

Ranked Choice Voting in Utah Municipalities

Utah Ranked Choice Voting, www.UtahRCV.com

Utah municipalities have elections governed by state law. The law has required cities to hold an August primary when more than two candidates file for a single office. This creates uncertainty about the need for an August election until the filing period in June. It also extends the time necessary to campaign and costs local governments more tax dollars. As a result, Utah this year passed a law enabling cities to adopt ranked choice voting (RCV). Any city adopting RCV will not have an August primary, but instead always have all candidates run in November.

What is ranked choice voting? The goal of ranked choice voting (RCV, also known as instant runoff voting) is to duplicate the results of Utah cities' two-round system, but more efficiently. RCV is widely used in elections in private organizations and in more than a dozen cities in the United States. RCV gives voters the freedom to rank candidates: first, second, third and so on. If a candidate gets over half of the first choices, that candidate wins. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is defeated, and those who ranked that candidate as "number 1" now have their ballots count for their next choice. This repeats until a candidate wins with more than half the votes. RCV also can be used in citywide elections for more than one seat; the only change is to repeat the tally without the winning candidate in the second tally.

What are the benefits of ranked choice voting? RCV has straightforward benefits. First, RCV promotes majority rule, while avoiding the downsides of the traditional two

rounds of voting that usually result in lower voter turnout in the primary and increase the costs of elections. Second, voters can honestly rank the candidate they like without fear that doing so will help the candidate they like least. Third, candidates have incentives to engage with more voters to earn their support, which encourages candidates to refrain from personal attacks. Fourth, voters have new incentives to become informed about the candidates running to represent them.

Where is ranked choice voting used?

There are eleven cities and one state using ranked choice voting to elect their officers, including San Francisco, Oakland, Santa Fe and Minneapolis. At least five more localities will implement RCV by 2021. Approved by Robert's Rules of Order, RCV is used by many of our nation's largest professional societies and by the Academy of Motion Pictures for Best Picture.

How would RCV work for at-large elections for more than one seat? Voting for the at-large seats would be the same as in district. The only change is in the tally. The first winner would be elected the same way as in a district election with RCV. For electing additional winners, ballots are again sorted by first choice. The winner's votes are then counted for their next choice candidate, and then the RCV tally proceeds without that candidate. This process of electing candidates and restarting the tally after removing the winning candidate continues until all seats are filled.

What's it like voting with ranked choice

voting? Voting with RCV is easy, particularly when using proven best practices for ballot design and ballot instructions. RCV elections from this year had very low “overvote” rates across elections with different ballot designs and different electorates, including only 0.1 percent in Santa Fe’s five-candidate mayoral election, 0.25 percent in San Francisco’s eight-candidate mayoral race

this year and 0.2% in primaries in Maine in June. Exit surveys consistently find that large majorities of voters say it is very easy to rank their choices with RCV.

What would a ballot look like in an RCV election? Here is the ballot used for crowded primary election race in Maine this year. This design is similar to what would be used in Utah in nonpartisan elections.

Governor	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice	7th Choice	8th Choice
Cote, Adam Roland Sanford	<input type="radio"/>							
Dion, Donna J. Biddeford	<input type="radio"/>							
Dion, Mark N. Portland	<input type="radio"/>							
Eves, Mark W. North Berwick	<input type="radio"/>							
Mills, Janet T. Farmington	<input type="radio"/>							
Russell, Diane Marie Portland	<input type="radio"/>							
Sweet, Elizabeth A. Hallowell	<input type="radio"/>							
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>							

Ranked Choice Voting Election Example

Santa Fe March, 2018 Mayoral Election				
Candidate	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Alan Webber	39.2% 8,080 votes	41.4% 8,474 votes	44.8% 9,092 votes	66.2% 13,088 votes
Ronald S. Trujillo	24.4% 5,026 votes	25.6% 5,241 votes	27.8% 5,654 votes	33.8% 6,686 votes
Kate I. Noble	22.4% 4,611 votes	24.1% 4,928 votes	27.4% 5,565 votes	Defeated
Joseph M. Maestas	8.0% 1,649 votes	8.9% 1,818 votes	Defeated	
Peter N. Ives	6.0% 1,238 votes	Defeated		