

## Let's Start Electing Majority Approved City Officials

Editor: Alameda has elected a mayor and seven councilmembers since 2016. Only one of those successful candidates received 50% of the votes cast! These results are due to the fact that Alameda's City Charter does not provide for a runoff election. In California there are two ways to achieve the election of candidates supported by a majority of the voters, both using a runoff process.

California's statewide election system employs the option that allows only the top two candidates in a spring non-partisan primary to advance to the November general election. However, the cities of San Francisco, Oakland, San Leandro, Berkeley, and Albany have chosen the ranked-choice option.

Voters find the ranked-choice process easy to use. Each voter casts a ballot ranking his/her top choices in order of preference. If no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice ballots, a computer algorithm performs subsequent tabulations that eliminate the candidates with the lowest number of first-choice ballots and credit his/her ballots to the second-choice candidates. The process continues until one candidate receives the affirmative vote of a majority of the voters.

Both the non-partisan primary system and ranked choice give the voter the opportunity to vote for an alternative candidate if their candidate has been eliminated. However, there are two very clear benefits to ranked choice over primaries. First, there is the need for only one election, not two, with great savings to the taxpayer (about \$700,000), and the reduction of expensive campaign costs for the candidates. Second, there is a greater number and a broader spectrum of folks participating in the process by avoiding traditionally low turnout primaries that advantage special interests.

These are only a few of the benefits. I am glad that the Alameda League of Women Voters is educating voters about the benefits of ranked-choice voting. Their website, [lwvalameda.org](http://lwvalameda.org), at the "advocacy" tab explains a lot more about the voting method and even has a video showing how it works.

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