



Lessons from 3 IRV Elections

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RCV = Ranked Choice Voting

IRV = Instant-Runoff Voting (single-winner form of RCV)

LWVCO Caucus, May 19, 2023

Which form of RCV?

There are many different forms of ranked voting.

Their ballots are identical!

The tabulation is different.

Some forms of ranked voting are in the RCV umbrella. Others are not.

Right now, we will focus on

Instant-Runoff Voting (IRV)

**the most widely used
single-winner form of RCV**

1975 Cambridge Ballot -- Previous Way to Rank Candidates

DIRECTIONS TO VOTERS	
DO NOT USE X MARKS.	
Mark your choices with NUMBERS only.	
Put the figure 1 opposite your first choice, the figure 2 opposite your second choice, the figure 3 opposite your third choice, and so on. You may mark as many choices as you please.	
Do not put the same figure opposite more than one name. If you spoil this ballot, return it for cancellation to the election officer in charge of the ballots and get another from him.	
SCHOOL COMMITTEE For Term of Two Years	
SARA MAE BERMAN, 23 Fayette Street	
STEPHEN D. BUCKLEY, 147 Prospect Street	
A. GEORGE CATAVOLO, 202 Elm Street	
RALPH T. CENTANNI, 60 Sixth Street	
PRISCILLA ELLIS, 24 Francis Avenue	
DONALD A. FANTINI, 15 Day Street	
JAMES F. FITZGERALD, 107 Oak Street	

Ranked Voting Ballot

Rank candidates in order of preference.

Mark no more than one box in any column or row

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Alba Abar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Bill Boyd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cora Carr	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do Dien	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Everd Estay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

IRV Tabulation – Rd 1

For Instant-Runoff Voting tabulation, count 1st choices as votes.
A candidate with more than half the votes wins so subsequent rounds are unnecessary – defaults to Plurality Voting.

Mark no more than one box in any column or row

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Alba Abar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				
Bill Boyd	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Cora Carr	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Do Dien	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Everd Estay	<input type="checkbox"/>				

Transferring votes in IRV

If no candidate wins in the first IRV round, eliminate the lowest vote-getter and transfer votes from the eliminated candidate to next highest continuing candidate on each ballot. (If no more rankings on the ballot, then the ballot is exhausted.) Repeat until 1 candidate has more votes than the combined vote totals of the other continuing candidates.

Mark no more than one box in any column or row

	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice	4 th choice	5 th choice
Ally Alcar	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Bill Boyd	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
Cora Carr	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Do Dien	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			
Everd Estay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			

Lessons from Three High-Profile IRV Elections

**Maine 2020
New York City 2021
Alaska 2022 Aug**

Maine 2020 - US Senate

counting only #1 rankings

Susan Collins	417,645	51%
Sara Gideon	347,223	42%
Lisa Savage	40,579	5%
Max Linn	13,508	2%

Lesson from Maine 2020

**Only your first choice is
guaranteed to be
counted in IRV**

IRV may revert to Plurality

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 1

Eric Adams	288,654	31%
Maya Wiley	199,778	21%
Kathryn Garcia	183,433	20%
Andrew Yang	114,639	12%
Scott Stringer	51,534	5%
Dianne Morales	26,374	3%
Raymond McGuire	25,074	3%
Shaun Donovan	23,074	2%
5 Other Declared Candidates	23,572	3%
Undeclared Write-Ins – elimin	1,567	0%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 2

Eric Adams	288,854	31%
Maya Wiley	199,844	21%
Kathryn Garcia	183,541	20%
Andrew Yang	114,810	12%
Scott Stringer	51,606	6%
Dianne Morales	26,413	3%
Raymond McGuire	25,104	3%
Shaun Donovan	23,096	2%
5 Other Declared Candidates	23,680	3%
Exhausted	751	0%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 3

Eric Adams	289,304	31%
Maya Wiley	200,167	21%
Kathryn Garcia	183,637	20%
Andrew Yang	115,011	12%
Scott Stringer	51,707	6%
Dianne Morales	26,524	3%
Raymond McGuire	25,250	3%
Shaun Donovan	23,221	2%
Other Decl Candidates - elimin	21,674	2%
Exhausted	1,204	0%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 4

Eric Adams	291,047	31%
Maya Wiley	204,628	22%
Kathryn Garcia	185,693	20%
Andrew Yang	117,513	13%
Scott Stringer	53,351	6%
Dianne Morales	30,032	3%
Raymond McGuire	26,187	3%
Shaun Donovan – elimin	23,945	3%
Other Decl Candidates	0	0%
Exhausted	5,303	1%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 5

Eric Adams	295,030	31%
Maya Wiley	207,709	22%
Kathryn Garcia	190,813	20%
Andrew Yang	121,085	13%
Scott Stringer – elimin	56,465	6%
Dianne Morales – elimin	30,803	3%
Raymond McGuire – elimin	27,752	3%
Shaun Donovan	0	0%
Other Decl Candidates	0	0%
Exhausted	8,042	1%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 6

