



Improving Elections with Instant Runoff Voting

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) - Used for both government and private elections around the United States and the world, *instant runoff voting* is a simple election process used to avoid the expense, difficulties and shortcomings of runoff elections. Compared to the traditional "delayed" runoff, IRV saves taxpayers money, cuts the costs of running campaigns, elects public officials with higher voter turnout and encourages candidates to run less negative campaigns.

How instant runoff voting works:

- **First round of counting:** The **voters rank their preferred candidate first and may also rank additional choices (second, third, etc.)**. In the first round of counting, the voters' #1 choices are tallied. A candidate who receives enough first choices to win outright (typically a majority) is declared the winner. However, other candidates may have enough support to require a runoff – *just as in traditional runoff systems*.
- **Second round:** If no one achieves a clear victory, **the runoff occurs instantly**. The candidate with the fewest votes is removed and the votes made for that candidate are redistributed using voters' second choices. Other voters' top choices remain the same. The redistributed votes are added to the counts of the candidates still in competition. The process is repeated until one candidate has majority support.

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.

- Saves localities, taxpayers and candidates money by holding only one election.
- Ensures higher voter turnout than when voters are asked to return for a second, runoff election.
- Eases the administrative burden on election officials who only have to run one election, not two.
- Discourages negative campaigning because victories may require candidates to be the second or third choices of other candidates' supporters.

Where instant runoff voting is used:

- California: San Francisco started running IRV with a successful election in November 2004. By using IRV, the City expects to save at least \$15 million over the coming decade.
- Utah: Since 2002, the Utah Republican Party has used IRV at its state conventions for nominating candidates for congressional and statewide offices.
- Vermont: In May 2005 Gov. Douglas (R) signed a bill to allow Burlington to use IRV in mayoral elections in 2006, as approved by city voters by a two-to-one margin in 2005.
- Louisiana: More than 10,000 overseas and out-of-state military voters received IRV ballots in 2004. The system has been a success. Since, Arkansas and South Carolina have passed similar laws.
- Washington State: In April 2005 Gov. Gregoire (D) signed a bill that gained bipartisan support in the legislature to allowing IRV for a pilot program in three major cities.
- Universities: Many colleges and universities use IRV for student elections, including Wake Forest, William and Mary, Princeton, Rice, University of Washington, Duke, UC Berkeley and UC Davis.
- Businesses and Organizations: Many groups and corporations use IRV to elect their board of directors.
- Sports Awards: Even the winners the Heisman Trophy are picked by a ranked voting system.



Selling Points

Runoffs: A Waste of Time and Money

Runoffs are supposed to ensure majority rule, but they cause added **inconvenience and lower voter turnout**. They elect candidates with only a majority of the minority -- making it hard to say what the *actual majority* really wants. All this, in spite of the extra money spent to hold another election.

Runoffs cause lower voter turnout

- In Georgia's 2004 runoff for a Court of Appeals seat, taxpayers spent \$2 million for an election where only 5% of voters went to the polls.¹



Runoffs waste taxpayer money

- For example, New York City taxpayers picked up a **\$10 million** tab for the 2001 Democratic mayoral primary runoff...² **nearly \$7 for every runoff voter**.³

Runoffs disenfranchise our troops

- The men and women in our armed forces are shut out of the democratic process because there is often not enough time to receive and return a runoff ballot from overseas. By consolidating elections, our troops can better participate in the democracy they defend.



Runoffs inconvenience voters and election officials

- Authorities must print ballots, recruit & train poll workers, locate precincts, and prepare equipment. Voters then go to the polls. After, elections officials must process the ballots and results. – **All this has to happen not once, but twice.**

Runoffs lead to longer, more expensive campaigns

- The cost of a successful campaign for San Francisco Board of Supervisors **doubled** from 1977-1979 – \$30,772 to \$61,614 – when a runoff had to be held. Most agree we need less campaign spending, not more.⁴



¹ Parsons, Barbara L. "High cost of run-off elections." The Post Searchlight. December 7, 2004. http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?BRD=2068&dept_id=387472&newsid=13509188&PAG=461&rfi=9.

² Citizens for Instant Runoff Voting in New York State. "Replaces Costly Runoff Elections." 2003. <http://www.nysirv.org/overview.htm>.

³ Figures from Board of Elections in the City of New York. <http://vote.nyc.ny.us/pdf/results/2001/primaryelection/2001runoff.pdf>.

⁴ Hill, Steven. FairVote. "December Runoffs in San Francisco: a Historical Perspective. 2002. <http://www.sfrcv.com/runoffs.htm>.



Talking Points: Majority Rule, Without a Separate Election

Q: What is instant runoff voting?

*"Instant runoff voting (IRV) means **better elections**."*

- You rank candidates in the order you like them, so if your top choice doesn't win, your vote goes to your next choice, instead of being "wasted."
- If no one has a majority on the first count, the least-popular candidate is knocked off and those voters' next choice counts instead. This repeats until one candidate earns a majority.

