



# DEPARTMENT OF ELECTIONS

## RANKED CHOICE VOTING PUBLIC EDUCATION PLAN

November 2, 2004 Consolidated General Election

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

On March 5, 2002, San Francisco voters approved a Charter Amendment that requires the City to utilize a ranked-choice voting, or “instant run-off voting,” method. Ranked-choice voting eliminates separate runoff elections.

This document describes the San Francisco Department of Election’s public outreach and education plan for implementation of the ranked-choice voting method.

## **II. OBJECTIVE**

The objective of this public outreach and education plan is to inform voters and the public at large about ranked-choice voting and how to correctly mark ranked-choice voting ballots.

## **III. MESSAGES**

This section outlines the information on ranked-choice voting that will be communicated to voters and the public. Depending on the target audience, these messages will be incorporated into media and other materials differently, but the goal is to deliver clear and consistent messages.

### **A. What is ranked-choice voting?**

Ranked-choice voting allows voters to rank a first, second and third choice candidate for a single office. The November 2, 2004 election will be the first San Francisco election using ranked-choice voting.

### **B. Who is elected using a ranked-choice ballot?**

On November 2, 2004, San Francisco voters will use ranked-choice voting to elect Supervisors for districts 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, and 11. Ranked-choice voting does not apply to elections for School Board or Community College Board, or to candidates for State or federal office.

In future elections, San Francisco will use ranked-choice voting to elect the Mayor, City Attorney, District Attorney, Public Defender, Treasurer, Assessor and Sheriff.

### **C. How do voters mark ranked-choice ballots?**

1. Each voter can rank a first, second, and third choice, in order of preference, among the candidates for each ranked-choice office:

- a. A voter can mark a candidate as first choice.
- b. A voter can mark a separate candidate as second choice.
- c. A voter can mark another candidate as third choice.

#### **D. How are ranked-choice votes counted?**

All first-choice votes are counted first, and if a candidate receives a majority (50%+1 vote) of the first-choice votes that candidate is elected.

If no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes, a process of eliminating candidates and transferring votes begins. The candidate who received the fewest number of first-choice votes is eliminated, and votes cast for the eliminated candidate are transferred to the voter's next-choice candidate. The votes are then recounted. If any candidate receives a majority of the votes, that candidate is elected. If no candidate receives a majority, the process of eliminating candidates and transferring votes is repeated, until one candidate receives a majority.

#### **E. What can I expect when I go to the polling place?**

San Francisco will continue to use paper ballots and the same optical scan voting equipment it has used since 2000, so these should be familiar to voters. But the design of the ranked-choice ballot and the instructions to rank up to three choices for each applicable office will be new.

Voters can familiarize themselves with ballot design and instructions by looking at a sample ballot. Sample ballots are included in the Voter Information Pamphlet that is mailed to all voters. A demonstration ballot will also be available at the Department of Elections and on the Department's website beginning in July.

### **IV. MESSAGE DEVELOPMENT AND ADVERTISING**

This section outlines the educational and outreach mechanisms the Department will use to communicate information about ranked-choice voting to voters. These mechanisms will utilize print and electronic media, as well as presentations, to effectively disseminate ranked-choice voting messages. All of the materials will be translated in accordance with the Voting Rights Act.

#### **Public Relations Firm**

The Department will work with a public relations firm to assist in developing ranked-choice voting themes and messages for voters. The firm will assist with development of supplementary materials in the outreach effort, including posters, brochures, public service announcements, and video presentations. The firm will create a positive and compelling information campaign, serving as the general lead organization in disseminating the ranked-choice voting message within its established network of media

venues and contacts. The firm will also brief media outlets and policymakers and work with the Department's ethnic media outreach contractor, as well as mainstream and community-based organizations to train spokespersons and develop demonstration formats.

## **Ethnic Media Message Development and Advertising**

### **Selected Contractor – \$25,000**

A selected contractor will take the ranked-choice voting message that the public relations firm develops and work with the firm, ethnic media outlets, community-based organizations and translators to tailor and disseminate the message to populations protected under the Voting Rights Act – the Spanish-speaking, Chinese-speaking and African-American communities – as well as other minority language communities.

## **Print**

### **Citywide Mailing**

Using a citywide mailing format the Department will design and produce an informational flyer intended to reach all registered voters in San Francisco. The approved budget funds one citywide mailing. The Department plans to mail the flyer at the end of September so that it reaches absentee voters before the start of early voting.

### **Flyers / Posters**

The Department will design and produce tri-fold flyers highlighting the key ranked-choice voting messages (see Messages section above). Each flyer will be reproduced in Chinese and Spanish. The Department will look for all opportunities to distribute these flyers, including through community presentations, street fairs and festivals, and civic and religious organizations, and City agencies. All flyers will also be posted on the Department's website for downloading

### **Voter Information Pamphlets**

Ranked-choice voting informational material will be included in the Voter Information Pamphlet (VIP), which is mailed to all registered San Francisco voters prior to each election. The material will highlight all of the ranked-choice voting messages, focusing on instructions on how to correctly mark the ranked-choice voting ballot. The ranked-choice voting material additionally will be translated for inclusion in the Spanish and Chinese versions of the VIP. Also included in the VIP will be a sample ranked-choice voting ballot showing the exact layout of the contests, the choice arrangement, and the candidates as they will appear in the Official Ballot for the election, as well as a reference guide that voters can use to note their respective choices for each ranked-choice voting contest and take with them to the polls.

