



Eight Steps to IR *Victory*

Steps 1–4

Welcome to the movement for free and fair elections! We're excited to have you. IRVictory can be yours...just take these basic steps. Here's what we've learned:

Step 1: The Foundation of an IR*Victory*

To lead a successful reform campaign, you must organize yourself and your thoughts; gather basic information; build the argument for reform; prepare to overcome legal and logistical obstacles; and design your campaign strategy. Find relevant data from your local elections website or by contacting a city or county clerk or relevant administrator. Studying the problems will help you to sell the benefits of reform. Understanding how your solution would work and be implemented will help you pre-empt skeptics' criticisms. Developing a campaign strategy, finally, will give you the ultimate roadmap to victory.

Step 2: Sell the Solution

Once you have the base of research and knowledge needed to discuss electoral reform, you must develop a plan to sell the solution, and then carry that plan out. You must target your audience, develop your message, and choose your tactics. Targeting your audience helps to reveal who most needs to hear your message. Developing a message is about determining what to say, and how best to say it. Choosing your tactics involves deciding how you can most effectively speak to your target audiences. Tactics include presenting to local organizations, canvassing door-to-door or in public events, conducting sample elections, coordinating letters-to-the-editor and launching a website.

Step 3: Build Models

Your target community needs to understand that a new voting system is not untested or radical. A number of cities and nations use "alternative" voting methods; still, it is always helpful to have local examples to breed familiarity and acceptance of reform. One way to do this is to convince local organizations – such as a church board, union committee, school group, PTA, neighborhood association, local party committee, or a non-profit – to adopt your system for their board or leadership elections. Around the country, additionally, over forty student government elections have moved to ranked and/or proportional voting. These reforms help build trusted models for you to point to in a local campaign.

Step 4: Get Endorsed

Another key step toward building momentum and legitimacy for improved voting systems is to gain an official recommendation for their use in your community. If your city, county, college or target reform unit forms a committee to investigate reform, attempt to join it. If you cannot, take advantage of their investigation by highlighting the problems within the current system. Ask to make a presentation or provide educational materials to the commission. Be persistent. If your government does not use these types of commissions, you may still be able to persuade the governing body to create a committee to study and issue recommendations for improving elections.



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Steps 5–8

Step 5: Build Political Support

Local leaders and elected officials serve as either the gatekeepers to electoral reforms, or as influential allies. As a result, it is usually critical to try and build support amongst this key group of people, and to keep consistent constituent pressure on them. At this stage, all of the prior work comes in handy. A core group of supporters, armed with extensive research and examples from the community, along with the recommendation of an official body can go a long way towards persuading political leaders to support improved voting systems. Part of this process, however, should involve doing active outreach to the local media through Op-Eds and letters to the editor.

Step 6: Pass Legislation

If the above steps have been taken, it may be time to seek legislative action. The best way to achieve this is to find governing body members who are willing to sponsor legislation to have the government adopt it as its method of election. Your sponsors can help you identify how best to persuade the other policy-makers, as well as to identify potential obstacles to reform and counter-arguments that are likely to be presented. Should the group decline to pass the reform, ask your sponsors to take the matter directly to the voters by putting the reform on the ballot. Public perception is aided greatly when these elected officials themselves support the reforms in question. Citizen-initiated ballot initiatives are also a possibility, but should be conducted only after seeking a measure backed by the governing body. Citizen-initiated drives are time and labor-intensive, but signature gathering is a good way to educate voters while moving the initiative forward.

Step 7: Put It On the Ballot

If your efforts paid off and reform will be put before the voters, the hard work is about to begin! It is time to assemble a team of canvassing volunteers who will distribute easy-to-understand literature to educate voters. You should also re-double efforts to gain the endorsements of key political leaders and organizations for your initiative. Literature and ads cost money though, so having a financial base will be key to your success. Plan on inviting likely supporters to attend fundraisers. Also, aggressively seek support from local editorial boards.

Step 8: Implement

If your campaign for reform is successful, congratulations! ... But the work is not over yet! Stay in touch with officials to develop a timetable for implementation. The best way for this to be done is to have a defined date for implementation written into the legislation so that IRV can speedily be put into place. Most importantly, make sure steps are taken immediately to bring voting equipment into compliance with the new voting method. Lastly, make sure adequate voter education is conducted on the new system and that the ballot design is sufficiently clear.