

Voice for Democracy

NEWSLETTER OF **Californians for Electoral Reform**

May 2014

Special Edition – Candidate Surveys

This issue presents candidates' responses to a CfER survey. The California Secretary of State is in charge of managing elections. As such, the Secretary is person CfER deals with on voting system issues. We submitted our survey to all candidates for this office and their responses are printed herein.

The Survey

Here are the survey questions posed to the candidates:

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?
Yes / No
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?
Yes / No
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?
Yes / No
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?
Yes / No
5. What issues and requirements, if any, specific to IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting, do you foresee in developing regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports those election methods? How would you address those issues and requirements?
Narrative
6. What is your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general? What are your thoughts about replacing the top-two primary with, for example, a single IRV election with all the candidates in November, or a "top-four" system that winnows the field to four candidates in June and then uses IRV to determine the final winner in November? Do you have other ideas as to how to ensure that the most popular candidates advance to a later, final-round general election or runoff?
Narrative
7. This space is for anything else you would like to say that would be of interest to our members.
Narrative



The Responses

Here are the candidate responses to the survey, in alphabetic order.

Roy Allmond (Republican)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?

Yes. If this is what the affected voters had agreed upon.

I need some clarification of the “proportional representation”. It seems to me that a true proportion representation would mean that if three candidates were to run, and results were that the first had 40%, the second had 35%, and the third had 25% then all would win, and they would be able to respectively have 40%, 35%, and 25% of the power. Would they also receive 40%, 35%, 25% percent of the pay? This would be like pandemonium.
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?

Yes. Equal treatment under the law.
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?

Yes. Equal treatment under the law.
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?

Yes. Equal treatment under the law.
5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...

Paper ballots would not have the flexibility of electronic machines.
6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...

I feel that that the Top-Two primary scheme is closest to how the founding fathers envisioned elections to be held. Some have objected to their candidate being eliminated. I counter, not so! They had their chance during the primary, and after the primary results, it is either go big, or go home. The General Election is not a time to want to see their name in print.

For instance, if there are seven candidates on the ballot, and if the second candidate would be acceptable to all of the voters who had voted for the last five ranking, then the election will have been thrown to the second best candidate. Especially if the highest vote getter only received 40% of the vote and the next six had 60%. Sometimes too many choices water down the voter choices.
7. ... anything else you would like to say...

The blanket answer to all of the questions is:

 - * The Secretary of State is to facilitate all legally approved voting schemes – whether it is IRV, RCV, STV, or musical chairs – not dictate how they feel the vote should be run. If I have any objections, it would be because I can point to a law or court decision that the voting system conflicts with.
 - * The Secretary of State (and the California Legislature, as well as the California voters) does not have independent control of how the Federal Election votes are counted. The rules have to be applied in all States uniformly.

My goal, and it should be every candidate’s goal, to fulfill the duties of the office in such a way that all voters; the ones who voted for, and against, would be glad I had been elected.



Derek Cressman (Democratic)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?
Yes
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?
Yes
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?
Yes
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?
Yes
5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...
It's important that new voting equipment certified in California be able to accommodate more than three ranked choice votes for any race. I will support regulations to ensure that this is the case.
6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...
I do not support the top-two primary. I believe that a single IRV election, a top-four system, or possibly an Alaskan style blanket primary would be better policy alternatives.
7. ... anything else you would like to say...
Our voting systems and electoral systems need to provide voters with a full range of choices on election day while ensuring that the eventual winner has the support of a majority of voters in the district. I have been a longtime supporter of Californians for Electoral Reform, FairVote, and other campaigns to bring about IRV, the National Popular Vote, and other reforms.

David Curtis (Green)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?
Yes. It includes minor voices into representation.
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?
Yes. If people want to use IRV they should go ahead with it at the local levels.
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?
Yes. These options should be decided at the local levels.
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?
Yes. Voting method options should be decided at the local levels.
5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...
There is debate whether the software should be open source or proprietary. These are functional concerns that need to be worked out by consensus.
6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local



jurisdictions) in general...

The top-two is an artificial construct that needlessly reduces choice on the general election. I would not have a fixed number for participants in the general. It should be a variable number based on performance in the primary. IRV would also be better than the top-two.

7. ... anything else you would like to say...

You should follow me on Twitter. That is the inside scoop stuff. Twitter: dc_us

Jeff Drobman (Democratic)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?

Yes . I would like to see many forms of "other" voting methods tried out on an "experimental" basis and as "advisory" votes (non-binding) for a probationary period.

2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?

Yes . see #1

3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?

Yes . see #1

4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?

Yes. I favor RCV and IRV over cumulative.

5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...

I am advocating for ONLINE VOTING using Internet protocols and devices. I am opposed to using new, dedicated machines. I favor using industry standard PCs, databases, software and networks. These have 30+ years of development and use proven technology.

6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...

