

REFORMING THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE AND SUPPORT FOR PROPORTIONAL OUTCOMES

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Introduction

The system used to elect US presidents, the electoral college, was called into question following the 2000 presidential election, when Al Gore received over 500,000 more votes than George W. Bush nationwide but ultimately lost the election following a lengthy court battle over Florida's electoral votes. Although George W. Bush had failed to win the popular vote, his plurality of 537 votes over Al Gore in Florida netted all of the state's 25 electoral votes, giving him a total of 271 electoral votes, one vote more than needed to secure a majority in the electoral college. In 2004, George W. Bush received a majority of the popular vote but would have lost the election had he failed to secure a plurality in the state of Ohio. These two cases suggest a potential legitimacy problem for the electoral college that raises serious questions about the need for reform. Replacing the electoral college with another system would require a constitutional amendment that most agree would be extremely difficult to pass. Nevertheless, the US Constitution gives states the power to choose the method of selecting presidential electors. Most states employ a winner-take-all system on a statewide basis. However two states, Maine and Nebraska, select their electors on the basis of whether a candidate carries a congressional district. In 2004, an initiative appeared on the ballot in Colorado that proposed dividing the state's nine electoral votes on a proportional basis. In a close election, this would effectively give the loser up to four electoral votes, which could change the outcome of a presidential election.

The use of the initiative process to advance electoral reform is a growing trend in the United States. Recent initiatives include efforts to limit legislative terms (various states, 1992–8), reform redistricting (Arizona, 2000), provide for election-day voter registration (California and Colorado, 2002), adopt preferential voting (Alaska, 2002), reform the primary system (California, 1996 and 2004; Washington, 2004; Colorado, 2002) and extend the use of vote by mail in general elections (Colorado, 2002; Oregon, 1998). The reliance on popular support to achieve reforms that change the rules of the game raises questions about the ability of voters to reason through complex choices. Critics of direct democracy often raise questions about voters' ability to make informed decisions. The electoral college, for example, is believed to be poorly understood (Center for Voting and Democracy 2004). Moreover, while most modern democracies have systems that are based on proportional representation, the United States has little experience with such a system. How, then, can voters make reasoned decisions on matters that they know little about?

For these reasons, the Colorado initiative provides a unique opportunity to assess how Americans view the electoral process and reason about electoral reform. When voters were confronted with a decision on whether to approve a change in the process, were

they guided by partisanship, their attitudes about the fairness of the process or some other factor? This paper examines how these factors shaped voters' reaction to the measure drawing on a pre-election survey conducted in Colorado.

The Colorado Initiative

The effort to reform Colorado's winner-take-all presidential electoral system was heavily financed by J. Jorge Klor de Alva, a California entrepreneur and former president of the University of Phoenix. It is widely believed that Klor de Alva's group picked Colorado to launch a proportional system largely because it is easier to qualify initiatives in Colorado than elsewhere. To qualify, a group needs to secure signatures equal to five per cent of the votes cast for Secretary of State over a period of six months.¹ Presumably, another reason for choosing Colorado is that the state leans towards the Republican Party, with 36 per cent registered as Republican, 30 per cent registered as Democrat and 32 per cent independent. The slight edge means that Democrats would likely benefit from the measure's passage. In a close election, the loser would win four of the state's nine electoral votes. Had the measure been in place for the 2000 Presidential election, Al Gore would have been elected president.

Anticipating another close election, proponents of the initiative hoped that it would affect the 2004 election by including a retroactive clause stating that if passed the change would take effect immediately. Given its potential to alter the outcome of the presidential race, many prominent Republicans, including Colorado Governor Bill Owens and US Senate candidate Pete Coors actively opposed the measure. Although Democratic US presidential candidate John Kerry remained largely silent on the issue, the Democratic US Senate candidate Ken Salazaar, who was competing in a close race with Coors, announced his opposition to the measure. During the campaign, the group organised to run the opposition campaign, 'Coloradans Against a Really Stupid Idea', aired a television advertisement claiming bipartisan opposition to the initiative: 'At last an idea that both Democrats and Republicans can agree on'. Several prominent good government groups endorsed the measure, such as the League of Women Voters and Common Cause as well as some Democratic state legislators.