Q: What's the problem with the way we do it now?

"Right now our elections can't guarantee majority rule."

- The more candidates run, the fewer votes you need to win. This means a small minority of voters can decide the election for everyone else.

"Runoffs are a waste of time and money."

- Runoffs are supposed to produce a candidate with a higher level of support. In practice, voter turnout dwindles when second elections are held, actually giving us a candidate elected by fewer people. Given the cost and effort of holding a runoff, we need a better way.

Q: How does it strengthen democracy?

"It guarantees majority support without runoffs."

- Every vote counts equally and no vote is "wasted" or "spoiled."

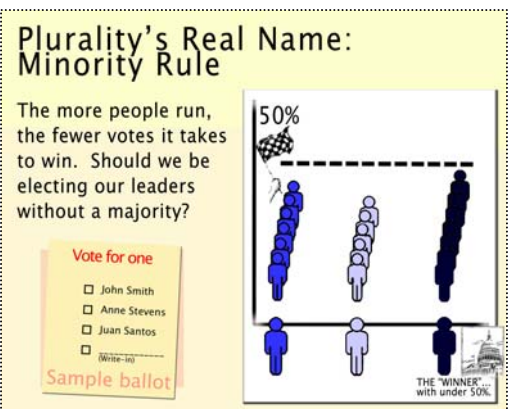
"Everyone wins with instant runoff voting."

- **Voters win.** You can vote for the candidate you really believe in, without worrying about throwing your vote away.
- **Taxpayers win.** IRV stops us from wasting money on expensive, ineffective runoffs.
- **Candidates win.** We will have less negative campaigning, since candidates want their opponents' voters to rank them #2.
- **America wins.** IRV restores faith in democracy by accommodating voter choice and inspiring better candidates to run for office.

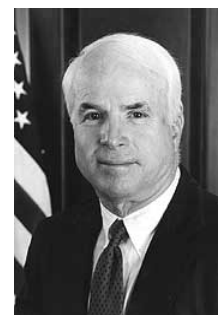
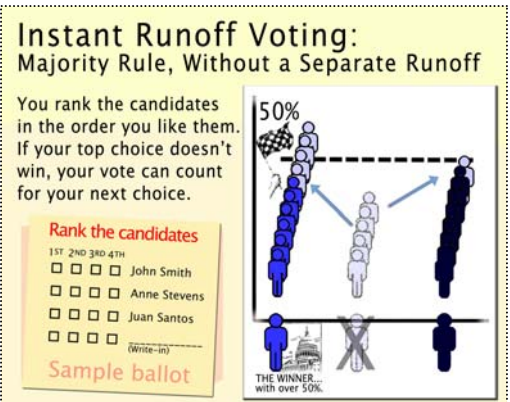
Q: Who supports IRV?

*"Leaders from across the political spectrum support it, from **John McCain** to **Barack Obama**."*

- Also, voters nationwide chose IRV. Cities like San Francisco CA, Burlington VT and Takoma Park, MD. Many countries and U.S. colleges use it as well!



VS.





Costs and Savings of Instant Runoff Voting

In addition to strengthening democracy, **instant runoff voting (IRV) can save money.** Any jurisdiction that does away with runoffs will see the savings add up year after year.

Case Study: San Francisco

In 2004, San Francisco conducted its municipal election using IRV for seven Board of Supervisor races. In November 2005, they used IRV for their Citywide Assessor's election. In 2006, they will add the mayor and other city offices.

To implement IRV, the city paid \$1.6 million to voting equipment manufacturer Electronic Systems & Software (ES&S) for a one-time equipment upgrade. Now, the city's new faster, better, and cheaper IRV elections they will pay this back and more in just two election cycles.

SAN FRANCISCO COSTS & SAVINGS SUMMARY

Approx. cost of implementing IRV:	\$2.4 million
Approx. savings, 2004 supervisors race:	\$1.4 million

PAYBACK PERIOD: 2 years

EXPECTED SAVINGS OVER 10 YEARS: \$15 million

BREAKDOWN OF COSTS & SAVINGS

ESTIMATED COST OF CITYWIDE RUNOFFS*

Between: **\$3.8 and \$5.7 million**
(Or: **\$15 - \$22 for every runoff voter**)

COST OF IMPLEMENTING IRV

Upgrading voting equipment:

\$1.6 million

Community education & outreach

\$800,000

SAVINGS FROM 2004 SUPERVISORS RACE

Administrative costs saved by eliminating runoff elections for Supervisor '04:

\$1.2 million

Public financing saved by eliminating runoffs of four Supervisor '04:

\$136,000

EXPECTED SAVINGS OVER 10 YEARS*

\$15 million

Voter turnout for Dec. '03 totals from the Dept. of Elections,
http://www.sfgov.org/site/election_index.asp?id=5877.

