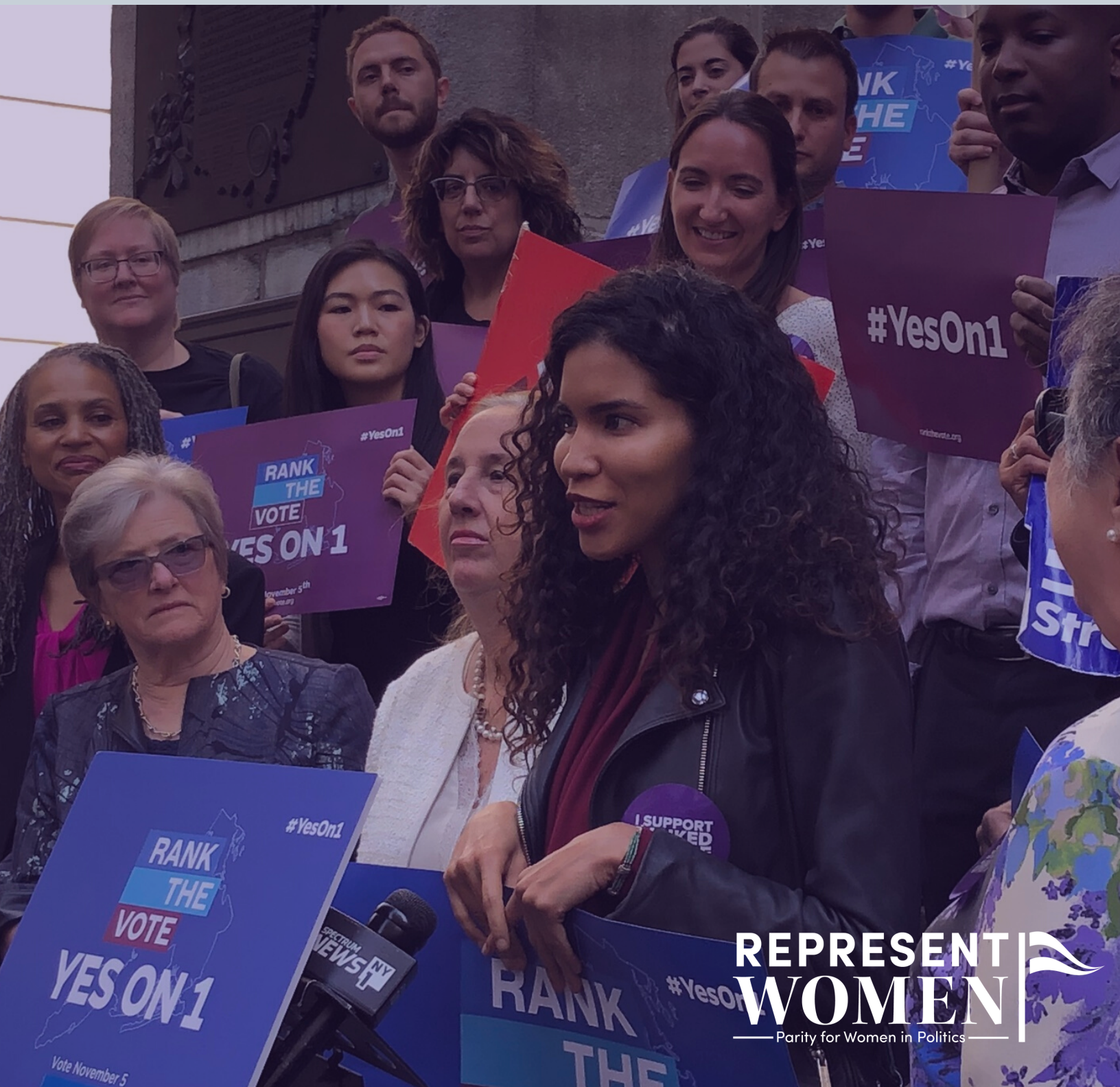


# In Ranked Choice Elections, Women WIN

*RCV in the United States: A Decade in Review*



**REPRESENT  
WOMEN**

Parity for Women in Politics

A thriving democracy is within our reach, but we must ensure that women across the racial, ideological, and geographic spectrum of the United States have equal opportunities to enter political office so that our nation's rich diversity is reflected in our government.

