

## Tips for Bay Area Organizations in Ranked Choice Voting Elections

FairVote California (FVCA) provides this campaign strategy guide to help organizations in ranked choice voting (RCV) elections in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro. This information is based on analyses of RCV races and conversations with organizations, candidates and campaign consultants in these cities and in other cities with RCV like Minneapolis and St. Paul, Portland, Maine, and Cambridge, Massachusetts.

FVCA is contacting organizations to provide the following information:

1. Review how ranked choice voting works
2. What it takes to win in RCV elections
3. Making organizational endorsements
4. RCV Education and Outreach
5. General RCV Advice

### **1. Key Features of RCV**

- **Ranking candidates** - Voters vote by ranking individual candidates in order of preference: 1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice, and so on. Voters are limited to three rankings in Bay Area cities, but may be allowed more in the future with new voting equipment. A voter's 2nd choice will count if their 1st choice is eliminated. A voter's 3rd choice will count if their 1st choice and 2nd choice have been eliminated.
- **Value of ranking candidates** - Voters do not have to rank three candidates, but are encouraged to do so unless they are indifferent about the remaining candidates. Ranking a lower choice candidate never counts against a top choice, but it may help defeat a voter's last choice candidate. In the Bay Area's most contested elections, about eight in ten voters rank at least two candidates.
- **One election, not two** - By allowing voters to rank candidates, RCV can combine two rounds of voting into a single "instant runoff" election. Voters only have to make one trip to the polls, when turnout is highest, more diverse, and representative of the community. Organizations can maximize their resources and focus on one election instead of two.
- **#1 vote matters most, but so do backup choices** - A voter's #1 ranking is most important, but #2 and #3 rankings can make a difference in the final head-to-head comparison between the strongest candidates. If a candidate has too few votes to win, their base of supporters will be able to maximize their vote by helping another candidate.
- **No "vote splitting"** - Multiple candidates from the same community can run without worry of the "spoiler effect" as long as like-minded voters rank candidates in order of choice.

## **2. What it Takes to Win Under RCV**

Winning a RCV election outright requires that a candidate receive a majority (at least 50% +1) of valid votes. If no candidate is the first choice of a majority, an “instant” runoff is triggered – instant in that the voters do not need to return to the polls to determine the winner.

With RCV, every voter gets one vote – and no more. Some have suggested that RCV gives some voters two votes -- this is NOT TRUE. A voter never has their ballot count for more than one candidates at a time. A voter’s ballot will only count for a first choice if that candidate still has a chance to win. Your vote will count for a lower choice if your top-ranked candidates have lost.

In a close RCV contest, a candidate needs to do well in first choices and then receive additional votes from being a second or third choice of voters who preferred defeated candidates. We encourage all candidates to reach out to various communities of voters to secure their support as a second or third choice. Evidence suggests that the best way to accomplish that goal is direct voter contact -- door-knocking, phone banking, community meetings, and other tactics where voters build relationships with the candidate.

A candidate must answer the following questions:

- 1) “How can I maximize my first choices?” and,
- 2) “How can I be the second and third choices of people who rank other candidates first?”

Here’s what Minneapolis 4th Ward Councilmember Phillipe Cunningham said in a press conference about his 2017 race, when he earned a victory by winning with far more second and third support support from backers of defeated candidates:

*“My favorite thing about ranked choice voting is that it allowed me to build relationships across bases. It wasn’t just “either or.” Ranked choice voting also allowed my campaign, for us, to be able to remain rooted in our values. From day one, I wanted my campaign to demonstrate the type of Councilmember that I will be. That is, to operate with integrity and be collaborative. Rather than getting caught up in the divisiveness that we typically see in traditional elections, I was able to build power and relationships across differences all across the Ward. We have a really diverse Ward in the 4th Ward.”*

## **3. Making Organizational Endorsements**

**Organizations should assess how much a candidate aligns with their platform, mission and values, and rank acceptable candidates.** This provides an opportunity for groups to educate their community on the RCV election and encourages them to vote in a way that meets their self interest.

- Organizations may wish to endorse only one candidate or may wish to endorse a slate consisting of a 1st choice, a 2nd choice, and a 3rd choice.
- You can use your current endorsement process to make the 1st choice and then conduct another process to extend your endorsement to 2nd and 3rd choices.
- Organizations may use ranked choice voting to endorse a candidate or a slate of candidates -- providing members with a ranked ballot gives the organization more influence over how its members rank all the way down the ballot.

