



Ranked Choice Voting for Local, Nonpartisan Elections

Background:

As we increasingly see local nonpartisan elections with many candidates on the ballot, our current method of voting often produces a nominee without broad voter support. Where used, Ranked Choice Voting (also known as Instant Runoff Voting) allows voters to cast meaningful votes that produce winners while avoiding the time and expense of runoff elections even when winning with a majority of votes cast is required.

Solution:

Enable local governments or school districts to use Ranked Choice Voting in their elections. By a majority vote, any local governing body could decide to conduct their elections using Ranked Choice Voting. The Secretary of State shall prescribe procedures to allow for an election of an office requiring a majority vote using a preferential voting system.

Instant runoff voting solves several problems:

- Enables the Texas Legislature to provide a **pilot program** that would not mandate adoption of a new way of voting for all jurisdictions.
- Gives any city, school district, or county that believes that Ranked Choice Voting would improve its nonpartisan elections an **opportunity to adopt** it. Since the bill allows localities to opt in, it has **no effect whatsoever on communities that prefer the status quo**.
- Provides a **standard set of rules** for implementation of Ranked Choice Voting.
- **Reduces costs** for election administrators and for candidates by eliminating the need for runoff elections.
- Ensures that **participation does not drop off** between the general election and the runoff.
- **Provides more choice** as more candidates can compete without fear of splitting the vote among similar candidates resulting in the election of someone who the majority does not support.
- **Candidates win with broader support** as they work to attract voters for whom they may not be their first choice.
- **Frees voters to vote their true preference** without fear of wasting their vote in order to keep a candidate they like least from winning.
- **Increases turnout** as more voters cast ballots because they feel their vote is more effective.
- **Reduces negative campaigning** since candidates have reason to be more civil and issue focused as they seek to gain second or third place votes.
- **Ensures that votes count** if people vote early or by mail even if some candidates drop out before election day.

Instant Runoff Voting for nonpartisan municipal and school district elections at the option of the local jurisdiction can be implemented by a legislative change to the Texas Election Code.