

Memorandum



Date: August 23, 2007

To: Victor M. Diaz, Chairman
Charter Review Task Force

From: Susanne M. Torriente
Assistant County Manager

Subject: Information Package for Charter Review Task Force – Issue 4

At its August 1 meeting, the Charter Review Task Force (CRTF) approved a list of issues, in priority order, for study during this process. Per your direction, staff has performed research on Issue 4, the Study of the Board of County Commissioners composition. The following report includes informational staff research and data. The attachments included are listed below:

1. Research on Models of Legislative Representation (Attachment 1)
2. Article – “How Proportional Representation Elections Work” (Attachment 2)
3. County Map by Commission Districts as of 1992 (Attachment 3)
4. Current County Map by Commission Districts (Attachment 4)
5. Population Data by Commission Districts
 - **1990** - The data was derived directly from the U.S Census decennial census figures adjusted to commission districts (Attachment 5).
 - **2000** - The data was derived directly from the U.S Census decennial census figures adjusted to commission districts (Attachment 6).
 - **2005 Estimated** – The 2005 Estimated Population Data was adopted by the Board of County Commissioners in October 2006 as part of the Adopted Components of the Comprehensive Development (CDMP) Master Plan. For 2005, the 2000 data formed the basis for the projection prepared by the Department of Planning and Zoning, Research Division (Attachment 7).
 - Overall population figures were based on the population projections developed by the Department of Planning and Zoning. The document included population figures for 2000 and projections for 2015 and 2025. Interpolation of the 2000 and 2015 figures resulted in the estimates for 2005.
 - The population increase from 2000 to 2005 was apportioned to commission districts based on the increase in housing units built during this period. This increase in housing units by type was converted to a person count by using the Census 2000 figures for persons per unit. The figures for persons per unit are inclusive of a vacancy rate.
 - Changes in allocation by race/ethnicity were based on absolute changes in percentages from 2000 to 2005 using previously developed projections by the Department of Planning and Zoning at the Minor Statistical Area (MSA) level. Minor statistical areas are used for planning purposes and divide the County into 32 areas.

- **2010 Projection** - The data developed for 2005 formed the basis for the 2010 projection (Attachment 8).
 - Interpolation of the population figures for 2000 and 2015 in the above-mentioned adopted CDMP provided the 2010 population projection for the County.
 - The population increase from 2005 to 2010 was apportioned to commission districts based on the increase in housing units for the period 2000 to 2006.
 - The 2010 data was compiled specifically for the CRTF.
 - Finally, changes in allocation by race/ethnicity were made using the previously mentioned projections by race/ethnicity.
6. Registered Voter information by Commission District (Attachment 9)

I would like to thank Manuel Armanda, Michael Johnson, Amy Horton-Tavera and Paul Mauriello for pulling this data together. Staff will continue to research this issue, as well as the other issues approved by the Task Force.