We can strengthen our democracy by replacing single-winner plurality voting with ranked choice voting. Ranked choice voting (RCV) lowers the barriers women and people of color often face by mitigating the risk of vote-splitting in a crowded field of candidates, incentivizing issue-based and positive campaigning, shortening costly election seasons, and ensuring majority, not plurality, wins.

**In Ranked Choice Elections, Women WIN:** the following report provides an update to our 2016 report, "The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation," which recorded the positive impact ranked choice voting had on the political representation of women, people of color, and women of color in the California Bay Area between 2004 and 2014. This report extends our analysis to elections that took place across the U.S. and finds that ranked choice voting has continued to have a positive impact on women's representation over the last decade.

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**RepresentWomen** is a research-based advocacy group that promotes the use of systems strategies to advance women's representation and leadership in the U.S. and abroad. To achieve our mission, RepresentWomen partners with allies across the country and political spectrum who help amplify our work by putting what we've researched into practice. By working in concert with our allies to address political barriers to office, we can ensure that more women can RUN, WIN, SERVE & LEAD.

**Contributors:** Cynthia Richie Terrell and Courtney Lamendola, with Maura Reilly, Katie Murnane, Corinne Bennett, Georgia Sherry, Hannah So and Lola Solis, expanding on a 2016 report whose lead authors were Sarah John and Haley Smith.

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All of the original data on election outcomes cited in this report is publicly-available on each city or county website. For direct access to our data, please follow [this link](#).

**Cover Image:** "Ranked Choice Voting Supporters Speak at 'Yes On 1' Rally in NYC," RepresentWomen Staff (26 September 2019).

## Executive Summary

The following study provides an update to our 2016 report, [\*The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation\*](#), which tracked how well women, people of color, and women of color fared in the 100+ ranked choice elections that took place in the California Bay Area between 2004 and 2014. We found that women (42%), people of color (60%), and women of color (22%) were more likely to win in ranked choice elections than in a plurality election. As of 2016, women held 59% of the 53 Bay Area offices elected by ranked choice voting, and people of color held 60%.

Four years later, our research shows that ranked choice voting has continued to have a positive impact on descriptive representation in the United States, as women and people of color continue to run and win in higher numbers in ranked choice elections. Over the last decade, 19 cities and counties used ranked choice voting to determine the outcome of their municipal elections. Out of the 156 local-level ranked choice elections that had three or more candidates in the running, 34% (308 of 907) of all candidates were women, and 35% (109) of these women won. Of the women who won, 38% were women of color. Overall, women won 48% (109 of 227) of the individual seats up for election. At the start of 2020, half of all mayors and nearly half (49%) of all city council members elected in cities that use ranked choice voting are women.

This report comes at a pivotal moment in the election reform movement, as Democrats opted to use ranked choice voting in five party-run presidential primaries and caucuses, Virginia Republicans used the system to nominate congressional candidates, Maine passed a law extending the use of ranked choice voting to the general election for president, and the number of localities set to use ranked choice voting in their next election has doubled to more than 20 since 2016 — with New York City among them. In the year of the suffrage centennial, this report is even more timely, as its findings make a strong case for adopting an election system that has been proven to have a powerful impact on women's representation and leadership.



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## Introduction

At the start of 2020, women held just over a quarter of all available seats in government, from national and state-level office,<sup>1</sup> to major local-level offices.<sup>2</sup> And while this is far from gender parity, it is still true that there are more women in office now than ever before. This recent progress, however incremental it may be, reflects the record-breaking gains women made in 2018. And yet, not all women benefited equally after the midterm elections, with large representation gaps remaining for women across party, race, and geography.<sup>3</sup> So while this progress is worth noting, it also highlights how much more work remains for women in the United States to reach parity in politics.

RepresentWomen tracks women's representation and leadership around the world to identify the barriers that prevent women from entering and remaining in political office at the same rates as men. Our research indicates that even as more women run, electoral rules and systems play a major role in determining outcomes for these candidates.<sup>4</sup> While many other countries have succeeded in electing more women to office<sup>5</sup> by modernizing their voting rules and systems and adopting additional affirmative measures,<sup>6</sup> the election system used in the United States systematically disadvantages women.

