

Presentation to the
San Diego Elections Task Force

Instant Runoff Voting/Ranked Choice Voting

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Summary of Presentation

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San Diego's Current System

Two-Round Runoff System

- Local elections consolidated with the state & national elections.
- Voters cast a vote for a single candidate for each race.
- Candidates can win with a majority in the primary
- If no candidate wins a majority, all but the top two candidates are eliminated
- A runoff is held months later during the November general election.

Vacancies

- The City of San Diego has tried various options over the years. Currently, uses two-round runoff system to fill vacancies which potentially delays representation if a runoff is needed

Some Advantages of Two-Round Runoffs

- Voters are familiar with the system
- Two-round runoff system assures majority winners

Some Disadvantages of Two-Round Runoffs

- Much lower voter turnout in primary than in runoff, especially among nonpartisan voters & communities of color
- Second-round runoffs can be costly, especially as stand alone elections when consolidation not possible
- Delayed runoff five (or more) months later can make for very long campaigns, contributing to voter fatigue
- Candidates need to raise money for a second campaign; Independent Expenditures increase in head-to-head runoff elections

Some Recent Voter Turnout Numbers from 2002-2006

In 2006, for District 8

- 42.1% in November '05
- 19.6% in January

In 2004, for Mayor

- 42.4% in March
- 68.1% in November

In 2005, for Mayor

- 39.5% in July
- 54.5% in November

In 2002, for City Attorney

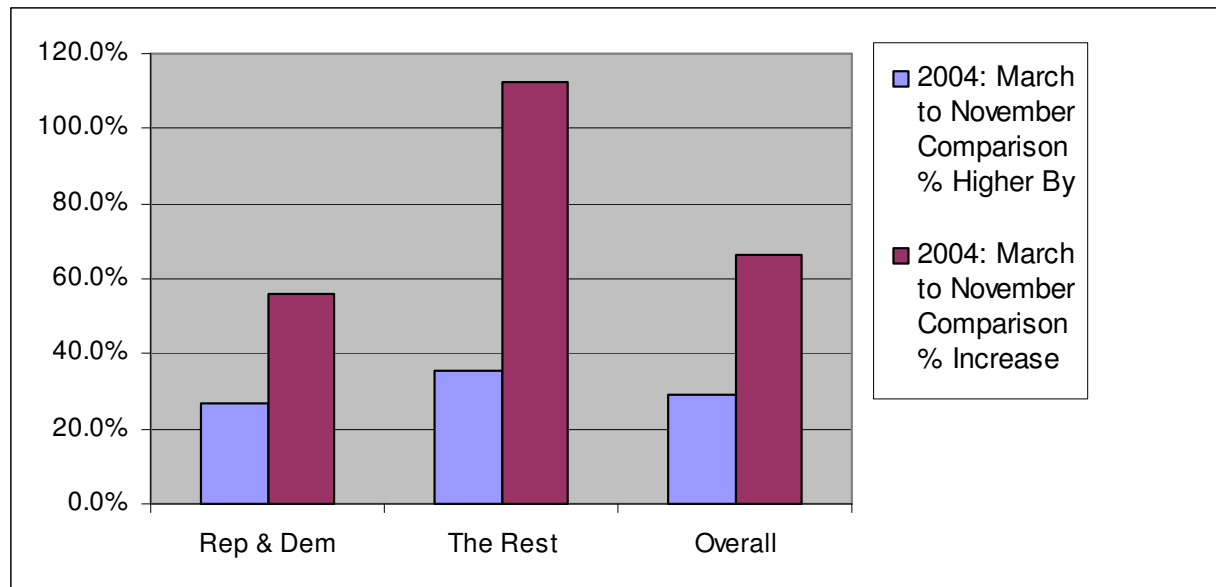
- 38.8% in March
- 61.1% in November

There are many more races that have gone
to runoffs; this is just a sample.

Voter Turnout Among Non Partisan and Third Party Registered Voters in 2004

-66.4% increase overall from March 2004 to November 2004

-112.6% increase among non Republicans & Democrats



This is overall turnout data for City of San Diego voters, not relating to specific races.

Election Administration Costs of San Diego's Two-Round Runoffs

There have been 14 elections, including seven runoff elections, since March 2000.

- 1/06: Districts 2 & 8 runoffs cost \$615,837
- 11/8/05: Mayoral runoff cost \$357,305
- 1/4/05: District 4 runoff cost \$246,837

Total spent on the seven runoffs:\$1,793,984

Voting System Alternatives

The City of San Diego uses single-seat districts.

