

## **Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Design**

A report by the Center for Voting and Democracy

### **Appendix 1: Excerpts from comments on ballot design**

Option #1 is <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/sidebyside.pdf>  
Option #2 is <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/wraparound.pdf>  
Option #3 is <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/sidebysideold.jpg>

Then respondents were asked to compare <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/sidebyside.pdf> with <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/sidebyside2.pdf>, but so far few comments have been received comparing these.

#### **Comments on options 1, 2 and 3:**

I choose wrap-around

Make candidates' columns in gradual shades from light to dark like the 1-2-3 options except in gray scale, to distinguish from each choice.

The colored ballot is definitely an improvement. I think that the wraparound ballot is bad.

Out of the three choices, I prefer the side-by-side version for ease of use, but I appreciate that approach seems to take up more space.

I like the side-by-side format because it's most obvious what is going on. The wrap-around format is confusing.

I would slide the colored boxes at the top of each column toward the right, so it is more obvious which arrow corresponds to which column (it's already apparent by the solid vertical line dividing the columns, but there will probably still be a few mistakes made - moving the colored column headers so they include the area over top of the corresponding arrows would help reduce such mistakes). Also, I would include the office title in the column header box for second and third choices same as it appears for first choice. Additionally, if it can fit in the colored boxes at the top of each column (or perhaps in instructions at the top), I would write in the second choice column header box some explanation such as: "Your vote may count toward this choice if your first choice does not win" and in the third choice column header box "Your vote may count toward this choice if your first and second choices both do not win". If you feel voter education has been sufficient, you may not need such explanations, but I would think it best to include some simple explanation of the concept of IRV so that the notion of choices on the ballot doesn't lead to confusion for voters experiencing it for the first time - the idea of ranked choices is simple but its appearance on the ballot may catch a few people by surprise, explaining it in the simplest and briefest terms as most applicable to filling out the ballot. An alternative could be to have such explanations on a separate sheet accompanying a sample ballot mailed to each registered voter and posted at polling stations.

## Appendix A: Comments on ballot format

I think Version 1 is by far the best. It is much easier to read and appears more organized. Additional suggestions: I would reverse the colors at the top of the three columns, so that choice number 1 was the darkest color, and choice number 3 was the lightest. The darker color seems like a more natural starting place, and the fading colors from left to right might better indicate those columns are optional.

The side by side (1), as designed is neater graphically vs. the old sample ballot (3), HOWEVER, (3) is more clear because the first line headers are clear...first choice, second choice, third choice. The problem with (1) is that it does not say "first choice" in the first line of the first choice column.

Ballot # 1 is much easier for the voter to understand.

I MUCH, MUCH prefer the side-by-side ballot ("Version 1"). The wrap-around form seems disorganised and is unnecessarily hard to read. The spatial layout should mirror the conceptual parallelism between the first, second and third candidate choices. The previous IRV ballot ("version 3") is also better than the newer wrap-around ballot, but the changes made are improvements, so "Version 1" is certainly the best of the three. Although it is preferable to the others even in its present form, there are a few obvious, closely related changes I would suggest be made to the side-by-side ballot: 1) The numerical headings (1, 2, 3) should extend over the arrows where the related choice is marked. For example, one only knows that the arrows between the "1" and "2" headings belong to the first column by the direction in which the arrow points. But notice that this group of arrows could also be interpreted as pointing FROM the second column. The voter might correctly conclude that because that would leave the first column "stranded" they must belong to the first column - but it would certainly be clearer if the heading were above not only the names of the candidates, but the arrows they're associated with as well. 2) The names of the candidates are flush left, while the arrows that point to them appear at right.

I don't like the any of the options, but I would say the 1st one is my first choice among the three presented.

I am concerned that the colored box heading each column is so busy that people won't read any of it...It might be better to surround the big 1, 2, and 3 with a lot of blank space, with the instructions above or below the big numbers.

I strongly prefer version # 1 over # 2, though I couldn't read # 3. I think the instructions need to be longer and more detailed. For example, "In the # 1 columns, vote for your first choice. In the # 2 column, vote for your second choice, and continue in this manner."

