

info on Instant Runoff Elections

WHAT ARE INSTANT RUNOFF ELECTIONS?

Most runoff elections are separate contests to determine final victors. **Instant runoff elections** are initial contests and runoffs combined.

By listing their 1st choice, 2nd choice and 3rd choice candidates, and so on, voters say in advance, on their ballots, who they'll vote for if their top-choice candidates don't make it to a runoff. This lets runoffs proceed “instantly,” without additional balloting, eliminating one candidate at a time. Voters may choose and rank as many or few candidates as they please, without hurting their top choices. The process is efficient and fair.

INSTANT RUNOFFS CAN PROVIDE SAVINGS

Extra elections are wasteful. That's why we cancel runoff elections after candidates win majorities in nonpartisan primaries. It's wasteful to have separate runoff elections when **instant runoffs** can determine winners with one round of balloting. Where they replace multi-round elections, **instant runoffs** provide significant savings.

► *Burbank, for example, spent \$108,000, more than \$9 per voter, on the second round of its 2005 elections, and could avoid similar costs in the future by switching to **instant runoff elections**.*

A separate runoff wastes more than taxpayer dollars. Volunteers, organizations and candidates spend valuable time and energy, while donors are solicited to open their wallets again, and the environment gets an unneeded round of discarded flyers and car trips to the polls.

INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING

STIMULATES THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS

Instant runoff elections allow voters to show first-choice support for candidates who stand for ideas they like, regardless of what polls say about the candidates' chances to win. This promotes innovation in the political marketplace of ideas. **Instant runoffs** may thus lead to higher voter turnout and greater participation in civic life by a broad spectrum of community members.

INSTANT RUNOFFS ARE MORE FAIR

Vote-splitting among similar candidates sometimes lets a candidate win with some of the vote when more voters would prefer one of the similar candidates. That's unfair. **Instant runoffs** form “virtual coalitions” so whoever wins truly has an unbeatable fraction of the vote.

► *Say 4 pro-school candidates and 2 anti-school candidates are in a single-winner race where 60% of voters are pro-school. In a one-round election, if the pro-school candidates split the 60%, each getting about 15% of the vote, an anti-school candidate could win — with 25% or less! But in an **instant runoff election**, runoff rounds would combine support for similar candidates as last-place candidates are eliminated. The winning candidate would have earned over 50% of the vote, and would almost certainly be pro-school like the majority of voters.*

In multi-winner elections, **instant runoffs** elect candidates who represent the voters in close proportion to how they vote.

► *In a simple two-round election, only the 2 anti-school candidates would make the runoff if they each get about 20% of the vote and the 4 pro-school candidates each get about 15%. But **instant runoffs** remedy vote-splitting, so a 2-winner **instant runoff** primary would likely elect one representative from each faction to advance to the final round.*

INSTANT RUNOFFS ARE WIDELY ACCEPTED

► Several U.S. cities, including San Francisco, CA, Takoma Park, MD, Cambridge, MA and Burlington, VT now have **instant runoff elections**. In U.S. exit polls, voters say **instant runoffs** are an improvement.

► **Instant runoffs**, called “single transferable vote” elections globally, are held in Ireland, Scotland, England, New Zealand and Australia. 57% of British Columbia, Canada, voters requested the system in 2005.

► Oscar® nominations are awarded through **instant runoff elections**.

► Many universities, including University of California and Ivy League schools, use the **instant runoff** system for community elections.