



RANKED CHOICE VOTING EXPLAINED

Why Talk About Ranked Choice Voting?

The Fort Collins City Council referred a ballot measure to the November election which would amend the city charter. Amendment 3 proposes changing the City of Fort Collins' election process from its current straightforward and accessible system to a complex and exclusive vote-by-survey election process known as ranked choice voting. The amendment would also provide the Fort Collins City Council with the power to enact unilateral limitations on the city election process.

Ranked choice voting is a complicated voting method which forces voters to rate all candidates on a sliding preference scale from the candidate they like best to the one they like least—like an opinion poll. The long-standing democratic principle of “*one person, one vote*” representative government is eliminated. Citizens would not have the ability to vote directly for the candidate they want to represent them in our city government. Fort Collins voters overwhelmingly rejected ranked choice voting in 2011 by over 60%.

How Does Ranked Choice Voting Work?

Voters rank candidates from a scale of 1 (first choice) to 4, 5, 6, etc. (last choice). Voters do not have to rank all candidates, but that could result in the voter's ballot being tossed out and excluded from the final iteration of the election. Ranked choice voting requires that a candidate wins by a majority, so if an election had 1000 votes counted, a majority winner would need to receive 501+ votes. If a majority winner is not achieved, then the candidate with the lowest number of first place votes is eliminated and his votes are reallocated to the second-choice selections.

The process continues until a 'majority' winner is reached. It's important to note, however, that the term 'majority' applies to the number of votes still included in the election process. With RCV, sometimes a voter's vote is eliminated because of ballot marking mistakes due to process confusion or by only ranking candidates who have been eliminated from the election. When ballots are eliminated, the total number of votes subsequently changes, resulting in a new denominator for the majority calculation.

For instance, an election in which 1000 votes were cast, but a majority winner wasn't declared in the first round (majority = 501), ballots could be eliminated that round. Thus, the vote total goes from 1000 votes to 1000 minus the number of votes discarded. In this example, if 100 votes were discarded, the new total number of votes would be 900, which then brings the majority requirement from the previous 501 to 451. This process is followed until a 'majority' winner is reached.