I prefer Version 1 - Side-by-side format. I am a registered voter in San Francisco.

I think Choice #1 is pretty clear and easy - side by side. The instructions could be laid out better in my opinion and also should be in bold, larger type.

Version 1. It is easier to keep track of which choice you are on on this one.

## Appendix A: Comments on ballot format

I like the sid-by-side format. However, shouldn't there be as many columns as there are candidates for true preferential voting? One other thing: The ballot will be less cluttered and confusing if there is a separate ballot for each language, English and Spanish. It should be a fairly easy calculation to figure out how many of each kind would be needed on election day.

I think 1 and 3 are very similar, the only major difference I can see being the top bar. The wraparound is terribly confusing, so something along the lines of 1 and 3 I think is the only viable option. But I felt they also needed some reworking so I've redesigned the ballot taking the best parts of each and adding. That file is attached.

I vote for format #1.

side by side - good simple instructions given; much easier to visualize that you have choices if they are side by side. maybe some kind of statement mentioned on the ballot materials that people should ASK FOR HELP from poll workers if they have any questions.

The wrap-around ballot seems especially confusing, even if it may result in using fewer pages for each ballot.

I vote for the side-by-side columns. It's pretty hard to improve on this format. I found the side-by-side ballot to be much easier to comprehend. The wraparound method seems to have much more potential for confusion.

1) side-by-side format: This one is the best, as far as I can tell, but it is still awkward. When I design surveys this way, I find that people get confused because they think they already answered the question in the first column, and that the rest is irrelevant repetition. Not sure how to get around that here--we get a lot of drop-off after column one. If you made the title of the position appear in every box above the choices, or better yet, centered over and above all three boxes, that might better convey the idea that this is all part of the same basic question about one position. 2) this wrap-around version is awfully confusing.

I think Option #1 looks great.

The second choice is a nightmare.

Fuck the trees. Don't make decisions in order to save paper. The side-by-side format is way better.

It would seem to make more sense to me if the line of names went down the left side of the ballot, then there would be 3 columns for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd, where people can rank. That would seem make less errors, since the ranking area is all in one place (to the right of the names).

I prefer the 1st option. The side by side arrangement is very clear and makes it easy to review the ballot to see if there is a vote (or three votes) for each position. Thanks for asking,

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Obviously, the first choice - side by side format - is the superior one, both because it makes for ease of comparison of candidates and because it is clear and understandable what is expected of the voter. Thanks for seeking input.

Side by side is the better format, anyway, although I wish something could be done about the connecting the arrow. Even a box to fill in would be preferable. Schools still teach us to fill in the box, right? I also think the instructions could be clearer- "Fill in the box to the right of the name of your first choice candidate in column 1, your second choice in column 2, and your third choice candidate in column 3." And in the instructions, I would give the instruction on regular how to vote before telling how to do a write-in.

Of the three choices I like # 1 the best with the following changes: I'd move the title of the office out of the "1st Choice" box and make it it's own headline above the columns. The eye should be able to scan to each office on the ballot easily and the title shouldn't crowd the rank choice. I'd also bold and/or enlarge "First Choice", "Second Choice", "Third Choice" I assume that there will be further instructions elsewhere that explain when 2nd and 3rd choices are counted and that you do not have to choose a 2nd and 3rd preference.

I like the side by side (#1) best.

The first choice is superior. The 2<sup>nd</sup> choice will confuse everyone.

#1 and #3 look very similar to me, except #1 has better technical quality. My preference is #3 because I like the parallel, TOP-LINE position of first, second, third choice. I suggest calling the columns: #1 CHOICE, #2 CHOICE, #3 CHOICE, with the name of the office below that, as in option #3. I sigh as I give this additional feedback, and I hope I'm not the only person who wishes that the made-up examples had more than 20% women in them. My initial thought is that the columns should be shaded different colors and/or have a bold line surrounding them. I can see how someone would mistake the second place candidate as the third place candidate if they were not paying close attention. By shading the 3 columns, there's pretty much NO mistake one could make.

I would add something that lets voters know somehow that ranking their second and third choices will in no way harm their first choice! Unless it's on the actual ballot, this will be a point of confusion with some voters, because no amount of voter outreach will reach everyone.

