**PRESS RELEASE**

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**US HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**ELECTING THE SPEAKER: *IMPASSE***

As the ancient Greeks realised, when there is no majority *in favour* of any one option, there is a majority *against* every option. So why not preferential voting?

The world record for a majority vote *impasse* was set in 1268–1271 when the assembled cardinals—every one of them holy, no doubt, and old for sure—voted on umpteen candidates... but yes, there was a majority against every proposed candidate. Eventually, after sitting outside for weeks... months... years... the hopeful, mindful, prayerful faithful became playful: they took the roof off! This would make it easier, they reckoned, for the Holy Spirit to inspire the good cardinals... before yet another one died. Sure enough—whether the weather went wet is not known—the assembled quickly found their collective, or at least their majority will—well one of their majority wills. It had taken 33 months and three deaths!\*

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***\**** Taken from my ***The Punters’ Guide to Democracy,*** (Springer, Heidelberg), 2022, p 69.

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