

## PROPOSED ADOPTION OF PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

A group of citizens recently formed the “Committee for PR in St. Helens” to obtain the necessary signatures for an amendment to the City Charter by referendum. Specifically, to put the question of expanding the size of the City Council to eight, limiting terms to two year, and adopting a PR system of electing members to a vote.

By this campaign, PR advocates emphasize that under PR voting majority rule would be guaranteed and at the same time minority groups would be given representation in proportion to their actual strength on the City Council. The mayor still would be independently elected every two years as provided in the Charter.

## PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

Proportional Representation (PR) is the method by which voters would elect members of the City Council. PR attempts to ensure minority representation in government while respecting the principle of majority control.

Generally, any group of voters that numbers more than one-eighth of the total turnout can be sure of electing at least one member of an eight-member Council, but a majority group of voters can be sure of electing a majority of the Council.

Proportional Representation requires that the candidates’ names be rotated in alphabetical order on the ballot so that each candidate appears in the desirable top-of-the-ballot position on an equal number of ballots.

## DIRECTIONS TO THE VOTER

In a PR election you may vote for as many of the candidates listed on the ballot as you wish. You must, however, indicate the order of your preference among the various candidates for whom you vote.

With the new style ballots designed for the

computerized ballot counting, you vote by shading in one of the numbered ovals next to the candidate names. The number in the oval you choose to shade in indicates your order of preference among the candidates listed on the ballot.

Fill in the number 1 oval next to your first choice; fill in the number 2 oval next to your second choice; fill in the number 3 oval next to your third choice, and so on. You may fill in as many choices as you please, but each number may be used only once.

---

### Example: Correct Marking

Candidate A ● ② ③  
Candidate B ① ● ③  
Candidate C ① ② ●

---

Filling in more than one choice for a candidate or filling in the same choice for more than one candidate will invalidate your ballot.

---

### Example: Invalid Votes for Candidates

*Filling in more than one choice for a candidate*

Candidate A ● ● ③

*Filling in the Same choice for more than one candidate*

Candidate A ● ② ③

Candidate B ● ② ③

---

To vote for a write in candidate you must write the name of the candidate in one of the areas marked “write-in” and then fill in a numbered oval next to the name you have written.

## HOW THE PR “QUOTA” SYSTEM WORKS

Proportional representation or PR is the proposed form of voting to be used by for St. Helens City Council. Under PR a candidate needs to win a certain proportion of the votes to be elected. This winning fraction of the votes is referred to as the “quota.”

The quota is determined by dividing the total number of valid ballots cast by the number of positions to be elected plus one and then adding

one to the resulting dividend.

Thus, to elect 8 City Councilors, the total number of valid ballots cast is divided by 8; then 1 is added to the result of the division.

For example, if 3,200 valid ballots are cast for City Councilors, the quota will be 401 (3,200 divided by 8, plus 1).

## HOW THE BALLOTS ARE COUNTED

The count begins with the sorting of ballots by the first preference shown-the NUMBER 1 vote. This is generally known as the “First Count.”

Any candidates who reach the necessary quota with Number 1 votes are declared elected. Any extra ballots they receive beyond the quota are redistributed to the candidates marked next in preference (the number 2 ones) on those excess ballots.

The count continues with the elimination of those candidates receiving fewer than fifty votes in the first count. Their ballots are redistributed to the other candidates according to the next preference marked.

After each distribution, the candidate now having the lowest number of votes is eliminated and his/her ballots redistributed to the next indicated preference (number 2, 3, 4, etc.).

As candidates reach the quota through the addition of redistributed ballots to their totals, they are declared elected and no further ballots are transferred to them.

This process continues until all candidates have been eliminated except the nine winners.

For many years the counting of the ballots was a lengthy process requiring several days to complete. This was a “hand count” open to public viewing while ballots were reshuffled during the various rounds of counting. The new computerized system of ballot counting introduced has made a much faster count possible.

## COMPUTERIZED PR BALLOT TABULATION

**The First Step:** On election night at the central tabulation center, the memory card from each precinct's ballot box is entered into a computer. The memory card is a storing device containing a picture of each ballot recorded by a scanner in the ballot box. This computer takes the records of each ballot from the memory card and sorts them by precinct for City Council, Mayor and ballot question. The complete ballot files for each race or question are then copied onto a computer disk. Each ballot record consists of the candidates selected by the voter and the order in which they were ranked.

**The Second Step:** The computer disk with the ballot files is installed in a second computer. This computer contains the software which counts the ballots. The software has been programmed to follow the "St. Helens Rules." By computer, the same process formerly carried out manually is conducted in a matter of seconds by the electronic sorting, counting, and transfer of votes.

## ELECTION RESULTS

An "unofficial first count" of number one (#1) votes for each candidate for City Council will be available on election night within minutes of receipt of the memory card from the last reporting precinct. This count is referred to as "unofficial" because it does not contain all ballots. For example, it does not yet include write-ins or ballots

marked in a way that could not be read by the scanner at the precinct level. Those votes must be individually added to those already scanned. Only when this last step is completed on the day after the election will all valid ballots have been recorded.

The complete ballot records are then copied and read into the tabulation software where they are tallied. The software produces an "official first count" and then proceeds to distribute surplus and eliminate candidates with the fewest votes until all seats have been filled. The Election Commissioners declare the results.

## CITY OF ST. HELENS

### CITY COUNCIL ELECTIONS

Voting by

Proportional Representation

