



# Ranked Choice Voting for Texas

[RCVforTexas.org](https://RCVforTexas.org)  
[info@RCVforTexas.org](mailto:info@RCVforTexas.org)

# Agenda

- What is ranked choice voting
- Voting systems Texans use today and their challenges
- Why should we switch to ranked choice voting
- Who uses ranked choice voting
- How does it work
- Ranked Choice Voting for Texas
- How you can help



# What is ranked choice voting (instant runoff voting)

**Ranked choice voting**, also known as instant runoff voting, is a system of voting that only comes into play if no candidate receives a majority of votes in the initial count. Instead of holding a separate runoff election in the future, voters are given the option to rank candidates in order of their preference, only to be considered in a “runoff” scenario.

If no candidate receives a majority of the first-choice votes, the ranked preferences are considered to determine which candidate has the broadest support.

The candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and voters who picked that candidate as their first choice will have their second-choice votes count. This process is repeated until one candidate accumulates more than half of the votes, thus serving as an instant runoff.

**No extra trip to the polls or costly additional election** is needed and **everyone** who voted in the original election **participates** in the instant runoff.



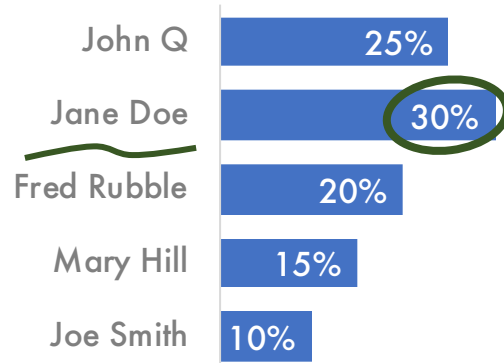
# Current voting system: plurality wins

## “First Past the Post” System (plurality voting)

### Step 1: Vote

John Q	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jane Doe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fred Rubble	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mary Hill	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joe Smith	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Step 2: Count Votes



Used in general elections in Texas for statewide offices, Texas House and Senate seats, and for U.S. Senators and Representatives.

## Challenges:

- If 3 or more candidates, winner can receive *less than a majority* of the votes.
- Who does the majority actually prefer?

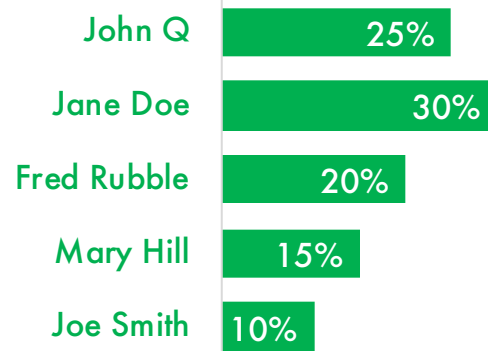
# Current voting system: majority wins

## "Two-round runoff" System (majority voting)

Step 1: Vote

John Q	<input type="checkbox"/>
Jane Doe	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Fred Rubble	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mary Hill	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joe Smith	<input type="checkbox"/>

