FAIRVOTE

Ranked Choice Voting:

Overview & Lessons Learned

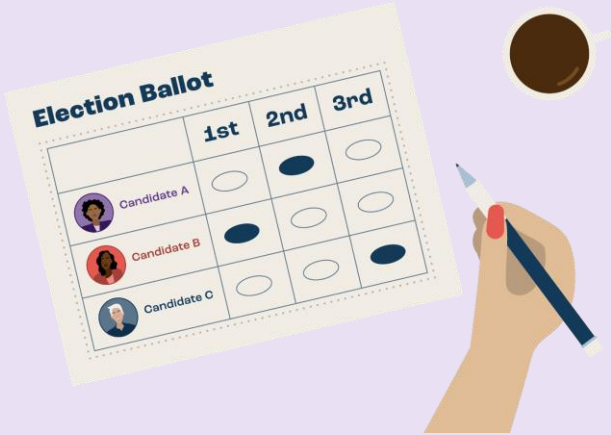
- Deb Otis, FairVote Director of Policy and Research

WHAT IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING

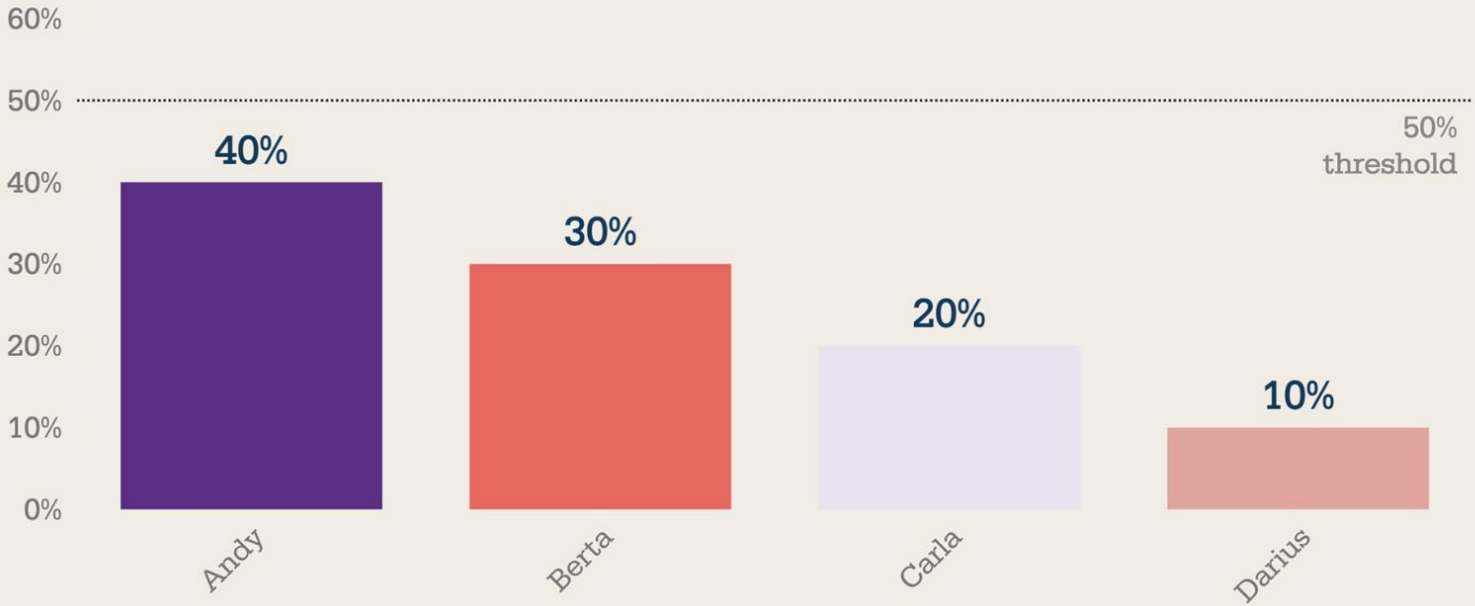
- Voters have the option to **rank candidates** in order of their preference.

- RCV **promotes majority winners**. If no candidate has a majority of first-choice preferences, candidates are eliminated one-by-one in an **“instant runoff”** until there is a majority winner.

- It’s a **simple change** with **powerful impacts** for our democracy.

