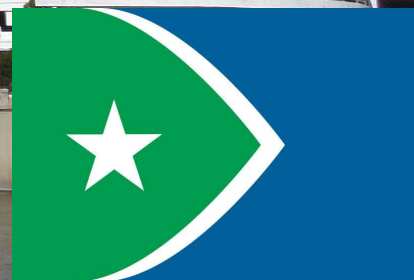


**BETTER  
BALLOT  
IOWA**

# Ranked Choice Voting For Cedar Rapids





# About Us

Better Ballot Iowa is a non-partisan 501(c)(3) that seeks to educate on the advantages of bringing Ranked Choice Voting to Iowa.









# What is Ranked Choice Voting?

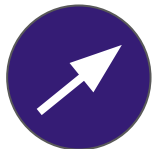
**Ranked Choice Voting** allows you to vote for your favorite candidate as your 1st choice...

...followed by a series of *backup choices* (2nd, 3rd, 4th, etc), in the event your 1st choice gets eliminated.

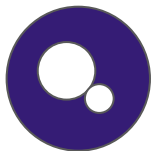
	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice
	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



# Ranked Choice Voting is...



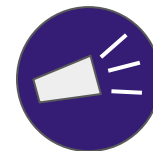
Simple



Efficient/Economical



Fair/Representative



Expressive



Better than any alternative options currently available to Cedar Rapids



# Two Types of RCV

We recommend:

- **Instant Runoff Voting** (RCV-IRV) for single winner elections
- **Single-Transferable Vote** (RCV-STV) for multi-seat elections



These are the most time-tested and straightforward methods, with decades experience in the US and over a century, worldwide

# Single Winner Elections Instant Runoff Voting





# How Cedar Rapids Currently Votes

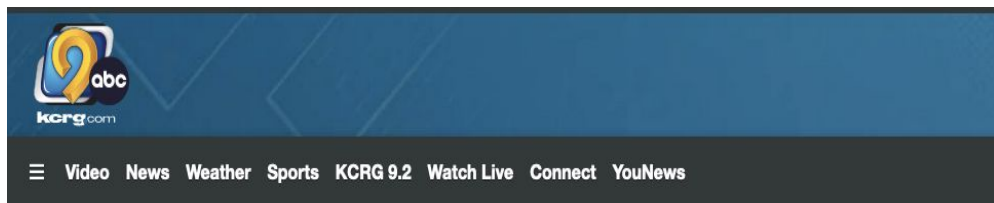
- Cedar Rapids currently uses a **Runoff Election System** to elect officials.
- If no candidate receives a majority of the vote in the **general election**, a **runoff election** is held between the top two candidates
- This runoff election must be four weeks after the general election, per state law (near Thanksgiving!)
- Ballots cannot be printed until any challenges/recounts are resolved





# The Current Runoff System

Runoff elections are costly and suffer from low turnout



**Cedar Rapids Mayoral Runoff Election set to cost around \$80,000, while Des Moines ended runoffs in 2020**

**Nearly 7,000 fewer voters in the runoff election**

general election turnout	runoff election turnout	change in turnout
26,428	19,898	-24.7%



# Instant Runoff Voting (RCV-IRV)

**is a series of runoff votes conducted  
*instantaneously***

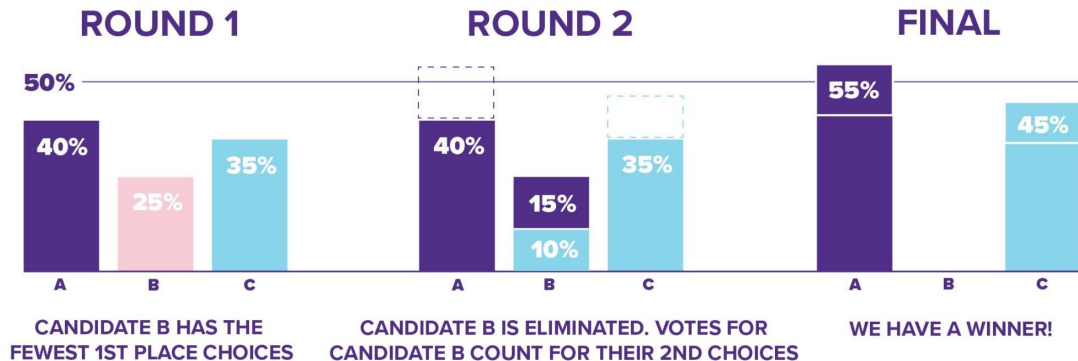
- Voters fill out a *single ballot* indicating how they would vote in a runoff, if their candidate was eliminated.
- So no additional election is necessary
- A majority winner can be found efficiently & cost-effectively



# Instant Runoff Voting in a nutshell

1. Any candidate with a majority wins
2. If no candidate has a majority, the lowest vote-getter is eliminated
3. Their voters' votes go to their next choice

Repeat until a winner is found





# Example: First-round winner

## Salt Lake City, UT Council, District 3 (2021)

**Wharton**



**O'Brien  
McDonnough**



**Berg**



**Inactive  
Ballots**

**19**

**50%**



# Multi-round example

Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021

ROUND 1

Weichers



3,526

Kraan



3,017

Evans



1,849

Schwartz



515

Hallbeck



344

Inactive Ballots 0

50%



# Real, multi-round example

Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021

ROUND 2

Weichers



3,526

Kraan



3,017

Evans



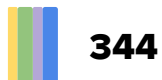
1,849

Schwartz



515

Hallbeck



344

Inactive Ballots 0

50%



# Real, multi-round example

Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021

ROUND 2

Weichers



3,526

+90

Kraan



3,017

+49

Evans



1,849

+91

Schwartz



515

+69

Hallbeck



344

Inactive Ballots

0

+45

50%



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 2**

**Weichers**



**3,616**

**Kraan**



**3,066**

**Evans**



**1,940**

**Schwartz**



**584**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 45**

**50%**



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 3**

**Weichers**



**3,616**

**Kraan**



**3,066**

**Evans**



**1,940**

**Schwartz**



**584**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 45**

**50%**



# Real, multi-round example

Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021

ROUND 3

Weichers



+104

Kraan



+300

Evans



+125

Schwartz



Hallbeck

Inactive Ballots 45

+55

50%



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 3**

**Weichers**



**3,720**

**Kraan**



**3,366**

**Evans**



**2,065**

**Schwartz**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 100**

**50%**



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 4**

**Weichers**



**3,720**

**Kraan**



**3,366**

**Evans**



**2,065**

**Schwartz**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 100**

**50%**



# Real, multi-round example

Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021

ROUND 4

Weichers



+899

Kraan



+751

Evans



Schwartz

Hallbeck

Inactive Ballots

100 +415

50%



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 4**

**Weichers**



**4,619**

**Kraan**



**4,117**

**Evans**

**Schwartz**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 515**

**50%**



# Real, multi-round example

**Cottonwood Heights UT, Mayor 2021**

**ROUND 4**

**Weichers**



**4,619**



**Kraan**



**4,117**

**Evans**

**Schwartz**

**Hallbeck**

**Inactive Ballots 515**

**50%**

# Multi-Seat Elections

## Single Transferable Vote





# At-large City Council Seats

- The current system (3 at-large reps)
  - 2 elected in a single multi-winner election
  - 1 elected in the same election as the district races
- At-large races often necessitate runoffs and typically see a more than 50% reduction in voter turnout





# The Current System

## Iowa Code Title IX (376.8)

- “In a regular city election held for a city where the council has chosen a runoff election in lieu of a primary...no candidate is elected who fails to receive a majority of the votes cast for the office in question.”
- “In the case of at-large elections to a multimember body, a majority is one vote more than half the quotient found by dividing the total number of votes cast for all candidates for that body by the number of positions to be filled. In calculating the number of votes necessary to constitute a majority, fractions shall be rounded up to the next higher whole number.”

Simple, right?



# The Current Runoff System

- Runoffs for selecting multi-winner at-large city council seats have had massive drop-offs in number of voters

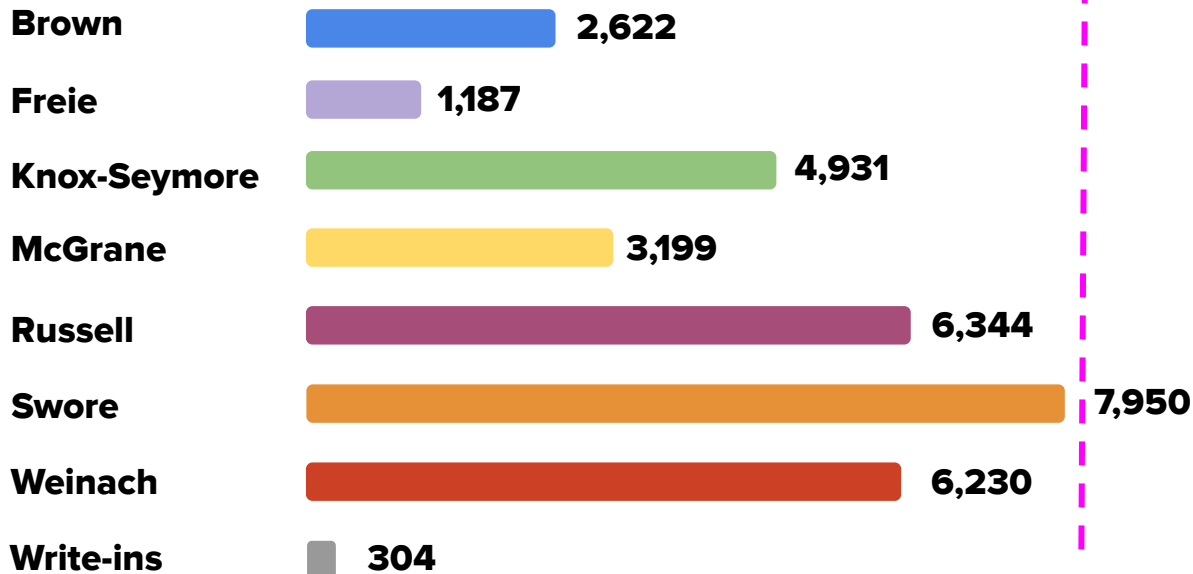
CR election	Voters (gen)	Voters (runoff)	% Change
2013 (2 seats)	20,161	7,896	<b>-60.8%</b>
2009 (2nd Seat, 2 vs. 3)	23,526	8,296	<b>-64.7%</b>
2005 (3rd seat, 3 vs 4)	25,183	11,909	<b>-52.7%</b>



# The Current System

**Cedar Rapids, At Large Council Race (2013) (2 seats)**

**General Election**





# The Current System

**Cedar Rapids, At Large Council Race (2013) (2 seats)**

**Runoff**

Brown

Freie

**Knox-Seymore**  **2,921**

McGrane

**Russell**  **4,566** 

**Swore**  **2,895**

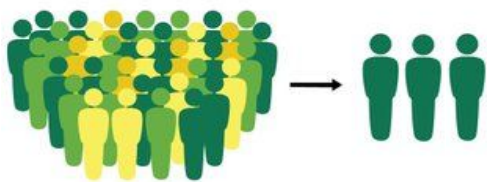
**Weinach**  **3,833** 

Write-ins

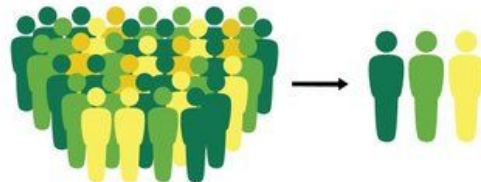


# Single-Transferable Vote

**Single Transferable Voting** would allow Cedar Rapids to efficiently select all three at-large reps in a single election, without an additional runoff. STV is very democratic and representative.



3 sequential single-winner races



Single-Transferable Vote



# Single-Transferable Vote

STV is **efficient**. It can quickly resolve 2-winner or 3-winner races in a single election, without the drop in turnout or costs.

To the voters, the ballot looks **no different** from a single-winner RCV race.

The vote counting is similar to Instant Runoff Voting, with just a few small differences.





