



Media Memo

November 4, 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

This memorandum is the third and final in our series to educate the media, candidates and other interested parties on Alaska's Election System.

Alaska's Election System

Nonpartisan Pick 1 Primary

Alaska's Election System is a 2-part system that starts with an open, nonpartisan primary election. All candidates appear on the same ballot and all voters have access to that ballot. The top four vote getters advance to the Ranked Choice General Election.

It's important to note that the Nonpartisan Pick 1 Primary allows multiple candidates of the same party registration to advance to the General Election, whereas in the past, only one candidate from each party would appear on the General Election ballot. In districts where the race is historically decided in the primary, this means that the general election - which has higher voter participation - is more competitive.

All voters having access to the same ballot allows for greater participation in each race. In the past, voters were given access to either the Alaska Republican Party Ballot, or the Alaska Democratic Party and Alaska Independence Party Ballot, or the Measures Only Ballot based on their registration. Unaffiliated voters, who make up nearly 60% of voters in the state, had to select one of the ballots, greatly limiting their choices at the ballot box. Since voters had access to only one ballot, it diluted participation and limited choice.

The Nonpartisan Pick 1 Primary allows maximum participation and maximum choice for all voters. All voters have the opportunity to have their true voice heard, as it may span support for candidates across party lines.

Ranked Choice General Election

RCV Requires a Broad Majority Coalition

How RCV works

Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference and ensures winners with the highest support possible in a single, decisive and cost-effective election. In ranked choice elections, voters rank as many or as few candidates as they like from their favorite to least favorite: 1st choice, 2nd choice, and so on.

If a candidate receives a majority (50% + 1) of 1st choice rankings, that candidate wins. However, if no candidate receives a majority, then the candidate with the fewest 1st choice votes is eliminated. Voters who ranked that candidate as the 1st choice have their vote instantly go to their next choice. This process continues until one candidate reaches a majority and wins.

To win under RCV, candidates should strive to build broad coalitions of support. Winning candidates need to earn a majority (50% + 1) of continuing ballots in the final round.

Unlike a traditional plurality election, candidates who focus solely on their core supporters are less likely to win under RCV. Of course, candidates should earn as many 1st choice votes as possible from their base, but they also need to go beyond that base and earn 2nd and later-choice votes to reach the winning threshold. Accordingly, candidates should be reaching out to as many voters and communities as possible and appealing to the issues that matter to a broad majority of voters. For the same reason, attacking your opponents can backfire since that may alienate that opponent's core supporters, and you are unlikely to earn those 2nd or 3rd choice votes. In short, building a broad coalition of voters is the way to win a ranked choice election.

General Election Ballot

Some races have fewer than three candidates on the ballot. In races with only two candidates, while RCV is technically available, a candidate will earn a majority in the

first round. Consequently, you are more likely to see the typical negative campaigning that you have with a traditional election and a binary choice. Ranking kicks in when there are three or more candidates on the ballot. It's important to remember that.

Ballot Measures

RCV is not used for ballot measures, specifically Ballot Measure No. 1 on the November 8 General Election ballot. Voters either vote yes or no, and the campaign tactics and dynamics are different from a ranked choice election.

Judges on the Ballot

The Alaska Constitution and state law require all judges to appear periodically on the ballot for approval or disapproval by the voters (referred to as “judicial retention elections”). The power and duty of the people to vote on judicial retention is a critical part of Alaska’s judicial system. These races are a binary choice and not impacted by RCV. A “yes” vote retains a judge.

When to Expect Election Results Election Day

1st choice results will be reported once the polls close. Results will be updated throughout the evening as the division receives them from polling locations.

November 9-22

The Division will update results on day 7 (November 15), day 10 (November 18) and day 15 (November 23) with absentee, early and questioned ballots.

Unofficial results prior to November 23 will only include 1st choices.

If media outlets are reporting results during this period, you should make it abundantly clear that only 1st choice results are available and use cautious language when describing the outcome. It is helpful for the public to understand that we have "preliminary 1st choice results only" while we await tabulation. Similarly, the candidate with the most 1st choice votes may be “ahead” as we await tabulation, but they do not win unless they clearly earn a majority.

November 23

Final results will be tabulated and unofficial results reported. Unofficial results on November 23 will include an “RCV Detailed Report” that will outline each round of tabulation, including which candidate was eliminated and how the votes were reallocated.

Livestream

KTOO will provide live Gavel Alaska special coverage of RCV tabulation on November 23 starting at **4pm Alaska Time**. It will be broadcast live on KTOO 360TV (available via broadcast, cable, satellite, ARCS tv services across AK, and can be streamed live on <http://ktoo.org/tv>

The video will be available after the event for on-demand viewing in the Gavel Alaska online archive at <http://ktoo.org/gavel>. All the ways to watch are available online at <http://ktoo.org/tv>. Coverage will be made available to other media organizations.

Round One:

The Division will count all 1st choices. If a candidate gets 50%+1 votes in round one, that candidate wins. If not, tabulation goes to round two. Tabulation for each race takes only a few seconds, as shown in the August special election for U.S. House.

Round Two (and beyond):

If no candidate gets more than 50% of the votes in round one, the candidate with the fewest votes gets eliminated. If you voted for that eliminated candidate, your vote goes to your next choice. If your 1st choice candidate was not eliminated, your vote stays with them.

Votes are tabulated again. This keeps happening in rounds until two candidates are left and the one with the most votes wins.

As rounds of tabulation occur, some ballots may become inactive and do not continue to the next round if the voter did not express a preference for any candidates remaining on the ballot. This is normal and can occur when voters choose not to use their rankings, most often because they do not rank candidates they don't like. If the candidate(s) ranked on their ballot are eliminated in the tabulation process, their ballot no longer continues to count toward the winner.

The winning candidate will always have a majority of ballots continuing in the final round.

All results can be found on the Division of Elections Website www.elections.alaska.gov.

Regardless of the ultimate winner for offices, the value of Alaska's Election System is that it encourages a diverse slate of candidates to run, and requires candidates to build broad majority coalitions of support to win — and be responsive to that broad coalition once in office. So RCV not only changes the dynamics of the campaign, but should also influence how leaders govern. Alaska's Election System gives more power to voters to elect candidates who align with their issues and their values and allows them to express their opinions on all the candidates; voters are adept at deciding those rankings. Alaska's Election System gives more power to the voter to decide the future of Alaska, and that's exactly where the power should reside.

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.