



# HONEST ELECTIONS PROJECT

## **RANKED CHOICE VOTING WOULD UNDERMINE VOTER CONFIDENCE AND DISENFRANCHISE VOTERS**

### **ANOTHER ATTEMPT TO REMAKE VOTING**

- Progressives around the country are [pushing](#) reckless ranked-choice voting as a [way](#) to ensure left-leaning politicians get elected to office.
- The RCV [process](#) fundamentally changes elections.
  - Under RCV, voters are asked to rank multiple candidates rather than vote for a single person.
  - If no candidate wins a clear majority, the one with the fewest first-place votes is eliminated, and his or her supporters' second-place votes are counted. If a supporter did not list a second choice, that ballot is labeled "exhausted" and is thrown out.
  - This process continues until a single candidate wins a majority of the remaining votes.
- Proponents claim that RCV is a bipartisan reform, but records show that liberal mega-donors are behind the push for RCV.
  - In Missouri, an [organization](#) connected to noted liberal donors John and Laura Arnold [contributed](#) nearly all of the \$6.8 million dollars raised to support a 2022 ballot measure.

### **MANUFACTURING A MAJORITY**

- RCV's signature promise is to deliver candidates that win true electoral majorities. But RCV's version of "majority rule" is a mirage rendered by throwing out ballots and redistributing votes between candidates.
- In fact, so many [ballots](#) can be thrown out that winners sometimes do not secure a majority of the total votes cast in an election.
  - In the 2022 Alaska special congressional election, Democratic candidate Mary Peltola won with just 48.4% of the total votes cast. 11,222 ballots were "exhausted" after the first round of tabulation and thrown out. Peltola won 51.5% of the remaining votes.

- By definition, RCV procedures are only triggered when candidates *fail* to win a majority.
  - In the Alaska special, Democrat Mary Peltola won only 40.2% of first-place votes.
  - Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey [won](#) only 43% of first-place votes in his 2021 reelection, but RCV allowed him to claim he was reelected with 56% of the vote.
- Under RCV, the candidate with the most first-place votes may go on to lose the election.
  - In 2018, incumbent Rep. Bruce Poliquin (R-ME) [lost](#) to Democrat Jared Golden despite initially winning a plurality of first-place votes.
  - In 2010, Don Perata won the first-place vote for mayor of Oakland, California, but ultimately lost to Jean Quan—a defeat the [New York Times](#) attributed to the “power of finishing second in a ranked-choice election.”

### **DISENFRANCHISING VOTERS AND DEPRESSING TURNOUT**

- Many voters do not rank multiple candidates in an election, leading to their ballots being tossed out if their first-place pick is eliminated—effectively [disenfranchising](#) them.
  - Ballot “exhaustion” is a euphemism for ballot erasure. RCV discounts these ballots as if the voter had never turned out in the first place.
  - [Studies](#) show that substantial numbers of votes are thrown out in RCV elections. Even RCV advocacy group [FairVote](#) admits that, on average, nearly one in three voters do not rank multiple candidates in RCV elections.
  - In Alaska, one-fifth (21%) of voters for third-place candidate Nick Begich did not list a second-place pick, meaning their votes did not count in the final results.
- According to research from the [Cato Institute](#), ranked choice voting may even reduce overall turnout—with particularly strong impacts on low-propensity voters—further straining claims that RCV broadens candidate support.

### **COMPLICATIONS AND DELAYS**

- Ranked choice voting risks complications and delays in elections, as we have already seen in examples across the country.
- RCV makes voting more complicated, increasing the [risk](#) that a voter will make an error that causes their ballot to be rejected.
  - This is especially problematic when voting by mail, since mistakes that are easily caught and corrected at a polling place cannot be detected until tabulation and are often incurable.
- RCV also makes tabulating more complex.
  - For Alaska’s first RCV election, the [Division of Elections](#) opted to withhold preliminary round-by-round tallies during the 15 day post-election ballot return window, citing concerns about confusing the public.

- The results of the June 22, 2021 Democratic primary for New York City mayor were not known until July 6, a delay of 14 days driven by widespread absentee voting and the need to run multiple rounds of RCV tabulation. The race was also [thrown into “chaos”](#) after 135,000 test ballots were mistakenly counted.

#### **THE SOLUTION: BAN RCV**

- Ranked-choice voting undermines the “one person, one vote” principal [idealized](#) in the Constitution, which is a bedrock of American elections.
- RCV also risks voter confidence in our elections, as the Left continues to push a range of ‘reforms’ aimed at eliminating election safeguards.
  - Nationwide, election safeguards are [under siege](#) from lawsuits filed by progressive activists and proposed legislation [like H.R. 1](#).
- So far, only two states—Alaska and Maine—have opted to use RCV, but numerous jurisdictions have adopted RCV for local elections.
  - State legislatures can proactively restore traditional voting practices by banning RCV. In 2022, [Florida](#) and [Tennessee](#) both passed laws to ban Ranked-choice (also known as “instant runoff”) elections.
  - States that want to ensure candidate earn majorities could instead consider requiring traditional runoffs, which deliver that outcome without the risk and complexity of RCV.