Step 2: Count Votes



**John Q and Jane Doe  
advance to run-off**

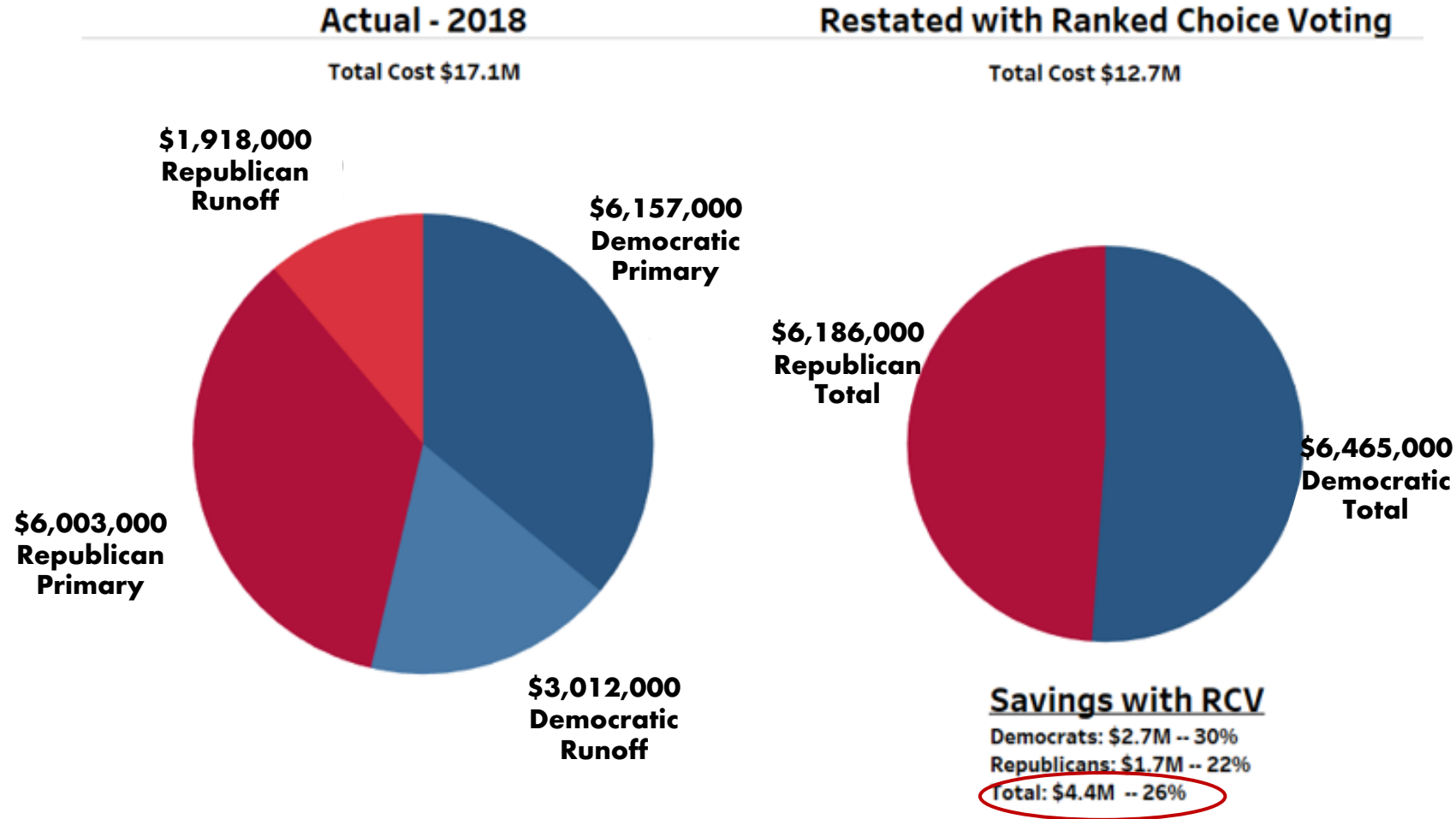
## Challenges:

- Additional time and cost if runoff election needed
- Low voter turnout already and even lower turnout in runoff
- Voters feel limited to voting for major candidate:  
*"I don't want to waste my vote on unlikely candidates, even if I like them better."*
- "Spoiler Effect": Similar candidates split votes causing opponent with minority support to win:  
Fewer candidates compete

Used in party primaries and special elections in Texas



# Texas 2018 primary elections – save 26%



All administrative costs previously allocated between initial and runoff elections applied to initial election



# Example: Texas 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District Special Election, 2021

- May 1, 2021 Special Election to fill vacancy
  - 23 candidates (no political party primary held)
  - Top 2: Wright - 19.2% of 78,374 votes; Ellzey - 13.8%
- July 27, 2021 Runoff election
  - Results: Ellzey 53% of 38,994 votes; Wright 47%
    - Ellzey won with 20,762 votes – 26% of initial election voters
    - Is this really a majority winner?
    - Cost of runoff to taxpayers and candidates
    - Additional 2-month delay to fill vacancy

