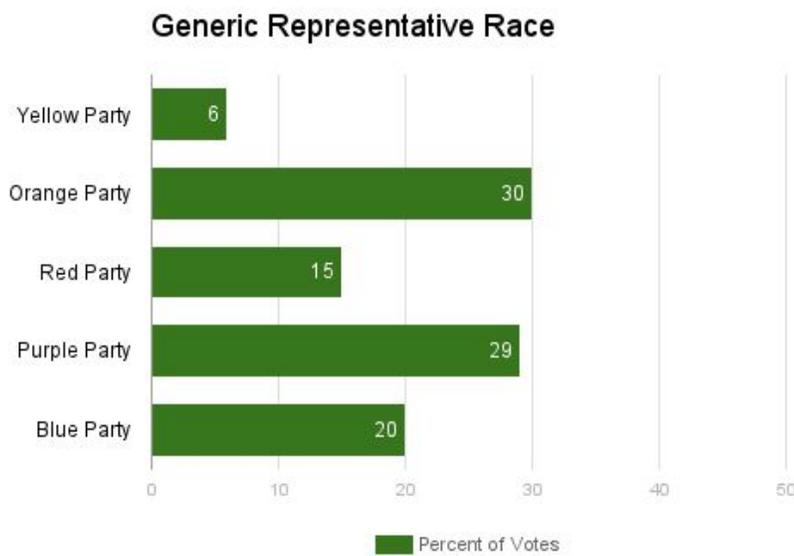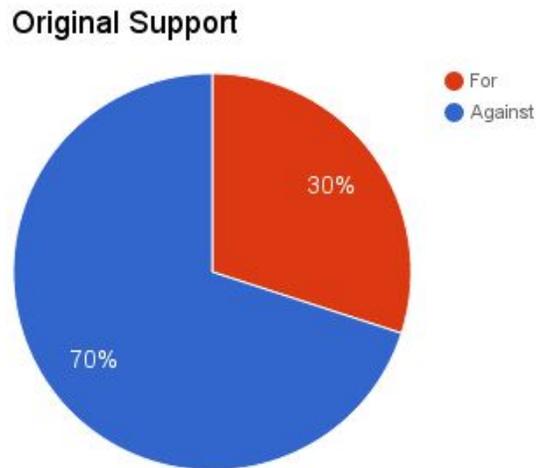David Morales

A Democracy Which Represents

The United States falls victim to a system of voting which does not truly represent its people. In the United States we use a system called "First Past the Post" or FPTP. FPTP presents a system in which voters elect the candidate with the most votes to win the election. A seemingly simple, fair and logical system and yet it presents a multitude of issues. FPTP seems natural to us because it provides a winner based on the person with the most votes: the winner, however, in most scenarios problems arise when this system is used to vote. For example, the majority of voters will inevitably be left without a voice.

When voting for a representative we look for who we feel will represent us, and who we want to represent us. Often is the case that multiple candidates will run for office, splitting the vote. If 5 candidates were to run for office they need only 21% of the vote in order to win the election. That means that a candidate could be hated by nearly 80% of his or her constituents but, because they received enough votes they are now the elected incumbent.

As an example to explain the flaw in FPTP, the following race to become a representative in a new district has 5 candidates running for office. As the bar graph shows, the candidate from the Orange Party saw a narrow victory in the election and is sworn into office shortly after the elections.

Generic Representative Race

Party	Percent of Votes
Yellow Party	6
Orange Party	30
Red Party	15
Purple Party	29
Blue Party	20

The results above clearly show that the Orange party candidate had the most support however, as shown in the Pie chart below, the vast majority of the population did not vote for the candidate and are unhappy with their representative.