Projections by FairVote: the Center for Voting & Democracy in "What does a citywide election in San Francisco cost?" <http://www.fairvote.org/sf/electioncost.pdf>. 2003.



Services and Resources for IRV Advocates

FairVote - *The Center for Voting and Democracy* assists national and international advocates for instant runoff voting. We encourage you to take advantage of the following FairVote services and resources:

Website

FairVote strives to make all of resources available online. This includes an extensive library of [articles](#), as well as [educational materials](#), [original research](#), [election data and analysis](#), and [organizing materials](#). Our website is www.fairvote.org.

Speakers, training, and conferences

Drawing upon our nationwide network of staff, board members, allies and FairVote members; we provide speakers, conduct trainings and hold regional and national conferences for citizens, elected official and election administrators.

Brochures

The IRV brochures produced by FairVote can be downloaded and printed for free using our website or, for larger amounts, may be purchased by contacting FairVote directly.

Legal and technical assistance

FairVote provides [expert testimony and amicus briefs](#) on voting rights and redistricting cases, as well as advice and [assistance for jurisdictions considering purchasing new voting equipment](#).

Drafting legislation

FairVote has [drafted legislation](#) at local, state and federal levels to adopt instant runoff voting, to allow instant runoff voting and to create commissions that review election laws.

Election consulting and administration

FairVote provides consulting services to both public sector and private sector clients on all aspects of elections. FairVote does not, however, do political consulting. We assist groups wishing to conduct elections, and we provide both consulting on electoral system design as well as one-stop election services from the distribution of ballots to the certification and reporting of results. We have assisted both for-profit and non-profit organizations. We will help any organization that needs this assistance.

Please contact us for assistance:

FairVote - The Center for Voting and Democracy
6930 Carroll Ave., Suite 610
Takoma Park, MD 20912

(301)-270-4616

www.fairvote.org

info@fairvote.org



Voting Equipment and IRV Compatibility

Voting equipment that is not compatible with ranked ballots can pose an almost insurmountable obstacle to reform. Whenever new voting equipment needs to be purchased, the goal is to acquire equipment that is fully compatible with all ballot types currently used in the United States, which includes ranked voting. **It is critical to understand the current state of voting equipment in your area and, if possible, participate in the process of purchasing new equipment.**

Here are some important things to know:

- The *Help America Vote Act* (2002) gave federal grants to local and state governments to buy new voting equipment. As of today, many election officials have purchased new voting equipment *but many places have not* or are considering buying even more new equipment.
- Many systems in place today are IRV "compatible." Unfortunately, compatibility only means that more work can be done to make IRV work on the systems. They would require new software or need to be retrofitted, often at taxpayer expense.
- Voting equipment can be IRV-incompatible (like old lever machines), IRV-compatible (like optical scan and touch-screen machines) or **IRV-ready** (fully capable of a ranked election when purchased).
- Some equipment companies publicize their products as "IRV-compatible," but will charge local governments huge sums to **make them IRV-ready**. This occurred in San Francisco. However, the city *still* saved much more money by using IRV and paying the comparatively low cost for changes.
- Voting equipment only needs to be able to store individuals' votes, not necessarily perform the simulated runoffs.
- Small communities may hand-tabulate votes or use a combination of automated counting and hand counting. Burlington, VT and Takoma Park, MD perform their IRV elections this way.

First, contact a representative of your local election authority

- Agency Name _____ Phone number _____
- Contact Name _____ Email _____

Issues to ask them about

- What model of voting system is being used? _____
- Is the voting equipment used compatible with ranking? _____
- Are there current plans to purchase new equipment? _____

Advocating for better voting equipment

- Educate election officials about compatibility for IRV and the advantages to having IRV-ready systems. Mention the likelihood that there will be a winning campaign for IRV in the future.
- Ensure that requests for new equipment include compatibility and IRV-readiness. An important point is that winning campaigns for IRV are taking place not only within jurisdictions, but might be used by parties for primary elections. **It is cheaper to ensure compatibility when companies are competing for a contract than once a contract has been locked in.**

Please let us know how your discussions with election officials go. If someone asks you a question about equipment that you can not answer, say, "I am not sure about that, but I'll get back to you," and contact us at IRV@FairVote.org or 301-270-4616.

WARD 8

TEST BALLOT - ANNUAL CITY MEETING

BURLINGTON, VERMONT

MARCH 7, 2006

- A. To vote, fill in the OVAL ☐ to the right of the candidate of your choice like this ☒.
- B. To vote for a person whose name is not printed on the ballot, write-in the name in the space provided and fill in the oval.
- C. Follow the special instructions for the mayoral election.
- D. If you wrongly mark, tear or spoil the ballot, return it and get another.

For MAYOR

Three-Year Term

Special instructions: Rank candidates for mayor in order of choice.

