



## Improving Runoffs with Instant Runoff Voting

Recommended by Robert Rule's of Order and tested among a wide variety of elections, instant runoff voting is a constitutionally supported means to avoid the expense and problems of runoff elections. Compared to the traditional "delayed" runoff, this ranked voting method saves taxpayers money, cuts the costs of running campaigns, elects candidates with higher voter turnout and reduces negative campaigning because candidates seek a #2 ranking from their opponents' supporters.

### **How it works:**

- First round of counting: The **voters rank their choices for an office: 1, 2, 3.** (*Nobody has to vote or rank more candidates than they want to.*) In the first round of counting, the voters' #1 choices are tallied. A candidate who gets enough first choices to win (typically a majority) is the winner, unless another candidate achieves enough support to require a runoff – *just as in traditional runoff systems.*
- Second round: If no one achieves a clear victory, all candidates except the top two vote-getters are eliminated, *just as in traditional runoffs.* If your #1 choice loses, your vote now goes to the runoff candidate you ranked best. The reallocated votes are added to the counts of the top vote-getters; the candidate with the most votes wins.

### **The benefits:**

Instant runoff voting (IRV) would do everything the current runoff system does to ensure that the winner has popular support – but it does it in one election rather than two.

- It saves counties, taxpayers and candidates money now used to hold two elections.
- It ensures higher voter turnout than when voters are asked to return for a runoff.
- It eases the administrative burden on election officials who run one election, not two.
- It improves campaign tone; candidates want their opponents' voters to rank them #2.

### **Where instant runoff voting is used:**

- Utah: Since 2002, the Republican Party has used IRV at its state conventions for nominating congressional and statewide candidates.
- Louisiana: More than 10,000 overseas and out-of-state military voters received IRV ballots in 2004. The system works very well. Arkansas passed a similar law this year.
- Washington State: Gov. Gregoire (D) signed a bill in April 2005 allowing IRV for a pilot program in three major cities, which passed with bipartisan support in the legislature.
- Vermont: Gov. Douglas (R) in May 2005 signed a bill for Burlington to use IRV in mayoral elections in 2006, as approved by city voters by a two-to-one vote in 2005.
- California: San Francisco had a very effective first IRV election in November 2004. Due to IRV the City expects to save at least \$15 million over the coming decade.
- Universities: Many colleges and universities use IRV for student government elections, including: Wake Forest, William and Mary, Clemson, Princeton, Rice, Univ. of Virginia.
- Organizations: Many corporations and groups use IRV to elect their board of directors.
- Heisman trophy: Even the winners of this prize are picked by ranked voting voting.

To learn more, see [www.fairvote.org/irv](http://www.fairvote.org/irv) or contact (301) 270-4616