Original Support

FPTP also inevitably leads to a two party system. Once Yellow voters see their candidate has no chance of victory they will back a more popular candidate. The same goes for other small parties. Eventually they will realize they can not win and will abandon the party, eventually moving to a party that has a chance of winning, causing a problem for third parties that now can no longer gain enough support to win elections. If a third party were to gain momentum in a two party race it could lead to what is known as the spoiler effect in which they will take votes away from the party they agree with the most and allow the candidate they oppose to win the election even if the majority oppose him or her.
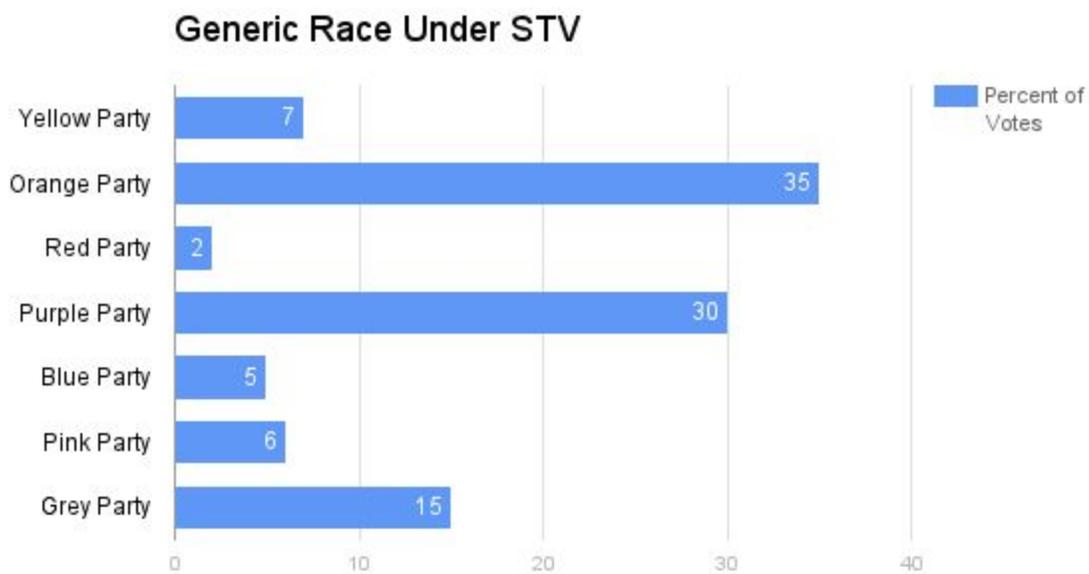
Gerrymandering is also a prevalent issue with FPTP. When districts need to be drawn in order to hold elections it is in the best interest of the party to draw districts in order to favour the party in the election. Florida itself is subject to gerrymandering. About 40% of Florida is Democratic and 35% is Republican and yet about 67% of the total State legislature is Republican. Although independent voters still represent a large portion of the population, there have been cases in which Florida has had to redraw its district borders to make them constitutional.

A Solution

A solution to prevent the problems of FPTP exist, it is just not implemented here in the United States. That does not mean it is not in other countries and working effectively. Countries such as the United Kingdom, Malta, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and Pakistan use the system of STV effectively in their country in order to vote for elected officials. STV is a system of voting which is meant to produce a proportional representation of the people which is voted on directly by the people. Other forms of proportional representation voting such as mixed representation voting systems present a similar route as STV in solving the issue, however, they present problems similar to those discussed for FPTP. Although the mixed representation system does allow for the people to receive the representation they want based on their party alliance, they do not have a say in their representative, the party is the one who appoints their representative. In doing so we legitimize the political parties as an entity in the voting system and also allow parties to force its members to adhere to their standards in order to be chosen for a seat as a reward for compliance or else the party could simply move them out of the system altogether.
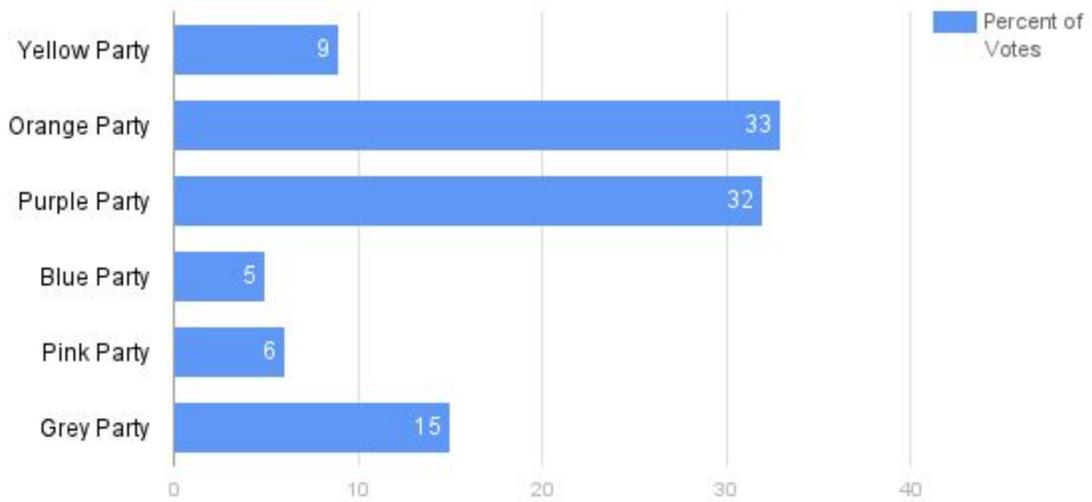
STV helps to solve the vast majority of our issues because it is a form of proportional representation which produces a proportional representation with local representation and the direct election of individuals. Inevitably in our system the concept of votes being "wasted" comes up and STV tackles the issue head on. Each voter receives one vote, which can transfer from their first-preference to their second-preference and so on. If your first preference did not receive the required number of votes to win, your vote would be moved to your second choice and so on until a clear winner is met. STV thus ensures that very few votes are wasted, unlike First Past the Post, where votes are more often than not wasted. STV allows for people to be represented by someone they and the majority of people feel comfortable with at all times. This abolishes the concept of tactical voting in which you would vote against the greater evil to support the lesser of the two evils and allows us to vote for our choice.