### Setting the Stage: How the U.S. Election System Disadvantages Women

At the national level, the United States follows a single-winner plurality system, otherwise known as the “winner take all system,” which permits candidates to win elections with *less than* majority support. In single-winner plurality elections, voters select their preferred candidates for each seat listed on the ballot. After the votes are tallied, the person who received the most votes is declared the winner of the election, even if they receive less than 50%+1 (the majority) of the vote. This means that a majority of voters can be represented by someone they didn't vote for. For example, consider Maine, where nine of the eleven gubernatorial elections that took place between 1994 and 2014 were decided with less than 50% of the vote, leading residents to vote to change their system by 2016.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Women in Elective Office 2020” Center for American Women and Politics. ([Accessed 27 March 2020](#))

<sup>2</sup> Out of 1,376 cities with populations of 30,000 or more, 306 (22%) have women mayors. At the county level, women hold 28% of all executive leadership roles in the five largest counties of each state. Recent data on women's representation at the local level has been collected by the RepresentWomen team in preparation for our forthcoming *2020 Gender Parity Index* report. “2020 Sample City Data - City and County Leadership in the United States,” RepresentWomen ([Accessed January 2020](#))

<sup>3</sup> Cynthia Richie Terrell, Courtney Lamendola, Jiakun Li, Louisa Sholar, Allison Mackenzie, Andrea Rebolledo, Gilda Geist and Marilyn Harbert. *2019 Gender Parity Index*, RepresentWomen ([July 2019](#))

<sup>4</sup> Courtney Lamendola, Andrea Rebolledo, Marilyn Harbert, Gilda Geist, Allison Mackenzie, and Cynthia Richie Terrell. *International Women's Representation*, RepresentWomen ([July 2019](#))

<sup>5</sup> In January, the U.S. ranked behind 81 countries for the number of women in the U.S. House: “Percentage of Women in National Parliaments,” Inter-Parliamentary Union ([January 2020](#))

<sup>6</sup> “2020 Open International Data,” RepresentWomen ([Accessed 27 March 2020](#))

<sup>7</sup> “Benefits of RCV,” FairVote ([Accessed 1 July 2020](#)).

Furthermore, single-winner plurality voting fortifies the male-dominant status quo in politics and systematically disadvantages women. The evidence is as follows:

**First, single-winner plurality elections protect incumbents and disadvantage challengers.** In single-winner systems, district lines decide the outcome of elections years before Election Day. And more than 80% of all Congressional districts are safe for the parties that hold them.<sup>8</sup> Women, who already fare best in open seat races, are even less likely to win as challengers in noncompetitive races.<sup>9</sup>

**Second, single-winner plurality elections are prone to a “spoiler effect,” in which similar candidates run and split the vote within a district.** The system incentivizes party leadership to ask candidates — particularly women of color — to “wait their turn,”<sup>10</sup> rather than run against a preferred candidate and risk splitting the vote. A system that incentivizes party leaders to discourage women from running is even less likely to yield representative outcomes.

**Third, single-winner plurality elections foster negative campaigning, which is both costly and inhospitable to women considering a run for office.** Too often, candidates in plurality elections win by barraging opponents with expensive, negative ads. Recent research suggests that women are often deterred from running for office due to the prevalence of negative campaigning in single-winner plurality systems.<sup>11</sup>

**Fourth, single-winner plurality elections are subject to expensive, low turnout runoffs in the event of a close race.** Systems that do not include automatic runoff elections create longer and more expensive campaign seasons;<sup>12</sup> runoff elections are further plagued by lower rates of voter turnout.<sup>13</sup>

**Fifth, single-winner plurality elections permit candidates to win with less than majority support.** This is crucial for women because elected officials — especially those who are considered ‘nontraditional’ candidates — report that they govern better when they have majority support.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> FairVote offers a rigorous critique of our election system in their *Monopoly Politics* research. Due to the design of Congressional districts in the United States, FairVote has been able to project the outcomes of U.S. House elections years before Election Day, with 99% accuracy over four election cycles. For more information, please see *Monopoly Politics 2020*, FairVote ([Accessed 30 March 2020](#))

<sup>9</sup> *Where Women Win: Closing the Gap in Congress*, Political Parity ([July 2015](#))