- Fill in the number 1 oval ☐ to the right of your 1st choice candidate.
- You may rank as many or as few candidates as you wish.
- Fill in the number 2 oval ☐ to the right of your 2nd choice candidate.
- Fill in the number 3 oval ☐ to the right of your 3rd choice, and so on.
- Fill in no more than one oval per column.
- Fill in no more than one oval per candidate.

(Rank candidates in order of choice)

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice	6th Choice
Hugh Barrows 123 Main Street REPUBLICAN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Paula Cooper 123 Main Street INDEPENDENT	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Michelle Ferengetti-Smith 123 Main Street DEMOCRATIC	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Jeff Lopez 123 Main Street PROGRESSIVE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
David L. Morrison 123 Main Street GREEN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Faye Wong 123 Main Street LIBERTARIAN	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

No more than one oval per column No more than one oval per candidate

For SCHOOL COMMISSIONER

Two-Year Term

(Vote for Not More Than ONE)

ROBERT LAMSON 123 Main Street	<input type="radio"/>
SHEILA PORTER 123 Main Street	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>

For WARD CLERK

Two-Year Term

(Vote for Not More Than ONE)

CYNTHIA KELLY 123 Main Street REPUBLICAN	<input type="radio"/>
JASON M. RICHARDSON 123 Main Street PROGRESSIVE	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>

For INSPECTOR OF ELECTION

Three-Year Term

(Vote for Not More Than ONE)

JOSE MARTINEZ 123 Main Street INDEPENDENT	<input type="radio"/>
NIKOLAI CHERTOFF 123 Main Street DEMOCRATIC	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>

For CITY COUNCILOR

Two-Year Term

(Vote for Not More Than ONE)

CYNTHIA KELLY 123 Main Street DEMOCRATIC	<input type="radio"/>
JASON M. RICHARDSON 123 Main Street REPUBLICAN	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>

For INSPECTOR OF ELECTION

One-Year Term

(Vote for Not More Than ONE)

LAURIE LENTZ 123 Main Street INDEPENDENT	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>

Ballot Continued on Back
Vote BOTH Sides



Testimony on Instant Runoff Voting

The following is testimony from Caleb Kleppner, who has been involved in IRV implementation and procedure in both San Francisco and Burlington, VT. He is a FairVote senior analyst and specialist in election administration. This testimony was given to the Pierce County, WA Charter Reform Committee about Burlington's instant runoff election.

"Good morning, committee chairs, committee members, staff and members of the public.

My name is Caleb Kleppner, and I was hired by the city to design the instant runoff voting or IRV voter education program, to train pollworkers about IRV, and to train city staff on the software used to tally the IRV election results. I also assisted Director of Elections Jo LaMarche with the design and evaluation of the pre-election logic and accuracy testing of Burlington's voting equipment.

By way of background, I worked for FairVote – the Center for Voting and Democracy for five years when I was living in San Francisco. In that capacity, I drafted the IRV legislation adopted by the voters in March 2002 and worked with city and state officials in the development, testing and deployment of the optical scan voting equipment used to conduct IRV elections in 2004 and 2005 in San Francisco.

1. How did Burlington's first IRV election go?

By all accounts -- my personal observations of the Burlington wards and from the media coverage -- the election went extremely smoothly. Voters didn't have trouble filling out their ballots, and pollworkers didn't have problems with the IRV portion of the process. I think you'll hear testimony from some pollworkers, but the comment that stuck with me was that the people staffing the IRV help desks were bored. The Burlington Free Press headlined their story about the voting, "Burlington Voters Ace Instant Runoff."

In terms of logistics, polls closed at 7 pm, and we ran the IRV tally and announced the results by 9:05 pm.

2. Some have speculated that IRV might be too difficult for voters, in particular, too difficult for low income voters. Was it?

Let's imagine what we would expect to see if the system was confusing for voters and especially low income voters. Then we can see if that happened.

First, we would expect lower voter turnout. In fact, citywide voter turnout was more than 25% higher than any mayoral election since 1999, which is as far back as I was able to go. In the lowest income ward, Ward 3 turnout was 25% higher than the 2003 mayoral election and 72% higher than the 2001 election. Thus, we have no evidence that IRV depressed turnout citywide or in Burlington, nor in low-income neighborhoods.

Second, we would expect more voters to skip over the mayor's race compared to other races. This year, about 1% of voters skipped over the mayor's race. In contrast, 2% skipped the mayor's race in 2001 and 24% skipped it in 2003. In Ward 3, 1% skipped the mayor's race, the citywide average. In every city council ward, more voters voted in the mayor's race than in every other race – something that was not true in 2003. In Ward 3, voters were five times more likely to skip the contested city council race, which did not use IRV, than the mayor's race. Thus there is no evidence that IRV led to more voters skipping the mayor's race citywide or in low-income areas.

