

CITY OF GAINESVILLE
Office of the City Attorney

Memorandum

Phone: 334-5011/Fax 334-2229

TO: Charles Hauck, Senior Assistant City Attorney
and the Charter Review Committee

DATE: April 10, 2006

FROM: Libby Baird Illsley

SUBJECT: Costs Associated with Implementing Choice Voting in Burlington and San Francisco

I spoke to Jo LaMarsh, the Director of Elections in Burlington, Vermont, and Linda Tulett, the Deputy Director of Elections in San Francisco regarding the costs of implementation in their respective cities. The results were approximately proportional to the size of the two cities. According to the US Census, San Francisco's population in 2004 was 744,230, and 411,764 were registered to vote. Burlington's population is 39,148 as of 2001, 30,110 of whom are registered to vote. Because Burlington uses the same machines as Alachua County does, the Committee should be able to approximate the costs of implementation here in Gainesville from the following information. In Vermont, however, there is no requirement for state certification of voting systems when the systems will be used only in local elections. Florida, in contrast, requires certification of all voting systems to be used in the state.

The City of Berkeley's elections are consolidated with the County of Alameda, and because IRV has not yet been implemented at the county level, Berkeley has not yet run an IRV election. California has also not yet certified any voting systems using IRV. According to Sara Cox of the Berkeley Clerk's office, Berkeley's charter amendment allows the city to implement IRV when the staff deem the process 'mature and trustworthy'.

Machinery

San Francisco uses 600 Eagle voting machines and Burlington, Vermont, uses 14 Diebold AccuVote machines, the same machines used in Alachua County. Thus, to implement IRV, the City would not have to buy new machines, nor interfere with Alachua County's ability to have plurality elections, even on the same ballot. However, if the same ballot contains both plurality and IRV votes, the ballots must be counted twice, once for each type of vote.

Software

The software Burlington uses is made by Voting Solutions and is called Choice Plus Pro. It is available as a free download in a "lite version" from Voting Solutions' website. Burlington borrowed the software from Cambridge for free and modified it to adhere to Burlington's rules and regulations. This software is not placed on the AccuVote machines as the Committee originally thought, but on a Windows-based laptop into which the ballot numbers are fed after they are scanned and compiled. There can either be two separate ballots for plurality and IRV voting or one ballot where they are combined, which must then be run through the AccuVote machines twice. San Francisco uses software developed by ES&S. ES&S also developed the machines and had the whole system certified.

Costs of Implementation in General

The cost of implementing IRV appears to vary based on the size of the city doing the implementing. In San Francisco, the total cost of implementation was \$1.6 million, while in Burlington, Vermont, it was considerably less. Though the software was free, Burlington had to spend a few thousand dollars having it altered to meet the required rules and regulations in Burlington. The voter education program was contracted out for \$8,200 to Election Solutions, the same people who educated San Francisco voters on IRV. Another significant cost was a mailing describing IRV sent to each home in Burlington.

San Francisco's total cost for implementation was \$1.6 million, not including public education. They paid this fee to ES&S to develop, design, test and certify all the equipment necessary to have IRV in municipal elections. The 600 Eagle machines used in the IRV votes are not used in state or national elections and as far as Tulett knows, do not have the ability to tabulate plurality voting as well as IRV.

Savings to the Municipality

Jo LaMarsh, the Director of Elections for Burlington, says the city will save money over time. A runoff election would cost \$8,000, but they've never had one in Burlington.

San Francisco, on the other hand, has arguably saved millions of dollars through the use of IRV. According to Linda Tulett, the Deputy Director of the Department of Elections, there would have been a runoff in November 2005 and four from all of 2004, for a total of 5 runoff elections. A citywide runoff costs between \$1 and 1.2 million. The four runoffs in 2004 would not have been citywide, so this will cause a reduction in the approximate cost of those runoffs.

Voter and Staff Education

Burlington spent a relatively short period of time in public education. They began educating election personnel in December with an internal mock election, and public education began in January.

San Francisco is still educating the public on IRV. The Public Research Institute at San Francisco State University has conducted a number of studies and exit polls to survey where voters learned about IRV and how well they understood it. These studies are available at http://www.sfgov.org/site/election_index.asp=27457. Ms. Tulett has offered to speak with me if there are any questions regarding her responses.

Summary

Based on the cost in these two cities, it seems likely that the cost of implementation for Gainesville would be closer to Burlington than to San Francisco. We already have access to the Accuvote machines. The software may have to be configured for local/state requirements. The system will need to be approved by the State of Florida, and whether this cost would be borne by the vendor or City remains to be seen. There is no need to purchase new machines, nor to inhibit the County's ability to run plurality elections simultaneously with IRV. Presumably, some additional costs would be incurred by the Supervisor (training and actual operation), which would be passed along to the City. That leaves public education, which costs are dependent on effort and are difficult to measure. The costs of runoff elections would be eliminated.