c: Charter Review Task Force Members and Staff

ATTACHMENT 1

Models of Legislative Representation

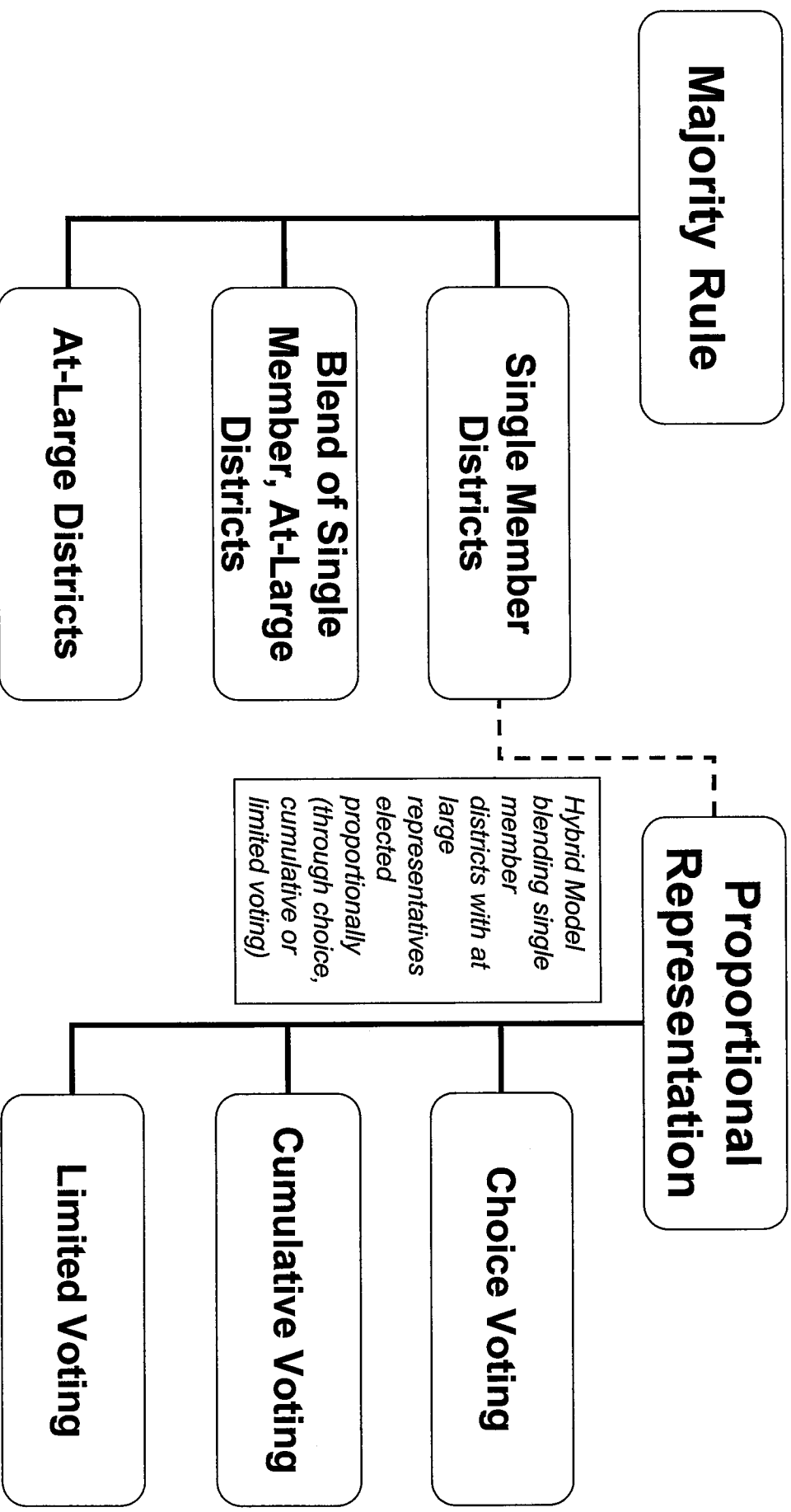
Prepared for the Miami-Dade County Charter Review Task Force

August 2007

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Legislative Representation: Basic Models



Majority Rule v. Proportional Representation: A Primer

Majority Rule

- **"Winner takes all" or "first past the post"**
- Traditional in American politics
- Currently used in U.S. Congress, all state legislatures, most city and county councils

Arguments For:

- Familiar and understandable to voters
- Majority rule may promote legislative cohesion, stability and efficiency (this advantage is most pronounced in partisan legislatures)

Arguments Against:

- May lead to under-representation of women, racial and ethnic minorities, and/or other minority constituencies
- Historically, has contributed to non-competitive races and low voter turnout
- High percentage of "wasted" votes (votes that do not elect a representative)
- High victory threshold may limit political discourse and lead to costly campaign
- Provides incentives for negative campaigning

Proportional Representation

- **Multiple winners per district, based on portion of votes received**
- Used by the majority of the world's large (population over 2 million) mature democracies
- Was used by two dozen U.S. cities (including New York, Cleveland, Cincinnati, Sacramento) during the Progressive era in the early 20th century; fears of minority and communist representation contributed to its rejection in many cities by the 1950s
- Was used in the Illinois state assembly between 1870 and 1980
- Currently rare in the United States (examples include the City of Cambridge, MA and cities and counties in Texas, North Carolina and Alabama)

Arguments For:

- Designed to facilitate representation of women, minorities and other communities of interest (e.g. issue-based constituencies), without gerrymandering
- Responsive to demographic and political shifts in the electorate
- May result in more competitive races and greater voter interest
- Lower victory threshold may expand political discourse (since taking unpopular stances is less risky) and reduce campaign costs
- Some variations may discourage negative campaigning

Arguments Against:

- May be confusing to voters
- May lead to legislative instability and/or inefficiency; potential to promote single-issue interest groups
- Poses technical challenges to election officials, potentially including modifications to voting machines and software
- May require changes to state law and/or judicial approval

Majority Rule: variations

Proportional Representation

Single Member Districts

Arguments For:

- May lead to greater representation of racial and ethnic minorities than at-large districts
- Representatives may have closer ties to their communities
- May allow for greater representation of local / neighborhood concerns

Arguments Against:

- May promote parochialism
- Potential under-representation of geographically dispersed constituencies and over-representation of geographically concentrated electoral segments
- May provide political incentives for geographic segregation of the electorate
- Does nothing to promote election of women
- Not easily responsive to demographic shifts in the electorate; requires periodic redistricting to remain current

