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.
  o Under RCV, voters are asked to rank multiple candidates rather than vote for a single person.
  o 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.
  o 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.
  o 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.
  o 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.