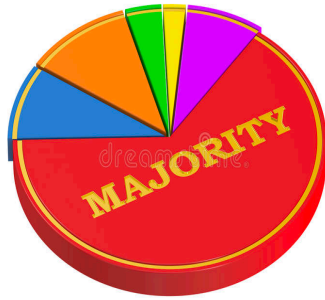


# Ranked Choice Voting is a better voting system

(also known as **Instant Runoff Voting**)



Saves money  
and time for  
election  
administrators,  
candidates, and  
voters



Assures  
majority  
winners



Greater  
choice: avoid  
vote splitting;  
fear of wasted  
vote



Stronger Voice:  
greater voter  
participation

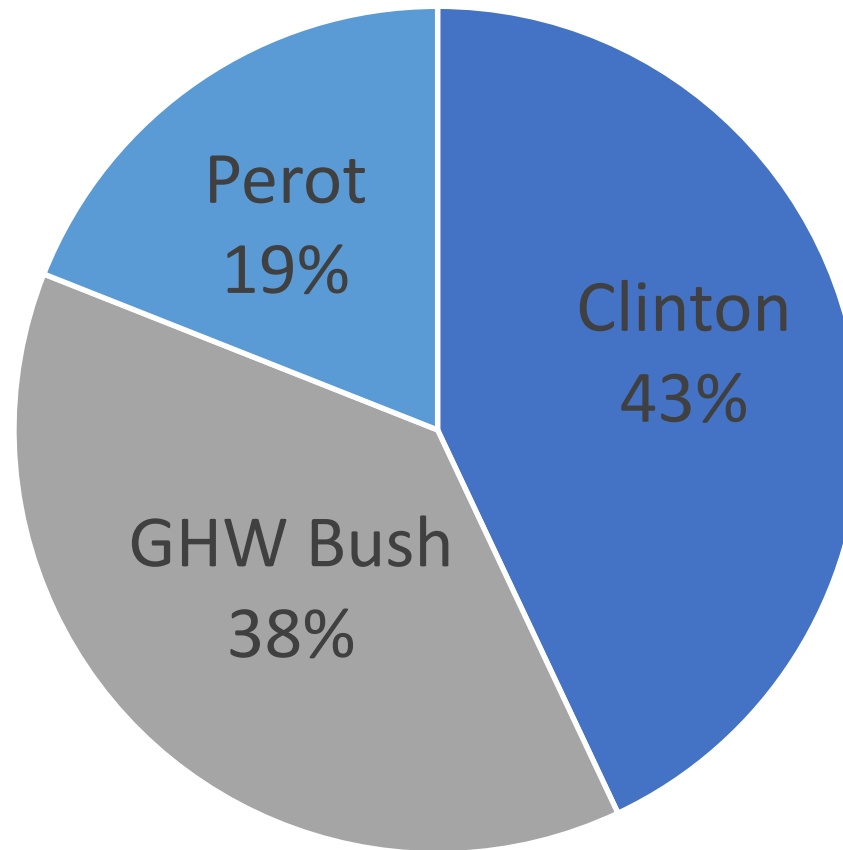


Less negative  
campaign;  
more issue-  
focused



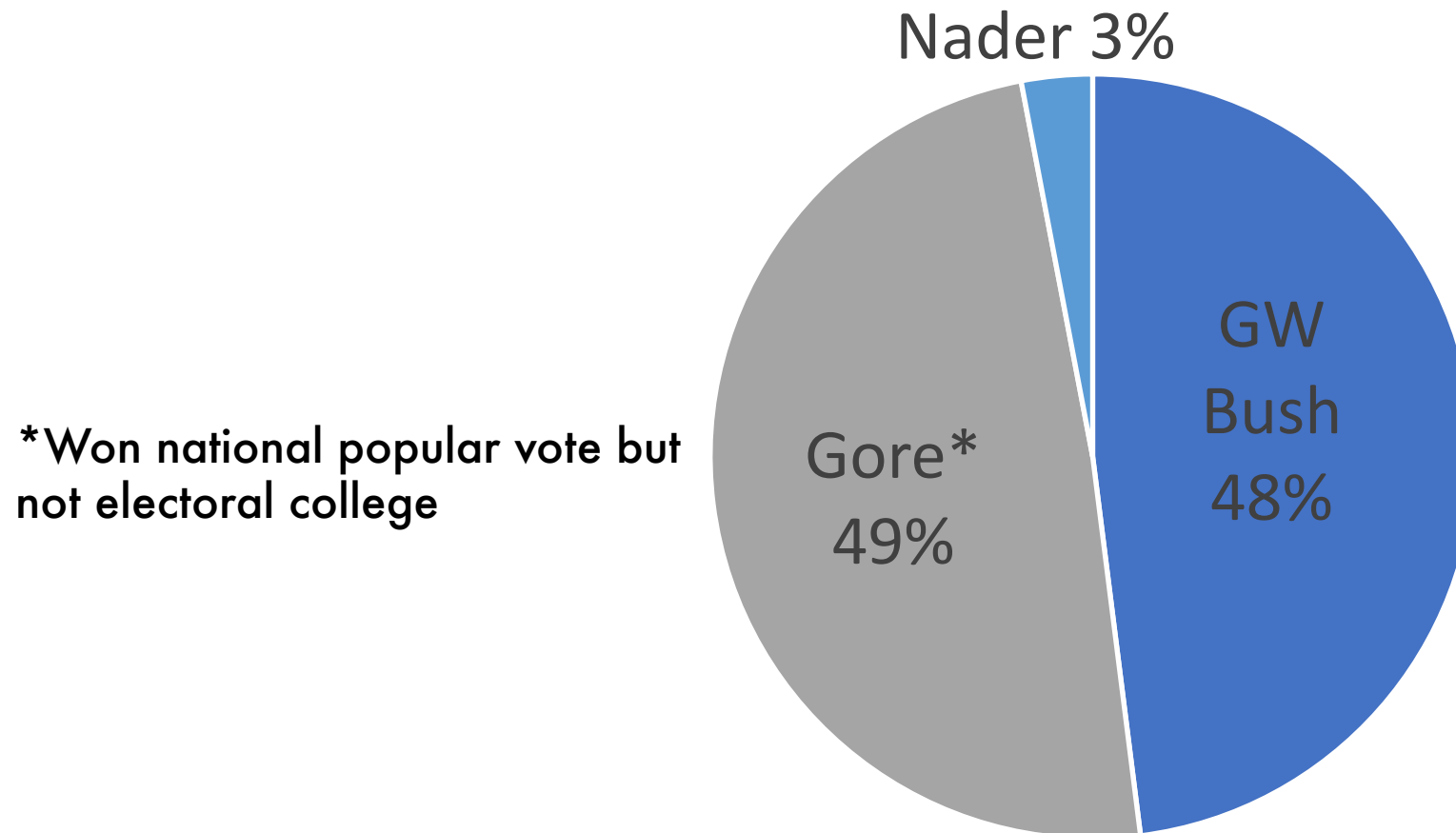
# Is Ranked Choice Voting nonpartisan?