I am in favor of trying the new "open primary" (top-two) for a while longer to gauge public acceptance. In the old system, ALL parties were given a slot in the general election no matter how qualified, and no matter how much support. The primary was a moot election for minor parties (usually a single candidate). So I view the new system as merely moving the single election for minor parties from November to June, but with the added advantage a runoff general election. I would like to try (as I said) using RCV and IRV for select races and issues as a companion "advisory" so we all can see the differences the methods would show.

7. ... anything else you would like to say...

I am running for Secretary of State to improve our statewide voter experience -- through SECURE ONLINE INTERNET VOTING for California.

I am running for California Secretary of State to make our statewide voter, election systems and databases more SECURE; to increase voter ACCESS and TURNOUT; to ensure VOTING RIGHTS; to enhance the voting experience; increase vote tabulation reliability & security; and to vastly reduce costs of running an election -- all through implementing SECURE ONLINE INTERNET VOTING.

My ultimate goal is to support "VOTE ANYWHERE, ANYTIME, ON ANY DEVICE" -- but only after first making our current election systems much more secure, and improving voter vetting and authentication, and protecting the privacy and security of voters' personal data (voter records and ballots).



Also, I have been participating in the California "super-state" parliament's "Coalition of 7" for California statewide candidates including Secretary of State. We have all voted for up to 12 state office candidates using RCV.

Alex Padilla (Democratic)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?

I support local, geographic-based representation for the state legislature. I believe it is vital for voters to have an elected representative accountable directly to their constituents and capable of addressing local concerns at the district level. I support allowing local bodies the right to determine their own electoral systems that ensure a fair and equal voice for all voters.

2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?

I have long supported efforts at the local level to increase turnout, protect voting rights for all and administer elections in a way that takes into account important local concerns. To that end, some local cities have adopted instant runoff voting. Other cities and counties have adopted policies, like district elections and early voting, to best serve their constituents. I will continue to support any effort to give voters more voting options, increase civic engagement and participation, and ensure local election systems are a good fit for the local electorate and local concerns. At the same time, I believe certain standards have to be set at the state level to protect voting rights and ensure fair representation. That's why I authored the bill to ensure charter city votes occur in general elections with higher turnout and more participation and why I've supported the efforts in numerous local cities to move towards district rather than at-large elections.

3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?

Ranked choice voting has worked well in some parts of California where voters have formally approved a change in voting format at the ballot box and where local elections officials have worked to educate the electorate about their new voting system. Any significant change to a system like RCV must be approved by the voters. While I do not believe RCV is appropriate every part of California, I certainly understand the appeal in ensuring a more diverse candidate field, giving voters more voting options and eliminating runoff elections.

4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?

Protecting voting rights for all and ensuring fair representation for minorities and underrepresented groups is a top priority in elections administration. To that end, a system like cumulative voting where voters can concentrate their votes for their favored candidates has its advantages. At the same time, district elections and local efforts to increase civic engagement and voter registration may accomplish the same goals in a simpler, more direct way. Regardless of the format, we must continue to work to get more voters engaged in local elections and ensure that local governments are as responsive as possible to local concerns.

5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...

I am proud to be the only candidate running for Secretary of State who has pledged to visit all 58 counties and meet with local elections officials in every county in California. I've made this pledge because I know Sacramento doesn't have all the answers and that every community in California is unique and has its own issues and concerns when it comes to elections and voting. I've already met with the registrars for San Francisco and Alameda counties, two of the main jurisdictions using alternative voting methods. I would work closely with local elections officials throughout California when developing voting regulations.

6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...



Beyond an election's format, the essential question we have to answer in California is how to get more voters engaged and participating in our democracy. Regardless of an election's format, we know that currently, there are millions of Californians who do not vote and millions of Californians who aren't even registered. We need to work to engage more Californians in voting. That's why I've pledged to register a million more voters in my first term as Secretary of State and prioritize visiting high schools throughout California to cultivate civic engagement among the next generation of California voters. At the same time, we also must work to increase trust and confidence of government. That's why I've introduced a tough package of campaign finance reforms in the state legislature to ban fundraising during the last 100 days of session and strengthen campaign finance disclosure and reporting. By working to engage more Californians in elections, and working to institute reforms to restore trust in government, we can strengthen our democracy.

Pete Peterson (Republican)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?

No. While I would support the right of a local citizenry to form this kind of gov't, I see proportional representation as generally forming weak governing bodies where it is difficult for voters to find who is accountable for a gov'ts poor performance.
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?

Yes. While I am not convinced that IRV is the best elections process, I support communities in making their own decisions (within the bounds of our State and Federal Constitutions) about how they will conduct elections.
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?

Yes
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?

Yes
5. ... regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...

Voting equipment under these conditions would have to be able to "count" multiple votes for the same office, and further be able to "count" votes cast for second/third place.
6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...

I generally favor the top-two primary, but acknowledge the challenges it presents to smaller Parties. My initial solution would be to make it easier for voters to cast "write in" votes in the General election, but I would be open to exploring the "top-four" system you describe above.
7. ... anything else you would like to say...

