

## Ranked choice voting primer

Written by FairVote MN, Jeanne Massey  
Thursday, 31 October 2013 11:54

---



On Nov. 5, both St. Paul and Minneapolis will use Ranked Choice Voting to elect city council members in multicandidate races. Minneapolis will also use RCV to elect Park Board members, members of the Board of Estimate and Taxation – and most notably, a brand new mayor.

Although Minneapolis rolled out RCV in 2009 and St. Paul first used Ranked Voting in 2011 (after voters in both cities approved the switch by referendum), this is a truly historic election year in the Twin Cities: Ranked Choice Voting is about to get its first big, high-profile test.

RCV works just like two elections – a primary and a general election – but it's done in a single trip to the polls. In Minneapolis and St. Paul, it's broadened citizen engagement by eliminating the low-turnout August primary, when historically a tiny, unrepresentative group of voters culled the field to just two choices for everyone else.

Ranked Choice Voting fosters greater political inclusion, enabling hardworking candidates from historically underrepresented communities – people of color, new Americans, women, up-and-comers without powerful establishment connections – to run for office and win.

In San Francisco, where it's been used for a decade plus, it's helped elect the most diverse Board of Supervisors in the city's history: Since RCV's adoption, the number of people of color elected to the Board of Supervisors has doubled; 8 out of 11 supervisors today are people of color.

And it rewards a more inclusive – and issue-based – campaigning style, too. Since candidates may need second- and third-choice votes from their opponents' supporters to win, it forces them to reach out to voters they might otherwise have ignored. Under RCV, a smart candidate emphasizes grassroots coalition-building and finding common ground on issues that matter to voters.

In an RCV election, identify backup choices in case their #1 candidate doesn't gather enough support to make it past the early rounds of counting. That means choosing a top favorite, plus additional acceptable candidates – and marking them in order of preference on the ballot.

## Ranked choice voting primer

Written by FairVote MN, Jeanne Massey  
Thursday, 31 October 2013 11:54

---

Each ballot will have multiple columns (3 in Minneapolis multicandidate races, 6 in the St. Paul Ward 1 race). Voters simply mark the ballot left to right, indicating their first choice in the first column, their second choice in the next column, their third choice in the column after that (and so on, if applicable).

**Specifying backup choices isn't mandatory, but it's smart. Ranking the ballot 1-2-3 gives voters more choice and more power. Remember, your first choice counts until that candidate is defeated. If you marked a second choice, your ballot will continue to count. And if you marked a third choice, your ballot will continue to count if your second choice is defeated.**

The finish line when electing just one candidate is 50 percent plus 1 (a majority of continuing ballots) – the first candidate to get there wins. If no candidate receives a majority of first choices, there will be additional rounds of counting, in which candidates with too few votes to move on will be defeated and their ballots transferred to remaining candidates . . . until one of them reaches the threshold.

Click here to see a video about how Ranked Choice Voting works: <http://vote.minneapolismn.gov/rcv/index.htm>

To learn more about how RCV works in Minneapolis, visit <http://vote.minneapolismn.gov>  
and <http://rankyourvotempls.org/>

To learn more about how Ranked Voting works in St. Paul, visit <http://votestpaul.org/>

And click here to download your sample ballot: <http://myballotmn.sos.state.mn.us>