Under an STV system of voting, voters rank their candidates in a series of most liked to least liked when they vote. Under this voting system, voters will also receive more representation. Instead of a single representative, three representatives could be used to represent a single district to ensure proportional representation. Once the votes are submitted the first choice votes are counted and the results could look like this.

Generic Race Under STV

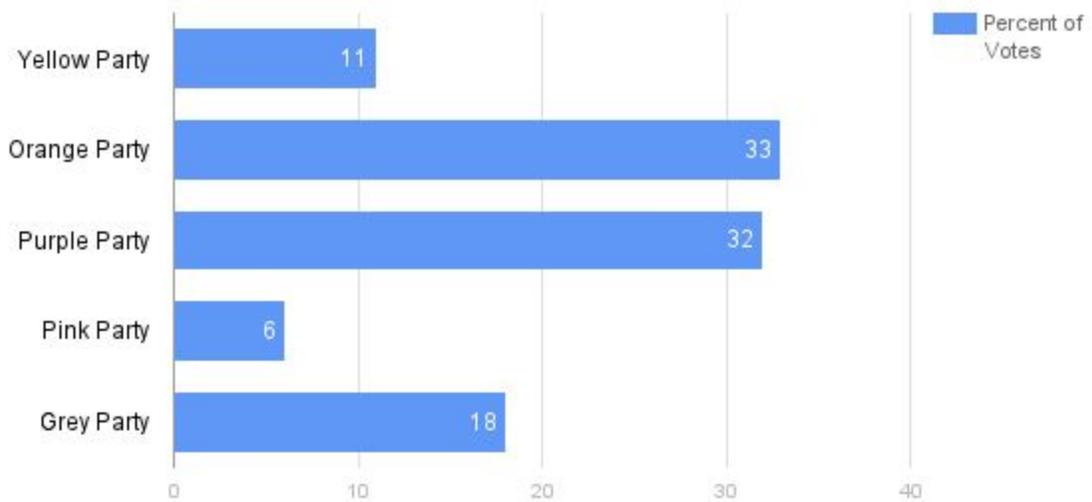| Party	Percent of Votes
Yellow Party	7
Orange Party	35
Red Party	2
Purple Party	30
Blue Party	5
Pink Party	6
Grey Party	15

Since there are 3 representatives, 33% of the vote is needed in order to qualify to be a representative. The orange won a seat with 35% of the vote and because they received a surplus of votes, their 2% extra voters will have their votes transferred to their second choice to ensure they do not have their vote wasted, in this case to the Yellow Party. Meanwhile the Red party with the least voters is eliminated and has their votes transferred to their second choice, the Purple Party resulting in the chart below.
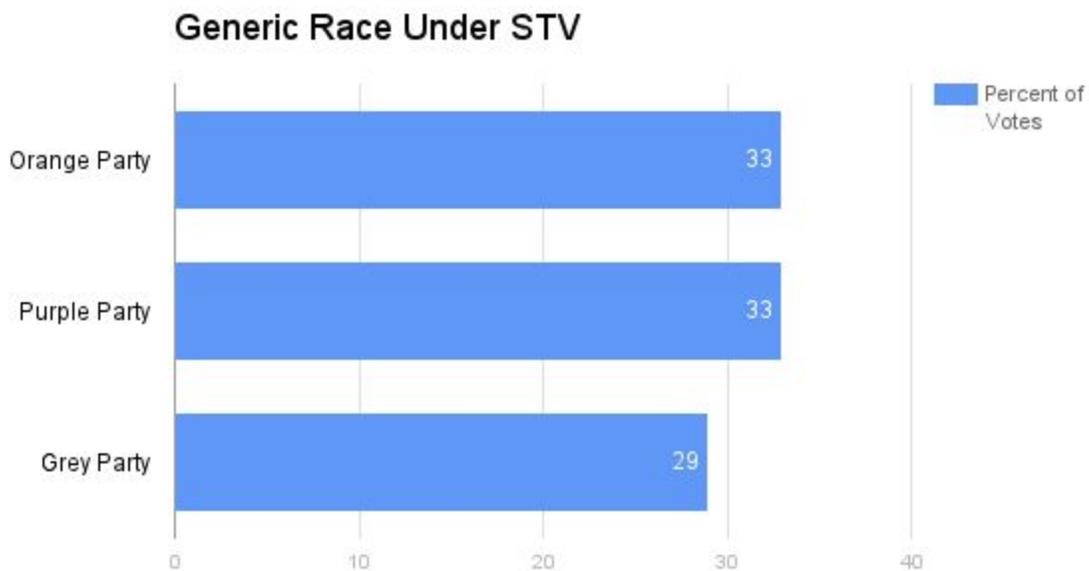
Generic Race Under STV