# Win-threshold depends on the # of seats

$$\text{Win Threshold} = \frac{\text{Number of Votes}}{\text{Number of Seats} + 1} + 1$$

For a 1-seat race, the quota is  $1/2 + 1$

...only 1 candidate can win more than a half

For a 2-seat race, the quota is  $1/3 + 1$

...only 2 candidates can win more than a third

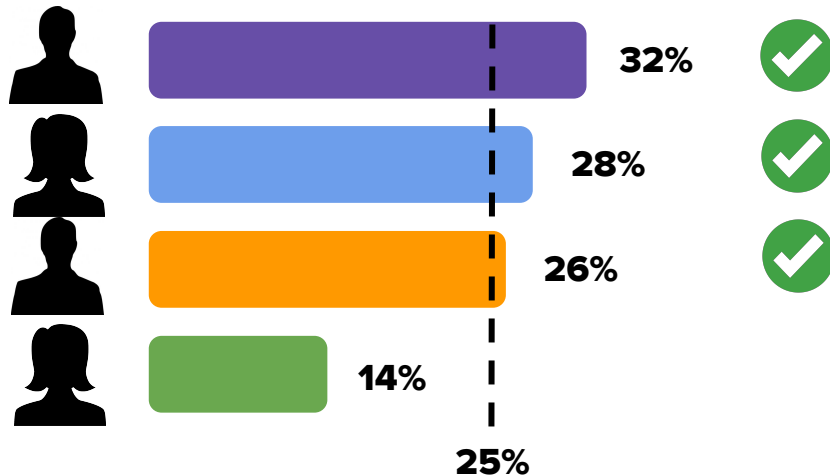
For a 3-seat race, the quota is  $1/4 + 1$

...only 3 candidates can win more than a fourth

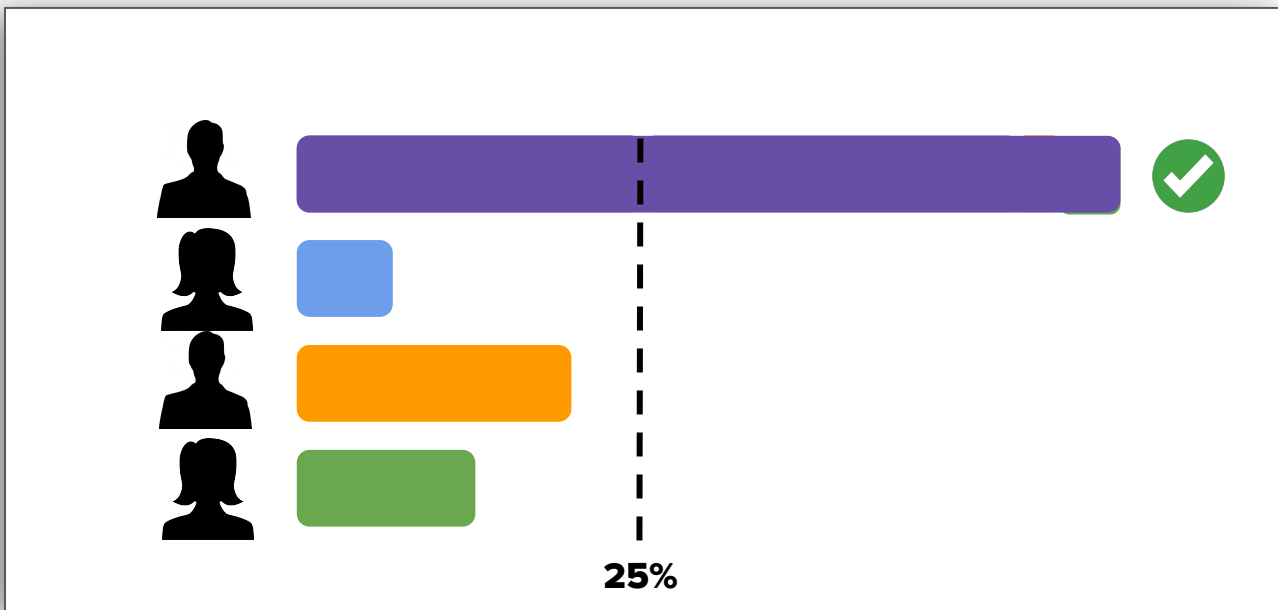


# Any candidate above the quota wins

## A single-round, 3-seat STV race



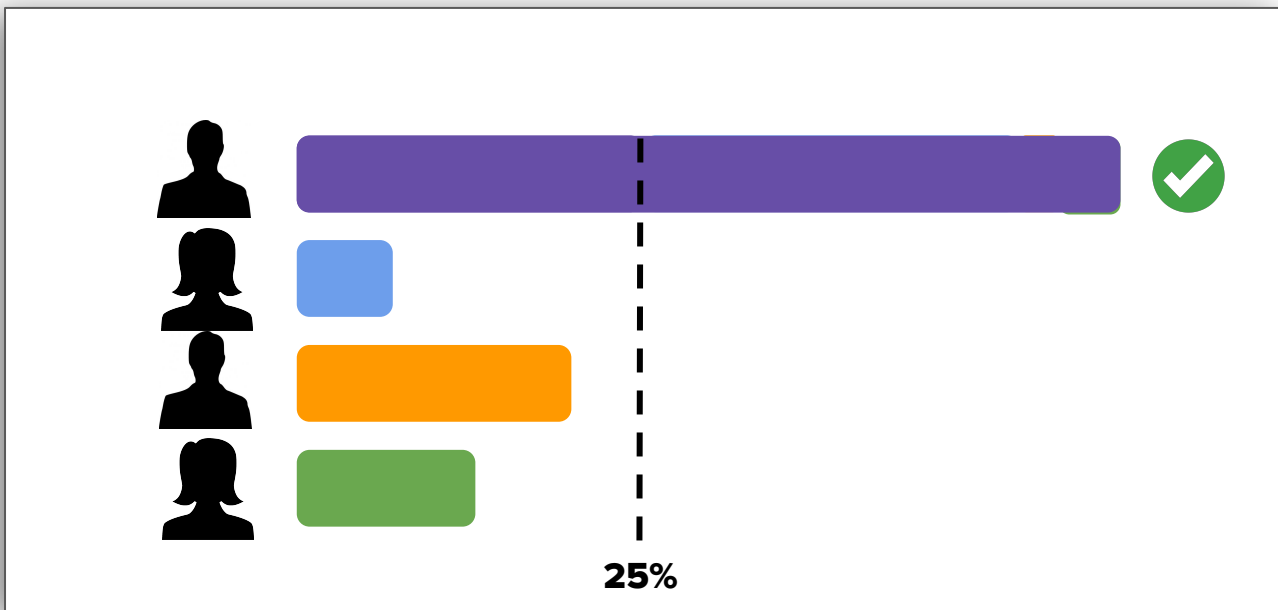
# Surplus votes are redistributed to their 2nd choice





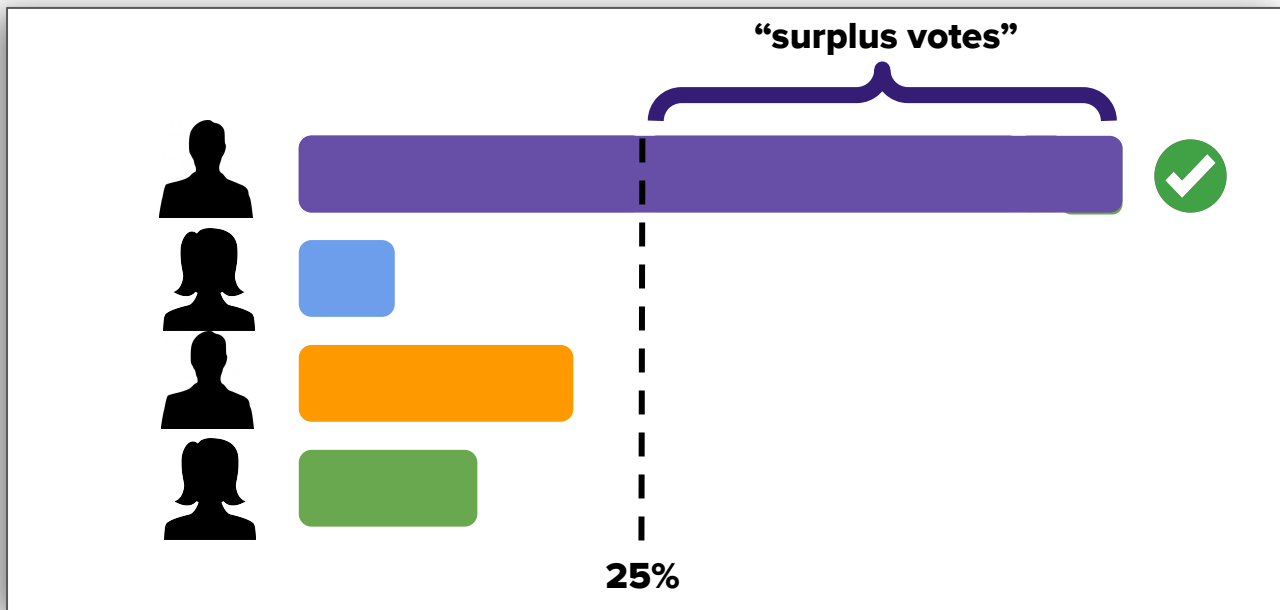
## Surplus votes are redistributed to their 2nd choice

If we decide the rest of the election without the purple voters, then the two other seats will be determined by less than half of the electorate.



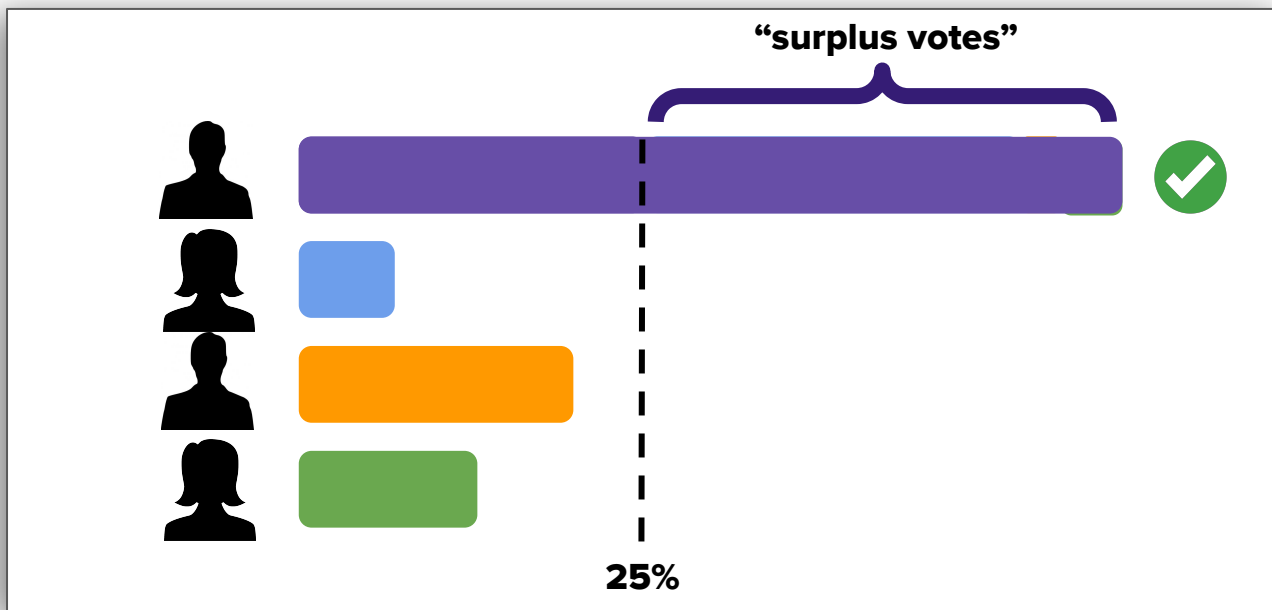
# Surplus votes are redistributed to their 2nd choice

The problem is that surplus votes are exhausted.



# Surplus votes are redistributed to their 2nd choice

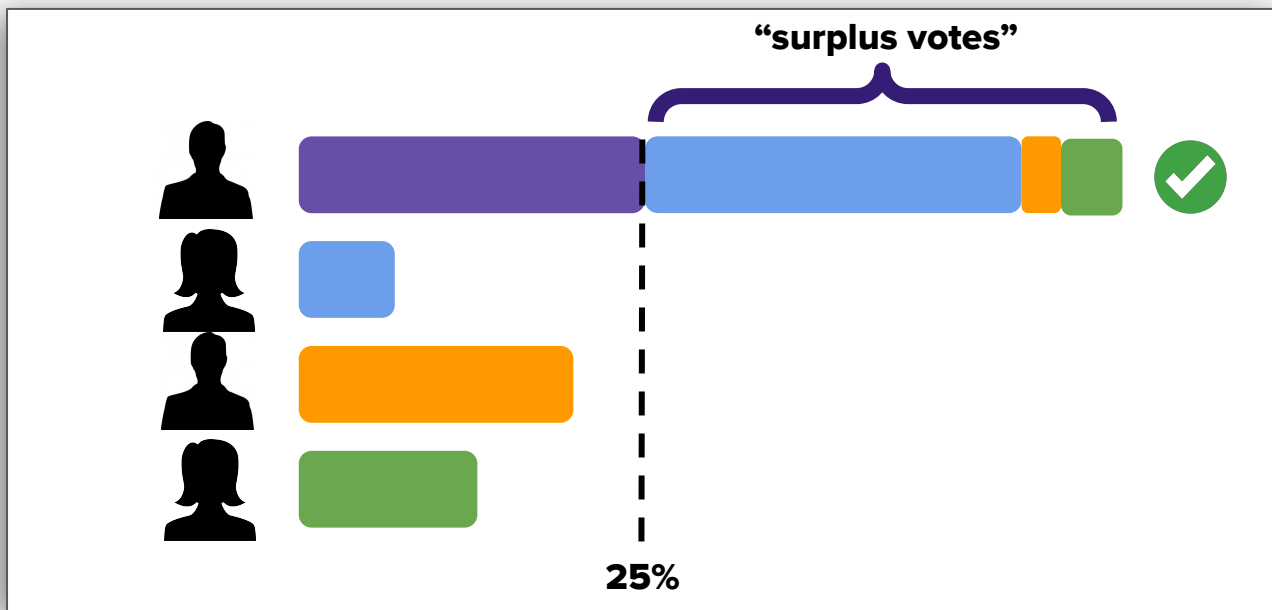
Voters should not be penalized for supporting a popular candidate. Surplus vote should go to their next choice.





# Surplus votes are redistributed to their 2nd choice

Voters should not be penalized for supporting a popular candidate. Surplus vote should go to their next choice.

