

Congressman Dennis J. Kucinich

Greetings:

I am writing to express my support for the ballot measure to adopt instant runoff voting in Oakland this November.

I believe that our election system is in need of serious reform to expand and enrich democracy. IRV offers a cost-effective way of insuring that the winning candidate is preferred by a majority of voters; it encourages voters to vote their wishes and not their fears; it promotes greater voter turnout and positive campaigning.

IRV works very simply, and election results from San Francisco and Burlington (VT) show that voters handle it very well. Each voter has one vote, and ranks candidates in order of personal choice (1,2,3, etc.). The counting of ballots simulates a series of run-off elections. All first choices are counted, and if no candidate wins a majority of first choices, then the last place candidate (candidate with the least first-choices) is eliminated. Ballots of voters who ranked the eliminated candidate are then redistributed to their next-choice candidates, as indicated on each voter's ballot. Last place candidates are successively eliminated and ballots redistributed to next choices until one candidate remains or a candidate gains over 50% of votes.

Voters have the option to rank as many or as few candidates as they wish—their favorite candidate first, their next favorite second, and so on. Voters have every incentive to vote for their favorite candidate rather than the “lesser of two evils,” because their ballot can still count toward a winner if their first choice loses. There also is every reason for a voter to rank as many candidates as they want, since a voter's lower choice will never help defeat one of their higher choices.

Most U.S. elections are held under plurality voting rules in which the candidate with the most votes wins. If three or more candidates run in the race, then the winner can have less than a majority of the vote. But the question always arises: Was that winning candidate really preferred by most voters?

Instant runoff voting is a sensible reform for elections where one person wins. It is better than plurality elections because:

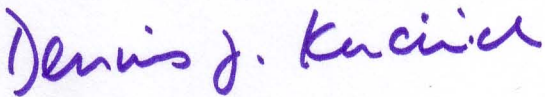
- It ensures the election of the candidate preferred by most voters.
- It eliminates the problem of spoiler candidates knocking off major candidates.
- It promotes coalition-building and more positive campaigning.

It is better than traditional runoff elections because it

- saves localities, taxpayers and candidates money now used to hold two elections.
- ensures higher voter turnout when eliminating low-turnout primaries or runoffs.
- eases the administrative burden on election officials who run one election, not two.

When I ran for president, I strongly supported IRV. Today, I continue to be a strong advocate for IRV. I strongly support its use in elections across the nation, including in Oakland, and I hope you will too.

Sincerely yours,



Dennis J. Kucinich
Member of Congress