

Stopping Rank Choice Voting In Arizona

A coalition of liberal groups are currently working on a ballot initiative to undo our system of voting that has existed since the founding of our nation— one voter casting one vote for one candidate—with a scheme called Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). This new process would undermine the fundamental principle of one person, one vote that determines the winner based on who receives the most votes with a confusing, time-consuming ranking system that will disenfranchise voters and empower out of state special interest groups.

Ranked Choice Voting is Wrong for Voters

- Undermines the fundamental principle of “one person, one vote.”
- Disenfranchises voters by “exhausting” their ballots when the candidate they voted for did not receive enough votes.
- RCV is confusing and results in decreased voter participation.
- Exposes voters to having their vote rejected if they make simple mistakes or errors when “ranking” several candidates.
- Manufactures a “false majority” where the candidate in the final round is elected by a minority of voters.
- Unfairly allows some voters’ ballots to be given more weight than other voters whose ballots are not counted in subsequent instant run-offs.
- Fabricates a false “choice” for voters by forcing them to consider an infinite number of hypothetical scenarios while depriving them of the actual ability to choose their candidate in a real, known run-off.
- Will add weeks (if not months) to the ballot tabulation process, further delaying the results of our election.
- Obscures election results by making them non-observable and therefore non-transparent, undermining the confidence of election results.
- Violates Article 7, Section 7 of the Arizona Constitution that states, “In all elections held by the people in this state, the person, or persons, receiving the highest number of legal votes shall be declared elected.” An allowance for run-off elections has been tried in Arizona once before resulting in a complete electoral disaster and then an immediate and decisive reversal by voters.

Arizonans tried runoffs before, and quickly rejected them.

From the beginning of elections in the United States, and the beginning of elections in the state of Arizona, we have had a simple system relying on a foundational principle: one person, one vote. Recently, partisans with desired electoral outcomes have been sweeping the nation with

proposals to upend this simple and understood method of selecting our leaders and replace it with a complicated, fault-filled system known as “Ranked Choice Voting”.

Sold as the solution to all our political woes, in reality it leaves voters confused, delays election results, and leads to thousands of voters being disenfranchised when their ballots are “exhausted” prior to the last “instant run-off.”

The push is being brought here to Arizona too, but this isn’t the first time an effort has been made to “reform” our elections.

In 1988, after a rare Gubernatorial election with a popular independent candidate resulting in the election of a Governor with just under 40% of the vote, who was subsequently impeached, the legislature referred to the voters a measure to amend the constitution to require a majority vote to elect candidates to executive offices in Arizona.

The voters approved it, as Prop 105, by a vote of 56.4%-43.6%. Just two years later, the result was the first Gubernatorial runoff election in Arizona history. It was a disaster. So bad in fact, that legislators quickly referred to the voters an amendment to the constitution to undo what they had just done.

It turns out the voters agreed with lawmakers, approving in 1992 as Prop 100 the repeal of the runoff system, this time by an overwhelming margin of 67%-33%.

This has two important implications:

1. Arizona voters already gave run-off elections a chance and were quick and decisive in regretting and rejecting it just a few years later.
2. It’s clear that any kind of run-off election, including RCV’s “instantaneous run-off” model, is unconstitutional. That’s why voters had to amend the constitution in 1988 to allow it, and why in 1992 they repealed their changes, reverting the constitution back to one ensuring the candidate with the “highest number of votes” is declared elected.

Free Enterprise Club Legislative Response to Rank Choice Voting

HB 2552 Rep. Austin Smith (voting; elections; tally; prohibition)—Would enshrine in statute the requirement that the candidate that receives the highest number of votes is declared the winner and ensures that cities, towns, and counties are prohibited from adopting a Rank Choice Voting system in Arizona.

HCR 2033 Rep. Austin Smith (primary elections; eligible candidates)—A proposed Constitutional amendment that guarantees that any recognized political party in the state of Arizona has the right to nominate a candidate to appear on a general election ballot for any office on the ballot. This proposed measure would render any RCV, Jungle primary system or blend of the two systems (the Alaska Model) unconstitutional.