

Vermont Needs Instant Runoff Voting

We can keep the election of governor in the voters' hands, assure majority rule, and eliminate the "spoiler" issue for good, by adopting Senate Bill S.22 or House Bill H.82

What Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) Means

Instant runoff voting (IRV) combines a regular election with a runoff between the top candidates into a single election. IRV eliminates the "spoiler" problem in our current election laws when three or more candidates run and the majority split their vote, which allows a candidate with less overall support to be declared elected. By finding a majority winner in all statewide elections in November the voters, rather than the legislators, get to make the decision of who should be governor or lieutenant governor, etc.

How Instant Runoff Voting Works

As recommended by Robert's Rules of Order, voters mark their ballot with their first-choice candidate, the same as they do now, but also get the option of ranking candidates to indicate their runoff choices. If no candidate is the first choice of at least half the voters, the bottom vote-getters are eliminated for a runoff count. As in a regular runoff, voters who preferred a candidate who didn't make it into the runoff, settle for one of the remaining candidates. But, rather than calling the voters back for a second election (costly and often low-turnout), those voters have already indicated their alternate choices. The ballots simply need to be recounted, with each ballot counting as one vote for whichever of the two final candidates each voter prefers more.

How You Can Help

1) Contact the Senate Gov. Ops. Committee Chair, Sen. Bill Doyle, and the other Senators.

Just say you want them to pass bill S.22 to assure direct elections of all state leaders by a majority of voters. You can leave a toll-free phone message for Sen. Doyle, and your own Senators from your county by calling the Sergeant at Arms office at **1-800-322-5616**.

Contact Senators at home or at: **Sen.____, Vermont Statehouse, 115 State St., Montpelier, VT 05633-5201**

Senate Government Operations Committee

R - Sen. Bill Doyle of Washington County, Chair	186 Murray Road, Montpelier, VT 05602	223-2851
D - Sen. Jim Condos of Chittenden County, Vice-Chair	23 Victoria Drive, So. Burlington, VT 05403	863-4654
D - Sen. Ann Cummings of Washington County	24 Colonial Drive, Montpelier, VT 05602	223-6043
R - Sen. Kevin Mullin of Rutland County	118 Ox Yoke Drive, Rutland, VT 05701	775-7631
R - Sen. Mark Shepard of Bennington County	6 Polygraphic Lane, N. Bennington, VT 05257	447-7322
D - Sen. Jeanette White of Windham County	35A Old Depot Road, Putney, VT 05346	387-4379

2) Write a letter to the editor (talking points, addresses and email addresses on back)

3) Volunteer with the Voters' Choice Coalition: email to vt@instantrunoff.com , or (802) 864-8382

4) Sign and circulate the IRV petition. You can sign on-line and download the petition and learn more about instant runoff voting by visiting our web page at www.FairVoteVermont.org

TALKING POINTS FOR A LETTER TO THE EDITOR OR A LEGISLATOR

We need to persuade both Democratic and Republican Senators, so avoid partisan arguments, and focus on good-government themes instead.

- * Vermonters want state offices like governor chosen by a majority of voters, rather than giving the decision to the general assembly, where 180 politicians pick the governor by secret ballot. Instant runoff voting preserves majority rule with direct voter election of state leaders.
- * Instant runoff voting assures majority rule rather than simply allowing the candidate with the highest vote total in a multi-candidate race to win. Under existing law, or a top-vote getter constitutional amendment, a “winner” might actually be the candidate the majority of the voters consider to be the WORST choice.
- * Instant runoff voting eliminates the problem of “spoilers,” and “wasted votes.”
- * IRV is important for Vermont because we have many multiple-candidate races - increasing the likelihood of a no majority outcome.
- * IRV has been endorsed by the Vermont League of Women Voters, Vermont Common Cause, the American Association of University Women, and even the Vermont State Grange.
- * Howard Dean has endorsed IRV and Ruth Dwyer was a co-sponsor of an IRV bill when she was in the House of Representatives.
- * Instant runoff voting does not need a constitutional amendment, so can be implemented in time for the next election. Any other solution to assure direct popular elections would require a constitutional amendment so couldn't be used until 2008 at the earliest.
- * Instant runoff voting is simple for voters to use, simply ranking candidates 1, 2, 3, as proven by mock elections at senior citizen centers and elementary schools. But voters would also be able to vote for just one choice in exactly the same way as presently if they wish.
- * IRV is recommended above our current system in modern editions of Robert's Rules of Order because it finds a majority winner in a single election no matter how many candidates are running.
- * Instant runoff voting is a proven system used in democracies around the world, like Australia, the Republic of Ireland, and to elect the Mayor of London, England, and was recently adopted by San Francisco.
- * The Utah Republican Party uses IRV for their congressional nominations, and Louisiana uses it for absentee voting.
- * IRV can reduce negative campaigning, since candidates will need to be concerned about winning the second-choice votes from some of their opponents' supporters.

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