About 10 years ago, I left a private sector career to pursue a passion of mine - getting more citizens involved and informed about the decisions that affect our everyday lives. That was not the best financial decision for me or my family, but it has taken me all over this great state consulting with and training government officials to be more engaging of their residents - either through better processes or better technology. My work has not been about pushing a community towards a certain decision, but to make sure the process they used was the most transparent and participatory. I bring this perspective and background to this run for Secretary of State - my dream job.



Dan Schnur (No Party Preference)

1. Do you support using proportional representation to elect local governing bodies and the California legislature?
No. I have not seen evidence of the additional benefits of this system, but as Secretary of State, I am open to all ideas on how to best increased voter participation and will be eager to talk with advocates of a proportional representation system to hear their ideas in more detail.
2. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using instant runoff voting for their single-winner municipal elections?
Yes. General law cities should have the same right as charter cities.
3. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using multi-winner RCV proportional representation to elect their governing bodies?
Yes. General law cities should have the same right as charter cities.
4. Do you support giving general law cities and all counties the same option that charter cities have of using cumulative voting to elect their governing bodies?
Yes. General law cities should have the same right as charter cities.
5. ...regulations for certifying new voting equipment that supports IRV, multi-winner RCV, and/or cumulative voting...
By taking advantage of advances in voter equipment, I believe that the state of California can encourage the acquisition of equipment that can handle a wide range of systems.
6. ... your opinion of the top-two primary in particular and two-round runoff systems (as used by many local jurisdictions) in general...
I am a supporter of the top-two primary because I believe it results in more competitive and productive elected officials; however, there are many improvements that can be made on the current system that can and should lower the threshold for participation for candidates representing smaller parties.
7. ... anything else you would like to say...
Throughout the campaign and during my time in office, my focus will be on fixing California's broken political system and finding ways to encourage our state's residents to become more engaged in civics and politics. As Secretary of State, I will work to ban political fundraising during the legislative session; support tougher campaign disclosure laws to make sure every political contribution is public within 24 hours; help economic recovery and job creation by simplifying and streamlining California's business licensing operations; and will work to restore voter confidence and participation by increasing civic education.



President's Letter

Web pages are ephemeral. A PDF file (if saved) is more permanent, as is a hardcopy document. That's why, even though the June primary is over, this newsletter contains the responses to the questionnaire CfER sent to all of the candidates for Secretary of State. They all responded, some sooner than others. In alphabetical order:

Roy Allmond (Republican) - Responded May 19

Derek Cressman (Democratic) - Responded May 15

David Curtis (Green) - Responded May 16

Jeffrey H Drobman (Democratic) - Responded May 18

Alex Padilla (Democratic) - Responded May 28

Pete Peterson (Republican) - Responded May 23

Dan Schnur (No Party Preference) - Responded May 16

We posted the responses to our website as they came in, and sent an email to the "all" list announcing the postings. (If we don't have your email address and would like to get such emails, please go to cfer.org/join, follow the links to the membership form, and update your record with your email address.) I hope you found them useful.

(We didn't send a questionnaire to Leland Yee, even though his name remained on the ballot, because he had withdrawn from the election and it would have seemed like a cruel joke had we sent him one. However, given that he finished third in the election anyway, perhaps we should have.)

We did intend this newsletter to go out before the election (which is why it's called the May 2014 newsletter), but neglected to coordinate with our publisher's vacation schedule. Had we kept to our intended publication date, however, we would not have been able to include the responses of the ones who ended up winning the June primary, Republican Pete Peterson and Democrat Alex Padilla. Since theirs will be the names on the ballot in November, I'm glad you will have this document to refer to in deciding for whom to vote.

You'll also note that this newsletter is only three months after the previous one, not the usual four. We decided to increase the publication frequency from three times a year to four to keep you informed on a more timely basis as to the progress of electoral reform in California.

By now you should have received the notice of the CfER Annual General Meeting, along with your CfER ballot. We've invited the two winners to participate in a panel discussion on the future of electoral reform in California.

The AGM will take place from 1:30pm to 4:30pm at the Davis Unitarian-Universalist Church, 27074 Patwin Rd., Davis, CA 95616.

—Steve Chessin, President



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About CfER . . .

Californians for Electoral Reform (CfER) is a statewide citizens' group promoting election reforms that ensure that our government fairly represents the voters. We are a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization with members from across the political spectrum. Since our founding in May of 1993, our numbers have grown from about two dozen to hundreds of members participating in local chapters across California.

OUR ELECTORAL SYSTEM IS IMPORTANT

The method by which we vote has dramatic consequences, and nearly one third of the state's electorate consistently goes without a representative that speaks for them in Sacramento. The choice of electoral system can determine whether there will be "spoilers" or vote-splitting effects, majority sweeps of representation on city councils, or pervasive negative campaigning. The choice of electoral system determines whether minority perspectives or racial and ethnic minority groups receive fair representation or get shut out of the process entirely.

CFER IS THE LEADING ADVOCACY GROUP FOR THESE REFORMS IN CALIFORNIA

CfER works for legislation that would allow cities and counties to adopt voting methods that allow people to rank their preferences when they vote. CfER also works with activists in its local chapters to enact fair election methods in cities and counties across the state.

For more information visit www.cfer.org/aboutus

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