

Issue: Ranked Choice Voting

Ranked Choice Voting

How It Works and Why Every State Should Use It

The Problem

In traditional voting, candidates can win elections with a plurality of votes—meaning they get more votes than any other candidate—but without receiving more than half the votes. Candidates for general elections are selected in primary elections that often have very low turnout. Since voters in primary elections tend to be more partisan than general election voters, this can skew the outcome away from what the majority of voters actually desires. Traditional voting can result in elected officials who do not accurately reflect the will of the voters, and voters understandably feel like they are not being heard.

Why Ranked Choice Voting is Better

In ranked choice voting, also called instant runoff, voters rank their preferences. Their first-choice candidate may not win, but possibly another of their preferred candidates will.

Voters do not have to consider electability; they can rank a long-shot candidate first without “throwing away” their vote because their second-choice candidate will get the voter’s vote if their first-choice candidate is eliminated.

Ranked choice voting results in more moderate candidates.

It encourages more civil campaigning because candidates are also vying to be the second and third choice of voters.

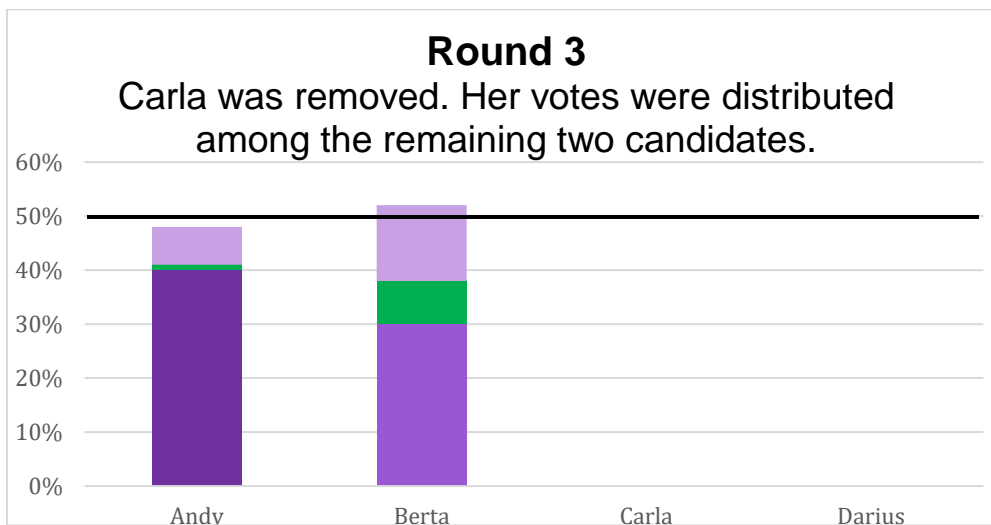
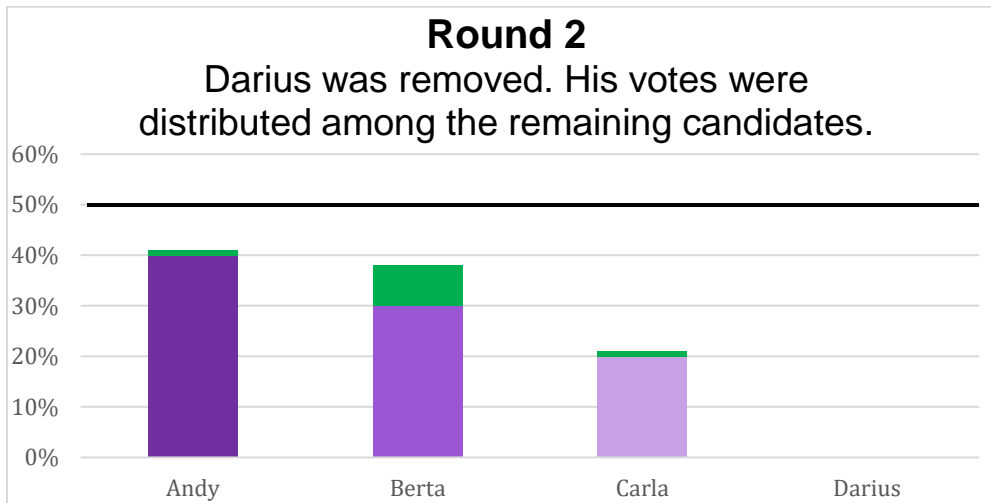
Ranked choice voting even saves money because there is no need for primary elections.

How Ranked Choice Voting Works

Instead of voting for just one candidate, voters rank their preferences among several candidates. If no candidate reaches a threshold of 50%, the candidate receiving the fewest votes is removed from contention. In the second round, the second-choice votes of those voters who voted for the eliminated candidate are distributed among the remaining candidates. Subsequent rounds of candidate elimination continue until one candidate reaches the threshold of 50% plus 1 vote. Even if an election has numerous candidates, voters are generally given the option to rank only a specific number of candidates.

The example on the next page was inspired by a similar example from Fair Vote. It shows how the person who would have won in plurality voting comes in second when ranked choice voting is used.

You can read more details about ranked choice voting here <https://fairvote.org/our-reforms/ranked-choice-voting/> and here <https://www.rankedyote.co/guides/understanding-ranked-choice-voting/pros-and-cons-of-rcv>.



Berta wins after reaching the 50% threshold. Most of Carla's and Darius's voters preferred her as their second or third choice.