

Ranked Choice Voting Fact Sheet

The League of Women Voters supports Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as a reform that will make our elections more democratic. It is currently used in all elections in the states of Maine and Alaska. Many cities have adopted it for municipal elections as proposed in Evanston.

Evanston residents will vote on using RCV for municipal elections on November 8th

How Does it Work?

In most elections in the United States, the candidate with the most votes wins, even if that candidate's share of votes is less than 50%. In RCV, the winner must have over 50% of the votes to win, and voters select the candidates by order of preference. If a candidate receives 50% or more, that candidate wins. If no candidate receives 50% of the votes, then the candidate with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated. If a voter's first place choice is eliminated, their other candidates are moved up one rank, and the first place candidates are counted again. The elimination process is repeated until one candidate receives over 50% of the vote.

What are the Benefits?

- **Voters have more choices.**
RCV gives voters more choices and more power. If your first choice candidate doesn't win, your vote still counts toward the candidate you ranked as your next choice.
- **Wasted votes are eliminated.**
Voters sometimes vote for their second choice if their preferred candidate is unlikely to win. In RCV you can rank your most preferred candidate first without fear of wasting your vote. Your vote can express your true feelings rather than your worst fears.
- **Voter turnout is generally higher.**
Most election data on voter turnout demonstrates increased voter participation. Ranked choice voting has been found to substantially reduce the drop in voter participation that commonly occurs between primary and runoff elections.
- **Polarization is reduced and elections are more civil.**
In RCV elections, candidates have an incentive to appeal to the broadest coalition of voters – not just a vocal minority. Competition between candidates is reduced and there is less negative campaigning.
- **Administrative costs are lower by eliminating runoffs.**
RCV allows a winner to be elected in a single trip to the polls for voters. Another name for RCV is "instant runoff." This saves money for the city.

Is there a con side to RCV?

RCV has been criticized as too complicated, but critics underestimate the intelligence of voters. To better understand the process, watch this 2 minute video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Z2fRPRkWvY>