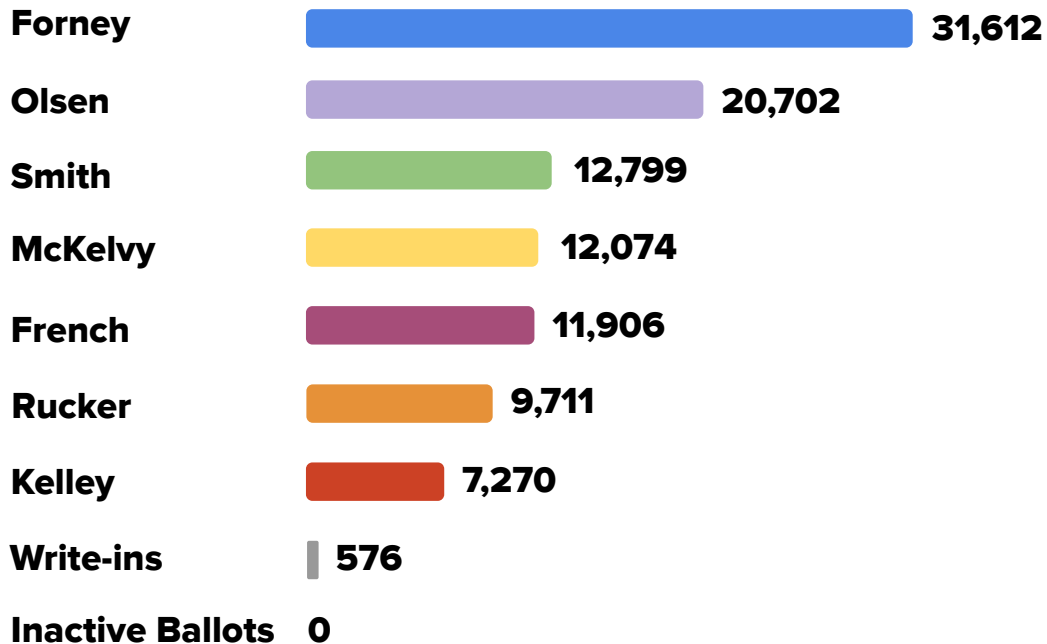




# Real example of STV (three seats)

**Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021**

**ROUND 1**

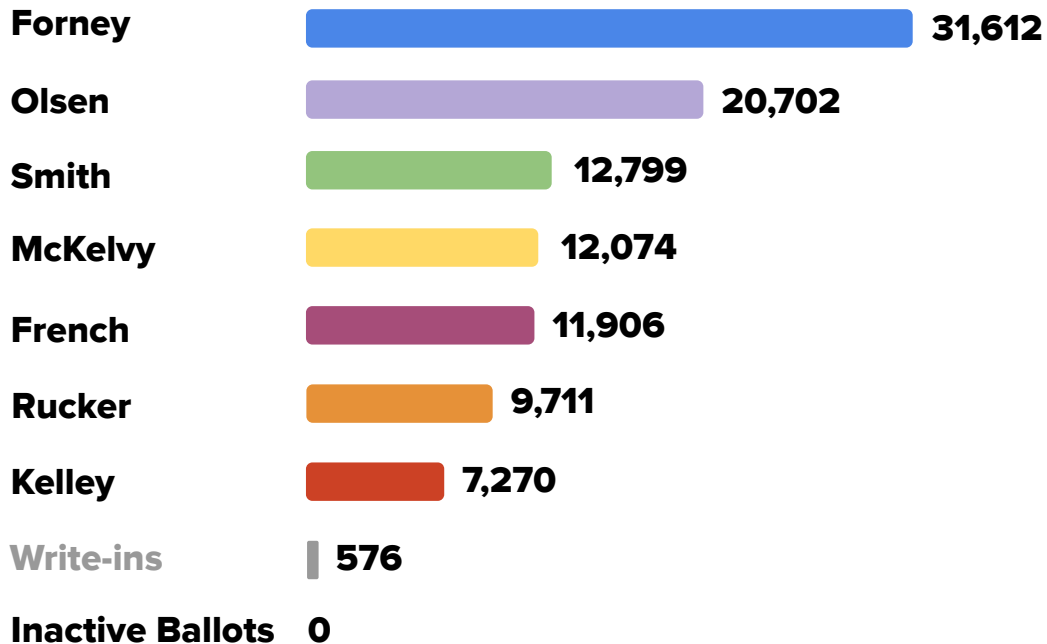




## Round 2: Write-ins eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 1





## Round 2: Write-ins eliminated

**Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021**

**ROUND 2**

**Forney**  **31,629 (+17)**

**Olsen**  **20,710 (+8)**

**Smith**  **12,806 (+7)**

**McKelvy**  **12,079 (+5)**

**French**  **11,916 (+10)**

**Rucker**  **9,720 (+9)**

**Kelley**  **7,272 (+2)**

**Write-ins**

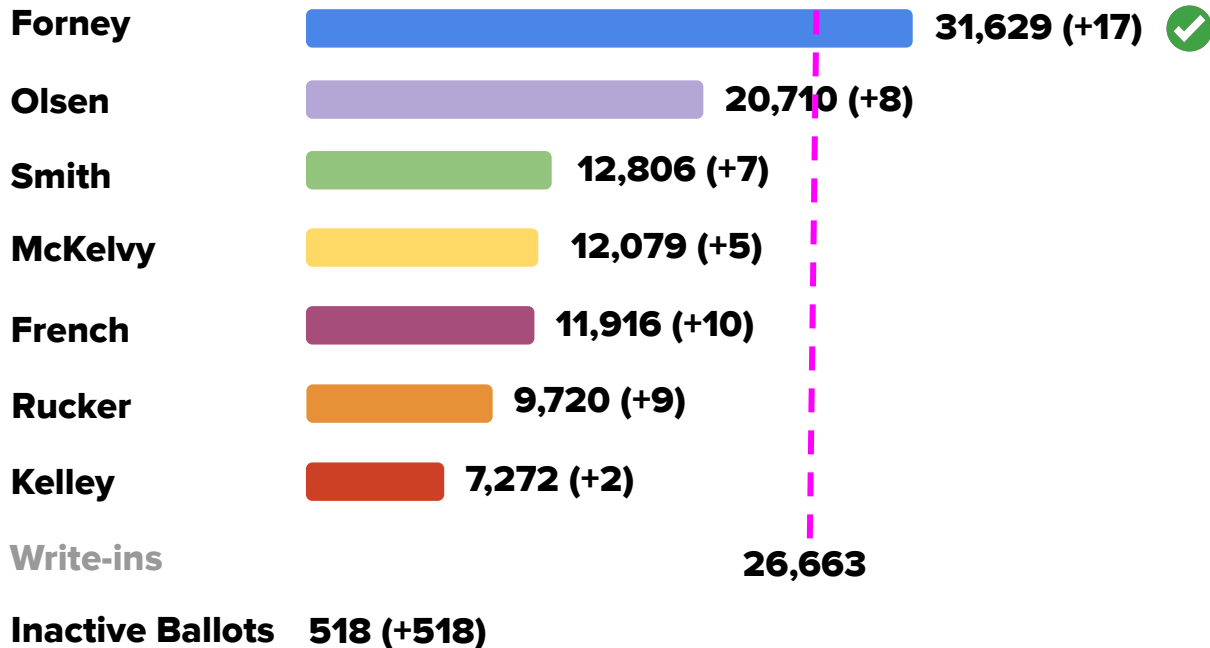
**Inactive Ballots** **518 (+518)**



## Round 2: Write-ins eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

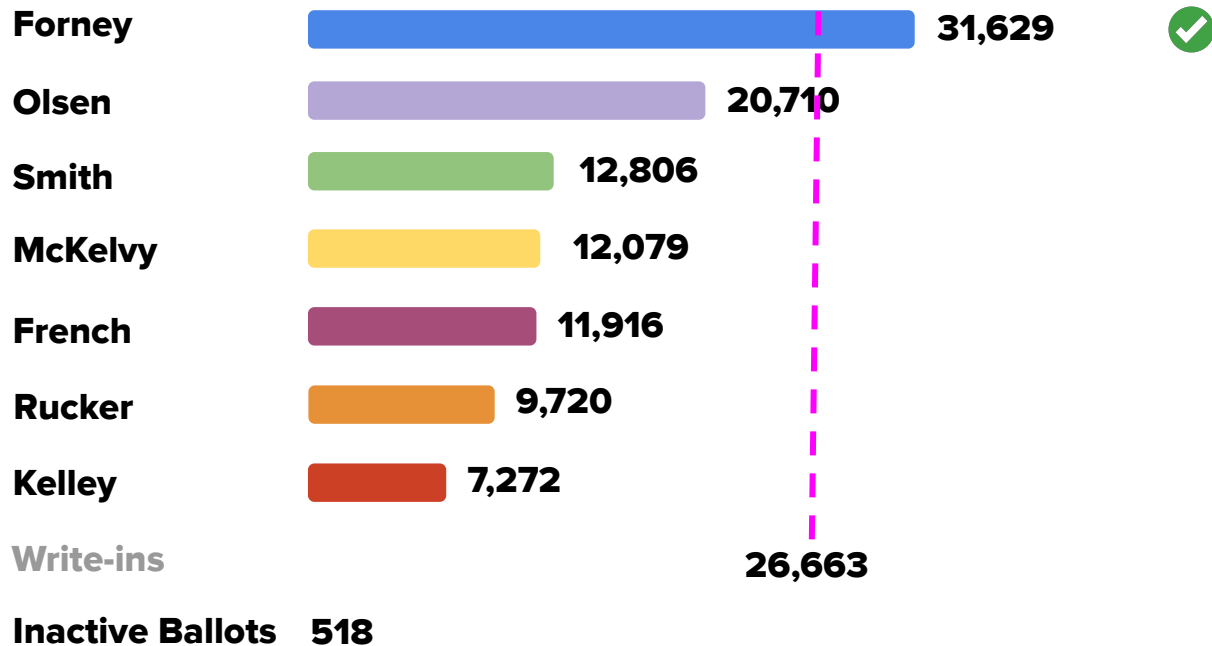




## Round 3: Redistribute surplus votes

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

