

Charter Commission Proposal for Run-Offs

November 9, 2007

Team Members

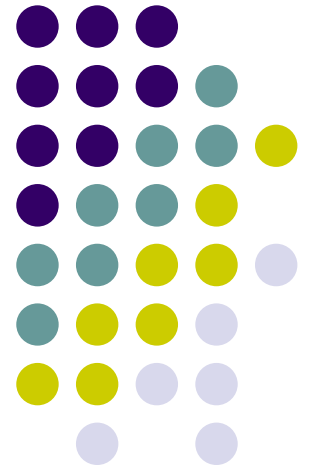
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History on Run-Offs

- Local judge decision in 1991 via United States vs. City of Memphis case – Judge Jerome Turner
- Dept. of Justice filed suit claiming run-offs were designed to prevent African Americans from winning elections
- Elimination of run-offs prevented stacking votes against the minority candidate
- Consent Decree declared at large elections 2nd round voting would disenfranchise minority voters
- 7 districts and 2 super district overlays as a result; 2 super districts and mayor office do not require run-offs

Run-Offs – Present Day



- Modernized methods do provide a just method to represent a majority of voters

Proposal



- Therefore we propose the city charter include a provision for run-off elections in all city wide elected positions

There are several pros and benefits to run-off elections



- Maximizes the voice of the majority of eligible voters
- Increases credibility and legitimacy among winning candidate having won with a majority or more than half the votes
- Increases support from the people because more than 50% of them will have voted for winner
- Ensures a truly democratic election and outweighs costs associated with having candidate elected by a minority of voters
- Provides incentives for voters to select their preferred candidate in first round rather than defaulting to a known front runner
- Significantly reduces negative campaigning given candidates may have to rely on competitor supporters for 2nd choice selection

Sources: Commonwealth Election Commission of The Northern Marian Islands, Voters Manual of Pros/Cons of the House Legislative Initiative 15-16, SD1; New Mexico Legislative Council Service, Constitutional Amendments Proposed by the Legislature in 2003 and 2004, Brief Analysis and Arguments For and Against Run Off Elections.

We propose a mutually beneficial approach with Instant Run Off Voting



What is Instant Run Off Voting?

In an election of three or more candidates, instant voting represents an invitation to voters to rank the candidates according to preference. If no candidate achieves the majority of votes required to be elected outright, then the results are re-tallied by eliminating the bottom candidate(s) and allocating the second choices of those whose first choice has been eliminated.

Instant Run Off Voting yields many benefits



- Eliminates voter fatigue and decreased participation associated with multiple trips to the polls
- Avoids costs of traditional run offs with only one round of voting required; requires only one time costs associated with upgrading selection materials
- Enables a true majority outcome increasing voter confidence and turnout
- Transfers power from politicians and government officials to voters

See what people have to say firsthand with testimonies about why they favor instant voting at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B2QgwX0Rahc>

Instant run offs is proven and continues to gain momentum



City	San Francisco, CA	Takoma Park, MD	Cary, NC
When Implemented	City implemented IRV for all local elections in 2004 elections	First used IRV in a city council election on January 30, 2007	On October 9, 2007, Cary (NC) became the latest city to implement instant runoff voting (IRV) with great success
Results and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Only 13% of voters would like to return to the two-round runoff system previously used -87% of voters said they understood the system and No more than 23% of any one racial and ethnic group reported not understanding the system -Several candidates held joint fundraisers, effectively endorsing competitors while appealing to their supporters for second and third choice voting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Only one invalid ballot and two voter errors in any rankings -Over 80% of voters used two or more rankings -83% of voters knew they would be using IRV, thanks to public education efforts -Over 88% of voters thought the system was easy to use -Over 55% of voters believed the campaign was less negative than under winner-take-all -Over 88% of voters wanted to use IRV in future elections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Exit poll showed three-to-one support for IRV over traditional runoffs and 96% understanding of the system -72% of those who voted say they favored instant-runoff voting -Only 9% percent of the people who voted for the third-place finisher failed to cast a second vote -Three North Carolina dailies called for expanding IRV elections in their state. -IRV is on the ballot in several new cities and counties this fall, garnering newspaper support -Voter participation in Cary was higher than in Wake County overall at about 19 percent.
Costs	<p>The new IRV system cost San Francisco approximately \$2.4 million versus an estimated second round of voting cost between \$1 million and \$3 million per runoff. This suggests that the new system would pay for itself in 1 to 3 election cycles, if runoffs are required.</p>		<p>The Wake County Board of Elections estimated that a town-wide runoff would have cost Cary an additional \$65,000. A runoff just for the district in question would have cost \$28,000. When two candidates meet for a statewide second primary that draws only 5 percent of eligible voters, it costs the state more than a million dollars. All that money is saved with an instant runoff.</p>

Sources: www.fairvote.org and www.commondreams.org



Research Methodology

- A series of in-depth interviews were conducted with subject matter experts over 5 week period to determine various viewpoints
- Background reference data from various sources was collected to obtain history of run-offs
- Benchmarks were also obtained from other city governments to round out viewpoints



Acknowledgements

Leo Bearman, Jr.

Michael Richards

Buck Wellford

Jenni Falkof

Davis-Kidd Booksellers

Google

Wikipedia

YouTube