

# THE COLOR OF REPRESENTATION

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ILLINOIS

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Lack of diversity in local government can have devastating consequences

When elected officials are not as diverse as the community they serve, the voices and interests of people of color are not adequately considered when decisions are made. National attention was brought to this problem in Ferguson, Missouri, where the mayor, police chief, municipal judge, majority of the police force, and 5 of 6 city council members were all white, despite Ferguson’s population being 67% Black. Such a severe underrepresentation of Ferguson’s Black community contributed to racially discriminatory policing practices, investigated in the wake of the killing of unarmed Black teen Michael Brown in August 2014.

Local governments are often understudied, but can have a huge impact on the daily lives of their citizens, especially communities of color. For example, their decisions can affect whether:

- A community is integrated
- Public resources are equally distributed throughout the city
- Public employees include people of color
- Schools disproportionately suspend and expel Black students
- Minority owned businesses can thrive
- People of color’s right to vote is burdened

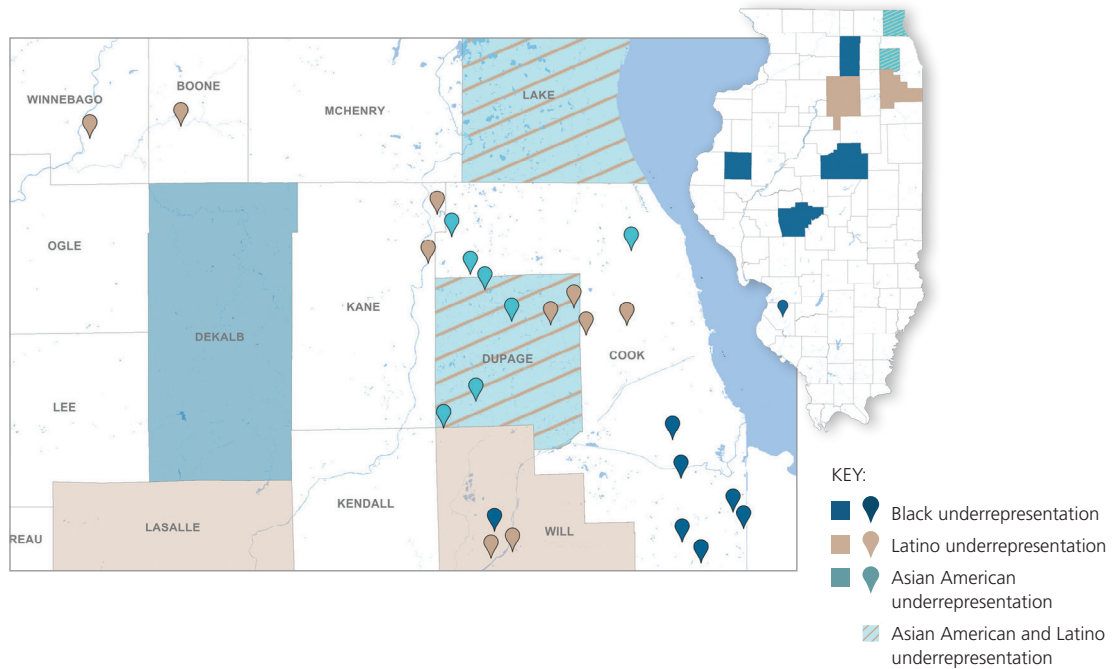
#### The Color of Representation is the first comprehensive investigation into minority representation in local governments in Illinois

The authors examined hundreds of county boards, city, town, and village councils, and school boards. The following are some of the places where people of color are most underrepresented:

Name	Black Citizens of Voting Age (CVAP)	Latino CVAP	Asian-American CVAP	Elected Officials of Color	Disparity (percentage of the population without representation)
City of Zion	36.3%	13.9%	2.6%	0 out of 4	53%
Glendale Heights	7.3%	16.9%	23.2%	0 out of 6	47%
Hanover Park	10.7%	16.9%	16.4%	0 out of 6	44%
Lansing Village	31.1%	8.8%	0.5%	0 out of 6	40%
Carpentersville	6.9%	28.7%	4.6%	0 out of 6	40%
Blue Island City	38.1%	31.0%	0.1%	4 out of 14	40%
Leyden Community High School District 212	2.5%	27.8%	4.5%	0 out of 7	35%
Morton Grove	1.8%	4.8%	27.5%	0 out of 6	34%
Fenton Community High School District 100	3.0%	21.9%	3.2%	0 out of 7	28%
DuPage County	4.6%	7.4%	8.7%	0 out of 18	21%

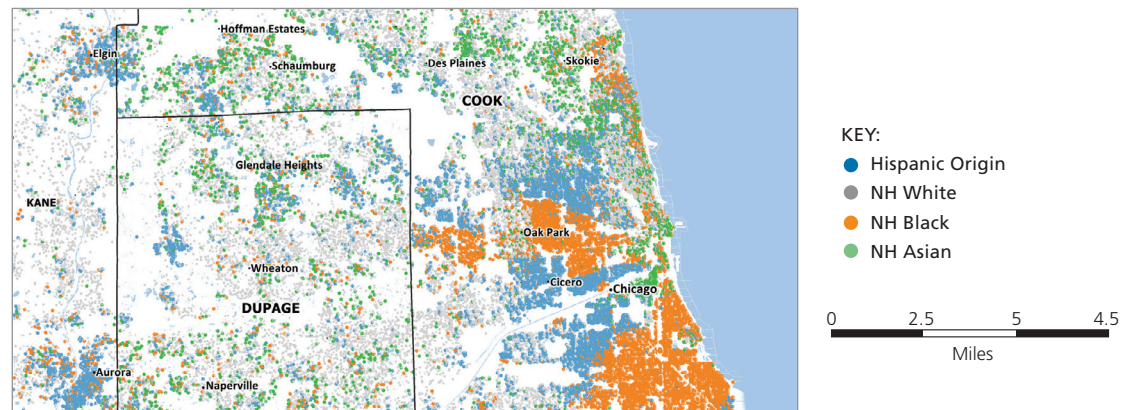
**The Color of Representation identifies 38 jurisdictions with a severe underrepresentation of people of color**

The following are counties, cities/towns/villages, or school board areas where the minority population is big enough to elect at least one additional member to the relevant board or council. 13 of the 38 jurisdictions could potentially be sued under the federal Voting Rights Act (Section 2).