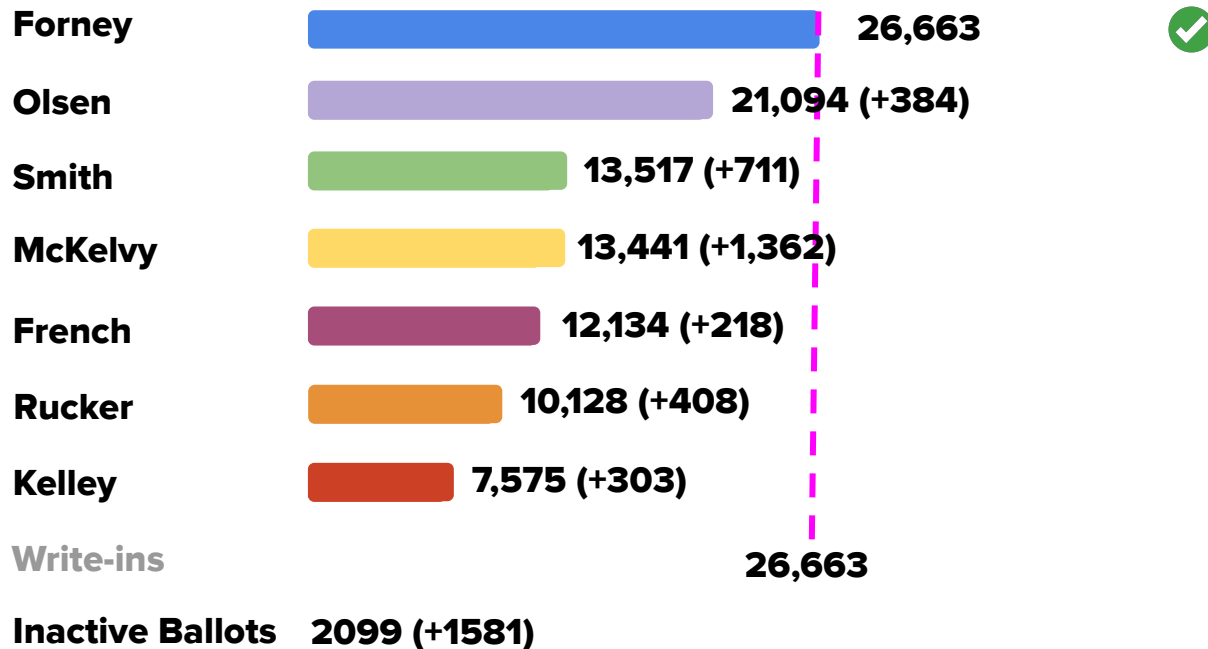
ROUND 2



## Round 3: Redistribute surplus votes

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

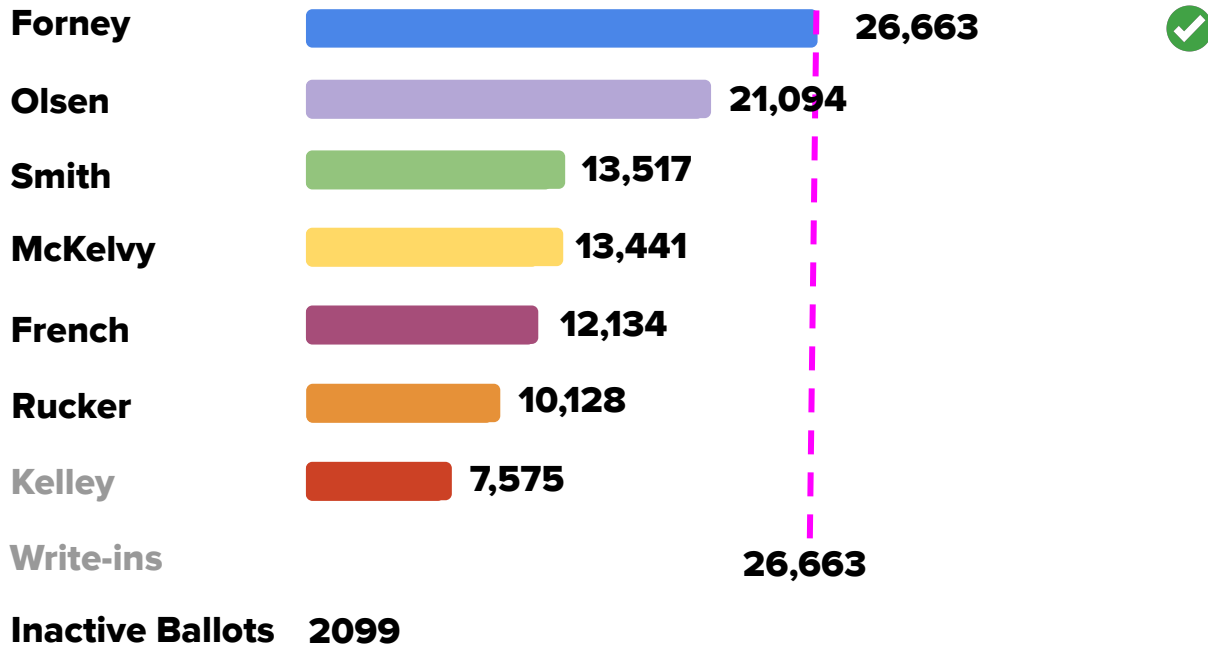




## Round 4: Kelley is Eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

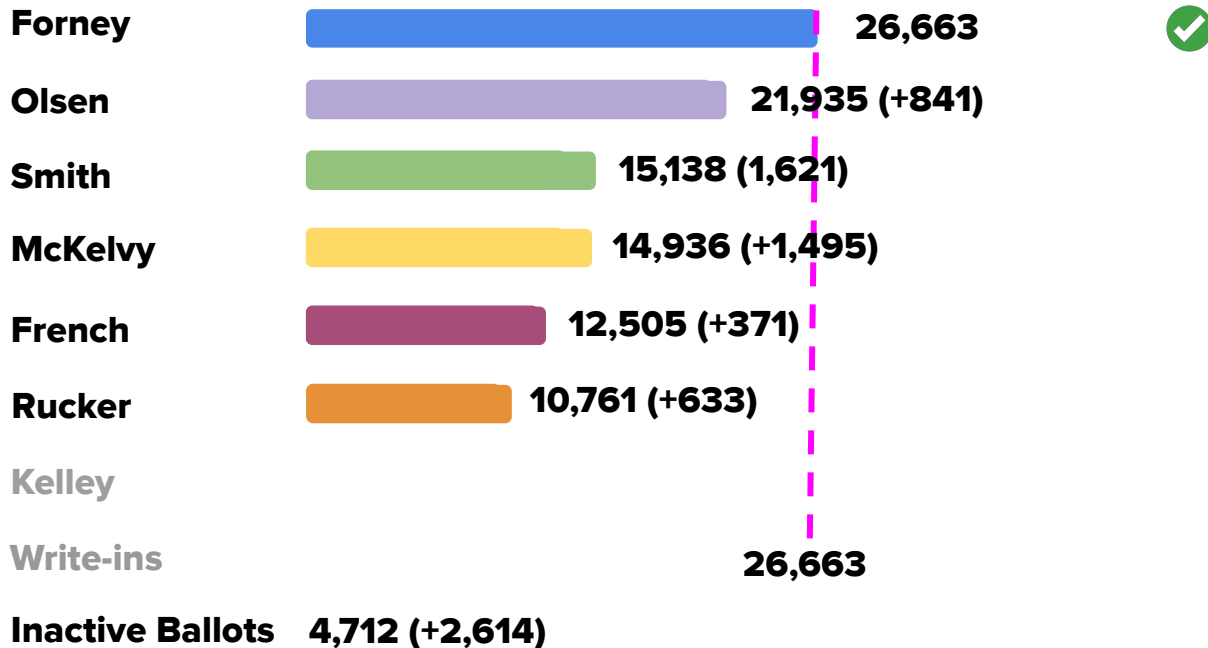




## Round 4: Kelley is Eliminated

### Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

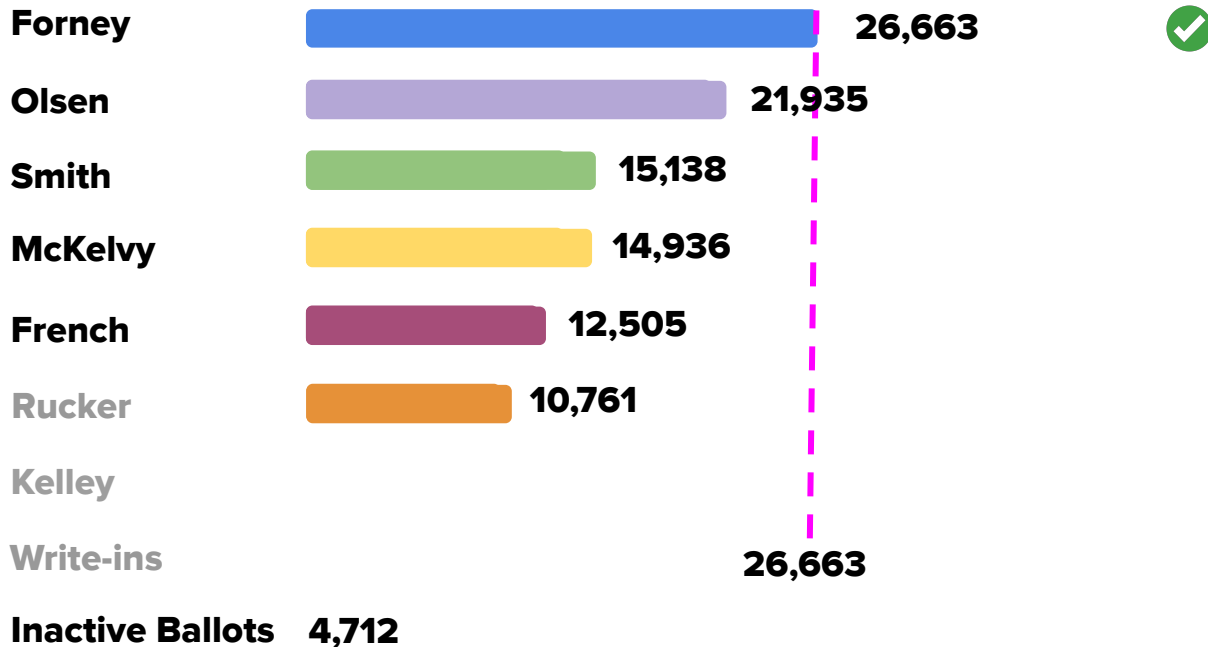




## Round 5: Rucker is Eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

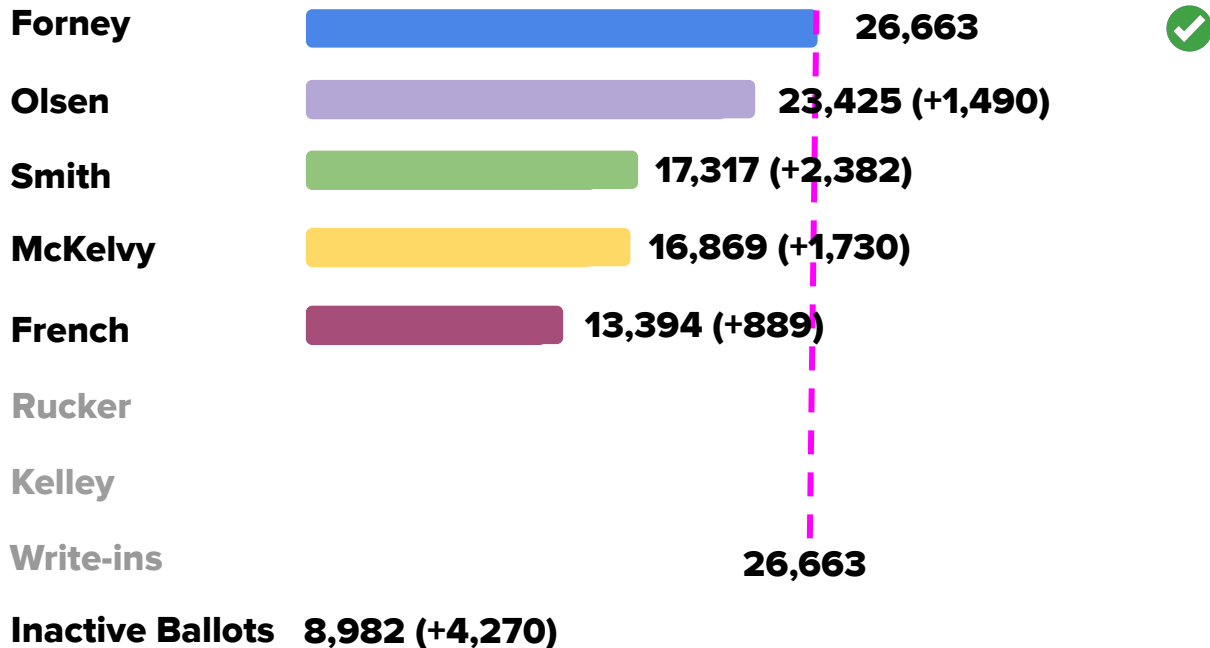




## Round 5: Rucker is Eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

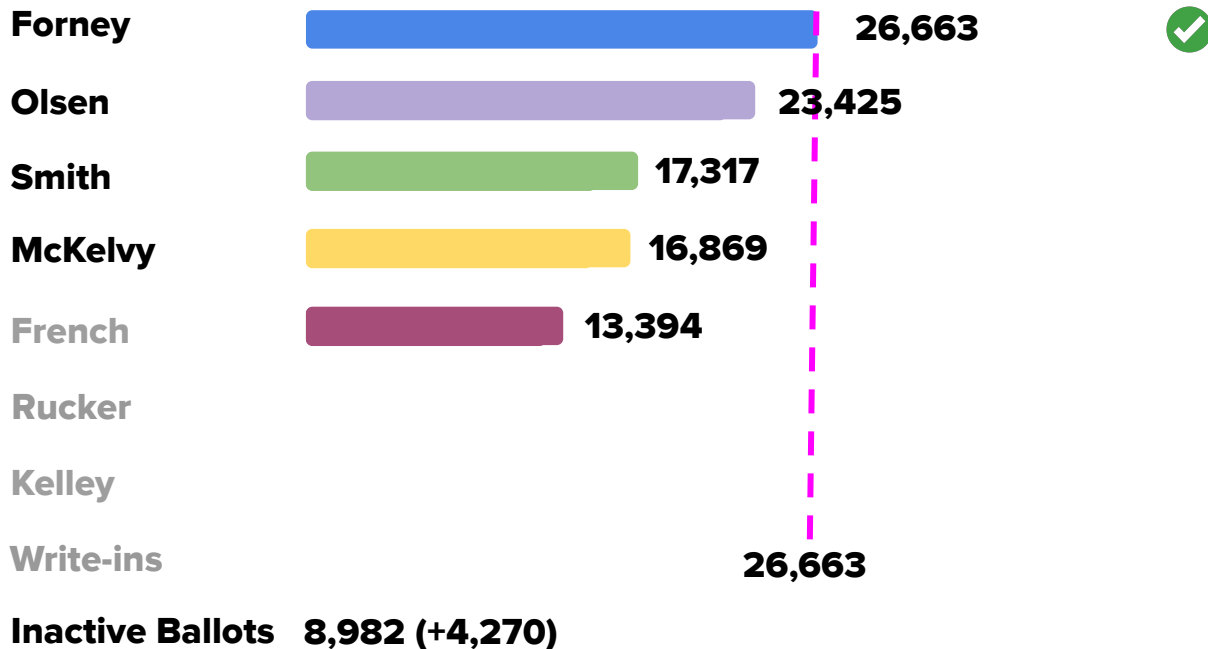




## Round 6: French is Eliminated

### Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

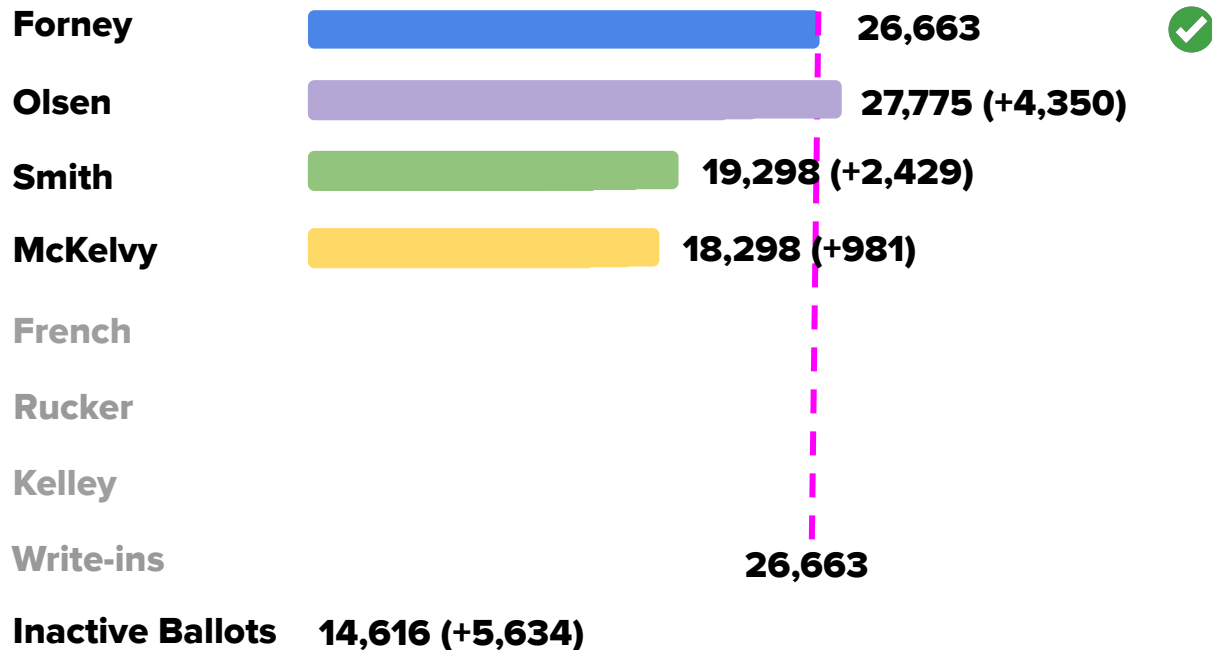