After tallying those votes, the Blue party is the party with the least votes and they're redistributed to their second choice which is split. The Blue party has second choices being three for the Grey Party and two for the Yellow Party.
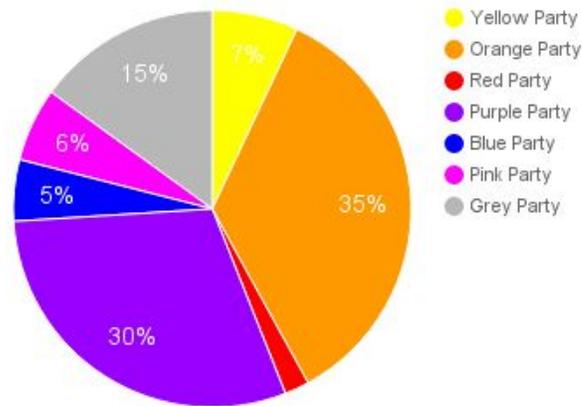
Generic Race Under STV

Now the Pink Party has Purple as their second choice but since Purple needs only 1% more, 1% will go to the Purple party and the other 5% will go to the voter's third choice in the election, the Yellow Party. The Yellow Party now has the least votes for the election and they are to be redistributed to their second choice and the redistributed voter's succeeding choice . Because the Orange and Purple parties all received the required votes they will not receive any of the redistributed votes. Also because some Yellow voters did not list any second choice their votes will not be redistributed and will be omitted. 4% of those voters will in turn be omitted and the rest redistributed accordingly leaving the Grey party with 29% of the vote.
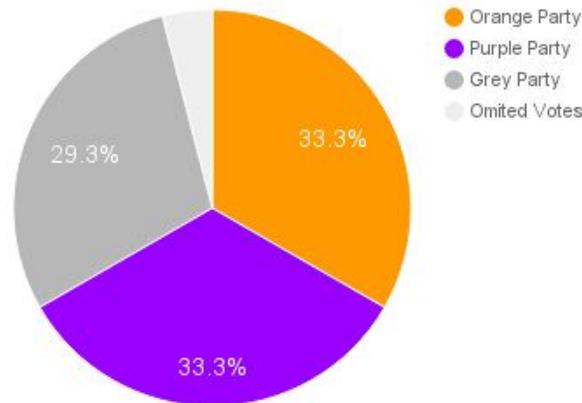
Generic Race Under STV

Although the Grey party did not receive the required votes, they did however have the closest and are the final standing candidate and therefore are awarded the final seat.

Original Support

Legend:
- Yellow Party
- Orange Party
- Red Party
- Purple Party
- Blue Party
- Pink Party
- Grey Party

7%, 35%, 30%, 5%, 6%, 15%

Final Results

Legend:
- Orange Party
- Purple Party
- Grey Party
- Omited Votes

33.3%, 33.3%, 29.3%

The Final results closely matched the original results, and although not every single party was represented, nearly everyone receives a representative that they feel comfortable with and they would have voted for had their party's candidate not have run. Under the FPTP system, 65% of the voters would not have supported the elected candidate but under this system, only 4% of voters do not support one of the candidates in the hypothetical election. There is no exact perfect system of voting, however STV has worked to solve a majority of the problems most other

systems of voting present. The only legitimate problem presented by STV is that the results may take longer to be processed so instant results are not available forcing voters to be patient, a small price to pay for a representative democracy. As with any system, STV has some possible issues, one of them being Donkey Voting, in which people vote straight down the ballot, not taking into account their personal choice. There is, however, a way to limit this outcome. The Robson Rotation system, which re-arranges candidates names on ballots to alleviate any influence of "Donkey Votes." STV could be a step closer to the greater good and rejection of the lesser evil.