<sup>10</sup> Julianne Malveaux, “No more ‘wait your turn’ politics,” *Richmond Free Press* ([13 July 2018](#))

<sup>11</sup> Sarah John, Haley Smith and Elizabeth Zack, “The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities,” *Electoral Studies* ([2018](#))

<sup>12</sup> New York Independent Budget Office, “Budget Options for New York City: Eliminate the Need for Citywide Run-Off Elections” ([22 October 2019](#))

<sup>13</sup> *Federal Primary Election Runoffs and Voter Turnout Decline, 1994-2012*, FairVote ([July 2013](#))

<sup>14</sup> Libby Schaaf and Jesse Arreguín. “Support - SB 212 - Strengthening Local Democracy,” Letter to Californian Governor Newsom ([18 September 2019](#))

## How to Level the Playing Field: Fair Representation Voting

An election system that systematically privileges incumbents will not render a reflective democracy. Therefore, in place of this single-winner plurality system, the U.S. should adopt a fair and proportional voting system at the national level. According to our research, the best fair representation voting model for women would be one that makes use of ranked choice voting (RCV) and multi-winner districts (MWDs) to proportionally represent communities across the United States.

Ranked choice voting is an electoral system in which voters can rank candidates in order of preference. When tabulating the results, each voter's first choice is counted. If a candidate receives a majority of votes, they win the seat. But if no candidate reaches a majority, then the candidate who received the fewest votes is eliminated. The ballots with the eliminated candidate ranked first are then recounted for their second choice candidate. If no one reaches a majority after the second round, the process continues until a candidate wins with majority support.

Ranked choice voting can be used in both single-winner and multi-winner races. The difference between single- and multi-winner districts is the number of people elected to represent a constituency. Multi-winner systems are widely used at the state and local level in the United States. Eleven state legislative chambers and a majority of city and county governments use multi-winner districts and hold elections for representatives "at-large."<sup>15</sup> On average, the percentage of the population represented by at least one woman increases dramatically with the use of multi-winner districts.<sup>16</sup>

In a multi-winner ranked choice system, representatives win seats proportionally and/or based on how the voters rank each candidate. One of the biggest differences between a single- and multi-winner ranked choice election is the threshold of votes candidates need to receive to win. Whereas in a single-winner ranked choice election, a candidate needs 50%+1 of the vote to win by a majority, in a multi-winner ranked choice election, the threshold will change according to the number of representatives elected. For example, if two candidates will be elected, the threshold is 33.3% +1 of the vote; if three candidates will be elected, the threshold is 25% + 1 of the vote.

Of the 19 U.S. cities and counties that have used ranked choice voting in the last decade, most follow(ed)<sup>17</sup> single-winner systems. But the City of Cambridge, Massachusetts has been electing city councilors and school committee members in

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<sup>15</sup> Vermont's state senate and the state houses in Arizona, Idaho, Maryland, New Hampshire, New Jersey, North Dakota, South Dakota, Vermont, Washington and West Virginia use multi-winner districts. "Electoral Systems in the United States," FairVote ([Accessed 23 April 2020](#))

<sup>16</sup>Shayna Solomon. "The Ripple Effect of Multi-Member Districts on Women's Representation," Representation2020 ([27 August 2015](#))

<sup>17</sup> Of the 19 cities and counties we studied for this report, 3 (Buncombe, Cumberland, and Rowan Counties) have since repealed their use of RCV, but they held RCV elections for superior court judges in 2010, so they are included.



multi-winner ranked choice elections since 1939. For any reader interested in learning more about how votes may be tabulated in a multi-winner ranked choice election, the [Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center](#) offers a more thorough explanation.<sup>18</sup>

## **Fair Representation Voting is a Critical Democracy Reform**

This year, the American Academy of Arts & Sciences' Commission on the Practice of Democratic Citizenship included multi-winner ranked choice voting as one of the key recommendations in their report, [Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century](#). In their words:

*"If [multi-winner districts] were coupled with ranked-choice voting in congressional elections, they would encourage the participation of a wider array of candidates, each of whom would have to appeal to a more heterogeneous bloc of voters.*

*Instead of exacerbating the distortions of winner-take-all [or single-winner plurality] voting and drowning out minority votes, [multi-winner districts] would amplify the representational benefits of ranked-choice voting and signal a victory for equal voice and representation."*<sup>19</sup>

The Commission's endorsement of multi-winner ranked choice voting as a key part of their proposed strategy for ensuring that all have an equal voice and representation in our government further strengthens our call for fair representation voting in the United States.