## **Electronic Media**

### **Website – Selected Contractor, \$40,500**

A selected contractor will assist the Department of Elections in developing the ranked-choice voting message on the web. The scope of work for this contractor will include video encoding, website setup and hosting. Utilizing the message developed by the PR firm, the contractor will develop an RCV-themed website to include both general and detailed information about ranked-choice voting. Features of the website will include instructional video and audio clips, interactive demonstrations on how to correctly mark a ranked-choice voting ballot, informational slides and images relevant to the ranked-choice voting process. Once produced, the ranked-choice voting website will require continual updates, support, and maintenance. The Department will seek to organize this new site so it is as accessible as possible.

The City's web content must be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Because Flash animation and other interactive features are not ADA compliant, it cannot be posted on the City's website. For this reason, the Department must utilize an alternative website to host these features. The approved budget funds four months of website hosting and maintenance. Therefore, while continuing to place text information on its own website, the Department will launch the interactive ranked-choice voting website in August.

## **Presentations**

### **Community-Based Organization (CBO) Recruitment**

#### **CBO Grant Administrator**

A selected contractor will serve as a trainer, coordinator, monitor and evaluator of the CBOs selected to receive the Department's grants. The contractor will administer the granting process, while ensuring neutrality and consistency of CBO efforts. Additionally, the Grant Administrator will provide CBOs with the Department's print and other developed materials for use in presentations and events.

#### **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)**

CBOs selected for grants will take the developed message, materials, trainings and demonstrations into community forums, which could include community meetings and presentations, ESL classes, adult literacy programs, citizenship classes, libraries, churches and other religious organizations. In addition to distributing ranked-choice voting information, these organizations will develop a message generally promoting voter participation and registration.

There will be two kinds of CBOs that receive grants:

#### **District Organizations**

It will be the responsibility of selected district organizations to take a broad approach and disseminate information about ranked-choice voting to all voters and the public at large within the assigned district. Organizations will be allowed to propose a plan and budget for more than one district. The total approved budget for all eleven supervisorial districts will be \$110,000.

### **Target Organizations**

The Department recognizes the need to target certain communities with additional information about ranked-choice voting beyond that given to the public at large. To accomplish this, the Department will recruit target organizations to conduct ranked-choice voting outreach. It will be the responsibility of the target organization to provide citywide support to the district organizations in disseminating information about ranked-choice voting to targeted communities.

The targeted communities include<sup>i</sup>:

Populations protected under the Voting Rights Act

Seniors

Disabled persons

Areas with historically low voter turnout

Younger voters

The approved budget allows \$100,000 for the funding of these target organizations.

### **Poll Worker Training**

In order to provide voters with correct and thorough information regarding ranked-choice voting, the Department must ensure that approximately 3,500 poll workers receive ranked-choice voting training. In addition to the standard election curriculum, the Department will provide dedicated ranked-choice voting information and demonstrations.

## **The Department of Elections**

The role of the Department will be to oversee and coordinate all of the message development and advertising. The Department will pay for the printing, distribution and advertising space for placement of materials, including basic presentation materials for the CBOs, when necessary.

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<sup>i</sup> Target Communities

#### Populations protected under the Voting Rights Act

The Voting Rights Act, adopted initially in 1965, codifies and effectuates the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment's permanent guarantee that no person shall be denied the right to vote on account of race or color. In addition, the Act contains several special provisions that impose even more stringent requirements on "covered" jurisdictions in certain areas of the country. Two of these provisions, Section 203 and Section 2, specifically apply to San Francisco.

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Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act is the language minority provision. This provision requires certain jurisdictions to provide bilingual written materials and other assistance when more than 5 percent of the citizens of voting age are members of a single language minority and are limited-English proficient. For San Francisco, the Department of Justice applies the minority language provisions of the Act to Chinese and Spanish speaking communities. The Department, however, recognizes that there are significant populations of other minority language speakers in San Francisco, and while not mandated to do so, produces election materials in Russian, Vietnamese and Tagalog.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act was intended to protect the voting rights of African-Americans and other minority groups. Specifically, Section 2 prohibits voting practices and procedures that discriminate on the basis of race, color or membership in a language minority group.

#### Seniors

According to historical figures on voting and registration, turnout for voters over the age of 65 is consistently well above the national average, making this the single largest group of voters. In order to ensure that this group understands the components of ranked-choice voting, the Department will target voters over the age of 65.

#### Disabled persons

Disabled voters are also a community protected by federal law. For example, the Voting Accessibility for the Elderly and Handicapped Act of 1984 (42 U.S.C. 1973ee to 1973ee-6) requires polling places across the United States to be physically accessible to people with disabilities. The Department recognizes the importance of outreach to the disabled community, as they are a community that receives additional legal protections, and accordingly recommends providing this community with additional outreach.

#### Areas with historically low voter turnout

In order to reach out to geographic areas in the city that have historically low turnout, the Department identified those neighborhoods for which turnout was below the citywide average for each of the previous six elections. From this analysis, the Department has determined the following low voter turnout neighborhoods:

|                           |                           |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Bayview/Hunter's Point    | Excelsior (Outer Mission) |
| Chinatown                 | South of Market           |
| Civic Center/Downtown     | Visitation Valley         |
| Ingleside                 | Western Addition          |
| Laurel Heights/Anza Vista |                           |

#### Younger Voters

According to historical figures on voting and registration, turnout for voters under the age of 25 is substantially lower than the national average. In order to encourage younger voters, the Department will target voters between the ages of 18-24.