There are several possible voting systems that could be used instead of the current two-round runoff system:

- Plurality
- Condorcet
- Instant Runoff Voting

The Rules Committee put Instant Runoff Voting on the Election Task Force's agenda so the bulk of this presentation on voting system alternatives relates to IRV

Voting System Alternatives:

Plurality Voting

- Voters rank one candidate in each race
- The candidate with the most votes wins
- This system is used in state and national elections

Some Advantages

- One round of elections
- Voters are familiar with it

Some Disadvantages

- Candidates can win with less than 50% of the vote when there are more than two candidates in the race
- Voters often worry about “spoiling” or having to choose between the lesser of two evils
- Only measures core support; breadth of support is irrelevant

Voting System Alternatives: Condorcet Method

–Voters rank candidates in a series of head-to-head contests.

–If most voters prefer (rank) A over B, A wins that contest.

Advantages

–One round of elections

Concerns

–Voters are unfamiliar with the system

–There may not be any candidate who defeats all the others: A might beat B, B might beat C, and yet C could beat A

–In this case, some other system must be used to resolve the paradox.

–only measures breadth of support and ignores how strong the support is

Note: Condorcet method of voting is not currently in use in any municipality in the US or around the world

Voting System Alternatives: Instant Runoff Voting (IRV)

IRV is sometimes known by different names

- Ranked Choice Voting
- Alternative Voting
- Preferential Voting

IRV is used solely for single-seat elections

- The precise system known as 'instant-runoff voting' was invented by an American in 1870.

IRV: easy as 1-2-3

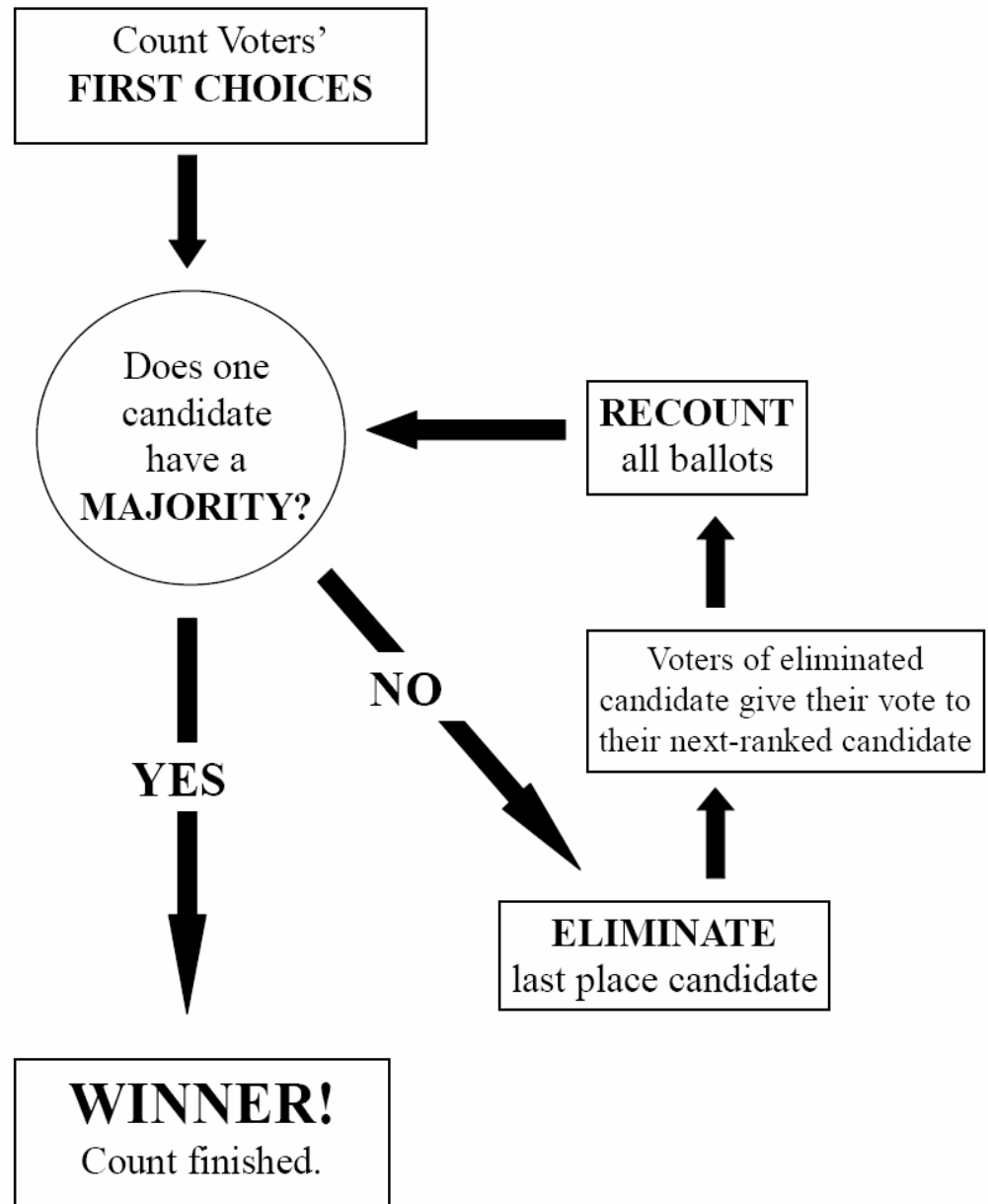
- Vote for your favorite candidate – just like in the current system
- You can also **rank** your runoff choices at the same time: 1,2,3 on the ballot
- You may rank just one candidate, or more than one.
- It's entirely up to you