## **The Future of Fair Representation Voting in the United States**

One of the most comprehensive initiatives to achieve fair representation voting in the U.S. is HR 4000, The Fair Representation Act (FRA). The FRA, first introduced by Representative Don Beyer (VA-08) in the summer of 2017, and then re-introduced last summer, would require states to adopt ranked choice voting and multi-winner districts at the national level.<sup>20</sup>

The Fair Representation Act is not the only Congressional bill that provides for the adoption of ranked choice voting in the United States. The Ranked Choice Voting Act

<sup>18</sup> "In Practice: Cambridge, MA" The Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center ([Accessed 2 July 2020](#)).

<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of our report, we modified the quote so that we refer to "multi-winner districts," as opposed to "MMDS," or "multi-member districts," and added "single-winner plurality" next to "winner-take-all" to make it clear that we are referring to the same system, and keeping the terminology used in the body of this text as consistent as possible while maintaining the integrity of the Commission's report. "Our Common Purpose: Reinventing American Democracy for the 21st Century," Academy of Arts and Sciences ([Accessed 10 July 2020](#)): 26

<sup>20</sup> Fair Representation Act, HR 4000, 116th Congress, ([25 July 2019](#))

(HR 4464), introduced by Representative Jamie Raskin (MD-08) in 2019, would implement ranked choice voting for all House and Senate elections.<sup>21</sup>

And then this past February, Senator Michael Bennet Introduced the Voter Choice Act (S 3340), which would provide \$40 million in federal grants to local and state governments that opt to use ranked choice voting. This money could be used to cover up to 50% of the cost for local and state governments to purchase compatible voting equipment, or otherwise used to cover voter education programs.<sup>22</sup>

Today, ranked choice voting is being approved for use by a growing number of jurisdictions across the U.S. So far, 13 cities used ranked choice voting to elect their current mayors and 14 cities used ranked choice voting to elect their city councilmembers. And as of July 2020, eight cities and counties are set to use ranked choice voting to elect local leadership between August and November of this year.<sup>23</sup>

But ranked choice voting has also been used statewide in Maine since 2018. The first woman governor of Maine, Janet Mills, was nominated from a crowded field of seven candidates in Maine's first ranked choice gubernatorial primary in June of 2018.<sup>24</sup> The following year, Governor Janet Mills announced that she would allow ranked choice voting to be used to decide Electoral College votes in the general presidential election in 2020 and for presidential primaries starting in 2024.<sup>25</sup>

This year marks the first time ranked choice voting was used in presidential primaries. In Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas and Wyoming, the Democratic Party empowered voters to use ranked choice voting to indicate their preferences for the presidential nominee. According to our close allies at [FairVote](#), the nation's lead advocate for ranked choice voting, the results were very encouraging.

In Wyoming, for example, voter turnout was more than double that of the 2016 primaries, and fewer than one in 500 voters made errors that would render their ballots unusable.<sup>26</sup> Ranked choice voting was used with similar levels of success in Kansas, where voter turnout was three and half times the turnout of the 2016 primaries, and 99.8% of voters' first choice preferences were correctly filled out.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ranked Choice Voting Act, HR 4644, 116th Congress, ([24 September 2019](#))

<sup>22</sup> "Bennet, King, Phillips Introduce Bill to Promote Ranked Choice Voting," ([27 February 2020](#))

<sup>23</sup> These cities and counties include: Minneapolis, MN (special election on August 11th); Benton County, OR; Berkeley, CA; Oakland, CA; Portland, ME; San Francisco, CA; San Leandro, CA; Takoma Park, MD (November 3). Please note that Palm Desert, CA is no longer on this list because they have postponed their implementation of ranked choice voting to 2022, citing financial and logistical pressures re COVID-19. This list is also subject to change if fewer than 3 candidates file in any of these elections.