Ballot version 1 - side by side - looks good to me

I prefer the headings in (sidebyside2.pdf), with the 1, 2 and 3 separated from the text of the instructions. I also think it's good that the numbers line up vertically with the candidates' names as they do in his design. If you right-justify the candidates' names you may want to place the number headings directly over them, just to the left of the arrows (try it and see how it looks). I have two other suggestions as I look at the ballot again: 1) There ought to be some separation between the instructions in English and in Spanish. 2) I would be clearer if standard capitalization and punctuation were used in the instructions. So for example, instead of: Vote For One Must Be Different Than First Choice Vote Por Uno Debera Ser Diferente de Su

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Primera Seleccion I would prefer to see: Vote for one. Must be different than first choice. Vote por uno. Debera ser diferente de su primera seleccion.

I like the 1st choice. #1 is very clear/easy for the voter to understand.

Of the 3 designs which you proposes, it is my opinion that design #1, the new side-by-side design, is by far the most preferable design of the bunch. I believe it has clear readability and the layout supports the concept that each of the choice areas are related to the vote for a single election. In other words, it reinforces the central model for an IRV election.

I think the side-by-side is better, because things are more lined up. It just seemed more intuitive to me. What do others think?

I much prefer option #1, the side-by-side version. It's the least confusing. I like that the 2nd and 3rd choices do not have the title of the office in their headings; I believe this reduces the possibility that someone would mistake, say, the 3rd choice column for a separate vote. My one suggestion would be that the columns should be visually linked somehow, so that the voter can tell easily that they all apply to one office. I don't know if they should be surrounded by a shaded box, or if the column headings should be touching or connected or have arrows drawn between them, but I think something along those lines would help.

I definitely like Version #1: [Side-by-side format](#) better than the wrap around.

I think (sidebyside2.pdf version) is right about the reverse number not being under the text, it is much easier to see.

I tend to prefer the side by side format too. My concern with this format, though, is that it's not obvious that each arrow corresponds to the candidate on the left. You're forced to look at the whole ballot to make sure you're doing it right. Here are some suggestions: \* the different shadings of the 1-2-3 boxes aren't being taken full advantage of. Those shadings are a real plus. Can these colors be incorporated into the columns below to reinforce the correct relationship? \* what about drawing a light 1, 2 or 3 between the head and foot of each arrow? Caleb thought something like this might be doable, possibly in a light red. \* how about putting a quarter-inch space between the right side of the arrows and the names to the right. In other words, move the vertical line over a little to create more of a division. \* how about making that vertical line a little thicker, in addition to or instead of moving it over? \* I also think the text in the 1-2-3 boxes should parallel each other more. As it is now, Board of Leisure is on the top line of the 1st box, but Second Choice is on the top of the 2nd box. Maybe the boxes could be taller, and there could be a blank space at the top of the 2nd and 3rd boxes.

I like Ballot #1, the side-by-side format. The wrap around format is very difficult to read. I thought the language on the ballot could have been more clear under "Ranked Choice Voting" Instead of "Vote for a different candidate for each choice or your second and third choice will not be counted" I suggest "Rank candidates in order of preference, marking the ballot to indicate your first, second and third choice. You may not vote multiple times for the same person." I also think the graphic of the hand connecting the arrow should be as large as possible.

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I agree that option uno iz by far the bes.

I prefer version #1

the first one looks ok.

I definitely like # One the best

After perusing the three options, I found Option #1 to be the easiest to read and decipher.

1st: New side-by-side, 2nd: Old side-by-side, 3rd: Wraparound And, for what its worth, I think each choice should get an Arabic numeral-based ordinal (1st/1o., 2nd/2o., 3rd/3o.) or cardinal (1,2,3) number in addition to the spelled-out versions (first/primero, second/segundo, third/tercero) - you know, to help folks with marginal literacy.

(list candidates only once, then have arrows for 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choices – suggested several times)

using ALL CAP text, for more than just a few words at a time, makes for difficult reading. (This is, like, the standard canon in Graphic Design 101 teaching.)