Arguments in favour of the initiative emphasised that proportional representation (PR) would be more fair than the existing winner-take-all system. Under PR, all votes would count, which would strengthen political efficacy and improve voter turnout. Proponents were careful to emphasise that support for the measure crossed partisan lines. Opponents, on the other hand, argued that dividing the state's electors would weaken Colorado's influence in presidential elections. As a result, they claimed that future candidates would ignore the state and campaign elsewhere. One of the themes in the campaign was that the backers of the initiative, who were from outside the state, wanted to use the state as a laboratory and weaken its influence in national campaigns. Proponents raised close to \$800,000, almost all of which was funded by Klor de Alva, while the opposition had received over \$600,000 in contributions 30 days prior to the election (source: Colorado Secretary of State).

In the end, Amendment 36 failed by 65 to 35 per cent. The decisiveness of the vote raises questions about how Americans view the concept of proportionality and how they might reason about electoral institutions. In the following section, several theories are discussed that might explain how voters reacted to the proposal.

Explaining Public Support for Reform

One theory for explaining how voters respond to reform proposals assumes they evaluate proposals to change electoral rules in terms of winning and losing (Anderson et al. 2005). Those who believe that the current arrangements place them at a disadvantage are less risk-averse and consequently more likely to embrace a change in the status quo while winners are going to resist change (Bowler and Donovan 2007). Voters in New Zealand reacted this way to a referendum to change their electoral system from a single-member plurality system to proportional representation. In that case small-party supporters as well as the Labour Party, both of which had been disadvantaged by the existing system, formed the basis of support for the successful referendum while the National Party in power opposed it (Banducci and Karp 1998). In the United States majorities of voters who expect to lose were significantly more likely to embrace PR to elect the US Congress and to support doing away with the electoral college to elect the president (Anderson et al. 2005, 172). The Colorado proposal not only offered those on the losing side a chance to reform the electoral system for future elections but also, given its retroactive clause, the opportunity to influence the outcome of the presidential race. Those voters expecting their candidate to lose the race in Colorado who were aware of this provision may have been motivated to support the initiative because it would give their trailing candidate as many as four electoral votes. In contrast, those expecting their candidate to carry the state who were also aware of the retroactive clause would likely oppose the measure because it would effectively deny their candidate all of the state's electoral votes. For these voters then, the immediate consequences for the presidential election may well have shaped their reaction to the reform proposal. As for future elections, proportional representation would offer independents and other groups who are marginalised by the winner-take-all system a chance to gain some voice in the process. An explanation based on partisan self-interest would predict that groups marginalised by winner-take-all rules would be more likely to embrace the concept of proportionality. In short, the partisan self interest explanation would predict that those who perceive themselves as losers would be more likely to support the principle of proportionality, while those who regard themselves as winners will be more reluctant to change the rules of the game.

While concerns about who might gain or lose from reform could be at the forefront of voters' minds, more general evaluations of the political process may also play a role. Concerns about the democratic process inform views of political institutions (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002). Those who have confidence in the political process and who are generally more satisfied and efficacious should be more likely to resist change regardless of whether the reform promises to further their own partisan interest. In contrast, those expressing dissatisfaction with the current system should be most likely to support a change in the status quo. Similarly, those with lower levels of political efficacy may react differently to reform proposals than those who believe the system is responsive to their concerns. To a certain extent, these attitudes may be shaped by electoral outcomes. Citizens who are continually on the losing side should be more likely to support change or simply to withdraw from the political process.

We know furthermore that ideology plays a role in shaping the way elites view institutions and political reform (Bowler et al. 2006). To the extent that liberals favour equitable outcomes, we might expect liberals to be more likely to support the concept of proportionality while conservatives will be likely to reject it. Men and women may also

have very different views about democratic norms and principals of fairness. Studies about views on distributive justice suggest that men place more emphasis on merit while women are more sensitive to need and equality (Scott et al. 2001). In the case of electoral reform, men and women may react differently to proposals that place an emphasis on fairness or equality of outcomes.