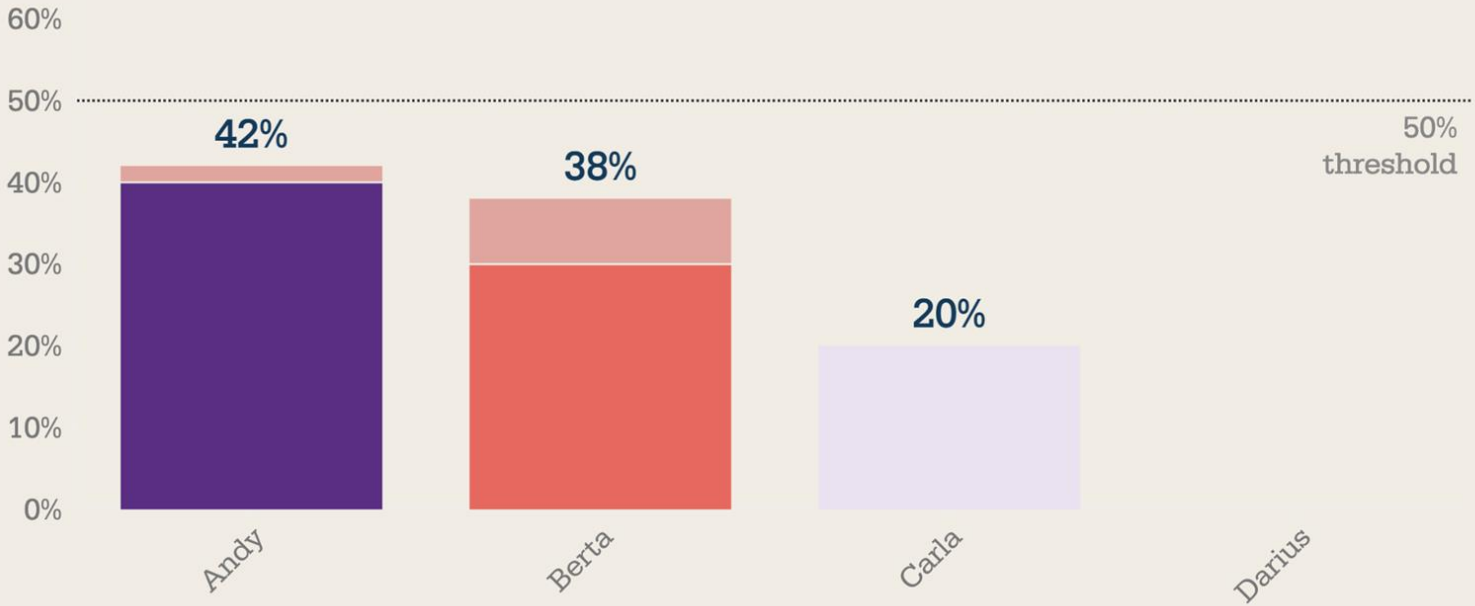


ROUND 1



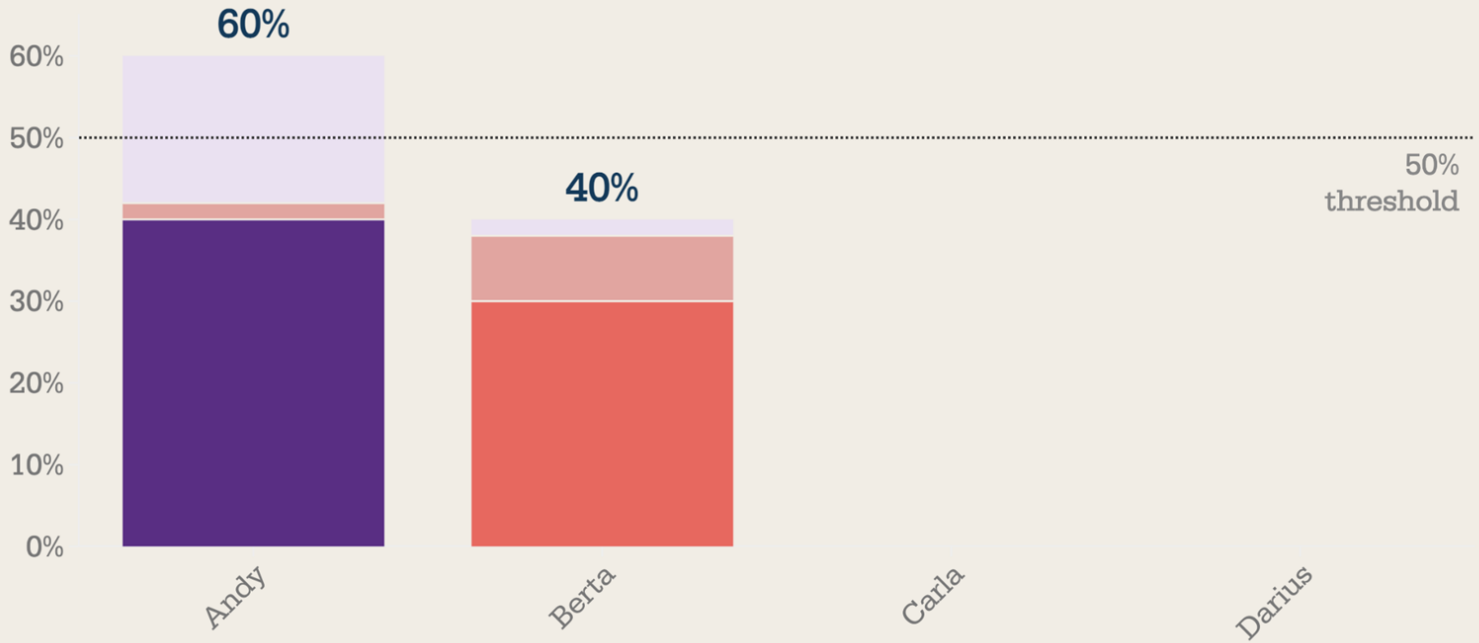
No candidate has more than half of 1st choices. The last-place candidate will be eliminated.

ROUND 2



Darius is eliminated. Those ballots count for the voters' 2nd choices.

