



## Instant Runoff Voting

### What is Instant Runoff Voting?

- Instant Runoff Voting, also known as Ranked Choice Voting, **only comes into play if no candidate receives a majority** of the votes during the original election. 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.
- Instant Runoff **Process**:
  - 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.

### What are the benefits?



**Saves money and time** for election administrators, candidates, and voters by eliminating runoffs. If IRV had been used for Texas primary elections in 2018, taxpayers would have saved 26% of the total cost. No runoffs also means that **vacancies can be filled faster** and the public does not have to wait to know the outcome (as was the case with the Georgia Senate runoffs in 2020).



Ensures **broad voter support** for winning candidates with a single trip to the polls.



**More people can choose to run** because they don't need to fear splitting votes among similar candidates nor the cost of a runoff election.



Allows voters to **vote their preference** without fear of wasting their vote in order to keep a candidate they like least from winning.



Makes voters feel their votes matter leading to **greater voter participation**. Avoids low turnout runoff elections.



**Decreases campaign negativity** because candidates want 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice votes so are less likely to go negative and instead stay focused on issues.

### What else do I need to know about Instant Runoff Voting?

- **IRV is a nonpartisan change in voting logistics** that sometimes helps Democrats, sometimes helps Republicans, and always makes government more representative.
- **Gradual adoption** would allow Texans to see how it works and appreciate its benefits. IRV is particularly valuable in elections with many candidates such as party primaries and special elections.
- **Public confidence in elections is enhanced** as vote splitting among similar candidates that produces an incongruent result of electing someone who the majority does not support is avoided. Confidence is also enhanced when people who vote early or by mail can know that their vote will still count if candidates drop out before election day.
- **Adoption of IRV has been gaining momentum** in both red and blue jurisdictions. It is now used statewide in Alaska and Maine and for local elections in cities and counties in more than a dozen states. It was used in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries in five states and is used by various state political parties for their internal elections.

### Is Instant Runoff Voting Right for Texas?

- IRV exists in several other jurisdictions, is nonpartisan and has the potential to address many concerning issues with the current election system.
- An interim study conducted by the Texas Legislature would facilitate a more robust discussion on whether this is a positive option for Texas to consider.

#### Draft Interim Charge

Evaluate the possible impact of instant runoff voting, also known as ranked choice voting, on special and primary party elections and military/overseas ballots in Texas, including its impact on voter participation, voter satisfaction, election costs, public confidence in elections, and ability to nominate and elect candidates with broad voter support. As part of the evaluation and impact analysis, the study shall review jurisdictions in other states that currently use instant runoff elections.