Ranked Choice Voting
Implementation Fact Sheet
Arlington Office of Voter Registration & Elections

Background

This fact sheet was compiled at the request of the Arlington Electoral Board to explore how ranked-choice voting (RCV) can be implemented in Arlington County following the passage of HB 506 in the 2020 Regular Legislative Session. This bill amended Va Code § 15.2-705 and § 15.2-705.1 which allows the Arlington County Board to adopt an ordinance to elect County Board members using RCV.

Legal & Policy Steps

- VA Code § 15.2-705 allows RCV. Implementation requires County Board to adopt by passing a local ordinance.
- County Board Needs to Advertise and Pass Ordinance.
- State Board of Elections (SBE) Must Adopt or Decline to Adopt
  - Ballot Standards (aka Ballot Form)
  - Tabulation Rules—Single Vote Winner (SVW)
  - Tabulation Rules—Multi Vote Winner (MVW)
- Guidelines to Report Results
- Certify RCV Voting Machines and Tabulation Software
- Arlington Electoral Board & Office drafts procedures to transfer ballots & tabulate.

Technical Requirements

- Arlington’s County Board race requires tabulation for both SVW & MVW races.
- Arlington uses 2 Ballot Layout & Tabulation Processes.
  - Unysin OpenElect Voting System
    - Partially Compliant:
      - Up to 3 Rankings
      - Grid Layout
      - SVW Only
      - Central Tabulation
  - MyVaBallot
    - Not Compliant:
      - No Layout Options
      - Tabulated by Hand - No Cast Vote Record (CVR) created
- Results are reported to SBE using State system.
  - Not Compliant
Gaps & Recommendations

There are both policy and technical gaps that the Arlington Office of Elections recommends resolving before implementing RCV.

**Legal & Policy Gaps**

- SBE must decide if they will exercise their option to pass regulations for tabulating votes in rounds for SVW and MVW scenarios.
  
  **Recommendation:** We recommend SBE exercises this option. Specifically, we recommend SBE address potential conflicts with code §24.2-673 and §24.2-535. These sections state that the winner shall be “candidates having highest number of votes” in a General or Special Election or “plurality” of votes in a Primary election.

- SBE must decide if they will exercise their option to draft ballot standards per §24.2-613.

  **Recommendation:** We recommend SBE exercise this option to have consistent ballot standards for the Commonwealth and remain in compliance with §24.2-613.

- SBE must decide how results will be reported.

- SBE must notify Arlington about the certification status of current systems specifically in regards to conducting an election using RCV.

- Tabulation policies must allow for a CVR to be manually created for ballots unable to be read by a scanner. This CVR must be combined with one created by voting machines.

**Technology Gaps**

**Arlington County will be responsible for funding all changes.**

- Arlington must have a voting system that can tabulate a MVW race.

- MyVABallot must accommodate Ballot Standards for RCV ballots.

- If results from multiple rounds must be reported using the State System, SBE must make technical changes to the State reporting system.

- Tabulation software needs to allow for a CVR created for hand counted ballots to be combined with the CVR created by voting machines.
Scenarios
With each gap there are several scenarios.

**Ballot Standards**
- **Will SBE Draft Ballot Standards?**
  - YES
  - NO

  **Should Ballot Standards be in Ordinance?**
  - YES
  - NO

  CA will draft. Legal Question
  AEB will draft. Legal Question

**Tabulation Rules**
- **Will SBE Draft Tabulation Rules?**
  - YES
  - NO

  **Should Tabulation Rules be in Ordinance?**
  - YES

**Technology Gaps**
- **Does current voting system comply with Ballot Standards?**
  - YES
  - NO

  **Does Tabulation allow CVR import from Hand counts?**
  - YES
  - NO

**Results Reporting**
- **Will SBE require all rounds to be reported?**
  - YES
  - NO

  AC needs cost estimate for changes?
  AEB will draft policy to release rounds.

- **Does current tabulation tool allow for SVW & MVW?**
  - YES
  - NO

- **Is CVR from scanned ballots able to export to 3rd party tabulation software?**
  - YES
  - NO

**Ready for RCV!**
- 3rd Party Tabulation Software must be certified by SBE & purchased by AC.
- New voting equipment and tabulation software must be purchased.
Definitions & Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AEB</td>
<td>Arlington Electoral Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ballot Standards</td>
<td>Also known as Ballot Form. These are regulations for ballot design and layout.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVR</td>
<td>Cast Vote Record - Data file that shows how ballots are marked. Tabulation is run from this file.</td>
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<td>MVW</td>
<td>Multi Vote Winner - Vote for 2 or more races</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCV</td>
<td>Ranked Choice Voting</td>
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<tr>
<td>SBE</td>
<td>State Board of Elections</td>
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<tr>
<td>SVW</td>
<td>Single Vote Winner - Vote for 1 race</td>
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Additional Resources

https://www.opavote.com/methods/san-francisco-rcv-rules
https://www.opavote.com/methods/instant-runoff-voting
https://www.opavote.com/methods/single-transferable-vote#minneapolis-stv

Minneapolis, MN
https://vote.minneapolismn.gov/ranked-choice-voting/history/

Alameda County
https://www.acgov.org/rov/rcv/
https://www.acvote.org/voting/rcv
https://www.fairvote.org/bay_area_election_analysis
https://my.lwv.org/california/oakland/voters-toolbox/ranked-choice-voting

Maine
https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/ranked-choice-voting-state-presidential-election/story?id=72780965
https://www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/upcoming/rankedchoicefaq.html

Rank Choice Voting across the US
https://www.fairvote.org/where_is_ranked_choice_voting_used