Data

To examine these questions, the following analysis relies on a pre-election survey data of 474 eligible voters in Colorado. The survey was designed by the author and conducted by computer assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) techniques during the week prior to the election (25 October–1 November). The questionnaire included about 25 questions and took 10–12 minutes to complete. The cooperation rate was 50.4 per cent, and 75 per cent agreed to be surveyed again after the election. Those respondents providing email addresses were contacted by email after the election and asked to complete a web survey. The completion rate was about 50 per cent. Other respondents were contacted after the election by telephone. Of these, 93 per cent agreed to be interviewed.

Several questions were asked to assess expectations about the outcome of the presidential race. These questions asked respondents who they believed would win the national election as well as who would carry the state of Colorado. To assess whether individuals considered themselves as winners or losers, and how these perceptions might influence attitudes about proportionality, we replicated a question developed by Bowler and Donovan (2007) that asked respondents to think about whether the candidates that they had supported in presidential elections usually won or usually lost (see Appendix for question wording). As a measure of subjectivity we included the response category 'sometimes won or sometimes lost'. To assess general attitudes about the political process, several items are used that were designed to assess general satisfaction as well as measure attitudes about political efficacy. Satisfaction is measured by a question asking whether citizens are generally satisfied with the way democracy works. Political efficacy is measured by whether respondents agree or disagree that their vote counts in elections and whether they have a say. Another item that assesses perceptions of government responsiveness is measured by whether respondents believe that elections makes government pay attention a great deal.

Asking voters to assess the fairness of the 2000 presidential election raises the question of whether citizens even fully understand how the system works. As an initial assessment of knowledge about the electoral college, respondents were asked 'In presidential elections, the winner is decided by who wins the popular vote'. Over 70 per cent responded correctly that the statement was false while 25 per cent believed it was true. Thus the vast majority of voters in Colorado at least appear to understand that the electoral college is not based on the popular vote nationwide.

Partisanship is measured by whether respondents report identifying with one of the two major parties. Ideology is measured by responses to the following item: 'When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as very liberal, liberal, middle of the road, conservative or very conservative?'

To measure support for proportionality, respondents were asked the following question: 'Imagine that a presidential candidate receives 20 per cent of the vote nationwide but fails to carry a single state. Do you think that candidate should receive 20

per cent of the electoral votes or no votes at all?' This question was designed by the New Zealand Election Study (NZES) to measure support for proportionality (see Vowles et al. 2002). The 20 per cent threshold was chosen because it provided a realistic example for a recent third-party candidacy, when Ross Perot received 20 per cent of the vote but failed to carry a single state in the 1992 presidential election.

Responses to this item reveal that two-thirds of the electorate support the concept of proportionality at least to some extent. Overall, 29 per cent believe that the candidate deserves 20 per cent of the electoral votes, while 26 per cent believe that the candidate should receive at least some of the vote. A third of the electorate, however, believe that a candidate winning 20 per cent of the vote but failing to carry a single state deserves nothing.

Results

Reflecting the competitiveness of the presidential race, Table 1 reveals that 40 per cent believed that it was too close to call while another 40 per cent believed that George W. Bush would be re-elected. There was less doubt about the outcome of the race in Colorado. A majority of voters, 58 per cent, believed that Bush would carry the state while just 13 per cent believed that Kerry would win. In either case, expectations about the outcome of the race were likely to reflect a bit of wishful thinking; Republicans are more likely to be certain of the outcome and expect a Bush victory whereas Democrats were more likely to believe that Kerry would win the presidential election than Republicans or independents. In Colorado, Republicans and independents were more likely to expect a Bush victory than Democrats.