Third, we would expect the rate of invalid ballots to rise. This year, the invalid ballot rate for mayor was one tenth of one per cent, meaning that 99.9% of voters cast a valid vote. I do



Testimony on Instant Runoff Voting

not have data for past mayoral elections, but I know from national experience that this is an extremely low invalid ballot rate. For example, in the 2000 presidential election in Florida, the overvote rate was around twenty times higher.

In Ward 3, there were exactly two invalid ballots out of nearly 1,200 voters. It's hard to have a lower rate than that. Again, no evidence that IRV led to increased invalid ballots, nor that voters in Ward 3 were more likely to cast invalid ballots.

Fourth, we would expect voters to forego the opportunity to rank candidates. There were 3 major candidates in this race. Voters ranked on average 2.9 candidates, and in Ward 3 voters ranked 3.1 candidates (highest of all 7 wards). 82% of Burlington voters ranked more than one candidate, and 83% of Ward 3 voters ranked multiple candidates. Thus, no evidence that IRV discouraged voters from ranking multiple candidates, and in fact, Ward 3 voters ranked more candidates than voters in other wards.

Fifth, we would expect large numbers of exhausted ballots, meaning ballots that did not rank one of the top two candidates. Over 89% of all voters and 93% of Ward 3 voters ranked one of the top two candidates. Thus, the vast majority of voters cast a vote that counted in the decisive round of the instant runoff – and those that didn't were largely Republican voters who quite rationally may have decided to refrain from expressing a preference between the Democrat and the Progressive.

Even though this was the first time Burlington voters voted in an IRV elections, there is no evidence that IRV discouraged voters from participating and there's no evidence that the system posed any burden for low income voters.

Note that these conclusions mirror what happened in San Francisco, where some people speculated that IRV might be disadvantageous to Asian Americans. Professor Rich DeLeon of San Francisco State University analyzed 18 hypotheses and concluded: "Based on the evidence, the score is zero for 18" that IRV disadvantages Asian American voters in San Francisco.

3. Would a runoff have been better?

Burlington is currently preparing a runoff election in Ward 7 because no candidate received 40% of the vote. Turnout generally drops in runoffs. For example, in federal runoff elections between 1994 and 2004, voter turnout went down in 94 out of 96 races. Overall turnout declined by 38%. In the past two Burlington city council runoffs, voter turnout dropped by an average of 35%.

By holding an instant runoff, Burlington saved the cost and hassle of holding a separate election and maximized voter turnout.

4. Conclusions

The administration of this election was extremely smooth, and voters demonstrated they are perfectly capable of participating effectively in an instant runoff election.

Thank you for your attention, and I would be glad to answer any questions you might have."

For Voters, Choice Is As Easy As 1, 2, 3 *San Francisco Adopts Ranked Balloting*

By KIMBERLY EDDIS
Special to The Washington Post

WHEN voters here go to the polls in November to select their top choice for a seat on the city's Board of Supervisors, they also get to pick their second choice—and even their third.

Here, a winning candidate has to receive at least 50 percent of the vote for the Board of Supervisors, which is the local city council. In the past, if nobody did, there was a runoff election.

But this year, San Francisco has become the largest city in the nation to adopt a form of voting that proponents say is a little like walking into an ice cream shop to order a chocolate cone only to discover the shop is all out—no problem, just order your next favorite flavor, and if that's out, your third.

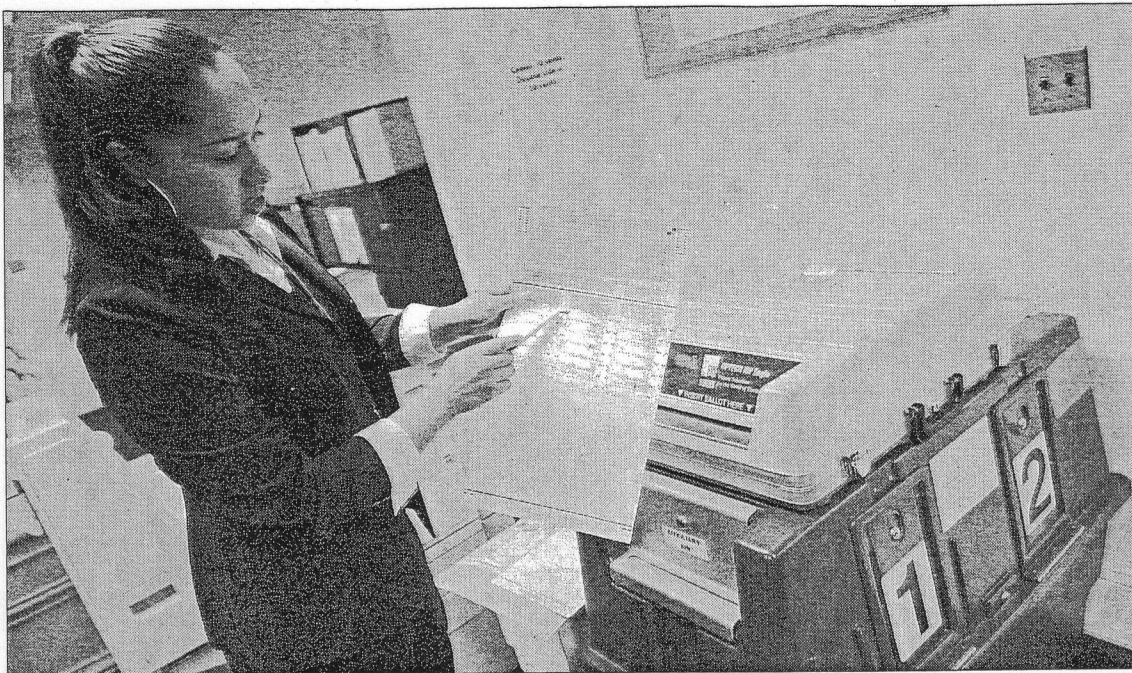
Calvin Lau, 50, an interior designer here, can't wait. He's tired of the heaps of campaign literature cramming his mailbox and dreads the prospect of a runoff.