Probably would have helped Republican in Election of 1992



# Is Ranked Choice Voting nonpartisan?

Probably would have helped Democrat in election of 2000

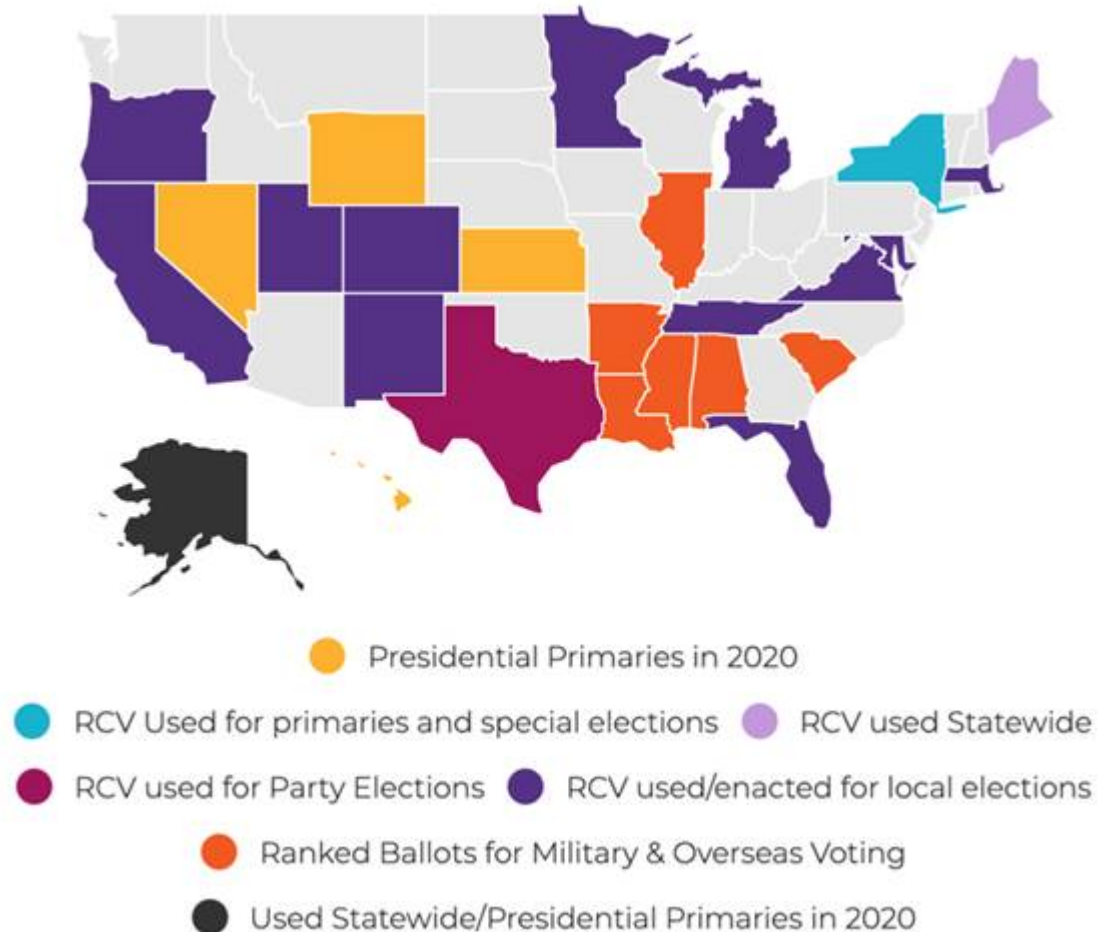


# Example: Virginia Republican Party Primary – May 2021

- A large number of candidates were expected to run for the Republican nomination for Governor.
- A candidate nominated with a plurality of votes might not be able to garner broad support either within the party or in the general election.
- Ranked choice voting was used to nominate a candidate who was able to attract voters beyond their base as second or third choice votes.
- Result: Glenn Youngkin received 33% of first choice votes and after eliminating six other candidates won the Republican nomination with 55% support. He received 51% of the votes in the general election.



# Where is Ranked Choice Voting used today?



## Universities in Texas:



And ...



## RCV Internationally:

Australia  
New Zealand  
Ireland & North Ireland  
Scotland  
Malta



# How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

## Step 1: Vote

	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice
Candidate A	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input type="radio"/> 3
Candidate B	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input type="radio"/> 2	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Candidate C	<input type="radio"/> 1	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/> 3

Voters rank candidates in order of choice without fear of helping elect the candidate they like least.