Eric Adams	316,234	34%
Maya Wiley	237,621	25%
Kathryn Garcia	222,389	24%
Andrew Yang - elimin	135,096	14%
Other Decl Candidates	0	0%
Exhausted	26,359	3%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 7

Eric Adams	353,664	38%
Maya Wiley – elimin	253,094	27%
Kathryn Garcia	265,461	28%
Andrew Yang	0	0%
Other Decl Candidates	0	0%
Exhausted	65,480	7%
Total	937,699	100%

NYC 2021 – Mayor

Democratic Primary – Rd 8

Eric Adams – winner	403,333	43%
Maya Wiley	0	0%
Kathryn Garcia	394,907	42%
Andrew Yang	0	0%
Other Decl Candidates	0	0%
Exhausted	139,459	15%
Total	937,699	100%

Lesson from NYC 2021

**You can win an IRV
election with less than a
majority of the votes**

Critics call this a “false majority”

Alaska 2022 – US House

Special 4-Mth-Term Election – Rd 1

Mary Peltola (D)	75,799	40%
Sarah Palin (R)	58,973	31%
Nick Begich (R) - elimin	53,810	29%
Total	188,582	100%

This chart ignores the small number of write-in votes.

Alaska 2022 – US House

Special 4-Mth-Term Election – Rd 2

Mary Peltola – winner	91,266	48%
Sarah Palin	86,026	46%
Nick Begich	0	0%
Exhausted	11,290	6%
Total	188,582	100%

Peltola beats Palin in a head-to-head runoff

Alaska US House Aug '22

9 Possible Rankings

# Ballots	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
27,053	Begich	Palin	Peltola
15,467	Begich	Peltola	Palin
11,290	Begich	--	--
58,973	Palin	Begich	Peltola
	Palin	Peltola	Begich
	Palin	--	--
75,799	Peltola	Begich	Palin
	Peltola	Palin	Begich
	Peltola	--	--

Alaska US House Aug '22

Begich **47%** vs Peltola 42%

# Ballots	%	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
53,810	29%	Begich	Palin	Peltola
		Begich	Peltola	Palin
		Begich	--	--
34,049	18%	Palin	Begich	Peltola
3,652	2%	Palin	Peltola	Begich
n/a	n/a	Palin	--	--
75,799	40%	Peltola	Begich	Palin
		Peltola	Palin	Begich
		Peltola	--	--

Alaska US House Aug '22

Begich **54%** vs Palin 33%

# Ballots	%	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
53,810	29%	Begich	Palin	Peltola
		Begich	Peltola	Palin
		Begich	--	--
58,973	31%	Palin	Begich	Peltola
		Palin	Peltola	Begich
		Palin	--	--
47,407	25%	Peltola	Begich	Palin
4,645	2%	Peltola	Palin	Begich
n/a	n/a	Peltola	--	--

Alaska US House Aug '22

All the Ranking Data

# Ballots	%	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
27,053	14%	Begich	Palin	Peltola
15,467	8%	Begich	Peltola	Palin
11,290	6%	Begich	--	--
34,049	18%	Palin	Begich	Peltola
3,652	2%	Palin	Peltola	Begich
21,272	11%	Palin	--	--
47,407	25%	Peltola	Begich	Palin
4,645	2%	Peltola	Palin	Begich
23,747	13%	Peltola	--	--

**Alaska's 2022
Special US House Race
experienced a
“Center Squeeze”**

Peltola

Left

Begich

Center

Palin

Right

Begich beats **Palin**

Begich beats **Peltola**

Peltola beats **Palin**

but **Begich** lost
because of the
“Center Squeeze”

**A candidate who beats all
the other candidates
head-to-head is considered
the Condorcet or “correct”
winner**

**Begich is the Condorcet winner
Palin is the Condorcet loser**

Lesson from Alaska 2022

**IRV does not always
elect the “correct”
winner**

Some RCV Ranked Voting Methods

Instant-Runoff Voting – best known

Single Transferable Vote – proportional

Boulder 1917-47; Cambridge since 1941;
Albany, CA beginning 2022

Preferential Block Voting – “anti-democratic”

some Utah towns since 2019

15% Threshold Proportional Allocation

for some presidential primaries

Bottoms-Up RCV – 2 or more “winners”

competing with Approval Voting in Seattle 2022

Non-RCV Ranked Voting Methods

Borda Count – each ranking has a point value
various organizations and institutions and overseas

Bucklin Voting (aka Grand Junction System)
in more than 60 cities in the 20th century

Coombs' Rule – look at lowest rankings
a variant is used in the “Survivor” reality TV program

Count the Rankings
Microsoft 365's Ranking form