<sup>24</sup> "Maine Governor Primary Election Results," *The New York Times* ([20 June 2018](#))

<sup>25</sup> "Governor Mills Statement on Ranked Choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine," Office of Janet T. Mills ([6 September 2020](#))

<sup>26</sup> "Wyoming RCV 2020," FairVote, ([Accessed 22 June 2020](#))

<sup>27</sup> "Kansas RCV 2020," FairVote, ([Accessed 22 June 2020](#))

FairVote estimated that 10.4% and 11.8% of Wyoming and Kansas ballots respectively would have been 'wasted' on non-viable candidates without ranked choice voting.<sup>28</sup>

## How Our Work Fits the Movement: Outcomes for Women in RCV Elections

In 2016, RepresentWomen (then known as Representation2020) studied the impact of single-winner ranked choice voting in the California Bay Area (Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro), a “hotbed of RCV implementation,” where over 100 ranked choice elections had taken place between 2004 and 2014 to decide local leadership in 53 offices.<sup>29</sup> The study found that more women (42%) and people of color (60%) ran in and won these elections since ranked choice voting was introduced.<sup>30</sup> By the start of 2016, women held 59% of the 53 Bay Area offices that were decided by ranked choice elections, and people of color held 60%.

Four years later, our data shows that ranked choice voting has continued to have a positive impact on descriptive representation. Out of the 156 local-level ranked choice elections that took place between 2010 and 2019, 34% of all candidates were women, and 35% of these women won. Of the women who won, 38% were women of color. Overall, women won 48% of the individual seats up for election. By the start of 2020, half of all mayors and nearly half (49%) of all city council members elected in cities that use ranked choice voting are women.

Our research shows that ranked choice voting has had a sustained, positive impact on women’s representation over the last few decades. With this report, we will continue to build a case for adopting ranked choice voting at the national level. The following sections will address: what ranked choice voting is and its history in the United States, where ranked choice voting is used — both in the United States and around the world — how well women fared in ranked choice elections in the last decade, and why ranked choice voting seems to be as successful as it is in addressing the structural barriers women candidates face.

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<sup>28</sup> “Three States use Ranked Choice Voting in 2020 Democratic Presidential Primaries,” FairVote, ([Accessed 23 June 2020](#))

<sup>29</sup> Sarah John, Haley Smith, Elizabeth Zack, Cynthia Richie Terrell, Michelle Whittaker, Jennifer Pae, and Rob Richie. “The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation: How Ranked Choice Voting Affects Women and People of Color Candidates in California,” Representation2020 ([August 2016](#)): 4

<sup>30</sup> Sarah John et al. “The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting” Representation2020: 19-21

## What is Ranked Choice Voting?

### How it Works

In a single-winner ranked choice election, voters rank candidates in order of preference. When tabulating the results, each voter's first choice is counted. If a candidate receives a majority of votes (50% + 1), they win the seat. If no candidate reaches a majority, then the candidate who received the fewest votes is eliminated. The ballots with the eliminated candidate ranked first are then recounted for their second choice candidate. If no one reaches a majority after the second round, the process continues until a candidate reaches a majority.

Ranked choice voting can be used in any election with three or more candidates. By allowing voters to rank how they would like their vote to be counted, they have more freedom in their vote. Ranked choice voting ensures that whoever wins, wins with a majority of the vote.

Style No.

**State of Maine Sample Ballot**  
**Republican Primary Election, June 12, 2018**  
for

**Instructions to Voters**

To vote, fill in the oval like this ●

To rank your candidate choices, fill in the oval:

- In the 1st column for your 1st choice candidate.
- In the 2nd column for your 2nd choice candidate, and so on.

Continue until you have ranked as many or as few candidates as you like.

Fill in no more than one oval for each candidate or column.

To rank a write-in candidate, write the person's name in the write-in space and fill in the oval for the ranking of your choice.

Governor	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice	5th Choice
Fredette, Kenneth Wade <small>Newport</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mason, Garrett Paul <small>Lisbon</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mayhew, Mary C. <small>Chase</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Moody, Shawn H. <small>Gorham</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Rep. to the Legislature District 75	1st Choice	2nd Choice	3rd Choice	4th Choice
Morris, Joshua K. <small>Turner</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pape, John Alexander <small>Turner</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Terreri, Angelo <small>Turner</small>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Write-in	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Turn Over for Additional Contests**

Sample ballot from Maine's 2018 Republican primary election via *The New York Times*.<sup>31</sup>

This is a ranked choice ballot that was used in Maine's 2018 Republican primary election. It contains the same information as a traditional single choice ballot but gives voters the opportunity to rank as many candidates as they would like.