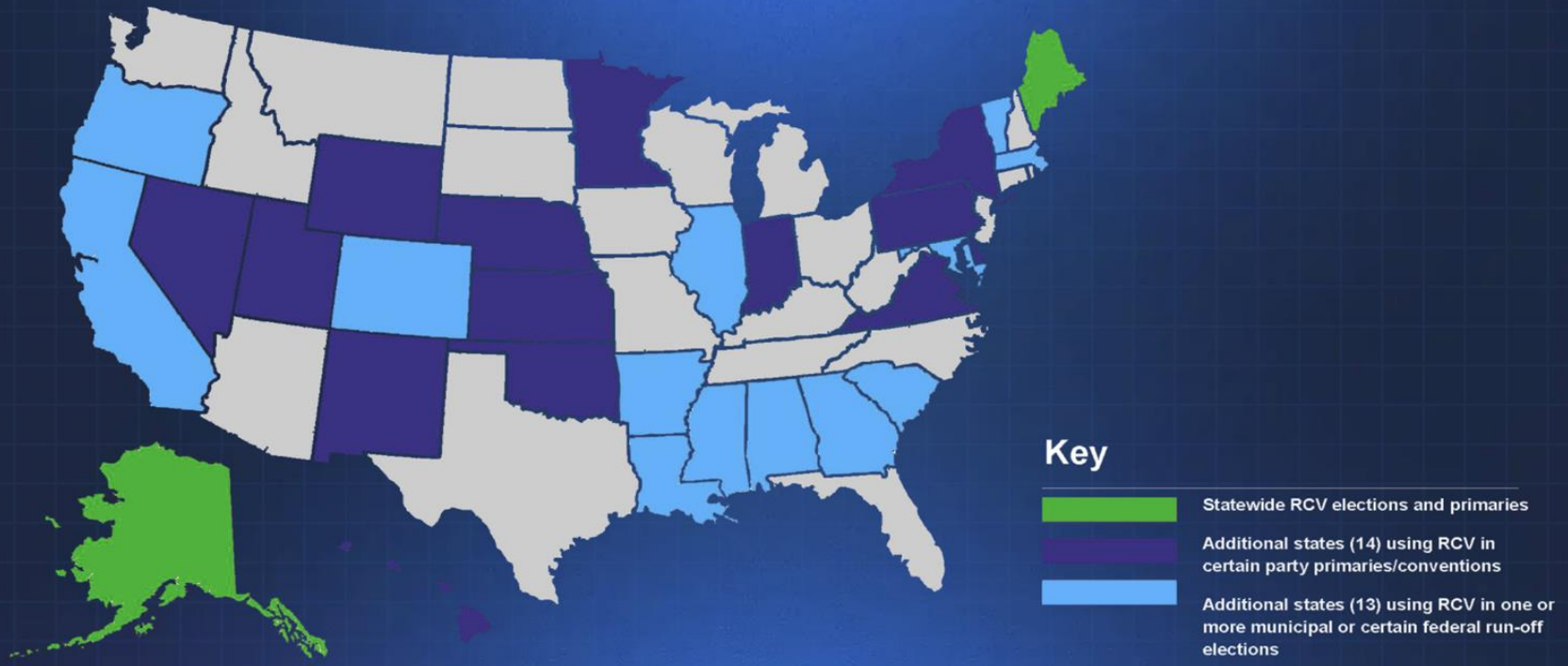
ROUND 3



Carla is eliminated. Those ballots count for the voters' next choices. Andy wins the election.

WHERE IS RCV USED?

14 MILLION VOTERS IN 29 RED AND BLUE STATES USE RCV



HOW RCV TRANSFORMS ELECTIONS

- Promotes **voter choice**
- **No more vote-splitting** & strategic voting
- Promotes **majority winners**
- Improves **campaign civility**
- Improved **representation** for women & people of color
- Creates incentives for **broader engagement** with voters

HOW DOES RCV WORK IN PRACTICE?

Voters like RCV & use rankings

- 77% in NYC
- 62% in Utah
- 94% in Santa Fe
- 71% of voters rank 2+ candidates (more in competitive races!)

RCV encourages "sincere voting"

- In Utah, voters said they were more likely to vote for their honest favorite by a 30-to-1 margin

RCV elects winners with broad support

- All winners have majority of final-round votes
- 73% of voters ranked the winner in their top 3

HOW DOES RCV WORK IN PRACTICE?

RCV improves the tone of campaigns

- Less mudslinging, more “issues” campaigning
- Candidates must appeal to a broader group of voters
- Evidence is available from exit surveys and campaign analysis

RCV improves representation

- Over the last decade, women won half of municipal RCV races
- NYC has most diverse city council in history
- Voters of color tend to use more rankings

RCV improves voter engagement

- Voters in RCV cities are more likely to be contacted by campaigns
- 73% of RCV voters elect one of their top 3 choices

WHERE IS THE RESEARCH MORE MIXED?

Unclear impact on voter turnout.

- Other factors drive turnout, like election timing, competitiveness, etc.
- Ballot style doesn't appear to have a strong impact.
- One recent paper finds RCV boosted turnout in odd-year municipal elections.

