



Media Memo

October 31, 2022

To: Media and Other Interested Parties

From: Amanda K. Moser, Chief Strategy Officer

Re: Alaska's Election System, Pick 1 Primary and Ranked Choice General Election

Candidates: Winning Requires a Broad Majority Coalition

There can be a tendency by the media and even by some candidates to treat a ranked-choice election like any other, but it's not. And candidates who use the same old campaign tactics do so to their detriment.

Candidates earn votes and win differently in ranked-choice elections and should campaign differently. Ranked choice voting (RCV) elections require winners to earn majority support, and that has several important implications for campaigning effectively and winning in a ranked-choice election.

First and foremost, RCV rewards candidates who build broad coalitions of support. Candidates who reach out to as many voters and communities of voters as possible, and strive to earn, not only 1st, but also 2nd and 3rd choice rankings are most likely to be successful under RCV. Unlike a plurality election, candidates are less likely to win with their base voters alone. Whether taking a progressive, moderate or conservative approach to Alaska policies, successful RCV candidates will want to broaden their base and reach as many voters as possible. Whatever the result, the winning candidate will be the one who made that effort, built the broadest coalition of voter support, and earned a majority in the final round of counting.

Second, negative campaigning and attacking your opponent can backfire. The most successful RCV candidates focus on the issues and refrain from negative attacks since they do not want to alienate their opponents' supporters and risk those 2nd and 3rd choice votes. The more negative and divisive a candidate is, the more voters that candidate offends, and the fewer 2nd and 3rd choices that candidate earns.

Similarly, independent expenditure campaigns (IEs) should focus on promoting the

positive side of their candidates rather than attacking their opponents. At the end of the campaign, whoever wins will represent and be accountable to the entire House District, Senate District, or Alaska, not just their base of voters. RCV encourages this coalition building, and IEs can and should lean in on this opportunity.

Third, while 1st choice rankings are most important, candidates should actively seek 2nd choice and 3rd choices votes to reach the winning threshold. They should tell voters, for example, "Vote for me number 1. But if you're supporting another candidate for 1st choice, rank me number 2."

In summary, candidates who focus on the issues that matter the most to voters, stay positive, reach out to as many voters as possible and build the broadest coalition are most likely to win ranked-choice elections.

Voters: Rank your vote!

It's really important for voters to rank as many candidates as they like - up to 5 choices if they have a write-in candidate. The more a voter ranks, the more power their ballot has in deciding the outcome of the election:

- If a voter's 1st choice candidate is eliminated, their vote will continue to count for their 2nd and later choices, and they will still have a say in deciding the winner.
- Voting only for one candidate, or the same candidate more than once, will not improve that candidate's likelihood of winning.
- If voters rank only one candidate and that candidate is defeated in the 1st round of counting, they have lost their opportunity to weigh in on the remaining candidates.

As voters prepare to rank, think of their:

- 1st choice as the candidate they love.
- 2nd choice as the candidate they like.
- 3rd choice as the candidate they like, but just not as much.

There are no downsides to ranking candidates. Ranking a 2nd or 3rd choice will never hurt your favorite candidate. Your vote counts for your 2nd choice only if your 1st choice is eliminated. Your vote counts for your 3rd choice only if your 1st and 2nd choices are eliminated, and so on.

Before voters fill out their ballot, they should take some time to educate themselves about the candidates and their positions. Voters can find candidate information in the Division of Elections Official Election Pamphlet, mailed to all registered voters and also available [online](#). Additionally, Alaska Public Media, Alaska Beacon, Anchorage Daily News and KTOO made an [interactive comparison tool](#) for statewide candidates.

RCV's effect on ballot measures and critical issues facing Alaskans

Alaskans for Better Elections is a nonpartisan organization that helps educate voters, candidates, communities, and the media about RCV and does not take positions on ballot measures unrelated to democracy reform.

However, voters will find Ballot Measure No. 1 on the General Election ballot regarding if Alaska should hold a constitutional convention, we would like to underscore two points.

1. RCV is not used for ballot measures; voters either vote yes or no. So the campaign tactics and dynamics are different from a ranked-choice election.
2. The ballot measure represents a binary choice that, like the plurality system, results in a more polarized electorate and leaves no room for nuance, even though the issue itself is complex and multifaceted.

Regardless of the result of Ballot Measure No. 1, candidates who win this ranked-choice election will have earned support from the broadest swath of voters possible — meaning a majority in the final round of counting.

With increasing political division in the electorate, it is more important now than ever to reach as many voters as possible and build broad winning coalitions of support. These are important conversations about the future of our state, and it is best that they take place in a constructive manner that Alaska's Election System encourages.

Please contact Amanda K. Moser, Chief Strategy Officer, at 907-830-7560 or Amanda@AlaskansforBetterElections.com if you have any questions or need additional information.