ROUND 2



# Round 6: French is Eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

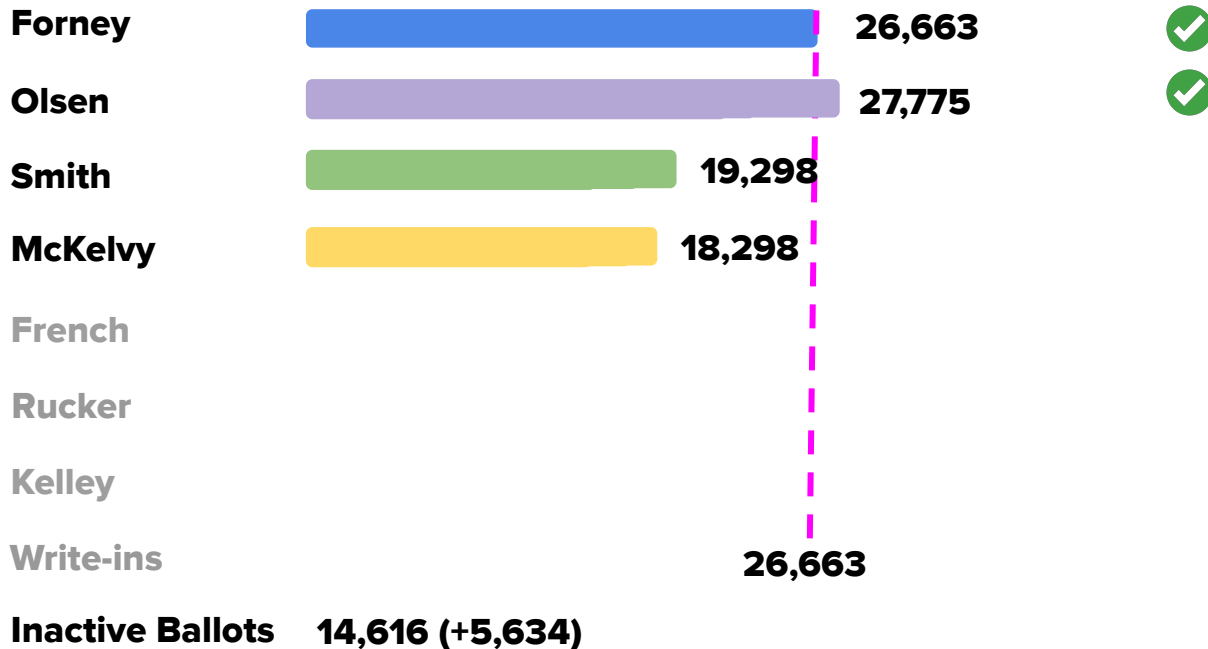




## Round 6: French is Eliminated

Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

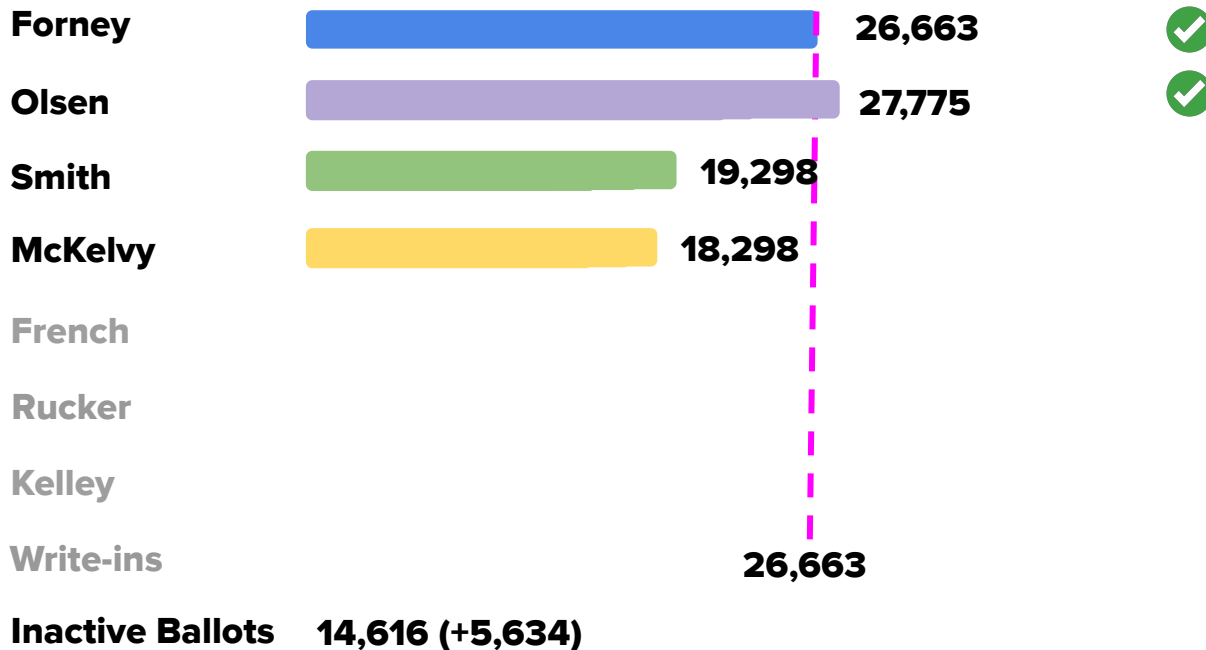
ROUND 2



# Round 7: Olsen's Surplus is Redistributed

## Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

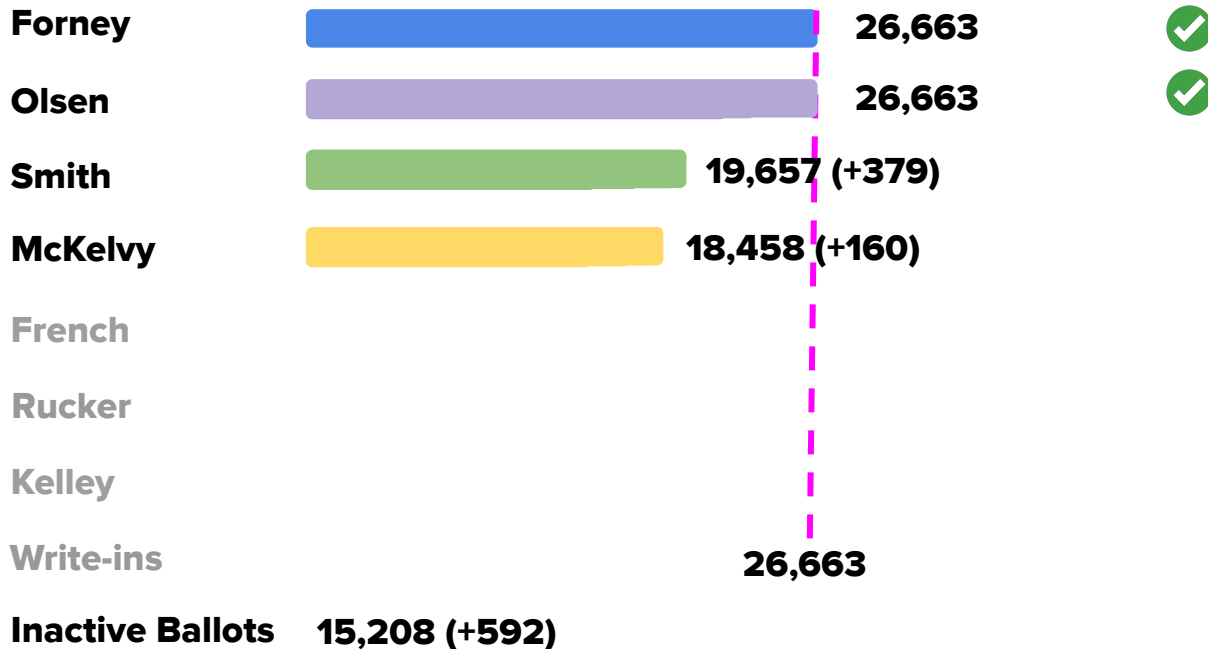




# Round 7: Olsen's Surplus is Redistributed

## Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

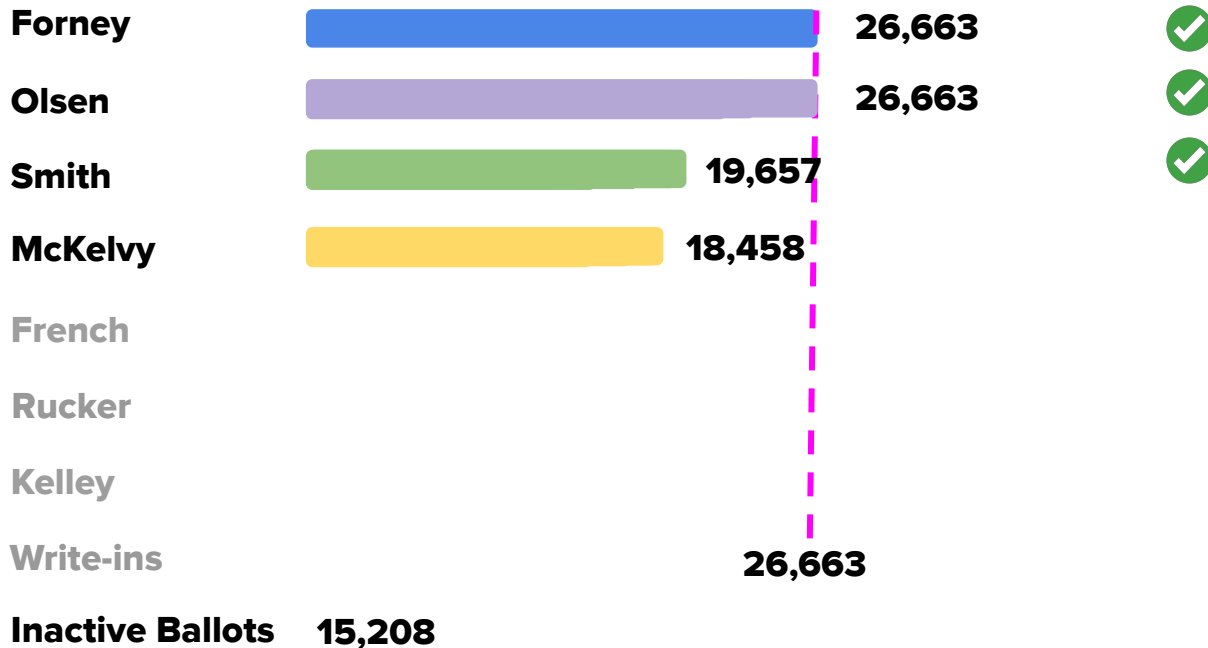




# Smith Wins 3rd Seat

## Minneapolis Park Board, At Large 2021

ROUND 2

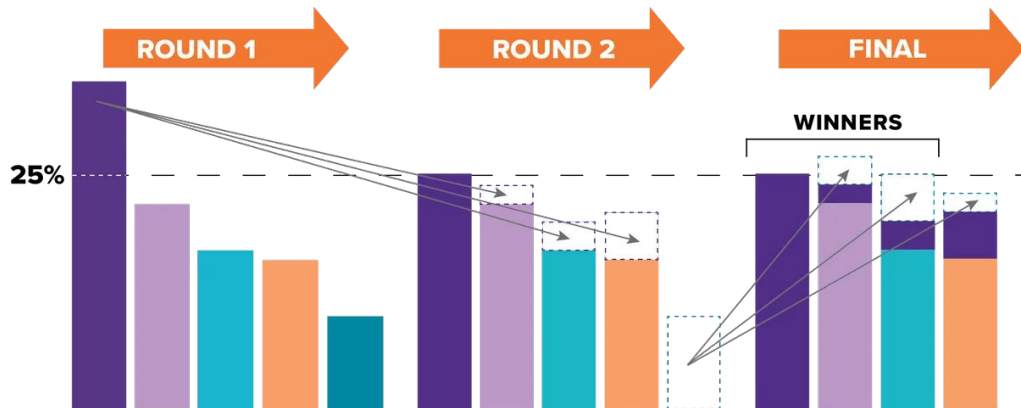




# Multi-winner RCV in a nutshell

1. Any candidate who crosses the threshold wins a seat
2. Surplus votes are transferred to their next choice
3. Conduct elimination and runoff rounds

