



The League of Women Voters of Oakland

The League of Women Voters - where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement

RANKED-CHOICE VOTING

MOST CRITICAL INFORMATION

IMPORTANT FACT TO REMEMBER: The person in office can be either good or bad after being elected by either the Primary or Ranked-Choice Voting system; don't blame the voting system for the actions of the person in office.

HOW TO VOTE STRATEGICALLY: Vote your favorite as your first choice, regardless of his or her likelihood to win, then choose from the front-runners for your second and third choices. If your first choice is eliminated early, your second and third choices of the front-runners still have you in a strong position to help choose the winner.

FURTHER EXPLANATORY INFORMATION

Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) allows voters to rank a first, second and third choice candidate for a single office. This makes it possible to elect local officials by majority vote without the need for a separate run-off election.

Voters in Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro use Ranked-Choice Voting to elect most local officials. In 2006 the Oakland City Council proposed adopting Ranked-Choice Voting; they voted 6-2 to put a measure on the ballot. The measure passed with 69% of voters supporting it. Ranked-Choice Voting does not affect the election of County, State and federal officials or the approval or rejection of ballot measures.

Does my vote still count if ...

- I vote for the same candidate three times? Yes, your vote will count once.
- I only select one choice? Yes.

Keep In Mind:

Your second choice will be counted only if your first choice candidate has been eliminated. Your third choice will be counted only if both your first choice and second choice candidates have been eliminated.

Why Ranked-Choice Voting is a good thing

- More people vote in November than in a June primary so decisions are made by a larger proportion of citizens. RCV provides instant runoff.
- More people of color, less-well-off, younger, with lower-level jobs vote in November; in June the majority of voters are white, older, well-off, well-educated.

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- Less negative campaigning. If a candidate wants those supporting a different candidate to give *them* their second or third vote, they will not attack that other candidate but rather emphasize what they can do for the whole city.
- New candidates, new ideas and dissenting opinion are taken seriously. Candidates outside the mainstream have a chance—third party candidates in partisan elections; members of diverse groups not often successful in two-candidate races.
- Saves money.
 - Eliminates the \$800,000 cost of a June primary.
 - Candidates raise money for only one campaign, not two.
- Strategic voting: a voter can vote for the candidate they really like best. Near election time it becomes clear who the front-runners are. But voters can still give their first vote to the candidate they really like, even if they think he/she won't win. Then they can decide which of the front runners to give their second and third votes to. Each choice empowers the voter. There are no games here. We each have one vote, but we can indicate backup choices according to our sincere preferences. That's the best way to make sure our votes count, and Oakland gets the mayor, city council members, and school board leaders we deserve.

Who opposes RCV?

- Voters who are unhappy about the candidate who won. The problem is the candidate, not the election system. A two-candidate runoff can also result in a winner many voters do not like in office. (Any mayor who did not meet your expectations in years past was elected by the primary system.)
- Candidates who did not figure out strategies for RCV, which include appealing to a broad range of voters and asking to be ranked as second or third choice if not the voter's first choice. If no candidate gets a majority in the first round, the one with the most first choice votes may not win, and the second choice and even third choice votes will make a difference.
- Paid campaign workers: less employment.

Strategy for Candidates

- Get the most votes. Ask voters to make you their first choice. If you are not their first choice, ask them to make you their second choice or third choice. The winning candidate will have the most votes from all voters.
- Find voters who usually do not vote; explain to them the power they have. Make a wide and deep appeal to voters.

Links for further information:

lwvoakland.org/rankedquest.html

SmartVoter.org/ca/alm

acgov.org/rov/rcv

acgov.org/rov/registration.htm: REGISTER ONLINE at this site by Oct. 20.

You need to RE-REGISTER if you have changed your address