

Dr James Gilmour



Dr James Gilmour has been a campaigner for reform of the voting systems used for public elections in the UK for more than 45 years. He has consistently advocated the use of the single transferable vote system of proportional representation (STV-PR) for these purposes because he has not yet discovered any other voting system that would better meet the requirements for effective representative democracy.

He has been a member of the Electoral Reform Society since 1963 and served on its Council from 1975 to 1983. With James Woodward-Nutt, he wrote "Electing the Scottish Assembly" (published by the Electoral Reform Society in 1974), which made the case for using STV-PR to elect the then proposed Scottish Assembly.

He is a member of the Campaign Committee of Fairshare Voting Reform, Scotland's Campaign for a Better Democracy, and also serves as the Company Secretary and Treasurer. Fairshare campaigned successfully for the introduction of STV-PR for local government elections in Scotland and has more recently widened its remit to include all public elections in Scotland.

In support of reform and understanding of voting systems generally, James Gilmour has published articles and letters in the press, made radio and television broadcasts, and has given lectures and talks to a wide variety of audiences. He has published papers on STV counting rules in the technical journal "Voting matters".

Was an officially Accredited Observer in 1975 at one of the larger and longer counts for the STV elections to the Northern Ireland Constitutional Convention. Has many years practical experience of conducting counts for STV-PR elections. Since 1979 has supervised the count for the STV election of the Rector of the University of Edinburgh. For that purpose he wrote the special STV rules for single-vacancy elections (published by the Electoral Reform Society in 1978). Advised the University of Edinburgh on its electronic voting and counting system adopted for the 2006 Rectorial election.

Drafted submissions, initially for the Electoral Reform Society and later for Fairshare Voting Reform, that were made to the McIntosh Commission on the Scottish Parliament and Local Government, to the Kerley Working Group on Renewing Local Democracy, to the Scottish Executive, to the Local Government Committee of the Scottish Parliament and its successor, the Local Government and Transport Committee, to the Arbutnott Commission on Boundary Differences and Voting Systems, and to the Scottish Elections Review.

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Gave oral evidence to the Local Government Committee of the Scottish Parliament when it was considering the proposal to change the voting system for Local Government elections, and to the Arbuthnott Commission. Prepared written evidence on behalf of Fairshare Voting Reform for submission to the Health Committee of the Scottish Parliament during its consideration of the Health Board Elections (Scotland) Bill and gave oral evidence to that Committee. Also made personal submissions to most of these bodies on matters related to voting systems.

Drafted amendments to the Scotland Bill 1977 to introduce STV-PR and drafted similar amendments to the Scotland Bill 1997. Drafted substantive and technical amendments to the STV rules in the Local Governance (Scotland) Bill before all the detailed rules were removed at a late stage in the Committee debate. Made several personal submissions to the Scottish Executive relating to the implementation of the STV voting system for Local Government elections. Wrote and published (in Voting matters) the first detailed rules for manual counts of STV elections using the Weighted Inclusive Gregory Method (WIGM) for transferring surpluses.

Made personal written submissions to the British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (August 2004) and to Ontario Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform (January 2007). Was a member of the Fairshare team that met a delegation of MPs from the Canadian Federal Parliament Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs (March 2005) and a delegation of MPPs from the Select Committee on Electoral Reform of the Legislative Assembly (Provincial Parliament) of Ontario (September 2005), both of which were reviewing voting systems with a view to reform in their respective legislatures. In 2004, provided information and advice to a Researcher working on voting systems for the Executive Council (Provincial Government) of Prince Edward Island, Canada. Provided advice to an Adviser to the Environment and Public Affairs Committee of the Legislative Council (State Parliament) of Western Australia on the WIGM rules for STV elections (February 2007). Prepared a detailed description of the STV WIGM count that was "adopted" by the Scottish Executive and published on the VoteScotland website (April 2007) and was subsequently published in extended form as an article in "Representation" (August 2007). Was an Accredited Observer at the Scottish Parliament elections and the Scottish Local Government elections (May 2007). Presented a paper at the 2007 EPOP conference on "Rejected ballot papers in the Scottish Elections 2007".

Dr James Gilmour trained as a biological scientist and worked for 25 years in agricultural research and consultancy before entering senior management at executive board level when he had responsibility for an operational division with offices throughout Scotland. Since taking early retirement in 1997 he has undertaken a small number of international consultancies at government level on the organisation, management and funding of agricultural extension and advisory services, mainly in former Soviet-block countries. He has also undertaken consultancies on evaluating agricultural R&D programme proposals and on the design of CD-based publications for user acceptability. He is a member of the Board of British Crop Production Enterprises.

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