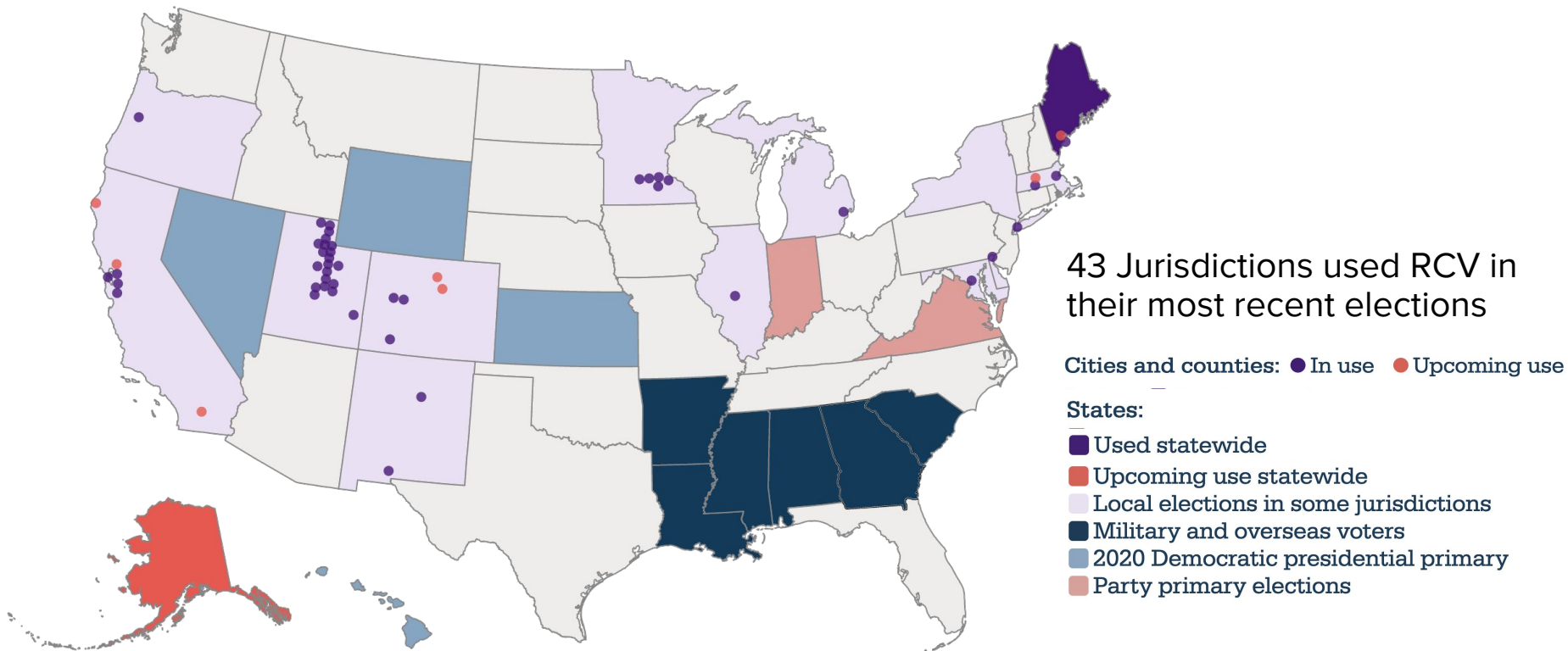
Repeat until all seats are filled



# RCV in Application



# RCV is a well-established voting system





# RCV has been used in municipal elections for nearly two decades

- In 2021, a record number of cities used Ranked Choice Voting: 32 cities in 7 states
- 20 cities were added in Utah alone, and RCV polled at 80% approval
- Three additional cities voted to adopt RCV by popular referenda



TOPICS PROJECTS FEATURES ABOUT GET INVOLVED SEARCH

## Ranked Choice Voting Survived Its Biggest Election Season Yet

STATELINE ARTICLE | November 23, 2021 | By: [Matt Vasilogambros](#) | Read time: 7 min

Read Mode

SHARE



A New York City Board of Elections staff member shows a ballot to a campaign observer during the mayoral ranked choice primary in June. Ranked choice voting is expanding nationally.

Mary Altaffer/The Associated Press

Voters in a record number of cities cast their ballots this month by ranking a slate of candidates rather than choosing just one.

AUTHOR



[Matt Vasilogambros](#)  
Staff Writer  
Stateline

EXPLORE MORE FROM STATELINE

explore by place

explore by topic

### Stateline Daily

Daily update — original reporting on state policy, plus the day's five top reads from around the web.



# RCV has support across the political spectrum

## Democrats

Many “Blue Cities” like

- San Francisco
- New York City
- Minneapolis

## Republicans

- The Utah State Legislature
- Virginia GOP Convention
- Indiana GOP Convention

## Third-Party/ Independents

- Officially endorsed by the Green, Alliance, Forward, and Libertarian Parties
- 62% of Americans believe a third party is needed (Gallup)

Photo: Andrew Rossello  
**Opinion:** Maya Wiley: I lost the NYC mayoral race, but women and minorities win with ranked-choice voting



By Maya Wiley  
May 16, 2022 at 10:00 am EDT

**Opinion:** Ranked-choice voting offers a promising path for Virginia elections

By ERIC WILSON  
FOR THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT | AUG 04, 2021 AT 8:05 PM



In this June 14 photo, an election worker goes over a ranked-choice voting explanation card with a voter before she casts her vote during early voting in the primary election, at the Church of St. Anthony of Padua in the SoHo neighborhood of New York City. (AP Photo/Mark S. Wright)

**Support for Third U.S. Political  
Party at High Point**

BY JEFFREY M. JONES





# Lots of expertise/best practices



[HOME](#) [RCV 101](#) [LIBRARY](#) [STAKEHOLDERS](#) [MEDIA](#) [TOOLS](#) [ABOUT](#) [GET CONNECTED](#) [MONTHLY POLL](#)

## ELECTION ADMINISTRATORS

### CONDUCT AN ELECTION

Administering an election is an intricate and vitally important process. Ranked-choice voting elections present routine election procedures and unique administrative tasks. This section is meant to guide election officials and others interested in the process through what it takes to run an RCV election. The page is divided into three main components; Planning, Pre-Election, and Election.

[LEARN MORE](#)

### TABULATION & RESULTS

Machine Counting

Hand Counting

RCV Tabulator

[LEARN MORE](#)

### BALLOT DESIGN

Designing Ballots

Best Practices

Grid Style

Optical Scan Ballots

[LEARN MORE](#)



# RCV is already compatible in Linn Co

- Linn County uses ES&S Digital Scan 200 optical scan voting equipment.
- This equipment is not only compatible with Ranked Choice Elections, but is also used by Minneapolis/Hennepin County, which effectively handles much larger RCV/IRV and RCV/STV elections.



RCV Readiness Score: 95%

RCV Readiness Category: Prepping for RCV



<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1yZIsR1po3xuBMEvGhq2OQiINVbnjrcNv/view>



# RCV is economical

Extra Cost per RCV Election

**\$3,000-\$4,000**



Extra Cost per Runoff/Primary

**\$80,000**





# Added costs of switching to RCV

## Recurring Costs

\$0	New machines
\$0	New software
\$3,000-\$4,000	Consultant from RCV Resource Center

## One-Time/Two-Time Costs

\$25,000	Mailers/Voter Education
\$10,000	Staff Training
\$8,000	Volunteer Training



# RCV is popular

**77%** of New Yorkers who used RCV for primaries, support it for future elections ([source](#))

**60.9%** of Maine Voters favor keeping or expanding RCV ([source](#))

**94%** of Santa Fe voters reported being “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” w/ RCV ([source](#))

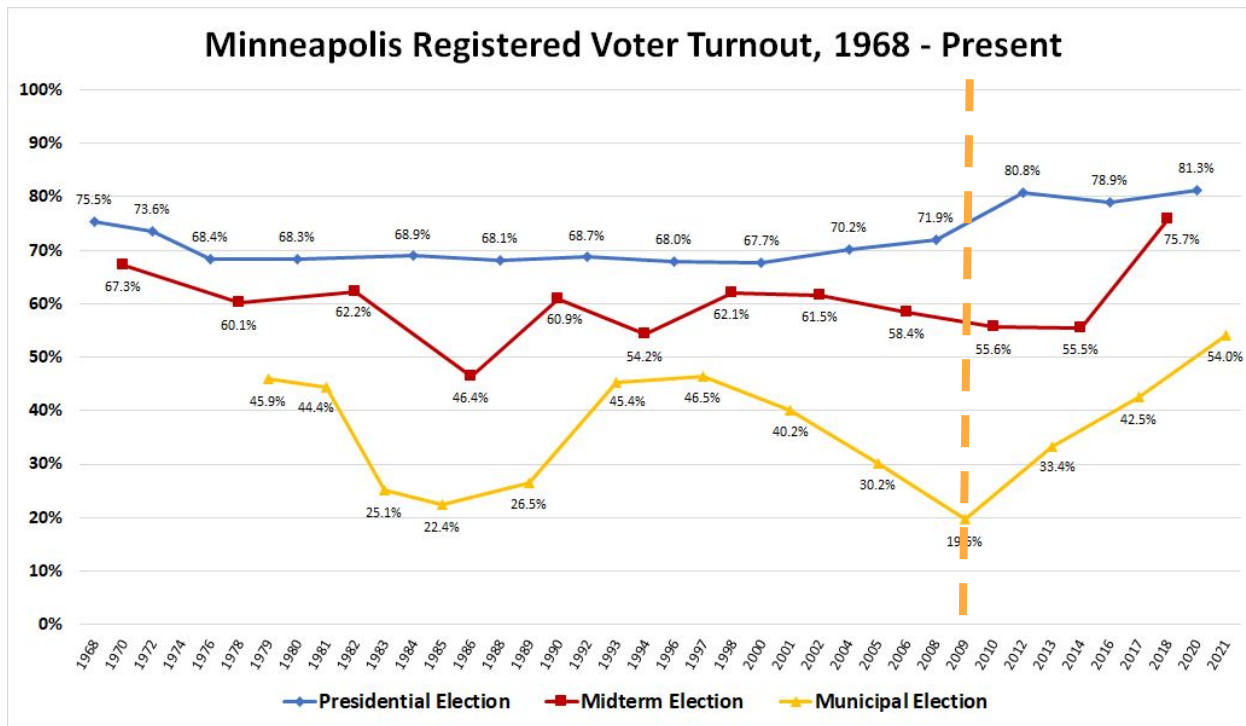
**66%** of Minneapolis voters support continued use of RCV, w/ only 16% against and 18% unsure ([source](#))

**86%** of Utah voters were either “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with RCV ([source](#))





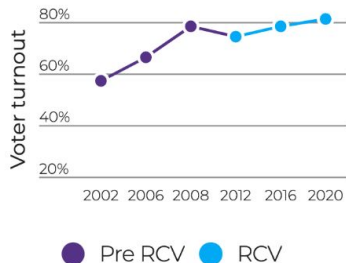
# RCV is good for turnout



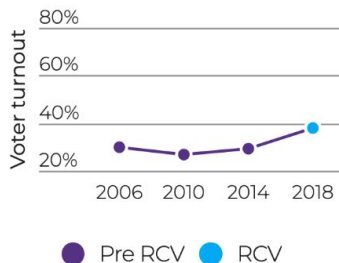


# RCV is good for turnout

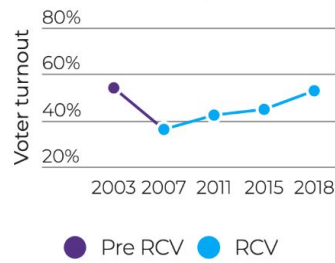
Berkeley, CA



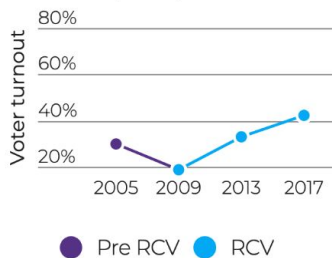
Santa Fe, NM



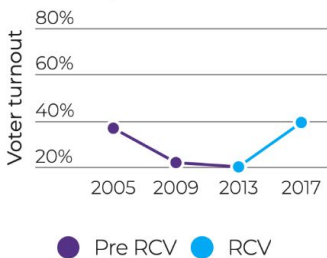
San Francisco, CA



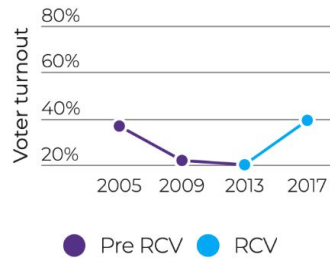
Minneapolis, MN



St. Paul, MN



St. Paul, MN





# RCV is secure and fully auditable

- RCV elections, using existing Iowa infrastructure, would still produce physical ballots that leave a paper record.
- Ranked ballots can be hand recounted, when necessary
- There are well established procedures for recounts and audits in close races.





# Incentives for Positivity

- When politicians are worried about winning your #2 choice, they're more careful not to attack your #1 choice
- A voter supporting a different candidate is still worth talking to, since their #2 choice is still in play.

Flips the script on campaigning



# An Exciting Opportunity for Cedar Rapids





# Available Options for Cedar Rapids

## Runoffs $\geq$ Primaries $>$ Plurality

- Majority wins
- Choice where it matters

- Majority wins
- Slightly more convenient

Simple

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Poor timing

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Less choice where it counts
- Contentious binary races

- Minority rule
- Spoiler effect
- Tends towards less choice and contentious binary races

(see backup slides for more data)



# Available Options for Cedar Rapids

**RCV** > **Runoffs** ≥ **Primaries** > **Plurality**

**Advantages of  
runoffs but  
without the  
costs**

- Majority wins
- Choice where it matters

- Majority wins
- Slightly more convenient

Simple

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Poor timing

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Less choice where it counts
- Contentious binary races

- Minority rule
- Spoiler effect
- Tends towards less choice and contentious binary races

**(see backup slides for more data)**



# Cedar Rapids can adopt trigger language

- Some attorneys have suggested that Iowa state law precludes local governments from adopting Ranked Choice Voting for local elections.
- Assuming this to be the case, Cedar Rapids can amend its charter to adopt RCV for city elections, but with language specifying that the change is to become effective when Iowa state law is changed to allow cities to do so.
- The mechanism is called **“trigger language”**, where the change to RCV for city elections is triggered by a change to state law.