Table 2 summarises the distribution of these responses by perceptions of winning and losing. The results suggest that attitudes about the political process are strongly influenced by electoral outcomes and perceptions of loss. Overall, about three-quarters of the electorate were satisfied with the way democracy works, though there is a substantial difference between winners and losers, with more than nine out of ten winners expressing satisfaction compared to just over half of the losers expressing satisfaction. While close to 90 per cent believe their vote counts, far fewer believe that they have a say in the process (71 per cent). Similar differences are evident on these items, with winners expressing the most confidence. When asked specifically whether they believed that the 2000 presidential election was fair, the electorate remained evenly divided. However winners were more than twice as likely to believe the 2000 election was fair than losers.²

TABLE 1
Expectations about presidential election

	Expected winner of presidential election			Total
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	
George W. Bush	60.3	18.8	31.1	38.9
John Kerry	2.9	34.6	22.0	17.4
Too close to call	33.9	42.9	42.4	39.9
	Expected winner in Colorado			Total
	Republican	Democrat	Independent	
George W. Bush	73.6	46.6	53.0	57.8
John Kerry	4.0	19.5	18.2	12.9
Too close to call	21.3	30.1	21.2	25.0

TABLE 2
Political attitudes by winning and losing

	Usually win	Sometimes win/lose	Usually lose	Total
Satisfaction with democracy	87.7	79.5	53.0	78.9
Vote counts in elections	95.1	92.9	68.7	89.2
People like me have no say (disagree)	76.4	72.3	57.8	70.6
2000 election was fair	74.4	46.4	33.7	51.5

Partisanship and political attitudes both appear to be factors that influence support for proportionality. While proportionality may be an abstract concept, it is nonetheless evident that partisans have very different views about electoral fairness. Colorado Republicans, who appear to be more confident of winning under the existing rules, are generally opposed to the idea of proportional outcomes while Democrats and independents are more likely to support the concept. While this appears to provide support for the partisan self-interest hypothesis, these differences may also result from attitudinal differences about the democratic process. Republicans for the most part are more satisfied with the political process and are more likely to be efficacious than Democrats or independents. In part these attitudes are also likely to result from the fact that Republicans are more accustomed to winning elections than Democrats. Those who feel that their candidates usually win are more likely to oppose proportionality while those who believe their candidates usually lose are more likely to support fully proportional outcomes. While concerns about winning and losing may shape attitudes about reform, these responses may also result from ideological differences that exist between liberals and conservatives that are shared by Democrats and Republicans respectively. Liberals are more likely to place an emphasis on procedural fairness while conservatives are likely to emphasise stability (Bowler et al. 2006). As Table 3 reveals, the differences between liberals and conservatives on attitudes about proportionality are even larger than the partisan differences.

All of this suggests the need for a multivariate analysis to determine what factors are associated with support for proportional outcomes. So far it has been suggested that the importance that citizens place on democratic fairness can be the result of their overall satisfaction with the political process, their level of political efficacy and their sense that government is responsive to their concerns. Alternatively, ideological concerns may be more important than pure self-interest.

To test these hypotheses a model is estimated predicting support for proportional outcomes. The model includes the attitudinal measures listed in Table 2 which are intended to measure political efficacy as well as satisfaction with democracy. We also control for gender differences as well as differences that may result from minority status. Because the dependent variable, proportionality, has three categories, ordered logit is used to estimate the model.

Given the potential endogeneity between attitudes about proportionality and the vote on the initiative, a two-stage modelling technique is used where the predicted values

TABLE 3
Attitudes about proportionality

	<i>A presidential candidate receiving 20% of the vote without carrying a single state deserves...</i>		
	nothing	some electoral votes	20% of the electoral vote
<i>Partisanship</i>			
Democrat	21.1	31.6	36.1
Independent	22.1	30.5	32.8
Republican	47.1	18.4	23.0
<i>Ideology</i>			
Liberal	12.7	31.8	46.4
Moderate	25.8	30.8	30.8
Conservative	50.0	18.6	19.1
<i>Gender</i>			
Men	44.8	18.5	28.0
Women	19.6	32.9	30.1
<i>Political Attitudes</i>			
Satisfied with democracy	44.7	18.9	26.5
Vote does not count in elections	15.2	32.6	32.6
People like me have no say (agree)	48.8	19.8	20.9
2000 election was not fair	17.5	30.0	41.5
Total	32.3	25.5	29.3

from the model described above are used in a second stage to predict the outcome of the vote on the initiative. It is assumed that party identification has a direct influence on the vote choice, so it is also included as a control variable. Additional variables include age, education, gender and minority status (see Appendix for details).