Voters can rank as many – or as few – candidates as they want.

➔ Take care not to vote for more than one candidate in a single column or for the same candidate in more than one row.

# How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

## Step 2a: Count Votes

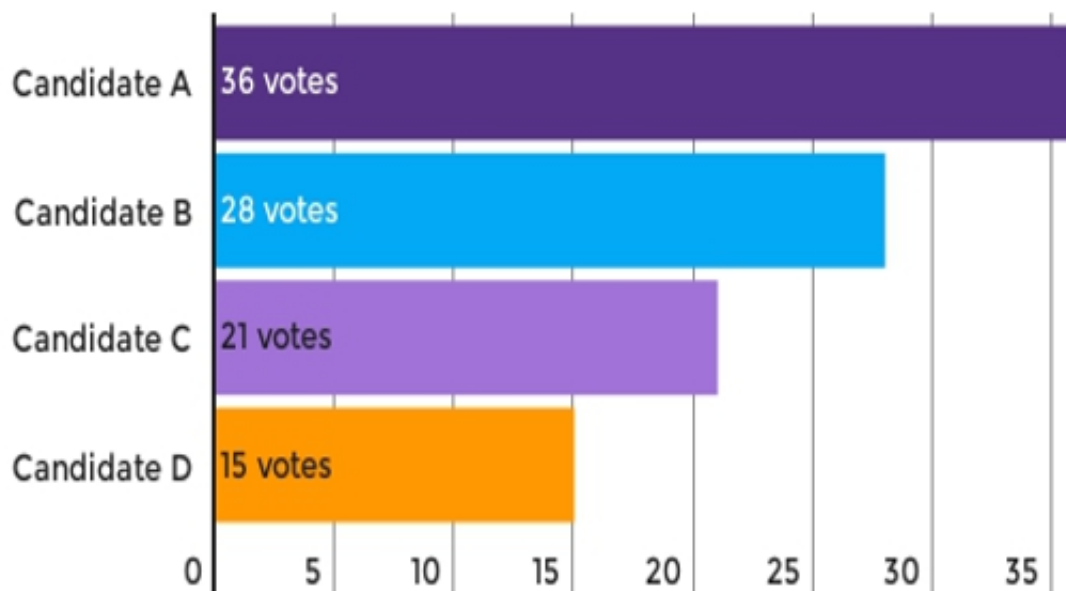
All first choice votes are counted.

If a candidate gets more than half, they win, just like any other election.

In this example, no one has a majority so there is no winner → proceed to next step...

## Round 1 Vote Share

Example: 100 voters



# How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

## Step 2b: Count Votes (cont.)

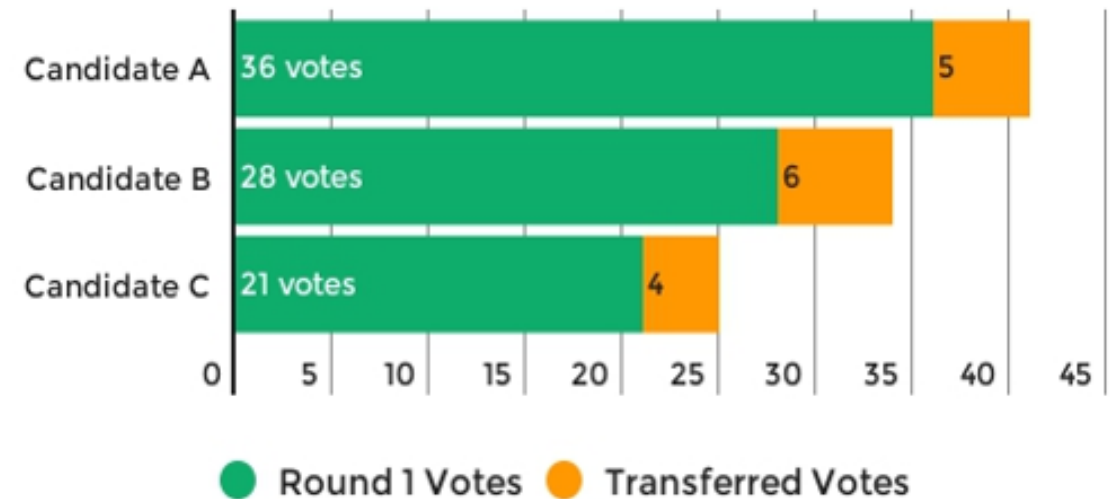
If no one receives a majority, the candidate with the *fewest votes is eliminated*.