"In this city there are always runoffs. Runoffs for mayor, runoffs for board of supervisor. It's always neck and neck here, and there are always, always runoffs. Let's just get it all over with at once," Lau said. "This is going to save me some time. I already have my three picked out."

Advocates said the new system has made campaigning more civilized—candidates don't want to lose out on the chance to be a voter's second or third choice by appearing too negative. And they say it may increase turnout.

But opponents say the new system is too complicated, will discourage turnout and forces candidates to spread themselves too thin.

Here's how it will work: Voters will select three candidates in order of preference. All of the top-choice votes are tallied. If any candidate receives more than 50 percent of the vote, that candidate wins. If no candidate has a majority, the candidate with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated. Voters who marked the losing candidate as their first choice will have their votes counted for their second-choice can-



PHOTOS BY BEN MARGOT—ASSOCIATED PRESS

In San Francisco, Campaign Services Coordinator Giannina Miranda displays the checks on her sample ranked-choice ballot, shown below, on which voters get a second and third choice for city supervisor. Ballot instructions are in English, Spanish and Chinese.

didate. The process continues until one candidate receives a majority of the vote; tallying could take several days.

"With runoffs, you have two different electorates going to the polls," said Steven Hill, with the Center on Voting and Democracy, which has been pushing ranked-choice voting in municipalities across the country.

"This way you elect the strongest candidate who has the majority of the vote and you're getting it over with in one race. It's just common sense."

Advocates say the best argument for the new system is that it prevents a third-party spoiler. Had the system been in place in Florida during the 2000 presidential election, Ralph Nader—with the fewest first place votes—would have been eliminated. Those ballots would have had their second-choice votes counted—these presumably would have gone to Al Gore. The added votes would have given Gore the majority.

"People really get to vote for the person they want to vote for, not just the person they feel has the better chance of winning," Hill said. "Their vote isn't wasted."

Critics worry that the system could be difficult for voters to navigate and that the added confusion could turn off minority and other groups with already low turnouts.

The system is used around the world, but it has yet to catch on in the United

DEMONSTRATION BALLOT / BALOTA DE MUESTRA / 樣板票

CONSOLIDATED GENERAL ELECTION / ELECCIONES GENERALES CONSOLIDADAS / 綜合選舉

CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO / CIUDAD Y CONDADO DE SAN FRANCISCO / 舊金山市及縣

NOVEMBER 2, 2004 / 2 DE NOVIEMBRE DE 2004 / 2004年11月2日

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 12, SENATE DISTRICT 17, ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 17, DISTRICT 9

INSTRUCTIONS TO VOTERS: Mark your first choice in the first column by completely filling in the bubble next to the candidate's name. To indicate a second choice, mark a bubble next to the candidate's name in the second column. To indicate a third choice, mark a bubble next to the candidate's name in the third column. To vote for a qualified voter in the district, mark a bubble next to the name of the district.

INSTRUCCIONES PARA LOS ELECTORES: Marque su primera opción en la primera columna, completando la burbuja que está al lado del nombre del candidato. Para indicar una segunda opción, marque una burbuja al lado del nombre del candidato en la segunda columna. Para indicar una tercera opción, marque una burbuja al lado del nombre del candidato en la tercera columna. Para votar por un elector calificado en el distrito, marque una burbuja al lado del nombre del distrito.

