Four Models of Multimember Districts

Although there has been increased discussion of multimember district systems in recent years, a number of variations exist. To help catalyze discussion, here are four.

1. <u>Fair Representation Act (H.R.3863)</u>[1]

   - Use of multimember districts of 3 to 5 members would be required in any state with six or more districts.

   - Candidates are selected through existing forms of nominating primaries, except that parties must nominate a number of candidates equal to the number of seats in a given district.

   - Winners in the general election are determined through ranked choice voting with multiple winners per district. A candidate will win a seat in a multimember district if he or she crosses the election threshold for the district. In a three-seat district, this threshold would be 25 percent, in a four-seat district 20 percent, and in a five-seat district 16.7 percent.

   - In broad terms, this would enact the electoral system used in Irish parliamentary elections.

2. <u>Multimember Districts Combined with Top 4 or 5 Primaries</u>

   - A variant on the Fair Representation Act where instead of holding separate, potentially lower-turnout party nominating primaries, all Democrats, Republicans, and third-party candidates seeking election in a district run together in a non-partisan primary held at the time of the general election,

   - Winners are determined through ranked choice voting with each district producing multiple winners.

   - Similar to the system used in Alaska, except that there are multiple winners in a district instead of just one.

3. <u>Multimember Districts with Party-List Proportional Representation</u>

   - Voters vote for a political party, with seats allocated according to the share of votes received by each party.

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[1] Introduced by Rep. Don Beyer of Virginia in the 117th Congress. May be reintroduced in modified form in 2024.

- Party-list systems may be either closed list or open list.

    - In closed-list systems, a party's candidates are ranked by the party on a list. If a party's share of the vote entitles it to three seats, the seats go to the first three candidates on the list and so on.

    - Notable examples of the closed-list PR system are Israel, South Africa, and Spain.

    - In open-list systems, a party's voters have the ability to alter the order of a list through their preferences. This is typically done by having voters identify which candidate within the party list gets their vote. Votes are first tallied by party to determine the number of seats won by each party, and then seats are distributed among candidates according to the votes won by individual candidates.

    - Notable examples of the open-list PR system are Chile, Finland, and the Netherlands.

4. Mixed-Member Proportional Representation (Hybrid Model)

- It is also possible to have a hybrid system that mixes single-member districts with multimember districts. In these systems, a voter typically has two votes to cast: one for a single-member district and one for a party-list district.

- Proportionality is achieved through the party-list segment of the vote. In "compensatory" systems (like Germany and New Zealand) the party-list seats are allocated so that the overall result in the body ends up closely matching each party's overall vote share. In "parallel" systems (like Japan) no such correction is made and thus the result tends to be less proportional.

- In Germany, about 41 percent of the seats are elected from single-member districts; in New Zealand, 60 percent; and in South Korea, around 84 percent. Remaining members are elected by proportional representation from party-list districts.