The results that are presented in Table 4 indicate that ideology emerges as the strongest predictor of support for proportional outcomes while few other variables are statistically significant. Those who consider themselves to be very liberal have a probability of .52 of preferring proportional outcomes, holding all other variables constant at their mean values.³ In contrast, a person who considers herself to be very conservative has a probability of just .12 of preferring proportional outcomes. When controlling for these factors, partisanship is not a significant predictor. Internal efficacy and dissatisfaction with democracy are also not significant. However, individuals who feel they have no say in the process are more likely to favour proportional outcomes; specifically those who strongly agree with the statement 'people like me have no say in what government does' have a probability of preferring proportional outcomes of .35 compared to .21 for the person who strongly disagrees with the statement. Women are also significantly more likely to prefer proportional outcomes than men. Specifically, women are 11 per cent more likely than men to favour proportional outcomes.

These results indicate that ideological values rather than partisan self-interest structure general attitudes about concepts of proportionality. Similar ideological differences have been found among mass publics in New Zealand (Vowles et al. 1998) and among elites in Australia, Germany, the Netherlands and New Zealand (Bowler et al. 2006). The observed gender differences are also consistent with research on distributive justice, which shows that women place more importance on equality while men are likely to emphasise efficiency (Scott et al. 2001).

TABLE 4
Estimating support for proportionality and reform: Two-stage logit model

	First stage Proportionality		Second stage Vote on initiative	
	Estimate	Std. Error	Estimate	Std. Error
Vote does not count	-0.05	(0.15)		
Ideology	-0.54 **	(0.11)		
No say	0.25 *	(0.13)		
Dissatisfaction with democracy	0.10	(0.12)		
Republican	-0.25	(0.22)	-1.02 **	(0.26)
Democrat	-0.13	(0.18)	0.28	(0.22)
Education	0.01	(0.09)	-0.08	(0.10)
Age	0.00	(0.01)	-0.01	(0.01)
Female	0.47 *	(0.18)	-0.12	(0.23)
Non white	0.22	(0.22)	0.36	(0.28)
Proportionality			1.00 **	(0.20)
Constant 1	-1.74 **	(0.73)	-1.87 **	(0.65)
Constant 2	0.14	(0.72)		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.16		0.27	
n	447		447	

**p<.01; *p<.05.

Proportionality has a strong impact on the vote. To illustrate these effects, Figure 1 shows the predicted probability of voting for the initiative by preferences for proportional outcomes. Those who believe that a candidate receiving 20 per cent of the vote deserves nothing if the candidate cannot also carry a state have less than a .20 probability of supporting the initiative. In contrast, a person who believes in fully proportional outcomes has a .66 probability of supporting the initiative. Persons who believe in some element of proportionality are more than twice as likely to vote for the initiative than those who believe that a candidate must have a plurality to receive electoral votes. These results strongly suggest that voters were influenced by values. Nevertheless, even when controlling for proportionality, partisan differences emerge, with Republicans being significantly less likely than independents to support the measure.

These partisan differences raise the question of whether voters were influenced by what they heard from elites. Despite the partisan nature of the measure, most voters were somewhat ambivalent about the elite position. When asked 'Do you happen to know whether leaders in the Republican Party have endorsed or opposed Amendment 36?' more than half responded that they did not know. A similar percentage reported not knowing whether leaders in the Democratic Party had taken a position on the measure. Of those who believed that leaders of the parties took a position, most were correct in assuming that the Republicans were opposed while there was more ambivalence about the Democratic position.