## Recent Example in the State Legislature:

<Sec. \_\_\_\_\_. CONTINGENT EFFECTIVE DATE. This Act takes effect on the date federal legislation is enacted authorizing states to adopt daylight saving time as the official time in that state throughout the year.>



# Our Recommendations

- Put trigger language stipulating the the city would adopt RCV if it becomes legally available
  - **Instant Runoff Voting** would be used to pick single winners
  - **Single Transferable Voting** would be used for multiple seats
- The election schedule can be adjusted to put all three at-large reps in the same election year as the mayor and all district-level council seats in the alternating election years
- Until RCV becomes available, the runoff system is probably the best option, imperfect though it is



# RCV: Better for Cedar Rapids

- Ranked Choice Voting provides a system for conducting instantaneous runoff votes, *without* additional elections
- RCV will help build a better system for Cedar Rapids, that
  - efficiently and economically picks the most preferred candidates
  - better represents the electorate
  - rewards politicians who build broad coalitions
  - doesn't play into the growing polarization of national politics

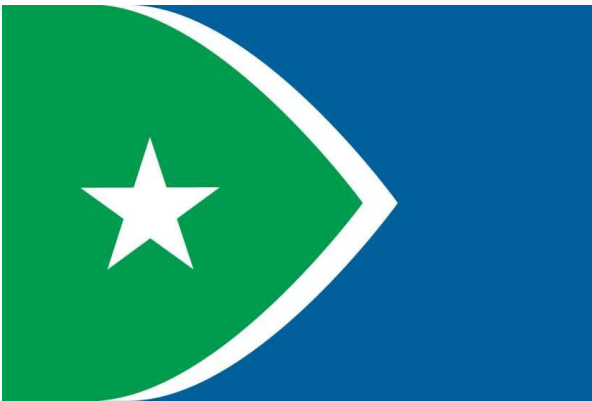




# RCV: Better for Cedar Rapids

Even though the legal path is not yet cleared for CR to adopt RCV, trigger language is a way of seizing the moment and advancing this issue

- Good for Cedar Rapids
- Good for other Iowa towns/cities struggling with these problems
- Good for Iowa at large



**IOWA**





# Thank You!

- We're happy to answer any questions or concerns.
- We can also connect you with any legal or technical support you would need to move ahead.

<https://www.betterballotiowa.org>


<https://www.facebook.com/BetterBallotIowa>

<https://twitter.com/betterballotia>





# Cedar Rapids Flag Was Chosen Using RCV



FOR RESIDENTS

FOR BUSINESS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

DISCOVER CEDAR RAPIDS

PMS: 3015 C  
CYMK: 100/58/21/4  
RGB: 0/98/155  
HEX: #0066A1

PMS: 356 C  
CYMK: 0/0/0/0  
RGB: 255/255/255  
HEX: #FFFFFF

Font Size: 356  
CYMK: 96/8/99/1  
RGB: 0/159/77  
HEX: #007934

Translate

Enter search terms...

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Were residents consulted for the design of the flag?**

Final designs were created by local volunteer designers using feedback received through an [extensive public input process](#), including suggested symbols and designs from more than 200 residents. The designs were revised based on feedback from members of the North American Vexillological Association and a local committee. **More than 2,000 residents ranked their favorite choices among four finalist options** to arrive at a final flag design.



# Backup Slides: Mechanics of CR Elections



# How Cedar Rapids Votes

- Cedar Rapids elects nine officials: the mayor, five district council members, and three at-large council members
  - Four of these are elected on a *city-wide* basis (the mayor and three at-large council members)
  - Five district council members are elected from districts





# How Cedar Rapids Votes

- All are elected to four-year terms
- All are members of the city council (including the mayor)





# **Backup Slides: Changing the Election Cycle to Get all At-Large Reps in One Election**



# Change to Election Cycles

- Currently, in mayoral election years (e.g., 2021, 2017), voters elected two citywide officials and three officials from districts:
  - The mayor
  - Three district council members (CD1, CD3, CD5)
  - One at-large council member
- In the other election years (e.g., 2019, 2015), voters elected two citywide officials and two officials from districts:
  - Two at-large council members (in the same race)
  - Two district council members (CD2, CD4)



# Change to Election Cycles

- It is believed that it would be less confusing if all citywide elections occurred at the same time and all districts had elections at the same time
- The elections can be transitioned as follows:
  - All current elected officials complete their current terms
  - In the 2023 elections, the two at-large members are elected to two-year terms
  - In the 2025 elections, three district council members (CD1, CD3, CD5) are elected to two-year terms



# During and After Transition

- 2023: CD2 & CD4 (4 yr terms); two at-large (2 yr terms)
- 2025: Mayor (4 yr); CD1, CD3, CD5 (2 yr); three at-large (4 yr)
- 2027: **All Districts:** CD1, CD2, CD3, CD4, CD5 (4 yr terms)
- 2029: **All Citywide:** Mayor (4yr); three at-large (4 yr)
- 2031: All Districts
- 2033: All Citywide
- 2035: All Districts
- 2037: All Citywide

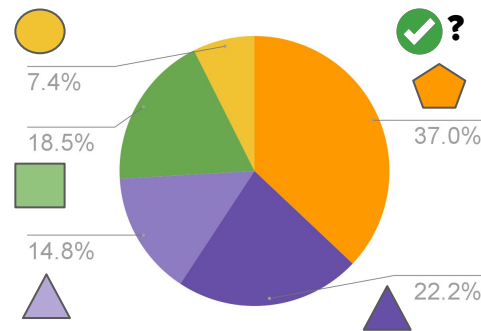
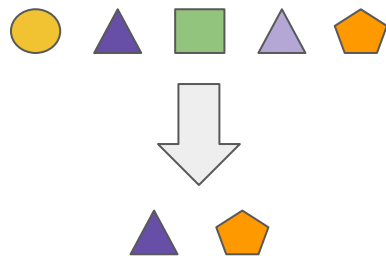


# Backup Slides: Other Options for CR



# Other Election Options in Iowa

- Switch to a **primary system**
  - If there are too many candidates, a nonpartisan primary is held four weeks before the general election
  - Top two candidates move on to the general election
- Switch to a **plurality system**
  - A single election is held
  - The candidate with the most votes wins, *even if it is not a majority*





# A Primary System Wouldn't Really Fix the Problems

- Slightly more convenient time
- Maximizes turnout at the final election
- Primaries famously have low turnout
- Less choice in the general election
- Might lead to more contentious binary campaigns in the general election
- **Would require *more* elections than a runoff system.**



# A primary system would require more extra elections

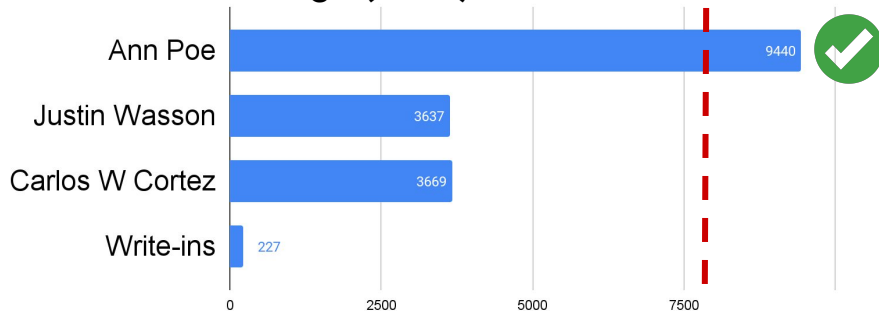
Election Year	Runoff Needed	Would've needed a primary
2005	YES	YES
2007	YES	YES
2009	YES	YES
2011	NO	YES (AL, CD2, CD4)
2013	YES	YES
2015	NO	YES (5 candis for 2 AL seats)
2017	YES	YES
2019	NO	NO
2021	YES	YES



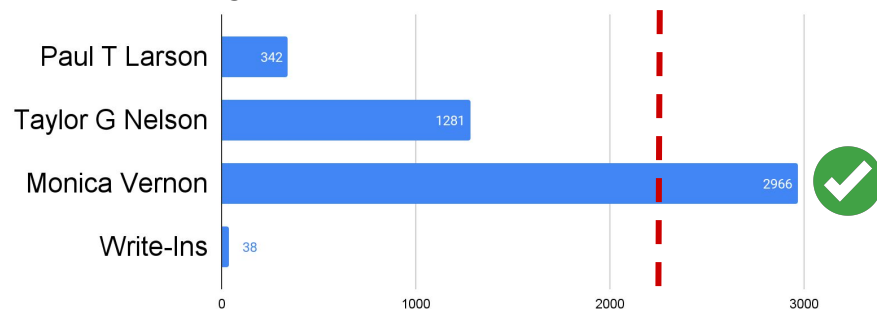
# A primary system would require more extra elections

## Example: 2011 Cedar Rapids Election

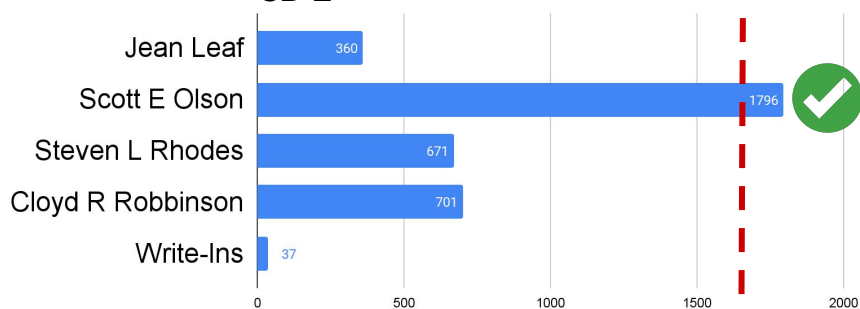
### At-large (1 seat)



### CD-4



### CD-2



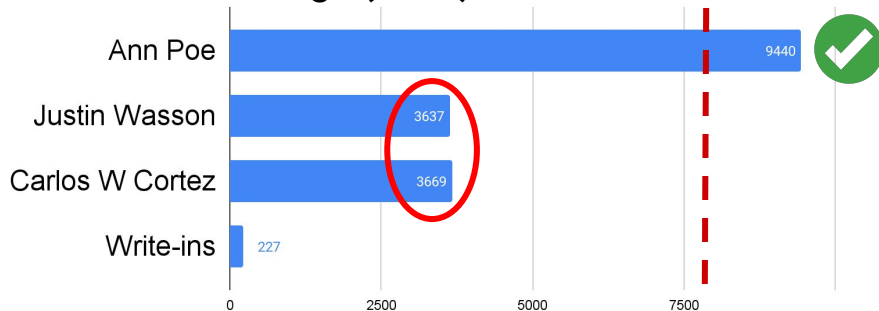
- **Clear majority in all races**
- **No runoff was needed**
- **All 3 races would have required a primary**



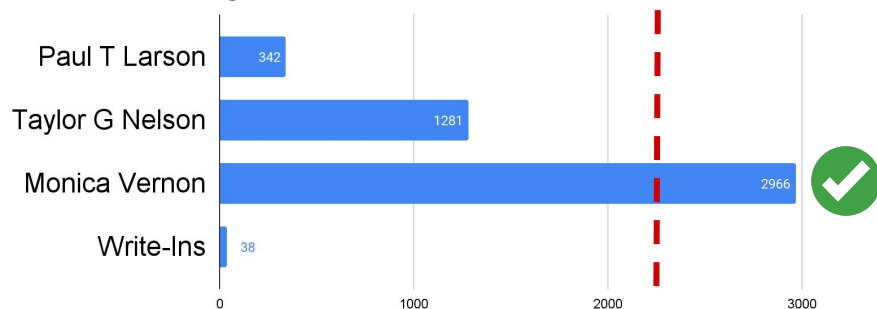
# A primary system would require more extra elections

Example: 2011

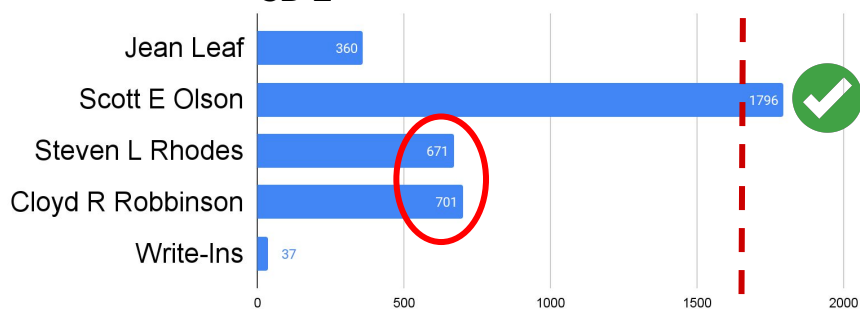
At-large (1 seat)



CD-4



CD-2



- In two races, the second place winner was close (30 & 32 votes)
- General election ballots cannot be printed until recounts are resolved



# Plurality Elections would be worse

Cedar Rapids elections since 2005:

