option.

The STAR system is a hybrid of Ranked Choice and Score Voting. The STAR ballot asks voters to score each candidate on the ballot on a scale of 0 – 5 stars. The two highest scoring candidates are the finalists and the finalist preferred by the majority of voters wins the race. Detailed information on various voting methods and their strengths and weaknesses is available in the LWVOR [Election Methods Study Update 2016](#).

Ms. Wolk explained that STAR voting has the following advantages in single winner races:

- It eliminates vote splitting and the spoiler effect.
- It eliminates advantages to specific types of candidates, for example it does not favor candidates who are perceived as being more “viable.”
- Ballots can be tabulated locally, by precinct, for example.
- Tabulation is not particularly complex; it requires two rounds of arithmetic calculation.
- It receives the highest rating of Voter Satisfaction Efficiency from the Center for Election Science. In other words, the most voters feel their choice was captured accurately.
- STAR voting is not conducive to strategic voting.

The Equal Vote Coalition is active in several Oregon communities. The proposal likely will appear as ballot measures in the city of Eugene and Lane County this November. Troutdale City Council is discussing the possibility of referring a measure to its voters. The Democratic Party of Oregon plans to use this method to select the delegates it sends to the national convention.

Equal Vote leaders met with Multnomah County Elections Divisions officials to discuss the concept. In their view, it would be relatively easy to adjust the tabulating software to accommodate a switch to STAR voting and likely could be done within the existing budget. Resources would be needed for voter education so people would understand how to cast their votes using this new approach.

The LWV Portland board likely will discuss whether to support adopting the method locally. The LWVOR position includes the following points:

The League of Women Voters of Oregon supports enabling legislation to allow local jurisdictions to explore alternative election methods. If an alternative election method is adopted, then funding for startup and voter education should be available. (Previous position) Adopted 2009 The League of Women Voters of Oregon believes that any election method should be evaluated on its ability to:

- Promote voter participation.
- Be simple and easy for voters to understand.
- Be verifiable and auditable.
- Promote access to voting.
- Promote competitive elections.
- Prevent political manipulation.
- Be compatible with vote-by-mail elections.