

A short description of Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting)

We need a better voting system.
We need a better balance between the government, the people, the political parties and the elected members.

An electoral system to replace 'First Past the Post' at Westminster

One MP in each constituency - for local personal accountable politics.
Simple and quick voting and counting that everyone can understand - for transparency and clarity.
Party Proportional voting - for a fairer balance in politics.
Every vote in every constituency counts - for everybody to re-engage with politics

Introduction

Direct Party and Representative Voting (DPR Voting) is an electoral system specifically intended to introduce a form of proportional representation to elections for the House of Commons in the UK while requiring the least change to the familiar 'First Past the Post' (FPTP) system. It is a form of Proportional Representation for the UK based on the existing single member constituencies.

Although DPR Voting is a Proportional Representation (PR) system, it maintains the system of single member constituencies, the method by which MPs are elected, and the relationship between the MP and their electorate. It accommodates independent minded MPs and even independent candidates.

DPR Voting is especially suitable as a replacement for FPTP because much of the voting process is unchanged. It is a PR system that addresses both the weaknesses of FPTP, and the disadvantages of the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) and Single Transferable Vote (STV) systems, and so neutralises most of the arguments for keeping FPTP.

Voting

The voter has two ballot papers with separate, independent, votes - one vote for the Candidate you want as your local MP - on your first ballot paper, and one vote for the Party you really support - on the other ballot paper. Each vote is a single choice - the voter marks their choice on each ballot paper with a single X.

The vote for the person determines who will represent the electorate as MP for the local constituency (and thus become a member of their party's parliamentary party.) It does not determine how many votes the parliamentary party will have in the parliament. The vote for the party determines how many votes the parliamentary party will have in the parliament. It plays no part in the election of any individual candidate.

A party that wins in no constituencies, ie has no MPs elected, will have no parliamentary party. But if the party wins sufficient party votes to exceed a predetermined threshold, it will be represented in the Parliament by its party leader with one vote.

Simplicity, equality, choice

The voting (and counting) in DPR Voting is as simple as FPTP. It's different because each voter has one vote for the candidate to be the local MP, as well as one vote for the party to form the Government. This form of voting is more straightforward for those who know which party they support, and gives more options for those for whom the relative merits of the candidates are important.

The 'Party' votes are aggregated nationwide, and this determines proportionately the number of votes each parliamentary party has in the parliament and therefore which party, or parties, can form the Government. Because the votes are totalled nationwide, each vote counts equally and where each vote is cast makes no difference to the result.

The Representative vote elects the MP for the constituency. The candidate who gets the most Representative votes is elected as the constituency MP. This vote is not linked to the vote for the party, so the voters can choose the best candidate to be the local MP regardless of their party allegiance.

The system requires some changes to the way parliament conducts votes (divisions). Electronic voting, while not essential, would save time and improve parliamentary administration efficiency.

The underlying reasoning for Direct Party and Representative Voting

The DPR Voting system reflects our parliamentary democracy which is based on political parties and constituency representatives. The dual nature of an MP's responsibilities – as both 1) a member of the parliamentary party and 2) as a representative of the constituency electorate – is built into DPR Voting.

The Authority of the MP to vote in parliament

a) Party issues

When an MP votes in parliament on party policy issues, their authority to vote is as a member of the Parliamentary Party. After the General Election, the 'Party' votes are totalled nationwide. The party's share of the party votes entitles its parliamentary party to a (PR) number of votes in the parliament. That is straightforward and is the basis of other PR systems. It determines which party, or parties, can form the Government.

In order for MPs to vote in the House of Commons the votes of each parliamentary party are simply shared out equally between its members (its MPs). As a result, no additional party list MPs are required.

Arguably this has more democratic logic than the method used in mixed member systems of appointing MPs from a party list. In DPR Voting all the MPs are elected as constituency representatives in the same way. When the votes each parliamentary party has are shared out equally between its members, each MP will not have a single integer vote, but rather it will be an equal share. Depending on the numbers, the vote may be more or less than one and may be expressed as a decimal.

b) 'Non Party political' issues or 'Free votes'

When the MP votes on 'non party political' matters they represent their constituency electorate. When an issue is not a party political issue, the party vote does not apply. For such apolitical issues - non party political divisions and 'matters of conscience' - every MP has one vote (value one).

The Party vote is the default case – most matters are party matters but, if all parties agree, a vote can be deemed a 'non party' vote. Thus every party has a veto and if there is no agreement amongst the parties the vote is carried out according to the party vote method. There is no ambiguity.

c) Parliamentary Committees

Under DPR Voting, the Party Political balance of Committees would be determined by the Party votes cast in the election. In addition to MPs, parties could put forward members of the Upper House to stand on Committees, as happens currently with Joint Committees. Voting on Committees would not change – each member would have one vote. The DPR Voting system that makes votes in parliament 'party proportional' does not apply to Committees. The proportionality has been dealt with by selecting Committee members that reflect the overall party balance.

All the advantages and principal outcomes of Direct Party and Representative Voting follow from the underlying democratic logic of the system.

Principal outcomes of DPR Voting:

- A form of proportional representation is achieved with minimal change to the voting system.
- All MPs are elected in single member constituencies. Their democratic accountability is retained.
- The relationship between the MP and their electorate is retained.
- The votes each party has in parliament are proportional to the votes won in the election.
- This determines which party, or parties, can form the government
- Simplicity of voting and counting is comparable with FPTP.
- The election is not decided by voting in 'marginal' constituencies.
- The system does not encourage numerous small parties.
- The system is resistant to gerrymandering
 - Frequent revision to constituency boundaries is not necessary.
- Separating the vote for the MP from the vote for the party means there are no safe 'party' seats.
- It accommodates independent and independent minded candidates
 - The MP relationship to his/her constituents is closer. The MP is less dependent on the Party.
- Each ('Party') vote in every constituency makes a difference to the result of the election.

DPR Voting is a PR voting system which does not need Party List MPs.

(unlike AMS / MMP)

The voting and counting procedures are simple, quick and transparent

(unlike STV)

DPR does not require constituency boundaries to be redrawn

(unlike STV and AMS/MMP).

The votes for the party, and the local MP are not combined in one vote

(unlike FPTP).

The system does not use preferential voting or multimember constituencies

(unlike STV).

There is no 'Overhang' issue with DPR Voting

(unlike MMP)

The cost of introducing the new system would be low. It would be straightforward to reverse the change.

For more details, see (<http://www.dprvoting.org>)

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The DPR Voting system was first published in 2010

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