

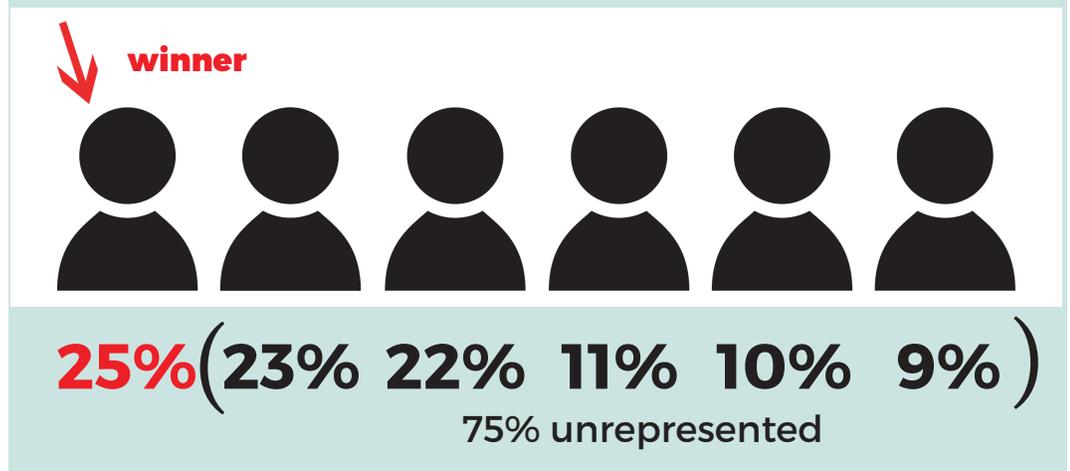
Improving Local Elections with Ranked Choice Voting

American democracy is based on the principle of majority rule. However, under our “winner-take-all” system, electoral races with more than two candidates often elect politicians with less than a majority. Why? When voters can only choose one candidate, it “splits the vote” between candidates with similar platforms. This also occurs when there are three or more strong candidates, and voters are put at a disadvantage because if they vote for that candidate that they truly prefer, they risk helping elect the candidate they like the least.

Ranked Choice Voting

In an RCV election, voters can rank as many or as few candidates as they want in order of choice. All 1st choices are counted, and if no candidate has received a majority in the first round, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. If a voter’s 1st choice candidate is eliminated, their vote instantly goes to their next choice. The process continues until there is a candidate with a majority of the votes cast, who is declared the winner.

Example of Winner-Take-All



The winner received only 25% of the vote, leaving the remaining 75% unrepresented.

- Preserves Majority Rule:** When RCV is used in single-winner districts, only candidates who receive at least 50%+1 of voter support will win. Depending upon how it’s adopted, this can even be achieved while eliminating runoffs and/or primaries, saving localities significant money.
- More Choices, More Voices:** When voters have the power to rank their ballot, candidates can run without worrying about splitting the vote and being labeled a “spoiler”. If one’s preferred candidate is eliminated, their second choice is still counted, and so on until a winner is selected, reducing “wasted” votes.
- Civil and Issue-focused Campaigns:** RCV changes incentives for candidates. Instead of distancing themselves from their opponents, alienating their opponents’ supporters, candidates can try to secure 2nd and 3rd choice votes by finding common ground with supporters of their opponents.