VIRGINIA IS FOR VOTERS

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DEPARTMENT
of ELECTIONS

GET THE FAQS:
About Ranked Choice Voting.

1 What is Ranked Choice Voting?

With Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), you get to vote for candidates in order of your preference. This lets you "rank" your vote—first choice, second choice, third choice, and so on.

Ballots are counted in rounds in which candidates receiving the fewest votes are eliminated. Then, their supporters' ballots are counted toward the next choice indicated on their ballot.

2 How does Ranked Choice Voting work?

All first-choice votes are counted. If no candidate has the required number of votes to win after first-round votes are counted, the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated.

Then, in the second round of vote counting, voters who ranked the eliminated candidate as their first choice will have their vote count for the candidate they ranked second. And then for the candidate they ranked third. This process continues until a candidate meets the required threshold to win.

This method can allow your vote to count toward another candidate if your favorite candidate loses. Election officials only use your second or third choice if your first choice has already been eliminated.

Example: In a five-candidate race for a single office, if no candidate receives the required number of votes (in this case 50% of the votes cast plus 1 vote), then the candidate with the fewest first choice votes is eliminated. Then, the second-choice votes from voters who chose the eliminated candidate are transferred to the corresponding remaining four candidates. If a candidate still has not received 50%+1 of the votes the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and votes for the eliminated candidate are transferred to voters' next ranked candidates still in the race. This continues until one candidate has the majority of votes.

3 Why are we doing a Ranked Choice Voting election?

In 2020, the General Assembly passed HB1103, giving cities and counties the option to adopt Ranked Choice Voting for local governing bodies, such as city councils or boards of supervisors. Arlington County is the first locality in the state to take advantage of this option.

4 Has anyone in Virginia done this before?

Ranked Choice Voting was used by the Republican Party of Virginia in its statewide nominating elections in 2021. Arlington is the first locality in the state to adopt Ranked Choice Voting for its County Board primaries. Several other localities are considering RCV for their upcoming November elections.

5 Do I have to rank all candidates, or can I just vote for a single candidate like I always have?

Voters can rank as few or as many candidates as they would like.

Candidates for City Council	First Choice 1st	Second Choice 2nd	Third Choice 3rd
N. Cardinal	⬭	⬮	⬭
F. Dogwood	⬮	⬭	⬭
A. Foxhound	⬭	⬭	⬭

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6 Does my vote still count if I vote for the same candidate more than once?

Yes, but your vote will only count once for that candidate. Ranking one candidate as your first, second and third choice is the same as leaving the second and third choices blank. You do not improve a candidate's chances of winning by voting for the candidate more than once.

7 Can I give multiple candidates the same ranking?

No. Each candidate can only be ranked once to reflect your order of preference (i.e., first choice, second choice, and so on).

8 Will Ranked Choice Voting delay Election Day results?

Ranked Choice Voting election results will not be known on Election Day. Results can only be determined after all ballots cast have been received and all provisional ballots considered. Due to the initial delay in vote counting to determine the total universe of ballots cast, confirming the winner (or winners) of Ranked Choice Voting elections may take up to 7 days.

9 Where else is Ranked Choice Voting used?

In the U.S., 28 states have used Ranked Choice Voting in at least one jurisdiction, and Maine and Alaska use Ranked Choice Voting statewide.

How to mark your ballot

Candidates for City Council	First Choice 1st	Second Choice 2nd	Third Choice 3rd
N. Cardinal	◯	⬤	◯
F. Dogwood	⬤	◯	◯
A. Foxhound	◯	◯	⬤

Step 1 Mark your top candidate under *First Choice*.

Step 2 Mark your next candidate under *Second Choice* (not required).

Step 3 Mark your third candidate under *Third Choice* (not required), and so on.

You must mark at least one candidate for your vote to count.

Each candidate can only be chosen once.

Ballot Errors

1st	2nd	3rd
◯	◯	◯
⬤	✗	◯
◯	◯	⬤

Do not choose the same candidate more than once.

1st	2nd	3rd
◯	◯	◯
✗	◯	◯
◯	◯	⬤

Do not choose more than one candidate per column.