**Remedying minority vote dilution has traditionally meant creating majority-minority single member districts**

Creating single member districts requires a community of color to be geographically compact, that is, segregated. However, many American communities are desegregating. 20 out of the 38 jurisdictions analyzed in this report are too integrated to draw SMDs. For example, while Chicago still exhibits a high level of residential segregation, DuPage County is much more integrated:

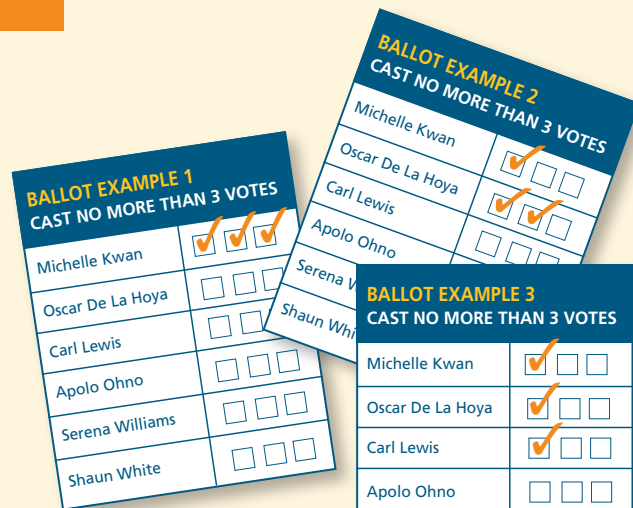


## Fair representation voting systems are a better way to remedy minority vote dilution

Unlike SMDs, cumulative and ranked choice voting allow communities of color that are desegregated to elect candidates of their choice. In cumulative and ranked choice voting systems, representatives are elected at-large from the whole city, or from large multi-member districts, in a way that ensures that candidates are elected in proportion to their support from the population.

### CUMULATIVE VOTING

CANDIDATES FOR CITY COUNCIL (3 TO BE ELECTED)	CAST NO MORE THAN 3 VOTES
Michelle Kwan	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Oscar De La Hoya	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Carl Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Apolo Ohno	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Serena Williams	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Shaun White	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>



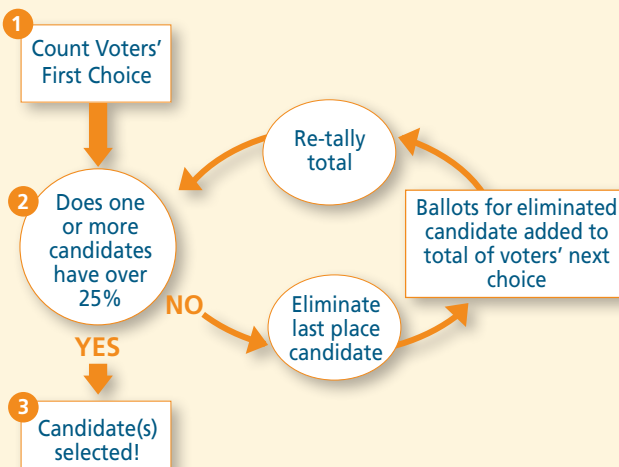
Calculating the winners:

- 1 Add up candidate totals
- 2 3 candidates with the most votes win a city council seat

### RANKED CHOICE VOTING

CANDIDATES FOR CITY COUNCIL (3 TO BE ELECTED)	
Michelle Kwan	6
Oscar De La Hoya	3
Carl Lewis	2
Apolo Ohno	1
Serena Williams	4
Shaun White	5

Calculating the winners:





## **Advocates can take action at the local, state, and national level to improve minority representation**

### **Local Recommendation: Communities should implement fair representation systems through community action**

Though some jurisdictions could change to single member districts to improve minority representation, fair representation systems like cumulative and ranked choice voting will help to ensure that any growth (or reduction) in the minority population can be reflected in increased (or decreased) minority representation.

Local communities in home rule jurisdictions (those that can change their system of election through ballot initiative) can build local power to introduce a fair representation system. This can be done by persuading local representatives, or gathering signatures to put a proposition on the ballot requiring the change to a new election system.

### **State Recommendation: States should adopt Voting Rights Acts that make it easier for communities to litigate to end minority vote dilution, and implement fair representation systems as remedies**

States should introduce state Voting Rights Acts like that currently used in California which is a more robust version of the federal Voting Rights Act. The state VRAs should explicitly state that minority vote dilution may be remedied by fair representation systems.

### **National Recommendation: Programs should target improving minority civic engagement and candidate recruitment**

Programs should be developed (at the local, state, or national level) to help register eligible citizens to vote, to improve turnout in local elections, to improve other measures of civic participation, and to recruit and train people of color to run for local office. Without comparable turnout by people of color to that of white voters, and without minority candidates on the ballot, no election system can ensure that people of color are fairly represented.

[COLOROFREPRESENTATION.ORG](https://colorofrepresentation.org)



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