

Selecting Members to the Forum for Long-Term Prosperity

Trust is never easy to win. How, then, could nearly every American voter get a representative they would trust on issues as divisive as the economy, taxes, entitlements and federal spending?

To answer that question, we've found it helpful to shrink the task down to a small scale. So imagine the residents of a small town meeting in a large hall to choose a town council that every resident could trust.

To start, each person who wants a council seat hands out copies of his/her platform. After taking questions from the audience, each candidate moves to a different point in the room. Next, everyone present gathers around their favorite candidate.

The person running the meeting then asks the candidate with the fewest backers to drop out of the race. That candidate and each person gathered around him then goes to their second choice. When all of those people get to their second choices, the moderator turns to the next candidate with the fewest backers and asks her to drop out. She and her supporters go to their next choices.

This process continues until each remaining candidate has the support of, say, at least 5 percent of the town.

Each townspeople would thereby get a representative as close to him or herself politically as is practical.

The townspeople would also have sorted themselves into coherent interest groups, based on which representative each person chose.

To achieve an equivalent result for the Forum on Nationwide Prosperity, we propose to select its members as follows:

1) We would invite all high profile public figures who had spoken out on the relevant issues to become candidates for the Forum. Candidates could come from academia, think tanks, industry, labor unions, the media, advocacy groups and so on.

We would verify that each candidate was who he/she claimed to be. We would also ensure that the candidates covered the political spectrum. If not, we would recruit candidates to fill any gaps.

2) Any voter could find appropriate candidates by going to the Forum website. The voter would first check off his/her concerns on the economy, taxes, entitlements and spending. The website would link to appropriate candidates' videos and written platforms. Each voter could watch the videos or read the statements to decide which candidates would best represent the voter's concerns.

As in the small town example, each voter would pick his or her first-choice. In case that candidate didn't win, the voter would also pick a second choice, a third and so on. The voter would mark those choices on a "preferential ballot."

3) We would count ballots the same way as in the small town scenario: That is, the candidate who drew the fewest first-choice votes would be out of the race. Each voter who had picked that candidate would have their vote go to their second choice.

Then, the next candidate with the fewest votes would be out of the race. Each of her voters would have their vote go to their next choice.

This process would continue until each remaining candidate had the support of at least 2 percent of the people who had voted.

4) Each voter would thus get a representative as close to him/herself politically as is practical.

And, in effect, voters would have sorted themselves into coherent interest groups, based on which representative each voter chose.¹

Note: Each voter would be asked, but not required, to put his/her name, address and/or email address on his ballot, so that each Forum member could communicate directly with constituents about his/her efforts on their behalf.

5) By the above process, each Forum member would attract a different number of voters. So, if the Forum took straw votes, each member's voting power should be proportional to the number of his or her voters. We would, however, encourage Forum members to seek consensus and not take straw votes.

¹ Every election process, including this one, has some mathematical quirks. Nonetheless, this election process is the one most likely to give as many voters as possible a representative they would trust. For more discussion of this subject, see www.GenuineRepresentation.org/prefer