

# Instant Runoff Voting

## Making Every Vote Count

### The problem with the current primary system

Minneapolis uses a nonpartisan two-round voting system to elect its city officials. Primaries narrow the field of candidates who will go on to the general election. This is supposed to ensure majority winners in mayoral and city council races.

The problem is few voters show up for Round One – for example, just 15% of registered voters went to the primaries this year – undermining the majority-winner requirement. Candidates who could win in a high-turnout general election are weeded out in Round One.

Narrowing the field of candidates, in turn, limits political debate following the primary and gives constituencies of losing candidates less reason to show up at the general election.

Two-round elections are also costly, and inconvenient – the City of Minneapolis administers two elections, candidates run for two elections and voters go to the polls twice.

### Instant Runoff Voting is a better voting method that:

#### ✓ Eliminates the primary and ensures majority rule in *one* election

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) ensures that a majority of voters can elect their candidate of choice in one election instead of two.

#### ✓ Increases voter participation

With no primary, the decisive election takes place when turnout is highest. With more candidates campaigning to their constituencies and less negative campaigning to turn them off, more people turn out to vote.

#### ✓ Saves time and money

Eliminating municipal primaries would save the City of Minneapolis about \$200,000 each election. It also saves candidates the expense of running for two elections and shortens the length of the campaign season, reducing the amount of money candidates need to raise and spend.

#### ✓ Is easy for voters to use

Voters rank candidates in order of preference - 1, 2, 3. If a candidate receives a majority of first choices, that candidate wins. If no candidate receives a majority of first-choice votes, the ballots are counted again. The candidate with the fewest first-choice votes is eliminated. If your first choice was for the candidate who was eliminated, your vote goes to your second choice. If your first choice was for any other candidate, your first choice is counted again, the same as occurs in a traditional runoff. This process of dropping off bottom vote-getters and transferring their votes to their supporters' alternate choices continues until a candidate gets a majority of votes.

#### ✓ More elegantly solves the “spoiler” problem and eliminates “wasted votes”

When more than two candidates are running, voting for the candidate you like best may split the majority and help elect the candidate you like the least. IRV lets you rank candidates in order of preference. If your first choice can't win, your vote goes to a viable candidate as your second choice.

#### ✓ Allows third parties to stand on their merits and get a true measure of support

Eliminating the “spoiler” problem lets third party candidates be considered on their merits all the way through the November election. By promoting sincere voting, IRV allows third party

candidates to get an accurate measure of their support.

#### ✓ Improves campaigns

IRV invigorates campaigns and reduces polarization and gridlock by bringing multiple viewpoints into the debate. It promotes positive, issue-based campaigns because candidates may need second and third choice votes to win.

#### ✓ Can be used in multi-winner elections

An IRV-related method can be used in multi-winner elections, like those that occur among the Minneapolis independent boards – Park Board, Library Board and Board of Estimate and Taxation.

#### ✓ Is a proven voting method and is gaining converts

San Francisco began using IRV last November to elect its mayor and city council members. Ferndale MI, Berkeley CA and Burlington VT have approved it for use; Washington State will pilot it in three major cities and it is being considered in several other U.S. cities and states. Cambridge MA uses an IRV-related voting system, and Australia, Ireland and London use IRV-style voting for their highest offices.

IRV is being studied across Minnesota and is endorsed by the League of Women Voters of Minnesota, the Minneapolis Star Tribune, MPIRG and the Minnesota Independence and Green Parties.

### How IRV can be adopted in Minneapolis

A change in voting method must be approved by the voters on a general election ballot. To learn more, contact the Better Ballot Campaign at: [www.betterballotcampaign.org](http://www.betterballotcampaign.org) email: [info@betterballotcampaign.org](mailto:info@betterballotcampaign.org)