



The Truth About Ranked-Choice Voting

What is Ranked-Choice Voting?

American elections are traditionally and almost universally run using the “one-person, one-vote” system. When voters cast their ballots, they pick a single candidate in each race, and the candidate with the highest number of votes wins.

Under Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV), voters are forced to rank the candidates. If no candidate wins a majority, the race goes into multiple rounds of what is referred to as “instant run-off voting” until one candidate receives more than 50 percent of the remaining votes. It is anything but “instant” though—it is a complex process that has taken days or weeks in some cases. Using RCV, candidates who lost in the first round can win the election after multiple rounds of tabulation.

The Left has successfully pushed RCV in Maine and Alaska through ballot initiatives and implemented RCV in cities across the country, including New York, San Francisco, and Cambridge, Massachusetts. The RCV movement is gaining momentum and without an explicit ban, every state is vulnerable.

What’s wrong with Ranked-Choice Voting?

With RCV, every vote does not count.

One of the greatest problems with RCV is “ballot exhaustion”—when a ballot is cast but does not count toward the end election result. This occurs when a voter overvotes, undervotes, or only ranks candidates that are no longer in contention on their ballot.

Ballot exhaustion leaves voters and voices uncounted—ballots are literally thrown in the trash because the RCV voting process renders their votes meaningless.

RCV diminishes voter confidence.

RCV is overly complicated and confusing. Additionally, it requires voters to make decisions about all the candidates on the ballot, forcing them to cast their vote for candidates that they disapprove of or lack sufficient information about.

RCV threatens fast and accurate ballot counting.

With multiple runoffs and choice rankings, the RCV process leads to slower election results and increased irregularities.



Ranked-choice voting undermines voter confidence and leads to slower election results and increased irregularities.

BANS ON RCV ARE TRENDING



In 2022, Florida and Tennessee lawmakers enacted bills that banned ranked-choice voting for all elections.

The RCV Track Record

With RCV, every vote does *not* count.



Maine's 2018 Second Congressional District Election

In this state race, 8,253 ballots were thrown in the trash, which was almost five percent of the total ballots cast. Bruce Poliquin (R) received 46.33 percent of the vote ahead of Jared Golden's (D) 45.58 percent. But since Poliquin didn't receive 50 percent, there was a second round of tabulation. The secretary of state threw out the 8,253 "exhausted ballots"—this was not a mistake; this is how ranked-choice voting is designed to work. Golden was declared the winner with 50.62 percent of the remaining ballots but only 49.2 percent of the total ballots cast.



Alaska's 2022 At-Large Congressional Special and General Elections

In the special election, nearly 15,000 Alaskan votes were tossed out before the Mary Peltola (D) was declared the winner. In fact, 60 percent of voters voted Republican in the first round, but by the last tally, Peltola came out ahead by just 5,129 votes. Conveniently for the Democrats, more than 11,000 ballots were tossed by the second round simply because they only voted for the other Republican candidate instead of ranking all of the candidates. In November's midterm elections, Mary Peltola won reelection after three rounds of tabulation and, once again, after nearly 15,000 ballots were exhausted.

RCV diminishes voter confidence.



Alameda County California's 2022 Local Elections

Nearly two months after November's election, Alameda County announced that it systematically counted the ballots wrong due to a ranked-choice programming error. The third-place finisher had actually won the Oakland school board election. The Board of Supervisors has directed a recount for all local races that used ranked-choice voting, including Mayor of Oakland.



Portland, Maine's 2021 Charter Commission Election

In a 10-person race for four open seats on the Portland Charter Commission, one of the eventual winners had a mere four percent of the vote after the first round of tabulation. Two of the top four initial vote-getters ultimately lost. A group backed by Democratic Socialists of America supported the winners and their success was largely due to ranked-choice voting being used in the election.

RCV threatens fast and accurate ballot counting.



New York City's 2021 Democratic Mayoral Primary

Ranked-Choice Voting mandates the central counting of votes and involves a complicated counting process. The 2021 Democratic mayoral primary took 15 days to announce a winner. The New York City Board of Elections accidentally included 135,000 "test ballots" in its publicly posted tally before fixing the error. Overall, almost 15 percent of the ballots were thrown in the trash and didn't count toward the final result.



Maine's 2022 Second Congressional District Election

It took more than eight days to decide the official winner in this 2022 congressional race. A "technical snafu" led to two memory sticks, which had recorded more than 16,000 ballots, being corrupt.