Discussion

These results have implications not only for the prospects of future reform but also for the initiative process itself. While the measure was soundly defeated, there nevertheless appears to be strong support for reform. When asked after the election whether the system needs to be reformed, a majority of 55 per cent agreed with the need

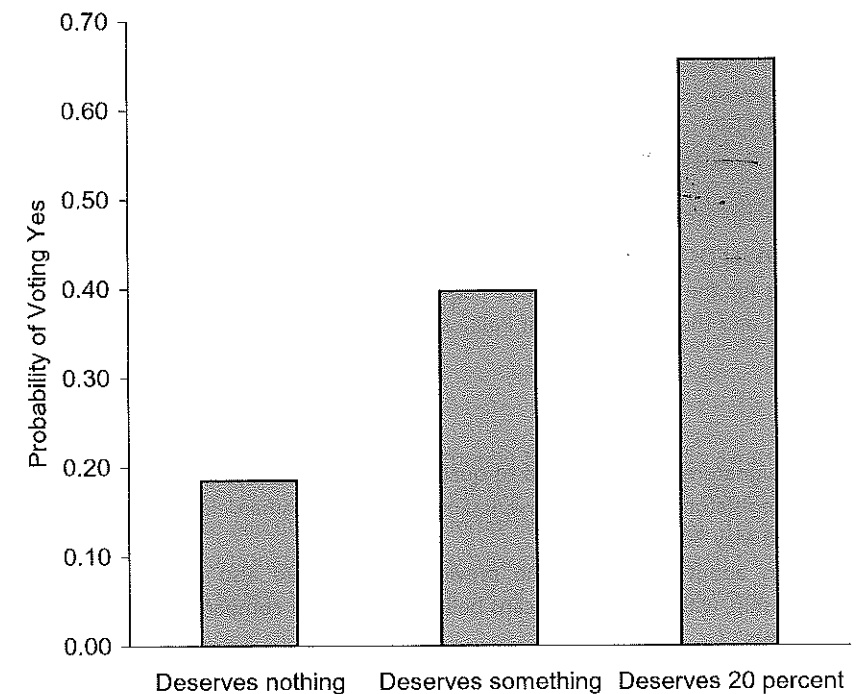


FIGURE 1
Impact of proportionality on vote choice

for reform. Moreover, while Americans have no experience with a proportional system, most citizens in Colorado believe that an electoral system should guarantee at least in some degree of proportionality. Of course these are the citizens who are more likely to feel marginalised by the existing winner-take-all system. In particular, those who believe they have little or no say in the political process are more likely to prefer a system that produces proportional results. Ideology emerges though as a major factor, with liberals being much more likely to support the concept of proportionality.

While attitudes about proportionality have a strong impact, partisan differences do emerge even after taking into account attitudes about proportionality. Republicans were significantly less likely than independents to support the measure while Democrats were just as likely as independents to vote for it. In part, this is likely to result from the fact that prominent leaders in the Republican party, including the current governor, were opposed to the measure. This is not surprising given the fact that the Republican party, which has an advantage in statewide elections, stood to lose the most from replacing the winner-take-all system with PR. Had the measure been on the ballot in a state where the political landscape favours the Democratic Party, such as in California, it is quite likely that political elites would have taken a different position. Whether conservative voters would be more likely to favour proposals that promote proportionality when it serves their interest and when trusted elites support rather than oppose such measures remains questionable.

From a broader perspective, the results from this case suggest that voters in Colorado may well have understood the implications of changing the system. Many voters may have had difficulty in understanding how the electoral college works. Moreover, they

had no experience with any alternative to the winner-take-all system. Nonetheless, the results suggest that a majority of voters did not reject the proposal because they failed to understand how it would work. Rather, ideological differences and, to a lesser extent, political disaffection served to structure attitudes about electoral fairness which ultimately played a role in determining how voters reacted to the proposal at the ballot box.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Funding for the data used in this paper was provided by the College of Letters and Sciences and the Department of Political Science at Texas Tech University.

NOTES

1. 67,829 signatures were required to qualify Amendment 36 (see National Conference of State Legislators at <http://www.ncsl.org/programs/legman/elect/SigReqs.htm#sigreq>, accessed May 30 2005).
2. Opinions about fairness of the previous election are also strongly influenced by partisanship, with 85 of Republicans believing it was fair compared to just 11 per cent of Democrats.
3. Probabilities were estimated using the SPost ado files for Stata 9.0 developed by J. Scott Long (Long and Freese 2006).