In this example, the 15 voters who picked Candidate D as 'number 1' have their votes count for their 'number 2' choice.

With those 15 votes redistributed, we still don't have a majority winner → proceed to the next step...

## Round 2 Vote Share

Example: 100 voters



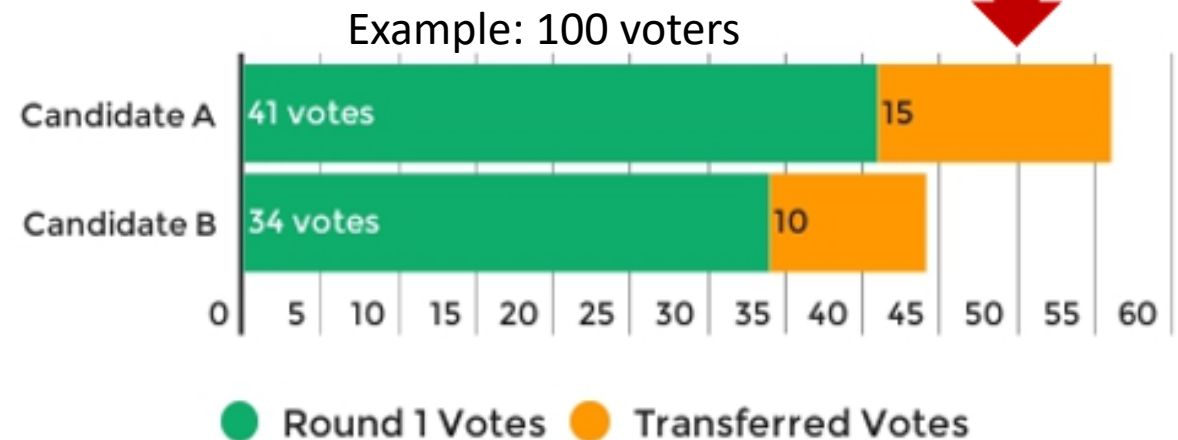
# How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

## Step 2c: Count Votes (cont.)

This process continues until a candidate wins with more than 50% of the votes.

Here, when candidate C's 25 votes are redistributed, we get a majority winner.

## Round 3 Vote Share





# We're campaigning for Texas to adopt RCV

- Nonpartisan, nonprofit, grassroots effort
- Advocate for Texas to adopt Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)
  - 2021 Legislative Session:
    - Military and Overseas voters (was approved by full House, not taken up in Senate)
    - Texas primary elections (no hearing held)
    - Nonpartisan municipal and school district elections (no hearing held)
  - Long Term:
    - Special Elections
    - Local, state, and federal elections
- We believe in a vibrant, competitive, inclusive democracy just as our Founding Fathers intended.



# How can you help?

## Be a supporter:

- Learn more at [RCVforTexas.org](https://RCVforTexas.org); sign up for newsletter
- Follow us on social media
- Stay tuned for an invitation to join our new Dallas Local Chapter
- Let your elected representative know you support RCV
- Contribute to support our outreach efforts (tax deductible)
- Contribute to support lobbying effort (not tax deductible)

## Be an advocate:

- Share our posts on your social media
- Tell your friends and colleagues about RCV
- Invite us to speak with your organizations/clubs
- Help recruit TX legislators to co-sponsor or support our bills
- Raise funds to continue activities to increase adoption of RCV





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