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Court Hearing TODAY

[Today](#) at 9 a.m., the Minnesota Supreme Court heard arguments in the lawsuit challenging Minneapolis voters' decision to use ranked-choice voting (RCV) in city elections.

The hearing is to be viewable by video [here](#).

Recap: In 2006, Minneapolis voters approved the use of RCV (aka instant runoff voting) by a nearly 2-to-1 margin. The implementation of RCV in Minneapolis was challenged in *Minnesota Voters Alliance v City of Minneapolis* (27-cv-08-15). FairVote Minnesota joined Minneapolis as a co-defendant.

In a 30-page [ruling](#) rejecting the lawsuit, the district court judge not only determined that the City of Minneapolis "has an important interest in respecting the democratic process" and thus should uphold voters' overwhelming support of RCV, but also that the plaintiffs "failed to demonstrate that IRV is either unconstitutional or contrary to public policy." This decision was consistent with the outcomes of similar cases in other states.

We fully expect the Supreme Court to affirm the district court's decision and allow Minneapolis to move forward with using RCV in this November's city elections. Look out for updates from FairVote Minnesota on the Supreme Court case.

Minneapolis Tests Procedures for November RCV Elections

In anticipation of a favorable outcome in the Supreme Court case, the City of Minneapolis has been conducting a [trial run](#) of RCV vote-counting procedures.

Minneapolis plans to use a combination of existing machines and a hand count to tally votes this fall. Machines will tally voters' first choices, so candidates who reach the threshold for winning after first choices are tallied will be declared elected on election night. Hand counts will begin the next day in elections that

require tallies of voters' additional rankings. Contrary to [a recent media report](#), Minneapolis is not unique in counting multi-seat RCV elections by hand. It is one of many jurisdictions to hand-count ballots in RCV elections.

The purpose of the trial run is to test and refine the process and seek input on ballot design and instructions. Elections staff and judges have been practicing procedures in both single- and multiple-seat elections using sample sets of 200 ballots for city council races, 300 ballots for park district races and 600 ballots for citywide races. The process has been open to the public, enabling observers to provide feedback also.

Elections staff will provide a report to the City Council on the outcomes of the testing procedures at the upcoming May 21 [meeting](#) of the Elections Committee.

Want to see a simple, fun illustration of how ranked-choice voting works? Check out this short [video](#) from Minnesota Public Radio.

While Minneapolis will use a combination of machine and hand counts in 2009, election technology is evolving to accommodate changing electoral needs like RCV. Want to learn more? Check out the [Conference on Innovations in Election Technology](#) at the Humphrey Institute May 27-29.

St. Paul Takes Steps to Put RCV on the Ballot This Fall

Members of the St. Paul Better Ballot Campaign team recently met to discuss the process and timeline for placing RCV on the ballot this fall with St. Paul Council Members Melvin Carter and Russ Stark, City Attorney John Choi and Deputy City Attorney Jerry Hendrickson. The Campaign is confident that the St. Paul City Council will vote in June to put a charter amendment on the ballot, following the Minnesota Supreme Court ruling on the Minneapolis lawsuit.

Stay tuned for information about the pending Council action. Contact Dakotah@fairvotemn.org for more information or to become involved. The campaign is recruiting volunteers NOW for summer events and other campaign activities.

Duluth to Launch Petition Drive for RCV

The Duluth Ranked-Choice Voting Steering Committee will meet May 19 to prepare for a petition drive and education initiative to put RCV on the ballot in Duluth next year! It is planning community presentations and seeking endorsements from community organizations and leaders.

The Duluth effort already has strong backing from the mayor, several council members and prominent community leaders. If you live in Duluth or the surrounding area, click here to see [details](#) about the meeting and to get involved in this exciting initiative!

Aspen, Colo., Holds First RCV Election

The city of Aspen held its first election for mayor and city council using RCV on Tues., May 6. Of the race, the Aspen Times said: "We...have been impressed with the professionalism displayed... [C]andidates have treated each other respectfully during these stressful times, and it has not gone unnoticed."

[Read more about the Aspen experience.](#)

The Aspen experience is not unusual. Greater civility in campaigns is one of the many important and proven benefits of RCV. Candidates don't want to alienate other candidates' supporters, as in RCV elections, second- and third-choice votes can be key to victory.

Momentum for Better Elections is Growing - Help Keep It That Way!

With all the positive momentum for electoral reform in Minnesota today, we have an unprecedented opportunity to make real change – important change for better elections. But we can't do it without the resources to educate, plan, prepare and, sometimes, fight.

FairVote Minnesota does far more than advocate for change; we help educate leaders and citizens on better voting methods, our experts advise on implementing reforms and, in extreme cases like the Minneapolis lawsuit, we take on opponents who don't want the voters' voices to be heard.

Momentum is clearly building for RCV, which will bring more choices to voters, more civil and issue-oriented elections, majority rule, more diverse representation, cost savings, and the ability for people to vote for their most-preferred candidates without worry of "wasting" their votes.

This year FairVote Minnesota is:

- Educating the citizens of Minneapolis about RCV – the method they will be using this November in municipal elections
- Educating citizens in St. Paul, where RCV likely will be on the ballot in November
- Educating citizens in Duluth, where there is a strong community effort to put RCV on the ballot in November of 2010
- Educating legislators to gain support for RCV legislation in 2010 – legislation that will make it easier for cities to use RCV and require jurisdictions to buy RCV-capable equipment when they replace their voting machines in coming years

Here's what your dollars will buy:

- \$500: Five information booths at summer events in Minneapolis and St. Paul
- \$250: Training for voter education volunteers

- \$100: Ads in two local newspapers
- \$75: A house party for RCV
- \$50: Eight "VOTE Ranked Choice Voting" lawn signs

By making a [contribution](#) to FairVote Minnesota today, you'll be taking a stand for better elections by enabling us to continue our work. Can you give [\\$50, \\$75, \\$100](#) or even more to help keep momentum going for ranked choice voting in Minnesota?

We need your financial support. But giving money is not the only way to contribute. FairVote Minnesota needs your volunteer help as well, to assist with our Minneapolis voter education campaign and Better Ballot Campaigns in Saint Paul and Duluth. Contact info@fairvotemn.org to get involved!

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