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APPENDIX: QUESTION WORDING

Vote Choice

As you may know, this proposal would change the way Colorado awards its electoral votes in presidential elections. Currently, all of the electoral votes are awarded to the candidate who wins the election statewide. Under this new proposal, the electoral votes would be divided proportionately according to how much support each candidate gets. If the election were held today, would you vote for or against this proposal?

Proportionality

Imagine that a presidential candidate receives 20 per cent of the popular vote nationwide but fails to win a single state. Do you think that candidate *should* receive 20 per cent of the votes in the Electoral College; some electoral votes; or no electoral votes at all?

Expectations

Thinking about the presidential election, regardless of how you may feel, who do you think will ultimately be elected president in November – [randomised Bush and Kerry], or do you think it is just too close to call? And what about Colorado? Regardless of how you may feel, who do you think will win the most votes in Colorado? Would you say [randomised Bush and Kerry] or do you think it is just too close to call?

Ideology

When it comes to politics, do you usually think of yourself as very liberal; liberal; middle of the road; conservative; or very conservative?

Perceptions of Loss

Think of the presidential elections held in your lifetime. Do you think that the presidential candidates you support usually win, sometimes win, sometimes lose, or usually lose?

Political Attitudes

Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement? My vote counts in elections

Do you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following statement? People like me don't have any say about what the government does

Are you very satisfied; fairly satisfied; not very satisfied; or not at all satisfied with the way democracy works in the United States?

TOWARDS A MIXED-MEMBER PROPORTIONAL SYSTEM FOR QUÉBEC?

* **Louis Massicotte**

Introduction

In December 2004, the Québec provincial government tabled a proposal aimed at introducing a mixed-member proportional system (MMP) for elections to the National Assembly, broadly patterned on the German, New Zealand and Scottish electoral systems (Shugart and Wattenberg 2001). This article summarises the historical background of electoral system reform in Québec and the reasons for reform, analyses the proposal in detail, and explores the prospects for its ultimate adoption. The proposal can be found in a draft bill (Dupuis 2004), the contents of which were determined by the government on the basis of a working paper I prepared (Massicotte, 2004a).

Historical Background

Prior to 1960, in contrast with other Canadians, Quebecers exhibited minimal interest in electoral system reform. After 1960, the issue has been debated more thoroughly in Québec than elsewhere in Canada. In recent years, other provinces have caught up and proportional representation (PR) has become a lively issue not only in Québec but in British Columbia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Ontario as well.

The years following the First World War were exciting for Canadians interested in electoral system reform (Pilon 1999). Many European countries were embracing proportional representation, while the issue was being debated in Britain (Carstairs 1980). Canadians were more prudent, but significant changes were made. The single transferable vote (STV) was introduced for the election of provincial legislators returned from the cities of Winnipeg (1920), Calgary and Edmonton (1924), while the alternative vote (AV) was selected for the single-member districts electing all other provincial legislators in Manitoba and Alberta, both in 1924 (Jansen 2004). In these provinces, the outcome might be described as a mixed system based on the coexistence of different electoral systems in different parts of the territory (Massicotte and Blais 1999a), a hybrid that Premier Drury tried in vain to introduce in Ontario prior to the 1923 election (Drury 1966; Oliver 1977). In addition, STV was introduced for the election of municipal councils in 18 municipalities (Johnston and Koene 2000), and AV was proposed for federal elections.

In Québec at that time there was very little interest for PR. In the debates of the assembly and the statutes of the province, there are only two hints that a few people in those days were interested in electoral reform (Massicotte and Bernard 1985). In 1921, the residents of the city of Montreal were offered the possibility of choosing between two schemes of government at a referendum. Among other innovations, 'Plan A' included STV in multi-member constituencies, and was put forward by a group of businesspeople and by the English-speaking community. 'Plan B' maintained the single-member plurality