

Instant Runoff Voting **Frequently Asked Questions**

What is Instant Runoff Voting?

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV), also known as Ranked Choice Voting (RCV), is a method of voting in which voters rank candidates for office in any order they choose and a single winner is elected, thus eliminating the need for run-off elections. Voters mark their ballots for multiple candidates in order of preference. The ballots are counted and the candidate with the least votes is eliminated. Then, a new round of counting begins with each ballot cast for the eliminated candidate counted toward the voter's next choice candidate listed on that ballot. This continues until only two candidates are remaining and the candidate with the highest number of votes is declared the winner.

Can IRV be used anywhere in California?

Under current law, only charter cities and charter counties can seek voter approval to conduct an election for a city or county office using the IRV method.

How many voting systems are approved to conduct an IRV election?

The Secretary of State has issued conditional administrative approvals on an election-by-election basis to permit the City and County of San Francisco to conduct IRV elections using a hybrid system that mixes elements of two versions of a voting system manufactured by Sequoia Voting Systems.

No voting system vendor other than Sequoia Voting Systems has applied for California approval of a voting system with IRV capabilities. Under California law, the Secretary of State must approve any voting system proposed for use in California. The approval process begins when a vendor completes an application for testing and pays the appropriate fees to cover the cost of the review.

Can jurisdictions conduct an IRV election by hand-counting ballots without Secretary of State approval?

Yes. Any charter city or charter county is permitted by law to conduct an IRV election by hand-counting the ballots.

Is it possible to conduct a recount after an IRV election?

Yes. A recount of the ballots cast in an IRV election would follow the same steps used in the initial counting of ballots. However, manually recounting IRV ballots is significantly more complicated than manually recounting ballots cast in an election conducted using the traditional non-IRV method.