Ballot for Office

<u>Candidates</u>	<u>1</u> First Choice	<u>2</u> Second Choice	<u>3</u> Third Choice	<u>4</u> Fourth Choice
Person A	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Person B	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Person C	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Person D	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Note: in San Francisco, voters can currently rank up to three candidates.

“Instant” Runoff Voting Ballot Count Flow Chart



Some Benefits of IRV

Increases Voter Participation

- Many San Diego elections are decided in the primary, when voter turnout is much lower than in November
- A single IRV election in November means everyone who votes in the first round, votes in the final round

Encourages Positive Campaigning

- Candidates may need the second rankings of their opponents' supporters to win.
- Candidates win by building coalitions and finding common ground, not mudslinging

Saves Taxpayer Dollars

- Holding two elections instead of one is costly – to the city, and to the candidates

Majority Winners

- IRV requires sufficient core support to avoid elimination and enough broad support to win a majority of the votes

Provides Representation Faster

- With a delayed two-round runoff, voters may have to wait months before finally electing a representative

Some Concerns Expressed about IRV

- Too complicated for voters
- American voters will never take to this
- People like the current system
- The ranked choice ballot is too difficult for voting equipment to handle
- This doesn't sound constitutional

After a legal challenge to the use of IRV in Ann Arbor, Michigan in the 1970s, the court ruled that IRV fully complied with the principle of "one person, one vote."

RCV: Not a New Idea

- First used in Ohio in 1915
- Used in 23 cities in the 1930s and 1940s including New York City, Sacramento and Cincinnati
- Used in Cambridge, MA since 1941
- Used in Australia since 1919, for House of Representatives and most State lower houses
- Used in New Zealand for District Health Boards, for Council and Mayor in ten cities
- Used in Ireland to elect the President since 1937

RCV: Current Use

Addressing the concern that “American voters will never go for it”

- Used in San Francisco, CA in 2004 and 2005
- Used in Burlington, VT in 2006
- Used for overseas military voters in Louisiana, Arkansas, South Carolina
- Passed in July 2006 by North Carolina State Legislature for use to fill judicial vacancies and to pilot use in 10 cities and 10 counties
- Used in college campuses across the country, including UCLA, UC Davis, UC Berkeley, Stanford and Caltech. Recently passed by UCSD.

RCV: Growing Support

Addressing the concern that “people like the current system”

- Passed with 84% voter support in Takoma Park, MD in 2005
- Passed with 72% voter support Berkeley, CA in 2004
- Passed with 69.8% voter support in Ferndale, MI in 2004
- On the ballot this November in Oakland, Minneapolis, Davis and Pierce County (WA)

San Francisco: A Case Study

- San Francisco voters passed ranked choice voting in 2002
- The system was used in 2004 to elect district Supervisors in seven of the eleven districts
- In four of those districts (1,5,7,11) no candidate won a majority in the first round but RCV eliminated the need for a December runoff
- In 2005, RCV was used in three citywide races
- The race for Assessor-Recorder did require an "instant runoff" since the front-runner had only 47% of the initial vote.
- San Francisco saved \$3 million in 2005 by avoiding that second, low turnout election

San Francisco: Voter Understanding

Addressing the concern that it's "too complicated for voters"

- 86 % of those who voted in the polling place and 89% of absentee voters felt they understood RCV fairly well or perfectly well after using it.
- 59% of polling place voters and 60% of absentee voters used the full potential of the RCV ballot by ranking three candidates

Source: 2004 Exit Poll: San Francisco State University/Public Research Institute

San Francisco: Voter Preference

- 61% of polling place voters and **77% of absentee voters** preferred RCV over the old system.

