

Instant Runoff voting or Ranked Choice Voting: Reading Materials prepared for the Work-group of the Portland City Charter Commission for January 14, 2009:  
(by Elizabeth Tarasevich)

**City of Burlington, VT:** Burlington Votes:

<http://www.burlingtonvotes.org/>

**Web page link:** it records election results including Mayoral elections subject to Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) as implemented by the City of Burlington in 2006. It includes a FAQ on IRV, as well as a flash animation on how IRV works (available in Micromedia Flash, accessed here:  
<http://www.burlingtonvotes.org/flash/?Action=Animate> )

**City of Minneapolis, MN:** Ranked Choice Voting Information:

<http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/elections/>

**Web page link:** it provides information on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as passed in the City of Minneapolis in 2006. It includes a link to the City Resolution (in PDF) on the administration of the first RCV election conducted in Minneapolis in November 2009, as well as a link to the *St. Cloud State University Survey Research Report* on RCV in the 2009 municipal elections (also in PDF; accessed here:  
[:http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/elections/docs/RCV-Survey-Report-Dec-2009.pdf](http://www.ci.minneapolis.mn.us/elections/docs/RCV-Survey-Report-Dec-2009.pdf) )

**City and Council of San Francisco, CA:** Department of Elections:

[http://www.sfgov.org/site/elections\\_index.asp?id=60440](http://www.sfgov.org/site/elections_index.asp?id=60440)

**Web page link:** it explains Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) as passed in the City of San Francisco in March, 2002. Includes an interactive demonstration on RCV; a sample Demonstration Ballot ( in PDF); a brochure on RCV, which explains the ballot and how votes are counted (also in PDF); as well as a link to San Francisco Charter Section 13.102 that governs RCV in San Francisco. (accessed here:  
<http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=14130&stateId=5&stateName=California>)

**Corvin, Aaron.** “New Voting System: Now What?” *The News Tribune*, Tacoma, WA: November 11, 2006. Pg. B1.

**Newspaper article summary:** it anticipates the logistical problems and costs, as well as the potential benefits of Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) [now Ranked Choice Voting - RCV] as passed by Pierce County (WA) voters in 2006; amended in article 3 of the County Charter and implemented in the 2008 county elections for eleven positions including: sheriff, executive, auditor, assessor-treasurer and the seven-member council .

Available in full text, re-printed here: [http://www.citizenreviewonline.org/nov\\_2006/12/voting.html](http://www.citizenreviewonline.org/nov_2006/12/voting.html)

**FairVote: Center for Voting and Democracy:**

<http://www.fairvote.org/irv>

**Web page link:** the homepage for the Center for Voting and Democracy, a national advocacy group founded

in 1992 which promotes Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) as well as other “practical” measures of election reform. Based in Maryland, but draws from a large volunteer network in many states it can be reached at this address: FairVote 6930 Carroll Avenue, Suite 610 Takoma Park, MD 20912; tel. (301) 270-4616; fax (301) 270-4133, via email: info@fairvote.org

**Grofman, Bernard and Scott L. Feld.** “If you like the alternative vote (a.k.a. the *instant runoff*), then you ought to know about the Coombs rule” *Electoral Studies*; Dec2004, Vol. 23 Issue 4, p641-659, 19p

**Abstract:** [This article] consider[s] four factors relevant to picking a *voting* rule to be used to select a single candidate from among a set of choices: (1) avoidance of Condorcet losers, (2) choice of Condorcet winners, (3) resistance to manipulability via strategic *voting*, (4) simplicity. However, we do not try to evaluate all *voting* rules that might be used to select a single alternative. Rather, our focus is restricted to a comparison between a rule which, under the name ‘*instant runoff*,’ has recently been pushed by electoral reformers in the US to replace plurality-based elections, and which has been advocated for use in plural societies as a means of mitigating ethnic conflict; and another similar rule, the ‘Coombs rule.’ In both rules, voters are required to rank order candidates. Using the *instant runoff*, the candidate with the fewest first place votes is eliminated; while under the Coombs rule, the candidate with the most last place votes is eliminated. The *instant runoff* is familiar to electoral system specialists under the name ‘alternative vote’ (i.e., the single transferable vote restricted to choice of a single candidate). The Coombs rule has gone virtually unmentioned in the electoral systems literature. Rather than considering the properties of these two rules in the abstract, we evaluate them in the politically realistic situations where voters are posited to have (at least on balance) single-peaked preferences over alternatives. Evaluating the two rules under this assumption, we argue that the Coombs rule is directly comparable in that Coombs is always as good as AV with respect to two of our four criteria and it is clearly superior to AV with respect to one of the four criteria, namely criterion (2), and is potentially inferior only with respect to criterion (3). Key to this argument are two new propositions. The first new result shows that, under the posited assumption, for four alternatives or fewer, AV is always as likely or more likely to select the Condorcet winner than plurality. The second new result shows that, under the same assumptions, the Coombs rule will always select the Condorcet winner regardless of the number of alternatives. [Abstract Copyright: Elsevier]

