Ranked Choice Voting

Ranked choice voting (also known as instant runoff voting) is a system of voting designed to select the most preferable candidate from a large field of candidates. As a voter, this method allows you to list three candidates, in order of your preference. As the votes are counted, a series of instant runoffs will sort through candidates until one has a majority of the votes (through some combination of first-, second-, or third-place votes).

<insert middle piece / step explanation here>

Ranked choice voting can enable a candidate with less initial support to win election over a candidate with more first-place votes.

Let’s imagine a 4-person race, with first-place tallies coming in as follows:

A: 25%

B: 20%

C: 45%

D: 10%

Since no candidate has a majority of the votes, D gets eliminated, and everyone who listed D in first-place gets their second-place vote counted. Let’s imagine 80% of D’s voters listed B as their second choice B, and the rest listed A:

A: 27%

B: 28%

C: 45%

Now, A is actually behind B, so A gets eliminated. Let’s imagine 85% of A’s voters also listed B as their second choice (or, of the ones carried over from D, as their third choice):

B: 51%

C: 49%

Person B – who was originally the third-most popular candidate – would actually win the election in this scenario, because most voters prefer B over C. The ranked choice voting system worked to find the most preferable candidate overall.

Additional Resources:

City of Berkeley Ranked-Choice Voting page: http://www.ci.berkeley.ca.us/rcv/

Alameda County Ranked Choice Voting FAQ: https://www.acgov.org/rov/rcv/faq.htm

Wikipedia page on Instant Runoff Voting: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Instant-runoff_voting>