Common practices for organizations to assess candidates include:

- A questionnaire for candidates

- Some organizations utilize a review process in assessing responses of candidates.
- Candidate forum
- Organizational poll

#### **4. RCV Education and Outreach**

In addition to organizational endorsements, providing RCV education to a community is vital to a successful election. FairVote California has materials available on how RCV works in English, Spanish, and Chinese. Also, both election offices of San Francisco and Alameda County provide informational materials on RCV and sample ballots. Links to all of these materials are available online at [FairVoteCA.org](http://FairVoteCA.org).

If your organization would like a training on RCV, contact us at [info@fairvoteca.org](mailto:info@fairvoteca.org).

#### **5. General RCV Advice**

The candidate with the most first choices usually wins. Candidates need first choices most of all, so don't just say "Vote for (Candidate X)." Instead, clarify that you are seeking a first choice vote for your candidate, and would still appreciate their support as a second or third choice when they decide to back someone else.

**KEY POINT: With RCV in a single-seat contest, it's impossible for a candidate to win with just second-choices votes even if every single voter ranks that candidate second.**

Use phrasing like "Make Candidate X your first choice for [office]," or "Give your first choice to Candidate X."

Even if you think your candidate could win by receiving the winning threshold of the first choices, pursue second and third choices by reaching out to supporters of other candidates to secure a broad base of support to win.

**KEY POINT: "Bullet Voting" Won't Help, But Suggesting It May Make Your Candidate Lose**

Some organizations mistakenly believe that if voters rank a second or third choice, this might somehow dilute the strength of that voter's first preference or somehow hurt the chances of that favorite candidate getting elected. That dynamic can occur in a traditional at-large election where more than one candidate wins, but it is **not** the case with ranked voting. Under RCV, ranking backup choices can never hurt the chances of a voter's first choice.

If a voter has ranked a first choice, that ballot will **only** count as a vote for that choice and provide no benefit to any other candidate **as long as that candidate still in the running**. The backup choices marked on a ballot are only considered if a voter's first-choice candidate have been eliminated and are not in the RCV runoffs. If a candidate been eliminated, it can't help or hurt candidates if a supporters' ballots indicate backup choices for the RCV count.

If your campaign urges your supporters not to rank alternate choices, it will run the risk of discouraging backers of other candidates to not rank your candidate as a backup choice as well.

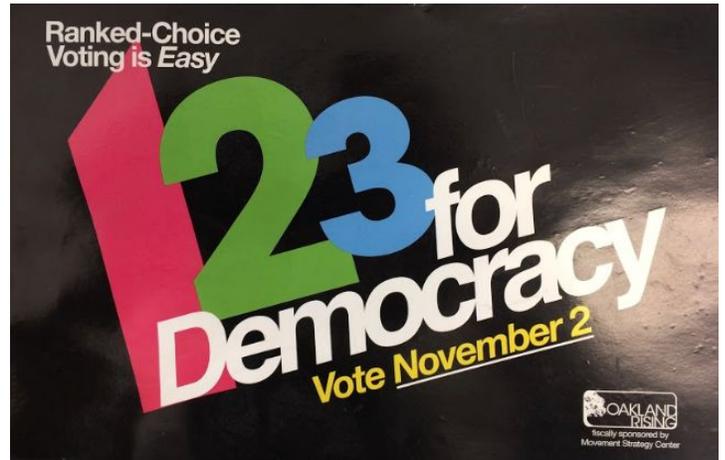
Some campaigns see strategic value in actively encouraging voters to rank a certain other candidate second – as a way of suggesting that supporters of that candidate might be wise to rank your candidate as their second choice. But even then, it is wise to find connection with backers of all candidates who may be eliminated and have their votes go to a backup choice.

### **Use the Language of Ranked Choice Voting in Your Campaign Materials**

In cities where RCV is used, campaign materials specifically ask people for their first-choice vote.

You want people to rank your candidate first, and if they won't do that, to rank your candidate second. "Can I count on your first-choice vote? If you're committed to another candidate, please consider giving [Candidate X] your second choice."

If you think there is a chance there will no majority winner from first choices alone, consider what your organization shares in common with other voting bases and the messages that might appeal to those voters.



### **RCV Messaging and Your Campaign Materials, Website, and Social Media**

In addition to your campaign materials, your website and social media channels are an easy place to include an explanation of RCV to make sure your organization understands the importance of ranking a vote. Your website may already include an endorsement list and should include a quick explanation of RCV.

***KEY TIP: Have FairVote California host a fun mock ranked choice voting election at your campaign event***



If you want to have your organizational members practice ranked choice voting, consider holding a RCV election at your next event! We can agree on what to vote on beforehand (best appetizer, best dessert, etc.). This provides a fun activity for attendees and an opportunity to make sure your community understand RCV. If you have an event, contact us at [pedro@fairvote.org](mailto:pedro@fairvote.org).

