

## Afternoon Breakout Session: Democracy Imperiled

Facilitator John Hilke asked participants to identify their actions, interests and projects related to the breakout session topic. Participants listed a range of topics: election reform, changing rules in Congress, tribal rights, personal rights and safety as an LGBTQ individual, access to voting, universal voting, gerrymandering, public finance of elections, reliable information to voters, outside influence on elections, and elimination of the Electoral College.

The initial comments focused in praise for Washington's mail-in voting system because of its advantages in avoiding discrimination and reducing incentives to try to influence the outcome of elections with last-minute outrageous claims.

The group chose to focus on three topics related to alternative voting systems that some participants view a superior to the winning-take-all voting system that is so widely used in the US. Participants offered insights and information about actual application of other voting systems, including ranked choice voting, open voting, and proportional representation.

Ranked choice voting allows voters to vote for 3 or more candidates in rank order. In the event one candidate doesn't get a majority vote, candidates with the least amount of voters are eliminated and voters for that candidate have their second choice applied to the remaining candidates until there is finally a candidate with a majority of votes. The option exists in the state of Maine and is currently under consideration in the WA Legislature for local elections--HB 1722. Fair Vote WA is a nonprofit supporting this effort.

Open or universal voting eliminates the need for voter registration and, when coupled with compulsory ballot return, helps insure that all who can vote get ballots.

Proportional representation expands current legislative and/or Congressional Districts to Super Districts so that voters have a chance to vote for more than one candidate. There is then a higher likelihood that the election of a governing body more accurately reflects the electorate.