

Tips for Bay Area Candidates in Ranked Choice Voting Elections

FairVote California (FVCA) provides this campaign strategy guide to help candidates running 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 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 all of the candidate campaigns to provide the following information:

1. A review of how ranked choice voting works
2. What it takes to win in RCV elections
3. General candidate advice

Key Features of RCV

- **Ranking candidates** - Voters vote by ranking individual candidates in order of preference: 1st choice, 2nd choice, 3rd choice. 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 three in four voters rank three candidates; nearly eight in ten will rank at least two.
- **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, and candidates can focus on campaigning for one election instead of two. With one general election, voter turnout will be higher, more representative, and diverse.
- **Getting a #1 vote matters most, but so do backup choices** - Earning a voter's #1 ranking is most important, but earning a #2 and #3 ranking can make a difference in the final head-to-head comparison between the strongest candidates. If a candidate has too few votes to stand a chance, the vote will be used to help that voter's next choice.
- **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.

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 candidate 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.

As a candidate seeking to win, two important questions to ask yourself are:

- 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-ranked 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.”

General Candidate Advice

The candidate with the most first choices usually wins. You need first choices most of all, so don’t just say “Vote for Me (Candidate X).” Instead, clarify that you would most like to be a first choice even though you would still appreciate their support as a second or third 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 you 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 You Win, But Suggesting It May Make You Lose

Some candidates mistakenly believe that if their supporters 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 you first, that ballot will **only** count as a vote for you and provide no benefit to any other candidate **as long as you’re still in the running**. The backup choices marked on a ballot are only considered if you, as their first-choice candidate, have been eliminated and are not in the RCV runoffs. If you’ve been eliminated, it can’t help or hurt you if your supporters’ ballots indicate backup choices for the RCV count.

If your campaign urges your supporters not to rank alternate choices, you run the risk of discouraging backers of other candidates to not rank you 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 you 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.



Ranked Choice Voting Ballot

Rank your first, second, and third choice candidates in the columns below. One to be elected.

1 FIRST CHOICE	2 SECOND CHOICE	3 THIRD CHOICE
<small>Vote for One</small>	<small>Vote for One: Must be different than your first choice</small>	<small>Vote for One: Must be different than your first and second choices</small>
YOUR NAME ←	YOUR NAME ←	YOUR NAME ←
CANDIDATE B ←	CANDIDATE B ←	CANDIDATE B ←
CANDIDATE C ←	CANDIDATE C ←	CANDIDATE C ←

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. Below is an example with actual rankings displayed -- something you should only do if you have endorsed other candidates.

You want people to rank you #1, and if they won’t do that, to rank you #2. “Can I count on your first-choice vote? If you’re committed to another candidate, please consider giving me your second choice.”

RCV also provides an opportunity to gain support from a voter from a second conversation who has previously confirmed their first choice support for a different candidate. If you think

there is a chance there will no majority winner from first choices alone, consider what you share in common with any of your opponents and what messages might appeal to their supporters. If you have tracked which voters were undecided on a second choice in your first conversation, this is a valuable group to prioritize reaching out to again.

You may wish to publicly disclose your personal #2 and #3 rankings, or even explicitly ask supporters of those candidates to rank you #2 or #3. Endorsing organizations commonly indicate their #1, #2, and #3 rankings.

When listing endorsements, it is common and fair practice to accurately cite the endorsement ranking.

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

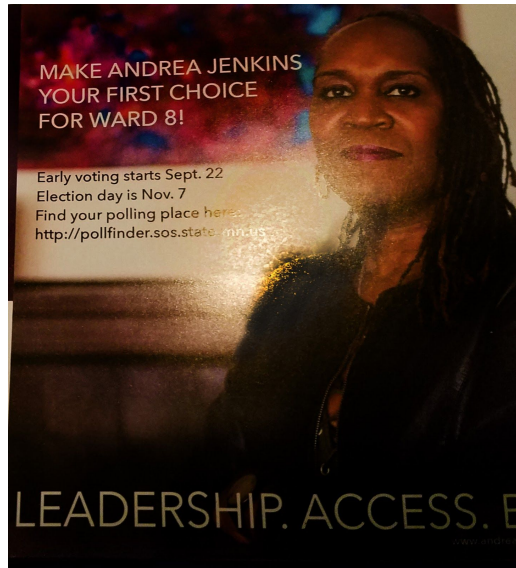
In addition to your campaign materials, your website and social media channels are an easy place to include an explanation of RCV to make sure your supporters understand the importance of giving you their first choice vote. Your website may already include other resources on voting information for your supporters and a quick explanation of RCV is a useful addition to this.

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



If you want to have your supporters practice ranked choice voting, consider holding a RCV election at your next candidate 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 supporters understand RCV. If you have an event, contact us at pedro@fairvote.org.

Sample Campaign Materials



Make Steve Fletcher your first choice vote for City Council Ward 3!

- ✓ Vote early in person at 217 S. Third Street - Downtown Minneapolis.
- ✓ Vote early by mail.
- ✓ Vote on Election Day, Tuesday November 7th. Polls are open from 7 am - 8 pm.

To make sure you're registered at your current address, find your polling place, and/or check out a sample ballot visit: <http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/>

As the DFL-endorsed choice for City Council, Steve will:

- Increase the supply of affordable housing in our city.
- Protect our air and water, and resist catastrophic climate change.
- Advocate for workers, as he has for a \$15 minimum wage, and earned safe and sick time.
- Advance racial justice, and work to overcome structural inequity in our city.
- Foster a vibrant local economy where workers and small businesses can prosper.
- Align policing with our city's values and expectations, focused on de-escalation and safety.

To talk to Steve about your vision for the 3rd Ward call (612) 293-8683, e-mail info@stevefletcher.org or visit www.stevefletcher.org

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>PHIL TING FOR ASSESSOR</p> <p>#1 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>RONALD CHUN</p> <p>#2 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>GERARDO SANDOVAL</p> <p>#3 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>