Source: 2004 Exit Poll: San Francisco State University/Public Research Institute

- Of those who expressed an opinion, 83% of Latinos, 70% of Whites, 72% of Asians, and 62% of Blacks liked RCV

Source: 2004 CAVEC Poll

San Francisco: Voter Turnout

- RCV increased the number of decisive votes cast in races that required a runoff by an estimated 168% in 2005
- Participation in first round and final round of Assessor-Recorder race nearly tripled what it would have been with a separate runoff.
- Most striking changes were in the most ethnically diverse and low-income neighborhoods: a 209% increase in Western Addition and a 307% increase in Visitation Valley

Information taken from: “Ranked Choice Voting and Voter Turnout in San Francisco Elections” by Christopher Jerdonek

Burlington, VT: IRV in Action

Also addressing the concern that it's "too complicated for voters"

- Burlington used IRV for the first time to elect its Mayor in 2006
- There were 5 candidates on the ballot plus a write-in slot.
- 90% of voters said they knew they'd be asked to rank candidates for mayor
- Voters preferred IRV to the old "vote for one" method by more than 3 to 1
- 91% disagreed with the statement, "The ballot was confusing."
- The valid ballot rate was 99.9%
- Voters ranked on average 2.9 candidates

Source: Testimony to Pierce County Charter Review Commission by Caleb Kleppner, a former staffer with the Center for Voting and Democracy from 1999-2004.

IRV and Voting Equipment

Addressing the concern that “voting equipment can’t handle ranked choice voting”

IRV can be used with paper ballots read by optical scan equipment, using electronic touch screens or can even be counted by hand.

San Diego County currently contracts with Diebold, which stated that its “*AccuVote-TS can easily be programmed for preferential voting*” in reply to the RFP put out by Alameda County.

- San Francisco used **ES&S** optical scan system in 2004 and 2005
- Alameda County recently entered into an agreement with **Sequoia** to have all county voting equipment IRV-ready by 2007.
- Cambridge and Burlington use **Diebold’s AccuVote-OS** system
- Australia hand counts all lower house ballots

Review: IRV vs. Delayed Runoffs

The next five comparison slides were produced by FairVote: the Center for Voting and Democracy.

More info available at fairvote.org

IRV vs. Delayed Runoffs : Step #1

Delayed Runoff

Voters go to the polls and mark their favorite candidate on the ballot.

Instant Runoff

Voters go to the polls and mark their favorite candidate as their #1 choice. They also can indicate runoff choices by ranking candidates.

IRV vs. Runoffs: Step #2

Delayed Runoff

If no candidate receives a majority, a second election is called.

Instant Runoff

If no candidate receives a majority, the instant runoff ballot count takes place.

IRV vs. Runoffs: Step #3

Delayed Runoff

Candidates resume raising money and campaigning. New ballots are printed. A second election is administered.

Instant Runoff

Skip step 3.

IRV vs. Runoffs: Step #4

Delayed Runoff

If your favorite candidate advances to runoff, you mark a new ballot for this candidate. If your favorite is eliminated, you mark a ballot for your next choice among runoff candidates.

Instant Runoff

If your favorite candidate advances to runoff count, your ballot counts for this candidate again. If your favorite is eliminated, ballot counts for next choice among runoff candidates.

IRV vs. Runoffs: Step #5

Delayed Runoff

The candidate with the majority of the votes wins.

Instant Runoff

The candidate with the majority of the votes wins.

IRV and the City of San Diego

- San Diego is a Charter City
- California General Law allows for charter cities to determine their own voting systems
- A change in the voting system would require a charter amendment, to let the voters decide how their representatives should be elected
- This could happen in either a primary or a general election, such as November 2008, when more people vote.
- Implementation date to be set for 2010.

No Perfect Voting System

Stanford Economist Kenneth J. Arrow received the Nobel Prize in 1972 for proving (in 1951) that there is no such thing as a perfect voting system.

**Now it's your turn to try.
Good luck!**

For More Information

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