Sample Campaign Materials

## AFRICAN AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CLUB OFFICIAL NOVEMBER 2011 ELECTION ENDORSEMENTS

### FOR MAYOR



1st Choice: Herrera      Duffy      Yee

### FOR DISTRICT ATTORNEY



1st Choice: Bock      Onek      Gascón

### FOR SHERIFF



1st Choice: Mirkarimi      Cunnie      Miyamoto

NOTICE TO VOTERS: THIS DOCUMENT WAS PREPARED BY THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN DEMOCRATIC CLUB, NOT AN OFFICIAL POLITICAL PARTY ORGANIZATION. Appearance in this mailer does not necessarily imply endorsement of others in this mailer, nor does it imply endorsement of, or opposition to, any issues set forth in this mailer. Appearance in this mailer is paid for and authorized by each candidate and ballot measure designated by an \*. FFPC ID#981476

### MAYORAL ENDORSEMENTS

#1 DENNIS HERRERA \*

#2 BEVAN DUFTY \*

#3 LELAND YEE

### DISTRICT ATTORNEY ENDORSEMENTS

#1 SHARMIN BOCK \*

#2 DAVID ONEK

#3 GEORGE GASCÓN

### SHERIFF ENDORSEMENTS

#1 ROSS MIRKARIMI \*

#2 CHRIS CUNNIE

#3 PAUL MIYAMOTO

### BALLOT MEASURES

PROP A: Repair and rebuild San Francisco schools.*	YES
PROP B: Road Repaving and Street Safety Bonds*	YES
PROP C: Sensible pension reform*	YES
PROP D: Anti-worker plan backed by Republicans*	NO
PROP E: Allow modification of voter ordinances	NO
PROP F: Bureaucratic campaign rules	NO
PROP G: San Francisco sales tax	YES
PROP H: Neighborhood schools	YES

## VOTE NOVEMBER 8<sup>TH</sup>

## VOTE NOV 7th - MINNEAPOLIS PARK BOARD AT-LARGE - DFL ENDORSED

# RUSS HENRY | LONDEL FRENCH | DEVIN HOGAN

### YOUR TEAM FOR GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD PARKS FOR EVERYONE IN MINNEAPOLIS

- Expand and increase **access to youth programming** in our neighborhood parks.
- Improve **ecological systems management** to reverse climate change in our parks.
- Ensure **inclusive Park Board leadership** to reflect our values and make our parks trans friendly and accessible to all.

Parks uplift people's lives - everyone must have equal access to the health, happiness, and community growing in our parks.

- Russ Henry

As a career educator, I believe the MPRB must focus on bringing people together in every neighborhood park.

- Londel French

Recreation is equity. Partner with the Minneapolis Public Schools to build new opportunities for all our kids and families to succeed."

- Devin Hogan



PREPARED & PAID FOR BY:  
 RUSS HENRY FOR PARKS 4549 341ST AVE S, MPLS 55406  
 LONDEL FRENCH FOR PARKS 3004 18TH AVE S, MPLS 55417  
 DEVIN FOR PARKS 3404 NICOLLET AVE #4, MPLS 55408

✓ Rank ALL THREE Nov 7

[RUSSHENRYFORPARKS.COM](http://RUSSHENRYFORPARKS.COM) | [LONDELFRENCHFORPARKS.COM](http://LONDELFRENCHFORPARKS.COM) | [DEVINFORPARKS.COM](http://DEVINFORPARKS.COM)

# PHIL TING IS THE FIRST CHOICE...

BUT USE ALL OF YOUR VOTES THIS ELECTION IN RANKED CHOICE VOTING

FIRST CHOICE PRIMERA SELECCIÓN 第一選擇	SECOND CHOICE SEGUNDA SELECCIÓN 第二選擇	THIRD CHOICE TERCERA SELECCIÓN 第三選擇
 <p><b>PHIL TING</b> FOR ASSESSOR</p> <p><b>#1</b> Phil Ting is the best choice for Assessor. He is the only candidate who has hands-on experience making complex real estate assessments. He has a proven track record of streamlining government and reforming bureaucracies.</p>	 <p><b>RONALD CHUN</b></p> <p><b>#2</b> Ron Chun ran for Assessor and lost. He was Doris Ward's Deputy Assessor for six months. He owns a home in Palo Alto where his family lives but bought an apartment in San Francisco so he could run for this office.</p>	 <p><b>GERARDO SANDOVAL</b></p> <p><b>#3</b> Sandoval says he's the best candidate to overturn Prop 13. According to the San Francisco Chronicle, "[Sandoval]... does not have the requisite background for this position."</p>