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None of the above

The Boston Globe

Bill offers voters a way to put action in dissatisfaction: force a new election

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Massachusetts voters sick of holding their noses on Election Day could get another option: none of the above.

The proposal would let voters reject all candidates and demand a new election.

"Occasionally, when you get an application for a position, none of them are qualified," said William H. White, a retired systems analyst from East Dennis spearheading the scheme, who testified yesterday before state lawmakers.

The measure, pending before the Legislature, would add the line "None of the Above; For a New Election" to every state and local race on the ballot. If that option won the most votes, another election would be held in 60 to 80 days, and other candidates would be allowed to run.

In a state where 70 percent of candidates ran unopposed last year, the bill would let voters try to force competition by calling for a new election.

The bill was sponsored at White's behest by Senator Robert A. O'Leary, a Barnstable Democrat, and Representative Cleon H. Turner, who represents Dennis. Turner said yesterday that the novel idea has gained little traction so far on Beacon Hill.

The bill's approval would make Massachusetts the first state to offer voters such a choice that is binding. Nevada has given its voters a nonbinding none-of-the-above option in statewide races since 1975.

Under White's proposal, the presidential race would be the only one in which voters could not demand a new election. But they could register their discontent by voting for none-of-the-above, as well as a candidate.

"That would signal that this candidate would not have a mandate, even if they won," said White.

ANDREW RYAN ■

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