First Order of Business: Educate Voters About RCV

The City Councils of Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro have officially approved the use of Ranked-Choice Voting (RCV).

Now begins the mad dash to November, when the first elections using RCV will take place.

Alameda County Registrar of Voters Dave Macdonald has been training his staff to ensure they are at ease with the workings of RCV.

While the reality of RCV is only sinking in with most voters, Macdonald knows his staff will soon be blitzed with questions about this new voting method.

Macdonald has met regularly with City Clerks Latonda Simmons of Oakland, Deanna Despain and Mark Numainville of Berkeley and Marian Handa of San Leandro to plan the RCV rollout. He also has gone into the community to speak at events about RCV and what voters should expect in November.

In addition, he has scheduled RCV training sessions with City staff, League of Women Voters chapters and other interested residents in hopes they will organize their own public education sessions.

It is the beginning of an extensive public education campaign the Registrar of Voters will lead over the next eight months to help voters understand RCV.

Macdonald says he expects the Registrar’s Office to lead at least 100 public education sessions in the community in the run-up to the November election. In addition, he has scheduled RCV training sessions with City staff, League of Women Voters chapters and other interested residents in hopes they will organize their own public education sessions.

Check the Registrar’s website, www.acgov.org/rov, to stay up to date with planning for RCV.

WHAT IS RANKED-CHOICE VOTING?

Voters rank a first-, second- and third-choice candidate for a single office. This makes it possible to elect candidates by majority vote without a separate run-off election.

HOW DOES RCV WORK?

First, all first choices are counted. Any candidate who receives more than 50% of the first choices is the winner.

If no candidate receives more than 50%, a process of eliminating candidates and transferring votes begins:

- First, the candidate with the fewest first choices is eliminated.
- Second, voters who selected the eliminated candidate as their first choice have their votes transferred to their second choice.
- Third, votes are recounted.
- Fourth, a candidate receiving more than 50% is the winner. If no candidate receives more than 50%, the process of eliminating candidates and transferring votes continues until there is a winner.

Offices that will be elected using RCV:
Berkeley Mayor
Berkeley Auditor
Berkeley City Council
Oakland Mayor
Oakland City Attorney
Oakland City Auditor
Oakland City Council
Oakland School Board
San Leandro Mayor
San Leandro City Council

About this Newsletter

This is the first of what will be a regular newsletter to update voters about planning for the use of Ranked-Choice Voting in Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro in November 2010.

To improve public understanding of RCV, the Registrar of Voters is reaching out in several ways to educate voters about how to vote using Ranked-Choice Voting. These include:

- A video
- An online Flash Media presentation
- A brochure, a mailer, a guide in the Sample Ballot mailed to all RCV voters and other printed materials.
- An IPhone application explaining RCV.

The Registrar will also place an extra poll worker in each polling place to help voters with RCV on Election Day.

In addition, the Registrar’s office is giving public demonstrations of RCV to community groups. If your group is interested in having a demonstration of RCV and an explanation of how it works, contact the Registrar of Voters at (510) 272-6933.