Blend of Single Member & At-Large Districts

Arguments For and Against are a blend of those of the other two systems

At-Large Districts

Arguments For:

- Promotes regional / jurisdiction-wide perspective
- Does not require complex redistricting
- No political incentives for geographic segregation

Arguments Against:

- Strong risk of minority under-representation
- May lead to less representation of local / neighborhood concerns
- May not be legal under the federal Voting Rights Act, which has established broad protections for minority voting strength at the federal, state and local levels

Majority Rule

Proportional Representation: variations

Choice Voting:

Voters rank candidates in order of preference; seats are allocated by distributing voters' preferences according to a proportional formula

For example:

- Five seats are up for election in District X. Ten candidates are running.
- District X voters rank the ten candidates in order of preference: First choice, second choice, etc.
- Any candidate who achieves a minimum of approximately 20% (or 1/5, since there are five available seats) of the first choice votes cast is elected.
- Winning candidates' "extra" votes (votes in excess of the number required for election) are proportionally redistributed to the voters' second choice candidates.
- If no candidate has received the minimum number of votes required for election, the last place candidate is eliminated and his/her votes are proportionally redistributed to the voters' second choice candidates.
- Votes are tabulated in this manner in successive rounds until all five seats have been filled.

Cumulative Voting:

Voters cast as many votes as seats and can give multiple votes to one candidate; winners are the highest vote-getters

For example:

- Five seats are up for election in District X. Ten candidates are running.
- Each District X voter may cast five votes.
- Each voter may:
 - Allocate one vote each to five preferred candidates;
 - Allocated five votes to one preferred candidate; or
 - Allocate the five votes to multiple preferred candidates in any combination.
- Votes are counted and the five highest vote-getters are elected.

Limited Voting:

Voters have fewer votes than there are seats; winners are the highest vote-getters

For example:

- Five seats are up for election in District X. Ten candidates are running.
- Each District X voter may cast one vote for each of three preferred candidates.
- Votes are counted and the five highest vote-getters are elected.

Majority Rule

Proportional Representation: variations cont.

Choice Voting:

Voters rank candidates in order of preference; seats are allocated by distributing voters' preferences according to a proportional formula

Arguments For:

- Designed to allow for more minority representation than at-large majority rule, since candidates are elected with less than a majority of the votes cast
- Ranking process easy to explain to voters
- Lowest risk of "wasted" votes; designed to ensure that as many voters as possible elect a preferred candidate
- Minimizes the impact of vote-splitting (and, consequently, may lead to a larger pool of candidates)
- Strong incentives to forge coalitions and reach out to opposing candidates, so as not to alienate their supporters

Arguments Against:

- Complex methods of tabulating votes may be confusing to voters and may lead to perceptions of manipulation or fraud
- Poses greatest technical challenges to elections officials and may require modifications to voting equipment and/or software

Cumulative Voting:

Voters cast as many votes as seats and can give multiple votes to one candidate; winners are the highest vote-getters

Arguments For:

- Designed to allow for more minority representation than at-large majority rule, since minority groups can pool their votes on a preferred candidate
- Ballot counting is straightforward

Arguments Against:

- Voting method may be confusing to voters; requires "strategic" voting
- Risk of vote-splitting and, consequently, under-representation of some constituencies (especially in non-partisan races without primaries); candidate pool may be limited as a consequence
- Risk of "wasted" votes (votes in excess of what a candidate requires for election)
- Less incentive to forge coalitions than with choice voting

Limited Voting:

Voters have fewer votes than there are seats; winners are the highest vote-getters

Arguments For:

- Designed to allow for more minority representation than at-large majority rule, since a majority group can elect the majority of seats, but not all seats
- Ballot counting is straightforward

Arguments Against:

- Voting method may be confusing to voters
- Risk of vote splitting and, consequently, under-representation of some constituencies (especially in non-partisan races without primaries); candidate pool may be limited as a consequence
- Less incentive to forge coalitions than with choice voting

Benchmarking Highlights

- Staff examined the council structure of the 7 largest counties in Florida and 14 selected large national counties.
- Of the Florida counties:
 - 4 councils (Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach and Orange) are comprised entirely of single member districts
 - 3 councils (Hillsborough, Pinellas and Duval) are comprised of a blend of single member districts and at-large representatives
 - None utilizes any form of proportional representation
- Of the large national counties:
 - 8 councils are comprised entirely of single member districts
 - 6 councils are comprised of a blend of single member districts and at-large representatives; in two of these counties, the at-large representative is also the elected executive or judge
 - None utilizes any form of proportional representation
- We did not identify any large jurisdictions utilizing a system similar to that advocated by the Miami Herald in its August 10, 2007 editorial (top two vote-getters in single member districts proceed to countywide run-off elections)