Unclear impact on voter trust.

- Voters who have used RCV report that they like it and trust the outcome.
- Voters who have not used RCV are sometimes skeptical.

RCV IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

- Party primaries
  - RCV is helpful in crowded races
  - Important in “safe districts” where the primary matters most
  - Helps parties advance stronger nominees
- Presidential primaries
  - RCV protects early voters and mail-in voters when candidates drop out: 3M wasted votes in 2020!
  - Tweak to the formula: Democratic presidential primaries award delegates to multiple candidates
- Municipal races

SAMPLE BALLOT

AK DEMS
Alaska Democrats

Official Ballot
Alaska Democratic Party
2020 Presidential Preference Primary

April 4, 2020

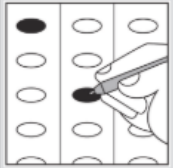
Instructions for marking a Ranked Choice Ballot

To rank your candidates, fill in the oval:

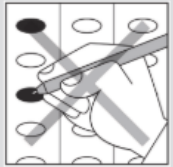
- In the 1st column for your 1st choice.
- In the 2nd column for your 2nd choice.
- In the 3rd column for your 3rd choice.

Making selections:

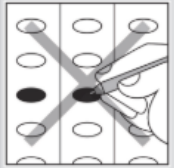
Rank candidates in the order of your choice.
You may rank as many or as few candidates as you wish, up to 5 choices.



Fill in the oval completely.



No more than one oval in a column.



No more than one oval for a candidate.

For the Democratic Nomination for President of the United States

	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Joseph R. Biden	○	○	○	○	○
Tom Steyer	○	○	○	○	○
Bernie Sanders	○	○	○	○	○
Amy Klobuchar	○	○	○	○	○
Tulsi Gabbard	○	○	○	○	○
Elizabeth Warren	○	○	○	○	○
Michael R. Bloomberg	○	○	○	○	○
Pete Buttigieg	○	○	○	○	○
(undeclared)	○	○	○	○	○

Questions?

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