**5 out of 11 runoffs**

The person with the most votes in the general election did *not* win the runoff

**<30% of the vote**

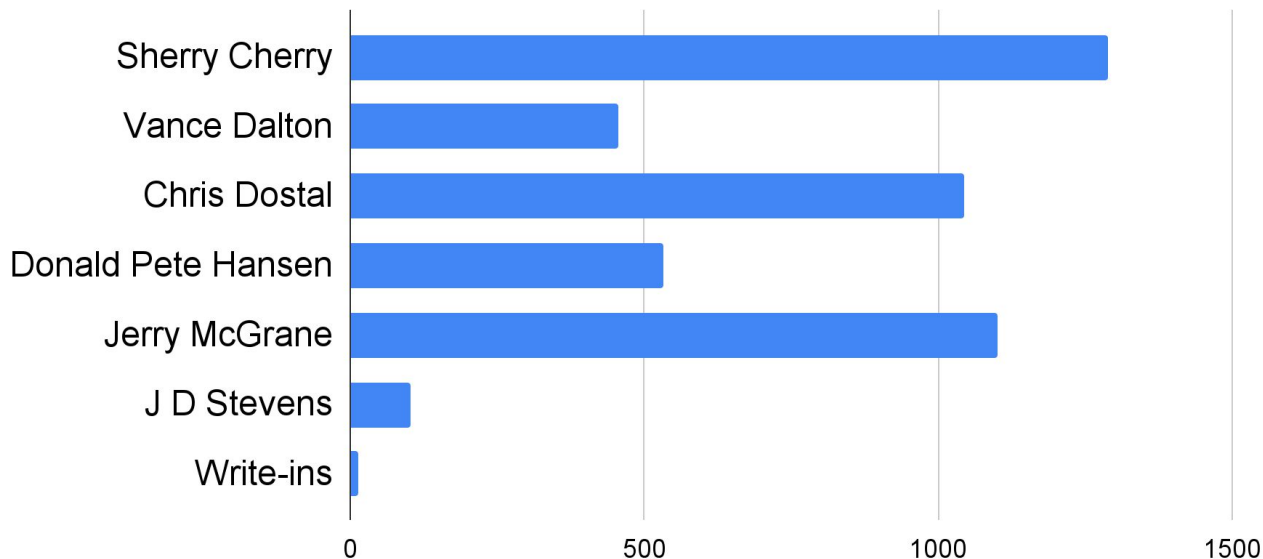
In 3 races, a candidate would have won the plurality election with less than 30% of the vote

Plurality elections would frequently fail to elect the preferred candidate



# Most Votes $\neq$ Preferred by the Majority

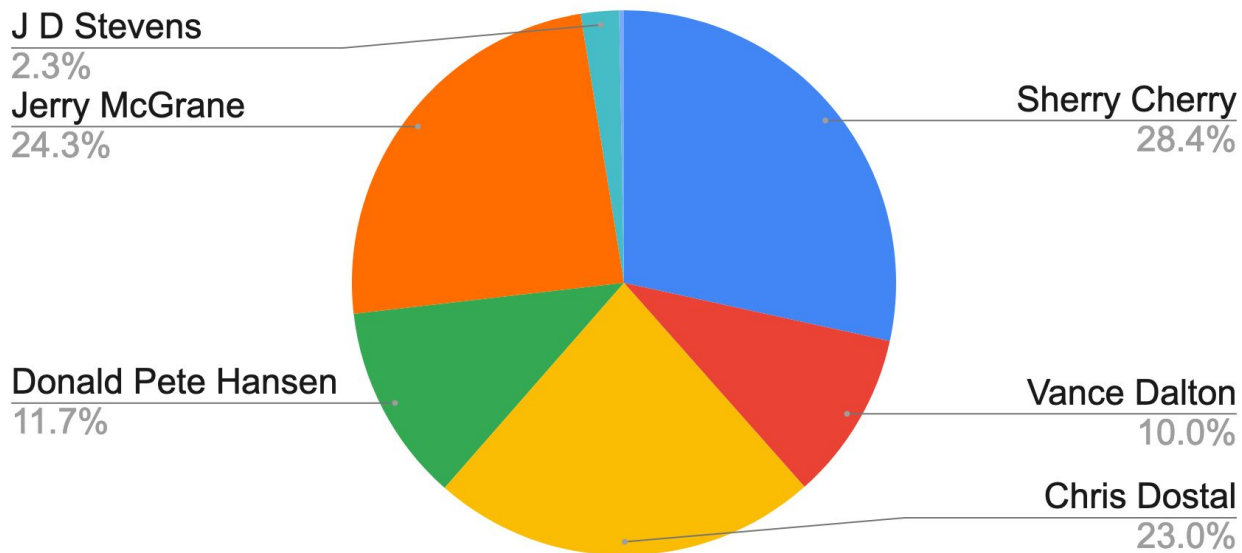
## 2005 General Election, District 3 Council Seat





# Most Votes $\neq$ Preferred by the Majority

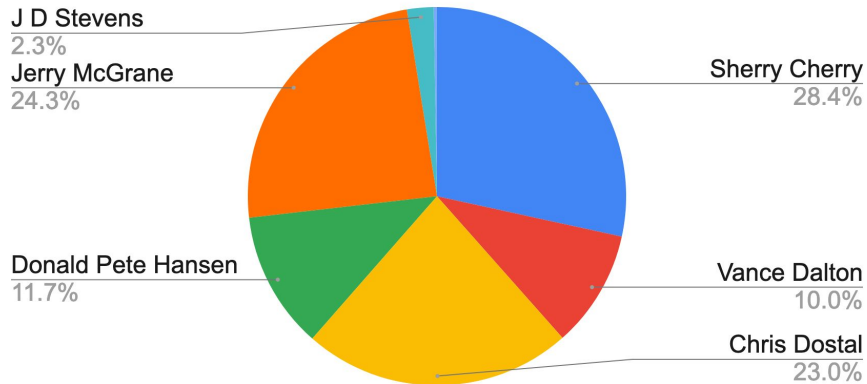
## 2005 General Election, District 3 Council Seat



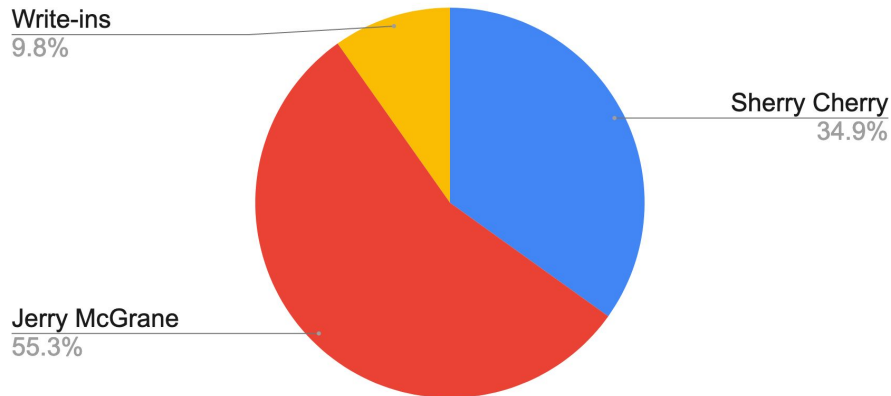


# Plurality elections can select an unpopular winner

**2005 General Election, District 3**



**2005 Runoff, District 3**



McGrane received more votes in the runoff than Cherry did in *either* election



# Plurality voting

- Can lead to minority rule
- Candidates are discouraged from running
- Voters are discouraged from voting for the candidate they really like
- Tends towards *contentious* binary races

**Don't run for office!!  
You'll SPOIL the election!**

**Don't throw your vote  
away!**



# Available Options for Cedar Rapids

## Runoffs $\geq$ Primaries $>$ Plurality

- Majority wins
- Choice where it matters

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Poor timing

- Majority wins
- Slightly more convenient

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Less choice where it counts
- Contentious binary races

Simple

- Minority rule
- Spoiler effect
- Tends towards less choice and contentious binary races



# Available Options for Cedar Rapids

**RCV** > **Runoffs**  $\geq$  **Primaries** > **Plurality**

**Advantages of  
runoffs but  
without the  
costs**

- Majority wins
- Choice where it matters

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Poor timing

- Majority wins
- Slightly more convenient

- Costly
- Bad for turnout
- Less choice where it counts
- Contentious binary races

Simple

- Minority rule
- Spoiler effect
- Tends towards less choice and contentious binary races



# Backup Slides: Data on Ranked Choice Voting



# Lots of data on outcomes

**440**

RCV elections since 2004

**439**

Where the winner was preferred by the majority of voters in any head-to-head pairing

**420**

Where the first-round winner won the final election

**1**

Where the Condorcet winner lost



# Lots of data on outcomes

## RCV outperforms two-round runoffs

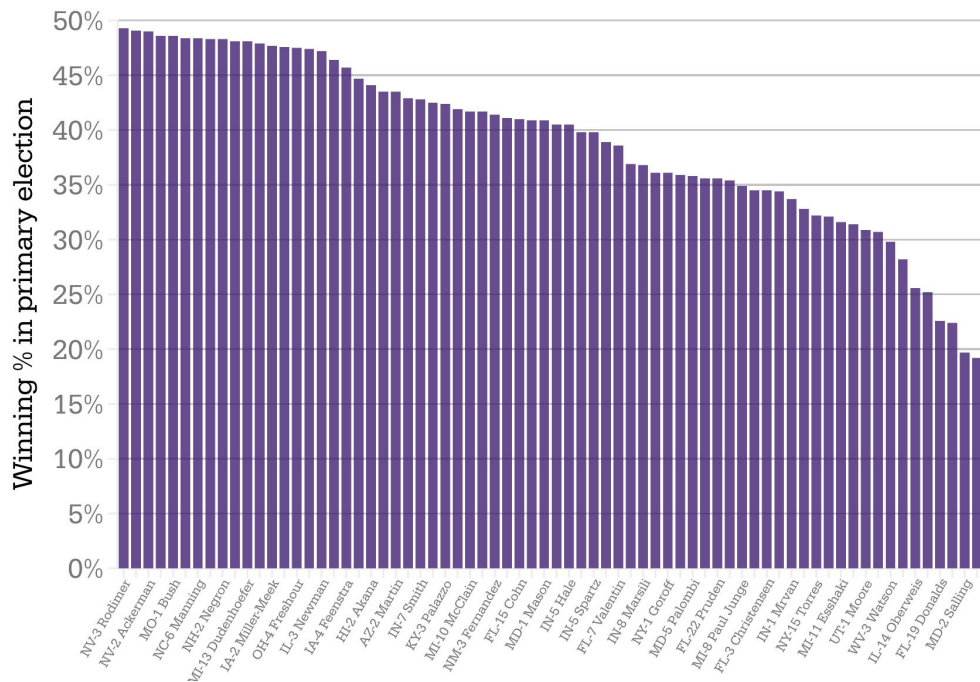
	RCV elections, 2004 - 2020	Federal Primary Runoffs, 1994 - 2020	San Francisco Runoffs, 2000 - 2003	Statewide Runoffs, 2020
Number of races	111	248	14	22
Races where winner's vote total increased from 1st to final round	100%	50%	43%	50%
Races where winner's final vote total >50% of 1st round vote**	41%	13%	14%	27%
Races where winner's final vote total >40% of 1st round vote**	94%	37%	36%	27%
Winners' median final vote share as % of 1st round vote	49%	36%	34%	36%

Includes multi-round RCV contests where ballot data allowed us to reduce the count to two finalists, as in runoff elections.



# Lots of data on outcomes

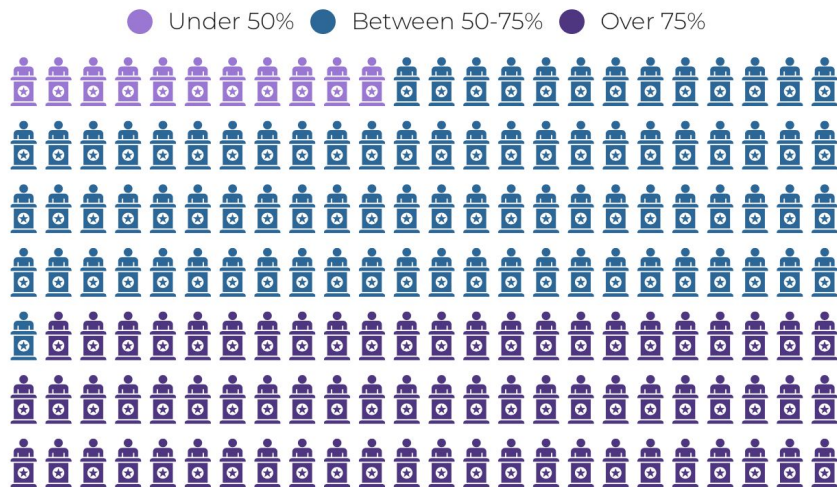
## 2020 plurality primary winners, U.S. house





# Lots of data on outcomes

## Consensus Value for Winners of RCV Races



**Percentage of voters for whom the winning candidate was in their top-3**

Includes all single-winner RCV races in the U.S. since 2004 with 3+ candidates and for which we have enough data to determine consensus value.



# Backup Slides: Policy Brief and History of CR Elections



## BBI Policy Brief

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZKGaBQc7rgOvx8k\\_ICl34Vgmt60Hn5codwecFebQE6g/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ZKGaBQc7rgOvx8k_ICl34Vgmt60Hn5codwecFebQE6g/edit)

Full summary of Cedar Rapids Elections since 2005:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/11B4ZAPjyyN0m1St1ksvZZpjeE-3hHu8b0SnjTC6xYCw/edit?usp=sharing>