MEMBER, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS / MIEMBRO, CONSEJO DE SUPERVISORES / 區議員

FIRST CHOICE PRIMERA SELECCIÓN 第一選擇	SECOND CHOICE SEGUNDA SELECCIÓN 第二選擇	THIRD CHOICE TERCERA SELECCIÓN 第三選擇
ELEANOR ROOSEVELT DEMOCRATIC PARTY	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT DEMOCRATIC PARTY	ELEANOR ROOSEVELT DEMOCRATIC PARTY
CEAR CHAVEZ DEMOCRATIC PARTY	CEAR CHAVEZ DEMOCRATIC PARTY	CEAR CHAVEZ DEMOCRATIC PARTY
WALTER LEE DEMOCRATIC PARTY	WALTER LEE DEMOCRATIC PARTY	WALTER LEE DEMOCRATIC PARTY
JOHN HANCOCK DEMOCRATIC PARTY	JOHN HANCOCK DEMOCRATIC PARTY	JOHN HANCOCK DEMOCRATIC PARTY
MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DEMOCRATIC PARTY	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DEMOCRATIC PARTY	MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. DEMOCRATIC PARTY
ANNA MAE PICTON AGUIAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY	ANNA MAE PICTON AGUIAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY	ANNA MAE PICTON AGUIAR DEMOCRATIC PARTY

about how to do ranked-choice voting," said Robert Haaland, a candidate for a district that includes Haight-Ashbury who nonetheless supports the new system.

In the district near Golden Gate Park, Supervisor Jake McGoldrick has been battling an "anybody but Jake" campaign against six challengers and a host of outside business interests. One of his campaign advisers said the new system did not make for positive campaigning.

"The proponents' pie-in-the-sky idea was that [the new system] will encourage everyone to be nice to each other. It's quite the opposite in that everyone has the incentive to go negative against the incumbent," said political consultant Jim Stearns, who represents two other incumbent supervisors besides McGoldrick.

But 22 contenders battling to fill the spot of Supervisor Matt Gonzalez, who is leaving office, have embraced the concept wholeheartedly. The district is seen as one of the city's more liberal, and candidates have been meeting regularly to discuss the issues facing the area. Candidates have pledged to work together with the winner.

While Haaland and Michael O'Connor, another candidate seeking the same seat, are concentrating on getting as many number one votes as possible, they are sure to mention each other if voters are looking for a number two suggestion.

They have co-hosted a hip-hop party to raise money for their campaigns. Proceeds were split down the middle.

"It was really cool," Haaland said. "Our supporters got together, drank together and got along really well with each other. It wasn't my supporters on one side and his supporters on another."

States. Ann Arbor, Mich., abandoned the method after just one election in the 1970s. Cambridge, Mass., uses a version to elect its City Council. Dozens of cities and counties across the country, including Los Angeles, are looking into the idea, and everyone is keeping an eye on San Francisco.

Detractors say that despite an extensive public information campaign, many voters don't understand the system. "It's complicated. You're trying to tell people why you're the best candidate while at the same time you're trying to do education

National Report

The New York Times

New Runoff System in San Francisco Has the Rival Candidates Cooperating

By DEAN E. MURPHY

SAN FRANCISCO, Sept. 29 — Eugene C. Wong is running for an office that typically does not draw the national spotlight. Yet Mr. Wong and the 64 others seeking seats on the County Board of Supervisors here are being closely watched by advocates for election reform around the country.

In Mr. Wong's case, the reason was evident on Wednesday, at one of his first big fund-raisers in the third district, an ethnically mixed area that straddles North Beach and Chinatown. The evening was unconventional, to say the least, with Mr. Wong sharing top billing with two principal rivals in the race, Sal Busalacchi and Brian Murphy O'Flynn.

"We are going to have more joint fund-raisers," Mr. Wong said. "I am not opposed to saying that if I don't win, then I hope one of these other guys wins."

The cooperation is in response to a new election system, instant-runoff voting. The system, which voters approved in 2002 and is having its first run, is viewed by critics of winner-take-all elections as the start of a long-overdue overhaul of the way Americans choose elected officials. Under this system, voters can choose three candidates for each office, ranking them in order of preference. If no candidate wins more than 50 percent of the first-choice votes, the lowest-placing finishers are eliminated, and the second and, if necessary, third choices on those ballots are counted until someone garners a majority.

The system removes the need for a separate runoff election, saving money and, if the recent past is a guide, increasing the number of voters who have a say in choosing the winner. Under the old system, turnout usually dropped significantly in runoffs.

"People are hungry for change," said Lani Guinier, a professor of law at Harvard who has written about alternative election systems and is among those closely watching the San Francisco example.

"There is a simmering dissatisfaction with not only what happened in Florida in 2000," Professor Guinier said, "but with some of the responses that the election officials, Congress and others have implemented, and a sense that if the voters and citizens

want to participate in our democracy, the voters and citizens have to take the initiative."

Critics of instant runoffs fear it is too difficult to pull off, for voters and election officials, and that it could reduce turnout among some minorities, especially those who speak English poorly and are new to voting. Some critics have also questioned whether it might violate the principle of "one man, one vote" that the Supreme Court established in 1964.

Even some supporters of the system acknowledge that its logistics can be daunting. It took San Francisco more than two years to use the system, a process that included making changes to its optical-scan voting machines that required the approval of the secretary of state. The changes were too late for the elections last year for mayor and district attorney.

