



Making a Presentation for Instant Runoff Voting

INTRODUCTION:

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) is a better way to guarantee majority winners in single-seat election, such as those of student government executive or class officers.

WHERE IRV IS USED:

1. **In colleges** – examples: Princeton, UC Berkeley, Rice, MIT, Wake Forreest, U. of Washington
2. **Internationally** - Australia, Ireland, London, and Papua New Guinea.
3. **American cities** - San Francisco, Burlington VT, Ferndale MI and Takoma Park MD.

PLURALITY ELECTIONS AND FIVE PROBLEMS:

Plurality elections are the most common type used in America: whoever has the most votes, wins. There are a number of problems with this type of elections:

1. Often produce **non-majority winners**
 - a. Runoffs can ensure a majority, but come with their own problems
 - i. **Lower turnout in runoffs**
 1. From 1994 to 2004, of 96 federal primary runoffs, 94 had lower turnout and overall turnout averaged only 35%.
 2. **Spoiler problem**
 - b. In a race with more than two candidates, it is possible that a candidate with little chance of winning can draw away enough votes from another candidate with similar positions, resulting in a win for a candidate less favored by the majority
 - c. Negative campaigning: candidates mount **personal attacks** to be the sole choice of voters

INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING AND FIVE SOLUTIONS:

1. Always a **majority winner**; the process of instant runoffs continues until one candidate receives a majority
2. At **no additional cost for runoffs**
 - a. No runoff means no extra campaign costs and no additional election costs.
 - b. Example: San Francisco saves \$1.2 million annually with the elimination of the city's runoff elections
3. One election, **more choice**; results in **higher voter turnout**.
4. **No spoiler** problem because citizens can vote their conscience
 - a. Candidates with similar positions do not have to fear splitting their base of support or being spoilers
 - b. Voters do not have to fear that they will cast a wasted vote
5. Encourages **positive campaigning**
 - a. Candidates need to gain second preference support from other candidates' voters

WHAT TO DO NEXT:

1. Give a demonstration to illustrate how it works and show the logic (works great with 20-30 people)
 - a. Use favorite music groups, colors, etc.
2. Next, address IRV concerns
 - a. Too complicated for voters
Reality: Exit polls prove that IRV makes sense with voter education.
 - b. Creates headaches for election administration
Reality: fewer burdens on election officials – only one election.
 - c. Voting equipment cannot handle the ballots
Reality: Online election software exists at many colleges and can be easily developed
Reality: Votes could easily be hand-counted, as they do in the small cities of Burlington, VT and Takoma Park, MD