

## *Is there something wrong with our VOTING SYSTEM?*

**YES.** The evidence is all around us: low voter turnout, negative campaigning, superficial treatment of the issues, narrow range of debate and distrust of politicians.

The two most common voting systems in the U. S. – plurality and two-round runoff elections – were cutting edge in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. However, most modern democracies have advanced beyond these voting systems because of their serious shortcomings. Among these are:

- **Minority Rule** In a plurality election, winners can be elected with less than a majority of votes. Bill Clinton won a majority in only one out of 50 states in 1992. In a 1998 congressional race in Massachusetts, nine candidates ran in the Democratic primary. The winner had only 23% of the vote. He then easily won the safely Democratic seat, even though 77% of primary voters supported someone else.

- **Problem with 'Spoilers'** Plurality voting allows candidates with little chance of winning to knock off popular candidates. Voters' choices are limited as potential candidates with good ideas don't run, due to fear of this "spoiler" effect.

- **Costly and Inefficient** In states with two-round runoff elections, taxpayers have to pay for two elections, candidates have to raise and spend more money, and voter turnout is often extremely low. In a low turnout runoff, it's impossible to say that the winner reflects the will of the entire electorate.

## *Can IRV solve these problems?*

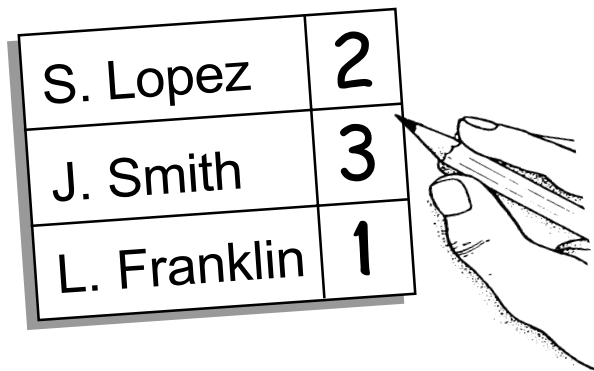
**YES!** **Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)** guarantees majority rule. Unlike in a plurality election, where candidates can win with less than a majority, IRV assures that winners enjoy majority support.

IRV eliminates the problem of multiple candidates splitting the vote, throwing elections to less popular candidates. It accomplishes all of this in a single election when turnout is highest. This means that taxpayers save the expense of conducting a runoff election.

## *How does IRV work?*

### **It's as easy as 1-2-3.**

Voters simply rank as many, or as few, candidates as they wish: first choice, second choice and so on.



If one candidate is the first choice of a majority of votes, that candidate is elected. If no one receives a majority, the candidate at the

bottom are eliminated, and ballots that ranked those candidates first then count for their next choice, just as if all the voters voted in a series of runoff elections. The field of candidates can be reduced to two finalists, with the one preferred by the majority being elected.

Candidate	First Choice	Transfer	Final
Lopez	44%	+ 8%	52%
Smith	46%	+ 2%	48%
Franklin	10%	-10%	NA

Winning requires more than half the votes.

In this example, candidate Franklin received the fewest first-choice votes and was eliminated. When Franklin's ballots were transferred to his supporters' second choices, Smith received 2% and Lopez received 8%. Lopez won because a majority of all voters actually preferred her to Smith.

## *Sounds good, but...*

### *Has IRV ever been used?*

**Yes,** IRV is used to elect the members of the Australian Legislature, the President of the Republic of Ireland, and the Mayor of London.

In the United States, various municipal and nongovernmental institutions have adopted

such rank-order voting systems, including Cambridge, MA, San Francisco, CA, the Academy Awards, and the American Political Science Association (APSA).

The APSA uses IRV because its members – political scientists who study these things – know it is such a fair way to elect a single candidate, when there are more than two choices.

The Utah Republican Party uses IRV for its congressional nominations, and Louisiana uses IRV ballots for overseas absentee voters.

*Doesn't IRV give extra votes to fringe voters who vote for eliminated candidates?*

**No**, IRV works like a two-round runoff. If your favorite candidate doesn't make the runoff, you have the opportunity to support a candidate who does. If your candidate does make the runoff, you continue to support that candidate. But with IRV, this all happens in one election.

*Isn't this too complicated for the voter?*

**No**, IRV is as easy as 1, 2, 3. Voters also can choose to vote for just one candidate, as they do now. Millions of voters use this system around the world without difficulty.

*Is IRV constitutional?*

**Yes**, IRV is a constitutional voting system that upholds the U.S. Constitution's principles of one person - one vote and majority rule.

## *Instant Runoff Voting can:*

- Promote majority rule, in contrast to plurality voting.
- Save money compared to costly two-round runoff elections, which often have low voter turnout.
- Increase voter turnout by giving voters more choices. Experience around the world shows that voter turnout goes up when voters have a wider range of choices.
- Promote positive, issue-based campaigns because candidates will seek 2nd and 3rd choice votes.
- Create a clearer mandate for a winning candidate's agenda, giving better direction for policy-making.
- Solve the problem of groupings of voters splitting their votes among similar candidates, which allows a candidate with only minority support to win.
- Minimize "wasted" votes, votes that don't help elect a winner. To the fullest extent possible, your vote will contribute to electing a candidate that you like.

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*Making Your Vote Count!*

**Just What Is ...**

# IRV

**... And Why Do  
We Need It?**

A simple guide to  
Instant Runoff Voting

—  
How to promote majority rule  
and greater participation

*"Vote for the candidate you like  
without helping to elect  
the candidate you don't."*