

Ranked Choice Voting

Sandy City has not yet elected to participate in either the Utah Municipal Alternate Voting Pilot Project or Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). In order to participate the City Council would first need to vote do so by passing a resolution. Prior to May 10, 2021 the City would also need to notify the Lt. Governor and the Salt Lake County Clerk of its intentions to hold an RCV election in 2021.

WHAT IS THE DECISION BEFORE THE CITY COUNCIL?

Sandy City Council is voting on April 20th on whether or not to use Ranked Choice Voting in the 2021 elections, instead of the traditional voting format. If the Council elects to use RCV, the Council will also need to decide whether to hold a primary election in August, or to hold only the general election in November.

WHAT IS RANKED CHOICE VOTING? HOW DOES IT WORK?

Ranked Choice Voting, also known as Instant Run-Off Voting, is a voting format that allows voters to rank candidates in an election in order of preference, instead of selecting only one candidate. Voters rank candidates one, two, three, and so on. If a voter's top choice in candidate does not win, their vote also counts towards their second, third, and other choices.

In 2018, the Utah Legislature passed the "Municipal Alternate Voting Methods Pilot Project," that requires county election officers statewide to make RCV available as an alternative voting method in municipal elections.

In an RCV format, a candidate will only win when they receive a majority (over 50%) of votes, instead of the normal plurality required in traditional elections. This is achieved through rounds where the candidates with the lowest number of votes are eliminated, and the second, third, etc. rankings of their voters are redistributed to other candidates. The rounds of eliminating the lowest candidate and redistributing their votes continue until one candidate receives the majority

(over 50%).

Ranked Choice Voting allows voters to rank as many candidates as they want without the fear of “wasting a vote” on a weaker candidate. The rankings provided by voters will ensure that the elected candidate will best represent their constituents, as voter’s opinions will carry through multiple rounds until one candidate receives a majority instead of a plurality.

City Council						
Rank up to 6 candidates. Mark no more than 1 oval in each column.	First choice	Second choice	Third choice	Fourth choice	Fifth choice	Sixth choice
	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Valarie Altman Orange Party	<input type="radio"/>					
George Hovis Yellow Party	<input type="radio"/>					
Althea Sharp Purple Party	<input type="radio"/>					
Mary Tawa Lime Party	<input type="radio"/>					
Joe Li Tan Party	<input type="radio"/>					
Phil Wilkie Independent	<input type="radio"/>					

If the Council decides to use RCV, and also decides to hold a primary, Sandy voters will use the RCV format in the August primary to rank their preferred candidates. According to Utah law, the primary must eliminate all candidates but double the number of the available seats. In the case of the mayoral election, the primary must eliminate all but two candidates, who will move forward to the general election in the fall. If the Council decides to use RCV and opts-out of holding a primary, Sandy voters will use RCV in the November general election to elect their final candidate.

Watch this [2-minute video](#) to better understand the RCV process.

HOW DOES RCV WORK IN MULTI-SEAT ELECTIONS?

In Sandy, our City Council At-Large seats can create a multi-winner, where there is more than one seat open for a candidate to fill. With multi-winner RCV, candidates will still need to reach

the majority (over 50%) threshold. The first winner will be determined in the same fashion as a single-winner race. The second winner will be chosen by repeating this same process, but first redistributing the first-choice votes for the first winner, and using those voters second-choice votes instead.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON MISTAKES VOTERS MAKE ON RCV BALLOTS?

RCV ballots look different than the traditional ballots many voters are used to using. Now, instead of voters checking one box, they can rank multiple candidates in whatever order they wish.

When voters incorrectly mark ballots, it can “nullify” part or all of their ballot. For example, if a voter marks Candidate A as their first choice, but accidentally marks both Candidate B and Candidate C for their second choice, their ballot will be counted towards Candidate A, but any other rankings after their double second choice will be nullified. The same occurs if a voter skips a ranking: if they mark Candidate A as their first choice, skip their second choice, and mark Candidate B as their third choice, their ballot will be nullified after their first choice.

Clear instructions will be provided with every ballot distributed to Sandy Voters to prevent these mistakes. Should the Council adopt RCV for 2021, Sandy will roll out a voter education and outreach plan across multiple platforms to inform voters about RCV, how it works, and to make sure Sandy voters feel prepared for election day.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT RCV?

WILL RCV CHANGE THE WAY I'M ABLE TO VOTE?

The 2021 election will appear identical to previous elections. It will occur through both mail-in ballots and in-person voting whether the Council elects to use RCV or to continue with the traditional election format.

CAN I VOTE FOR ONLY ONE CANDIDATE IF I WANT TO?

Yes, you can rank as many as ten candidates, as long as you follow the correct ranking order. This means you can rank anywhere from one to ten candidates for each race.

WHAT HAPPENS TO MY FAVORITE CANDIDATE IF I RANK A SECOND CHOICE?

A common misconception about RCV is that ranking candidates will “take away” from a voter’s top choice. When in reality, ranking other candidates will not harm your first choice. Your vote will count for your first choice until they are eliminated in the round-by-round count. After that, your second choice will act as a “back up” choice. This same logic is true for your third choice, fourth choice, and so on.

WHERE ELSE IS RCV USED?

RCV is used in major cities across the country, in 25 different states, including New York City; Sante Fe, New Mexico; Berkley, California; St. Paul, Minnesota; Cambridge, Massachusetts; and more. In Utah, Vineyard and Payson used RCV in their 2019 municipal elections. Other Utah cities have adopted legislation that declare their intent to use RCV in 2021 including Draper; Lehi; Riverton and many others.

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS? CONTACT THE SANDY CITY COUNCIL STAFF.

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