

IS RANKED-CHOICE VOTING GOOD FOR ALAMEDA?

Elections in larger cities normally use a Primary Election to eliminate extra candidates so that just two candidates appear on the regular election ballot. The two candidates with the most votes run against each other. Those who voted for a candidate other than the two with the most votes are ignored.

Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV) eliminates the need for a Primary Election. It also allows for the opinion of voters who voted for candidates that received a lower number of votes to still be considered. Voters get to vote for their second and/or third choice at the same time they make their first-choice vote. If no candidate receives the necessary 50% +1 votes to win, the opinion of all the other voters is considered because they have already voted for their second choice.

Alameda is too small to afford primaries.

The upcoming election in November is a good example of where RCV might help. There will be two councilmember positions open. Incumbent John Knox-White has said he will not run. Since there will not be two incumbent candidates running, we can expect several new candidates to run for the open seats. It is likely no candidate will receive 50% of the vote. Alameda could have a new councilmember who does not have most of the voting public supporting him/her.

In any election people vote for candidates they “wish” could be elected but know they have little chance of winning. RCV gives those voters the opportunity to cast their second choice, hopefully for a candidate with a better chance of having the support of most of the voters. RCV is often referred to as “instant runoff.”

The Alameda League of Women Voters supports RCV for Alameda and is providing information on the League’s website at www.lwvalameda.org/ranked-choice-voting.html. A list of the pros and cons can also be found on the League of Women Voters website at the following link: <https://my.lwv.org/vermont/article/pros-and-cons-instant-runoff-ranked-c...>

RCV is being considered by more and more cities across the country and in California. A list of most of these states and cities can be found at:

RCV in the United States https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ranked-choice_voting_in_the_United_States.

Several recent letters to the editor provide more information on RCV and explain that several Bay Area cities are using RCV right now. The following letters to the editor on the Alameda Sun website can be found at the following links:

(“It’s time for Ranked Choice Voting in Alameda,” Mar 17, 2022) <https://alamedasun.com/letters/15395>

(“Trial by Data,” May 5, 2021) <https://alamedasun.com/news/trial-data>

(“Why Alameda needs RCV,” Dec. 20, 2021) <https://alamedasun.com/letters/10385>

("Will Real Progressives Please Stand Up Now?" Nov. 29, 2018) <https://alamedasun.com/news/will-real-progressives-please-stand-now>

RCV is a new idea that more states and cities are turning to as a way to make voting more inclusive, and to elect representatives who are more favorable to the voters. RCV saves tax dollars by eliminating the need for a primary vote and will eliminate elected officials who are voted in by less than 50% of the electorate.

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