**Langdon, James P.** “Instant Runoff Voting: a Cure that is Likely Worse than the Disease” *William & Mary Law Review*; Feb2005, Vol. 46 Issue 4, p1569-1595, 27p

**Abstract:** [This article] describes the recent instant runoff voting legislation passed across the U.S. Compatibility of instant runoff voting with state election statutes and state constitutions; Policy implications of enacting instant runoff voting; Analysis of the potential benefits of instant runoff voting put forth by its supporters. (Academic Search Premier citation)

**League of Women Voters: Minnesota.** *Alternative Voting Systems: Facts and Issues*, September, 2004. PDF accessed here: <http://www.lwvmn.org/LWVMNAlternativeVotingStudyReport.pdf>

**Informational Brochure:** published by the advocacy group, this study examines alternative voting systems including ranked systems such as Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) and Borda. While it focuses on the issues relating to the adoption of IRV in Minnesota, it is useful for general descriptive reading and comparisons between the voting systems.

**Neely, Francis and Corey Cook.** “Whose Vote Counts? Undervotes, Overvotes and Ranking in San Francisco's Instant runoff Voting” *American Politics Research*; Jul2008, Vol. 36 Issue 4, p530-554, 25p

**Abstract:** [This article examines] the first 3 years of San Francisco's instant-runoff voting (IRV) elections to determine whether some voters adapt more easily than others to the more complex ballot and decision task. We draw on studies of uncounted votes to develop hypotheses about tendencies to undervote, overvote, and rank candidates in IRV elections. Individual ballot records and precinct-level census data are used to estimate the relative influences of demographic and election-specific factors. A natural experiment tests whether or not prior experience with IRV makes a difference. The change to IRV appears to have increased the rate of overvotes and decreased tendencies to undervote. Both behaviors are explained by demographics and aspects of the electoral environment. Meanwhile, tendencies to rank candidates were shaped less by demographics and more by contextual factors and prior exposure to IRV. The findings extend the literature on uncounted votes, inform issues of equality in elections, and provide practical insights on this type of electoral reform. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR]

**Nichols, John.** “A Real Vote Fix”. *Nation*; 11/16/2009, Vol. 289 Issue 16, p5-5, 1/3p

**Brief article abstract:** This article reports on electoral reform in the United States. The central focus of the article is a discussion of instant runoff voting, a system under which voters rank political candidates in order of preference. It is explained that such a system would prevent the election of candidates who have not achieved a majority of votes cast.

Available in full text in MARVEL databases: MasterFile Premier

**Olson, Eric C. and Steven Hill.** “Big Wins for Democracy: San Francisco and Vermont Vote for Instant Runoff Voting.” *National Civic Review*; Summer2002, Vol. 91 Issue 2, p201, 4p

**Abstract:** This article provides an evaluation of instant runoff voting (IRV) as it has been implemented in the city of San Francisco and in various townships, and in the city of Burlington Vermont. Its authors are affiliated with the Center for Voting and Democracy (CVD) in San Francisco, California; and it includes the contributions of Terry Bouricius, former Progressive Party legislator and CVD staffer, to the promotion of IRV in Vermont.

Available in full text in MARVEL databases: *Academic Search Premier*

**Sackariason, Carolyn.** “Aspen Rejects Instant Runoff voting – by Six Votes”. *The Aspen Times*; Aspen, CO: November 3, 2009.

**Newspaper article summary:** this article recounts the option to eliminate Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) as voted on in the City of Aspen in 2007 and implemented in the 2008 elections. The results of the non-binding advisory question means that the city Council must continue to explore alternative voting methods and make recommendations to the public.

accessed full text:

<http://www.aspentimes.com/article/20091103/NEWS/911039976/1077&ParentProfile=1058>