Williams, Suann

From: Illsley, Elizabeth B.
Sent: Thursday, April 20, 2006 11:05 AM
To: Williams, Suann; Hauck, Charles L.; Wheat, Penny
Subject: re: San Francisco surveys corrected website

The correct, functional place to find the report is the following:

<http://pri.sfsu.edu/>

Click Reports

Click pull-down menu and select "An assessment of Ranked-Choice voting in the San Francisco 2004 election"

Sorry for the confusion. It's been an honor working with you all.

Libby Baird Illsley



CITY OF GAINESVILLE

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MEMORANDUM

TO: Charles Hauck, Sr. Asst. City Attorney
FROM: Natalie Duguid, Paralegal
RE: Instant Runoff Voting
DATE: August 11, 2005

This memo is prepared in response to questions submitted by Chair Wheat in preparation for the August 18, 2005 Charter Review Committee meeting.

HOW DOES INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING (IRV) WORK?

Each person selects their first, second, and third choice on the ballot. If one candidate gets a majority of the votes, that person wins and the election is over. If there is no majority winner, the person with the least number of votes is eliminated. If your first choice candidate is not eliminated, and advances to the second round, you keep supporting that candidate. The votes are counted again. If your first choice candidate was eliminated, your second choice will now be counted. In IRV, candidates get eliminated one at a time, and each time all voters have had the opportunity to select among the remaining candidates. At each step of the ballot counting, every voter has exactly one vote for a continuing candidate. See sample attached.

ANALYSIS OF IRV TO NORMAL RUNOFF VOTING, (From websites advocating IRV)

Advantages to instant runoff ballot (IRV):

Voters and parties have less opportunity for playing games in early round(s) to influence the elimination order in favor of easier competition.

Candidates are discouraged from negative campaigning. A winning candidate will usually need first, second and lower ranked preferences to win, and can't safely afford to make enemies with no second chance vote.

In a runoff, a major political interest may fracture into a variety of parties, and its vote so splits in the first ballot that all those parties' candidates are eliminated in the first ballot.

Advantages to sequential balloting: (runoff voting)

A runoff allows voters and factions to refocus their attention on remaining candidates in each round. In IRV, voters must make careful choices among a large set of candidates in one ballot and may not have enough information to make informed rankings among the competitive candidates.

Candidates who were eliminated are given another chance to endorse and remaining candidates have another chance to court voters supporting the eliminated candidates.

In a runoff, minor parties stand on their own merits in the first round of voting. Under the single event IRV, interest in the minor parties only focuses on how they recommend their supporters cast their preferences between the major parties. In a runoff minor parties have the power to recommend second preferences in the final round.

IRV IN FLORIDA

According to Sharon Larson, Esquire, Deputy General Counsel, Florida Department of State, Division of Elections, there is no legal impediment to the adoption of IRV in Gainesville. The City would simply need to amend its Charter to provide for this method. She did caution, however, that the City's voting equipment might need to be upgraded or replaced in order to accommodate this method.

Ms. Larson was contacted again on August 11, 2005 regarding instant runoff voting. The question posed was what, if any, involvement the State would need to have should Gainesville amend its Charter. For instance, would the State have to certify the City's voting equipment? Ms. Larson was unavailable to discuss these issues at the time this report was submitted; however, a verbal report will be presented at the meeting on the 18th.

APPLICATION TO GAINESVILLE

The above information was confirmed, in part, by Supervisor of Elections Pam Carpenter, who noted that the City of Gainesville does not own any election equipment but utilizes Alachua County's equipment with the same contract used to contract for the conduct of the election. When asked about a possible timeline for converting to the Instant Runoff Voting method, Ms. Carpenter stated that the first step would be to amend the City's charter. Therefore, the municipal election schedule would be first to dictate the length of time necessary to convert to this new system. Once the Charter is amended, equipment would need to be purchased and poll workers trained. Ms. Carpenter stated she would be pleased to address these issues with the Committee but would not have the opportunity to fully research them prior to the Committee's meeting on the 18th due to scheduling conflicts.

Candidate A



Candidate B



Candidate C



ELECTION DAY

First Count

Candidate A receives 44% of the votes.

Candidate B receives 35% of the votes.

Candidate C receives 21% of the votes.

Candidate C is eliminated.

All voters who voted for Candidate C had chosen Candidate B for their 2nd choice.

Second Count

Candidate A receives 44% of the votes.

Candidate B receives 35% of the original votes PLUS the 21% of the voters' votes who had chosen Candidate C as their first choice. Candidate B now has 56% of the total votes. **CANDIDATE B is pronounced WINNER.**

NEW ELECTION DAY

First Count

Candidate A receives 44% of the votes.

Candidate B receives 35% of the votes.

Candidate C receives 21% of the votes.

Second Count

Candidate A receives 44% of the votes plus the 5% of the voters' votes who had chosen Candidate C for their first choice and Candidate A for their second choice. Candidate B receives 35% of the votes plus the 16% of the voters who had chosen Candidate C for their first choice and Candidate B for their second choice.

Candidate A receives 49% of the votes.

Candidate B receives 51% of the votes.

CANDIDATE B is the winner.