Is There a Better Way to Elect a President?

Steven J. Brams, New York University

I describe properties of approval voting—whereby voters can approve of as many candidates as they like in a multicandidate election, and the candidate with the most approval wins—and compare them with properties of plurality voting, in which voters can vote for only one candidate. I also discuss and compare the properties of other voting systems, including

• ranking systems, such as the Borda count and the Hare system of single transferable vote (also called instant runoff); and

• rating systems that have recently been proposed by mathematicians Warren Smith (range voting) and Michel Balinski and Rida Laraki (majority judgment voting).

I argue that approval voting, which has been adopted by the MAA, AMS, and several other professional societies, is a simpler and more practicable alternative and should be used in presidential and other public elections.