

RANKED CHOICE VOTING DEFINED

Q & A

What is Ranked Choice Voting?

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) allows a voter to rank a first, second, and third choice selection of candidates for a single office for certain races. An RCV Algorithm is applied which advances votes and accumulates totals. There is no Primary Election for RCV races. The RCV Elections will be held at the General Election only.

Who uses Ranked Choice Voting?

Currently:

- Pierce County, Washington
- San Francisco, California
- North Carolina
- Australia and Ireland

2009-2013 Possibly:

- Alameda County (Oakland, Berkley, San Leandro)
- Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Los Angeles, California

Who is elected using Ranked Choice Voting in Pierce County?

Starting in 2008, Pierce County will use Ranked Choice Voting to elect the following Pierce County officials:

- Executive – Partisan 2008
- Auditor – Nonpartisan 2010
- Assessor/Treasurer – Nonpartisan 2008
- Sheriff – Nonpartisan 2008
- Council Members – Partisan 2008/2010

Are all RCV races Non-Partisan?

No. County Executive and County Council offices will be partisan races. County Auditor, County Assessor/Treasurer and County Sheriff will be non-partisan races. All partisan RCV candidates will be required to obtain their party's approval before filing for candidacy. In addition, every partisan and non-partisan RCV candidate must present to the Auditor no later than the end of filing week petition statements supporting their candidacy with original signatures of no less than 25 persons to vote for the office the candidate is seeking.

Will the candidates' party affiliation be listed on the ballot?

Yes. Candidates will be listed in party order and then by lot drawing when necessary, for multiple party candidate filings.

Will voters be required to pick a party for Partisan RCV races?

No. For partisan RCV races, voters may choose candidates listed for Major Parties or Minor/Independent Parties, voting for different candidates for each choice. Voters will not be limited to one particular party for each race or ranked choice within a race

When will RCV candidates file for office?

All RCV candidates will file for office during the normal filing for office week in Washington State. RCV candidate's pamphlet statements will only appear in the General Election Voters Pamphlet.

Will the RCV ballot look different?

Yes. The RCV ballot will be an additional ballot, which will have a different look from the traditional ballot. The RCV ballot will list each RCV race three times across the ballot, giving the voter three opportunities to vote three choices in ranking order.

What happens if the voter does not vote three times?

The voter will not be required to vote in all rank choices. Only the ranks which have been voted will be counted. Under votes will be passed over when the algorithm is applied. In addition to this, votes may be advanced from right to left if under voting occurs when the RCV Algorithm is applied. If the algorithm is not required, all ranks are counted 'as is', including under votes and over votes, exactly as the voter has indicated and the votes will not be advanced in this case.

What happens if the voter chooses the same candidate for some or all choices?

Only one vote will be counted for that candidate. When and if the algorithm is applied, the ballot will be considered exhausted after the first rank is counted. All ballots with duplication voting will be exhausted after counting once. It is possible for the voter to vote for one candidate in the first rank and vote for a different candidate in the second and third rank, at which time, only the first and second ranks will be counted. The third rank will not be counted if it is a duplicate of the second rank. In this case the ballot will be considered exhausted after the second rank is counted.

When is the algorithm applied?

The RCV algorithm is applied after all votes from the first rank (choice) are counted and no candidate receives 50%+1 votes in the first rank. Votes are accumulated in the first rank, with totals identifying the candidate with the lowest votes, eliminating the votes for lowest candidate, after which the second choice votes (from those voters), are then added to the first choice votes still remaining. This pattern repeats until one candidate receives 50%+1 votes in the first rank after all votes are counted and advanced. There is no purpose in applying the algorithm before all ballots can be obtained and counted near or on certification day. The algorithm may arbitrarily be applied during any time prior to certification but the results will be considered unofficial.

During vote accumulation of all votes in the first rank, if any candidate receives 50%+1 votes in the first rank, that candidate is automatically declared the winner and the algorithm will not be applied.

It is reasonable to say that if the algorithm is not applied, the election is calculated just as a traditional election, counting only the first ranked choice, with the exception of no primary election being necessary. The winner takes all, during one election, regardless if the algorithm is applied or not.