

Ireland's Electoral System

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Abstract

Ireland's electoral system is named "Proportional Representation by Means of the Multi-member Constituencies Single Transferable Vote, or PR-STV." The fundamental spirit of this system is to uphold the principle of proportionality in the election results. Under the system, each electoral constituency has multiple seats and each seat has to acquire the "quota." The voter is allowed to freely mark his/her preferences regardless of the party line. Once a candidate acquires the quota the surplus is transferred to other candidates in the order of preferences. The complicatedness lies only in the counting process of the votes without troubling the voter. This system minimizes waste of votes while maximizing the proportionality of seats and votes. This system gives Ireland only a mild case of multi-party state. It has not caused Ireland problems in party discipline or structure. Many members of the Dail Eireann spend an excessive amount of time and effort in the constituency, but this has been more related to Irish political culture than the electoral system.

Keywords: propositional representation, multiple seats constituencies, quota, surplus, transferable votes