
Ranked Choice Voting Talking Points

- Minnesota’s “plurality-take-all” elections are a holdover from an era in which there were usually only two parties on the ballot; they’re out of step with Minnesota’s growing political diversity.
- Plurality winners are, unfortunately, becoming commonplace. Our last governor elected by a majority was Arne Carlson in 1994; now our legislative and federal races are trending this way too, with nearly 20 races decided by a plurality since 2002.
- Ranked Choice Voting (a.k.a. Instant Runoff Voting) gives voters more choice while eliminating the problems of “spoiler” candidates and “wasted” votes. The current system forces voters to choose between voting for their preferred candidate (and risk helping elect the candidate they like the least) or for their second choice to avoid “wasting” their vote.
- Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) provides a clear incentive for candidates to campaign positively and on ideas and positions that matter to voters. The current system rewards attack campaigning. Candidates can win votes by driving up opponents’ negatives, persuading voters to vote against the opponent instead of for the candidate. A candidate behaves differently knowing that being someone’s second choice is a tangible benefit.
- In local races, primaries have become expensive no-show elections in which qualified candidates get weeded out by just a small number of voters before the November election.
- RCV provides our electoral process with a badly needed upgrade. It’s like a traditional runoff, but faster, simpler, and cheaper.
- Under RCV, voters choose the candidate they prefer – as they would on a traditional ballot – but also additional choices if they wish. If a candidate receives a majority of first choices, that candidate wins. If not, the least popular candidate is eliminated and his or her ballots are divided among the remaining candidates based on voters’ second choices. If there’s still no majority winner, the process repeats until one candidate gains a majority of support. Or, in the case of multi-winner elections, until all seats are filled.
- In local nonpartisan elections, RCV combines the primary and general election, saving money and maximizing voter participation. In state partisan elections, RCV can be used in the primary to ensure winning candidates are supported by a majority of party voters, as well as in the general election to accomplish majority outcomes without a separate, costly, low-turnout runoff election.
- Under RCV, the outcome more accurately reflects the will of the voters, and officeholders serve knowing they were elected with majority support. In multi-winner elections, RCV allows more voters to be represented by someone they voted for.
- RCV gives greater opportunity to candidates of color and a greater voice to communities of color.
- RCV, a consensus-building process, could help moderate the polarization that dominates our political dialogue and decision-making.
- RCV works. It is a proven and successful system used in numerous U.S. cities and in democracies around the world, including Ireland, Northern Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Scotland and London. It had a successful rollout last year in Minneapolis and is on track for implementation in St. Paul.
- RCV is also used by more than a hundred colleges and organizations across the country, including by the Academy of Motion Pictures to elect Best Picture, by the Olympics to decide host cities and by the American Political Science Association to elect their president.
- While we continue to demonstrate that RCV works well at the local level, it’s time to take this idea to the state level for consideration and work to ensure that the next generation of voting equipment is equipped to conduct RCV elections. RCV equipment will provide instantaneous results just as current machines do now and give voters the ability to rank their full preferences.