

## RANKED CHOICE VOTING NOVEMBER 2019

CURRENTLY WE HAVE A WINNER TAKE ALL VOTING SYSTEM. If there are many contestants in the race we usually end up with someone who is not actually supported by the majority of voters. This greatly skews representation and lead to the cynical attitude we have toward all politicians. It is this attitude that leads to the polarization that we see in our nation today and the very low turn outs at the polls. In addition, this method tends to encourage candidates to denigrate opponents in order to get that ONE MORE vote.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING is just another method of counting ballots to take into consideration every voter's wishes. It is really just an improvement on the way we already vote. Of course, we can still just vote for the one candidate of our choice and be done with it. But, if we want to rank some of the other candidates in the order of our preference, we can do so.

The military abroad, mostly in the south - Arkansas, Alabama, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina - but even Springfield, Illinois, has successfully used Ranked Choice Voting for years because there is simply not enough time between the first vote and the run-off. It works well and smoothly within the military.

HOW DOES IT WORK? When all the votes are counted, if no candidate gets 50% or more, then Ranked Choice Voting analysis begins. The candidate with the least amount of votes is eliminated and, if that candidate was your first choice, then your second choice is moved to up into the first choice position. This method of elimination and moving the next choice up continues until one candidate gets more than 50% of the voter's approval. We are fortunate in Alachua County because our machines can be programmed with the necessary algorithms to do this analysis.

WHERE IN THE WORLD DID IT ALL START? First invented in Europe in the 1850's, as a proportional representative system to be used in multi-winner elections, by 1870 it was adapted to the single-winner (or instant run off) form by William Ware, an MIT professor. By the early 1900s it was used in many selected elections in Australia, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Scotland, United Kingdom, Fiji, Malta and even little Papua New Guinea.

SO WHERE IN THE USA IS IT USED TODAY? In our country, starting in 1915, local governments in Ohio, Colorado, Michigan, California, Connecticut began to use it for City Councils, School Boards and other groups. Since then cities in New Mexico and Maryland and the entire State of Maine, have adopted this method. Below are some cities where it is now actively used for many offices.

Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, San Leandro CA  
Cambridge, MA,  
State of Maine and Portland, ME  
Minneapolis and St. Paul, MN,  
Santa Fe, NM  
Takoma Park. MD  
Telluride, CO

BELOW ARE COMMUNITIES WHERE VOTERS HAVE APPROVED IT?

Amherst, MA  
Benton County, Oregon  
Basalt and Carbondale, CO  
Davis and Santa Clara County, CA  
Ferndale, MI  
Las Cruces, NM  
Memphis, TN  
Saint Louis Park, MN  
Sarasota, FL  
Vancouver, WA

WHERE IN THE USA IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING TRENDING? Following in the footsteps of Maine we see a ground swell from the voters in Massachusetts, Alaska, Washington, California, Utah, Tennessee and Michigan to establish the system statewide. More than 76% of the voters in Sarasota approved the method and we are just waiting for the Secretary of State's approval for that city. In fact we are currently raising funds to get a legal opinion to help Secretary Laurel Lee make a final decision. The issue is complex. Jacksonville is well on its way and we certainly hope that Alachua County will not be far behind. Many large corporations, universities and organizations also use Ranked Choice Voting.

SUPPORT FOR RANKED CHOICE VOTING IS NON-PARTISAN. Our current system of electing representatives certainly contributes to the partisan divide we see throughout our nation today. Within myself I work across the aisle every day. I am a fiscal conservative and a social liberal so I really know that the two sides can just hammer things out and I am pleased that we are getting strong support from both sides of the aisle everywhere.

Representative Joe Gruters from Sarasota, chair of the Florida Republican Party, is supporting our efforts. At the national level, Democratic Congressmen Don Beyer and Jamie Raskin have introduced Ranked Choice Voting under HR 4000.

Here are some examples of how one party can win over the other without the approval of the majority of the voters:

The Republican candidate for Governor of Connecticut, Bob Stefanowski, narrowly lost to the Democrat, Ned Lamont, in a six way race by only 3.16% of the votes. The Libertarian Candidate alone got 3.89% and we just know that under the Ranked Choice Voting method those voters would probably have put the Republican as their second choice and the Republican would have won. But the candidate with less than 50% support from the voters gets to run the State of Connecticut. It's just not fair!

Closer to home in the 2010 race for the Governor of Florida, Democratic banker Alex Sink narrowly lost to Republican Rick Scott in a six way race by only 1.15% of the votes. The Independent Candidate, Peter Allen, who had always supported the Democratic Party got 2.31% of the votes and we just know that under the Ranked Choice Voting method most of those voters would have put the Democrat as their second choice and the Democrat would have won. But the candidate with less than 50% support from the voters got to run the State of Florida. It's just not fair!

I am married to an American historian and am reminded that in 1912 Democrat Woodrow Wilson became our President with less than 50% of the voters wanting him. Progressive Party Teddy Roosevelt was 2<sup>nd</sup> and Republican William Howard Taft came in last. Surely Taft voters would have preferred Roosevelt and we would have had a Progressive republican as our President.

THE FLORIDA ORGANIZATION. Supporters in Florida have formed a 501(c)(4) under the name of Rank My Vote Florida and we are fund raising to match some grant money coming in, but it will take a major statewide campaign to educated all voters. There are several informative presentation being scheduled in Gainesville. Contact Jean Chalmers 352-538-4256 for more information.



THE POSITIVE IMPLICATIONS OF RANKED CHOICE VOTING ensures that as many voters as possible help elect a candidate that they actually want, thus strengthening our democracy. So we know that “winner take all” elections skew representation, create partisan polarization, and decrease turnout and participation. Just look at the great advantages of not having a costly run-off. We could save a lot of time and our tax money. In fact, voter drop off between the first round and the run-off is astounding. There is such a thing as “voter fatigue”.

So let's eliminate “vote-splitting” and the “spoiler effect” in our politics and support strength based campaigns rather than weakness based ones. Under Ranked Choice Voting candidates know very well that if they are not your first choice, they certainly want to be your second choice, so they had better not insult your first choice or they will end up as your last choice. The ugly opponent bashing that we see in campaigns today provides no advantage in Ranked Choice Voting and could actually backfire. Best of all, deep pockets might not have so much control.

Wouldn't it be nice to have more honest and issue based elections instead of the constant opponent bashing? Many communities believe that Ranked Choice Voting will give better representation, get hate out of politics and strengthen our democracy while saving taxes.

I think more citizens would throw their hat in the ring and share their thoughts for our future if campaigning was not so nasty, don't you?

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