Instant Runoff Voting is a system that has been adopted in several statewide races across the nation, 37 colleges and universities and, this year, N.C. State's student body elections. Presidential candidates Barack Obama and John McCain have even endorsed IRV in some state primaries.

Voters rank each of the candidates listed for a position in order of preference, and one candidate is eliminated in each round until a single candidate receives 51 percent or more of the votes. If a voter's top choice is eliminated in the first round, then his or her first choice becomes the candidate ranked second, and so forth.

According to Adam Compton, a senior in agricultural business management and the student senator who sponsored the bill to adopt IRV, this system allows students' votes to count for more.

"The idea of Instant Runoff Voting is to be able to vote as you want to see won, even if they don't have a slight chance of winning without throwing away your vote," he said.

"You're able to pick your can-
didate (who you want to win) instead of picking the lesser of two evils," Compton said.

This process, according to Compton, eliminates the hassle of another week of campaigning before a runoff election unless there is a "dead tie.

The system elicited differ-
ent views from the candidates running for student body presi-
dent.

"At the heart of what IRV stands for, it makes a lot of sense to me. But a lot of people teach to 'trick' the system. That's not the point," said John Mickey, a junior in civil engineering, who ran for student body president in 2004-2005, when only two can-
didates ran for the position.

"A lot of people try to strate-
gically favor the most mainstream sort of fumbled over this," he said. Compton said and try to trick the system to get their person in there. Because even if some stu-
dents voted one candidate as their top choice because they didn't think that person would win, that candidate would still get eliminated before the final round.

Bobby Mills, the incumbent candidate for student body presi-
dent this spring, said he did not think the system was effective.

"The system is going to hurt any incumbent in a single person race...because people are going to vote that person last," Mills, a junior in political sci-
ence, said.

After the Elections Com-
mission announced the results though Mills ranked third.

The last time Student Govern-
ment avoided a runoff election for student body president was in 2004-2005, when only two can-
didates ran for the position. Five candidates ran for student body president this year and if it weren't for IRV, candidates John Dawkins and Mickey would have had to go into a runoff election.

But because of the implemen-
tation of IRV, Dawkins, a junior in civil engineering, won the election without the added work of campaigning and additional voting.

"Instant Runoff Voting system candidate Ty Roach, a senior in biological sciences, said he did not fully understand how the system worked.

"I wasn't really sure why they dropped the bottom man out every time," he said. "I thought it should be the top two and then keep everyone else.

Roach also said requiring stu-
dents to rank all five candidates was not a good idea because many students voted only for their top pick and did not rank others. Dawkins said trying to trick the system was not really effec-
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Each figure represents about 10 percent of the students who voted for each candidate in the 2008 spring student body elections, which implemented the instant runoff voting system for the first time. When a candidate is eliminated in a round, his or her votes are redistributed among the other candidates in the next round, based on their candidate rankings. Although the tabulations for round four and five are the same, the IRV system automatically runs through a fifth tabulation to eliminate the final competitor before the winner is selected.

2008 SPRING GENERAL ELECTION REFERENDA

Candidate's assess instant Runoff Voting system implemented with the spring's student body elections

STORY BY SABA HINDI | PHOTO ILLUSTRATIONS BY STEPHEN BATEMAN & ROB FISHER

Breaking down the system

In the spring elections, 6,927 students cast their votes. Dawkins and Mickey would have won in the runoff election if IRV had not been implemented. Because Roach was not a top choice for many voters, Dawkins and Mickey garnered more votes than Roach. However, Dawkins and Mickey still had to work hard to win the election.

The last time Student Govern-
ment avoided a runoff election for student body president was in 2004-2005, when only two can-
didates ran for the position.

"A runoff favors the people who have the resources to keep campaigning, so the low so-
cio-economic classes wouldn't be able to participate in that," he said.

"But also, the students get sick of it. I'm glad with one vote, it can all be over," Dawkins said. He felt the same way. "It served the students well because they don't have to be constantly voting and the candi-
dates don't have to campaign for another week and later campus for another week," he said.

In the spring elections, 6,127 students voted in the student body president elections and out of the 1,484 students who took the exit poll survey, 76 percent said they would vote in elections again.

2008 SPRING GENERAL ELECTION REFERENDA