Because of the complicated counting, experts expect that just first-choice results will be available on election night, leading some critics to complain that the "instant" is being taken out of instant-runoff voting.

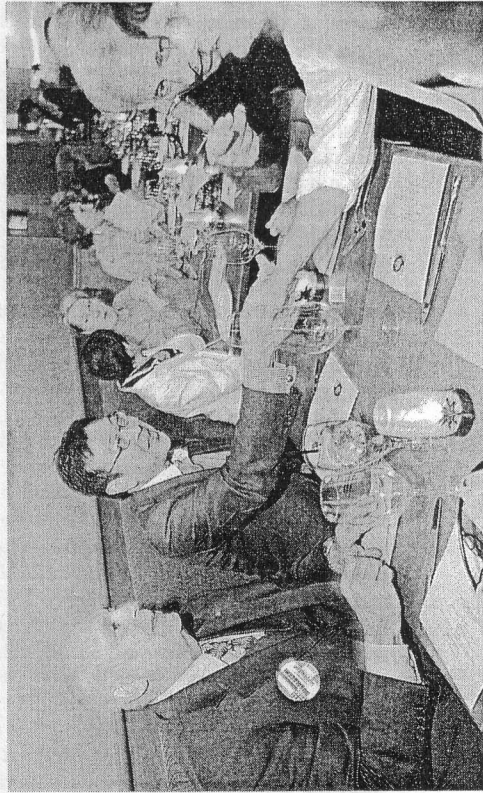
"It will be a negative," said Lillian Sing, a former judge who is among six candidates challenging Supervisor Jake McGoldrick in District 1, in the Richmond area. "We are just be-

ginning to get language minorities to vote more, and now all of a sudden we have this complicated process. It is a distraction to talk about how people should vote."

San Francisco is the first major city in the country to try instant-runoff voting since the 1970's, when Ann Arbor, Mich., abandoned it after one election. Variations of the system exist in a few places, including Cambridge, Mass., where the City Council and school board are elected by proportional representation, which includes ranked-choice voting. Until they were abolished by Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, the community school boards in New York allowed voters to rank candidates. Student governments at dozens of colleges and universities also use versions of the system.

But San Francisco is the sole major jurisdiction to incorporate what advocates of instant-runoff voting consider three essential components for its success, ranked-choice ballots, a single election and the requirement that each winner receive a majority of the votes cast.

"San Francisco is being seen as a very good test," said Robert Richie, executive director of the Center for Voting and Democracy, an organization in Takoma Park, Md., that advo-



Photographs by Jim Wilson/The New York Times

Sal Busalacchi, left, and Eugene C. Wong, rivals, in a joint appearance in North Beach. In the Fifth District, right, 22 candidates are vying for a seat on the Board of Supervisors.

votes."

Professor Guinier said the voting system favored outsiders, no matter their politics or party registration. That is also the belief of Jim Stearns, a Democratic consultant here who opposed the ballot measure because,

he said, he feared that instant run-

cans have wholeheartedly embraced. Because the winner in each district might be determined by voters' second and third choices, candidates have quickly learned that it is best to be on friendly terms so as not to alienate their opponents' supporters.

"Even if you come in second among the first-choice votes, you still have a shot at winning, so long as you can reach out to be the No. 2 choice to the rest of the people," said Mr. Wong, an immigration lawyer.

In District 5, Supervisor Matt Gonzalez, a big backer of instant runoffs in 2002, is not seeking re-election, creating the biggest free-for-all of the season. Many of the 22 candidates vying for his post participate in a so-called Candidates Collaborative, meeting publicly every few weeks to discuss district problems. The setting is decidedly congenial.

One candidate, Michael O'Connor, a nightclub owner, said the consensus among most candidates was that opting out of the collaborative would be political suicide in the new get-along environment. Last month, Mr. O'Connor also held a joint fund-raiser with a rival, Robert Haaland.

"The way I see how it works," Mr. O'Connor said, "win or lose, you may as well get along with people."

A crucial test for an alternative to winner-take-all elections.

offs would hurt so-called progressive politicians who have become the insiders on the officially nonpartisan Board of Supervisors.

"The irony of a lot of progressive reforms is that the system becomes legally more complicated and electorally more complicated, meaning those candidates who can afford high-quality help are going to be benefited," said Mr. Stearns, who is now running the re-election campaigns of three incumbent supervisors.

An early effect has been to introduce a new civility among the candidates, something many San Francis-

GUIDELINES FOR VOTERS

RANKED CHOICE VOTING

1. Rank three DIFFERENT candidates, 1, 2, 3.
2. It's best to use ALL THREE of your rankings.
3. Your second and third rankings are your "insurance" or your "runoff" choices in case your first choice cannot win.
4. Bullet voting (ranking only one candidate) or ranking your favorite candidate three times does NOT help your candidate.

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