<sup>31</sup> Jacey Fortin. "Why Ranked Choice Voting is Having a Moment," *The New York Times* (10 February 2020)

## The History of Ranked Choice Voting in the United States: 1912 - 1962

Multi-winner ranked choice voting was invented in Europe in the 1850s as a proportional representation system. In the 1870s, William Ware devised a way for ranked choice voting to be used in single-winner contests. By the early 20th century, Australia, Malta, the Republic of Ireland, and a growing number of municipalities in the United States were using ranked choice voting in their elections.<sup>32</sup>

In the United States, Ohio passed an amendment in 1912 to the state constitution to enable “home rule,” thus allowing cities to choose their own forms of government and voting systems.<sup>33</sup> Many cities opted to follow a fair representation model. Ashtabula, OH adopted ranked choice voting with multi-winner districts, though it was known at the time as “single-transferable voting,” in 1915. The same voting system was taken up by Cleveland, OH (1924); Hamilton, OH (1926); and Toledo, OH (1935).<sup>34</sup> From there, ranked choice elections began to spread across the country.

New York City adopted a proportional version of multi-winner ranked choice voting for the first time in 1936.<sup>35</sup> Just one year later, the city elected its first councilwoman, Genevieve Beavers Earle. Prior to her election, Earle had served on the city’s Charter Revision committee, where she worked as the only woman in a team of nine to draft the charter that initiated the city’s use of multi-winner ranked choice voting. In 1937, Earle was the only woman elected to the city’s new council.<sup>36</sup> Four years later, New Yorkers elected Adam Clayton Powell Jr. to the city council; he was the first Black man elected to hold this role.<sup>37</sup>

Unfortunately, as more jurisdictions began electing women and people of color for the first time, established politicians began turning against the ranked choice voting system. Consider for example the case of Cincinnati, where ranked choice voting enabled the election of two Black city councilmembers in the 1950s. At the time, the highest vote-getter would also have become mayor, but when Theodore Berry, a Black attorney, won with the highest percent of the vote, the city council appointed a White man as mayor instead. After five previous attempts, the city repealed its use of

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<sup>32</sup> “History of RCV”, Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center ([Accessed 27 March 2020](#))

<sup>33</sup> “Vote on Amendments Submitted to the People by the Convention,” Supreme Court of Ohio ([Accessed 3 July 2020](#))

<sup>34</sup> Kathleen Barber. *Proportional Representation and Election Reform in Ohio* (1995)

<sup>35</sup> The system was known at the time as PR-STV, or “proportional representation with the single transferable vote,” as noted by Carlos Ochoa in “Back to the Future: What New York’s Democracy Experiment of the 1930s Says about Today.” *The Fulcrum* ([5 February 2020](#))

<sup>36</sup> Helen M. Ewing. “Ex-Councilwoman Talks to Fireplace Literary Club,” *The Patchogue Advance* ([9 February 1950](#))

<sup>37</sup> Carlos Ochoa. “Back to the Future” *The Fulcrum* ([5 February 2020](#))



ranked choice voting in 1957.<sup>38</sup> By 1962, Cambridge, MA was the only city in the United States still using multi-winner ranked choice voting.

## The History of Ranked Choice Voting in the United States: 1992 - 2020

Election reformers began to find their spark again in the wake of a 1988 referendum. The referendum would restore ranked choice voting in Cincinnati, but fell short of passing with 45% of the vote.<sup>39</sup> In the early 1990s, four separate voting system reform organizations formed with the name, “Citizens for Proportional Representation” (CPR), each with the same goal of “resuscitating democracy.”<sup>40</sup> Of these four organizations, one was focused on restoring ranked choice voting in Cincinnati. Although the campaign was ultimately unsuccessful, the participation of reformers from across the country helped to cement the need for a national organization.

In June 1992, reformers gathered in Cincinnati for the founding conference of CPR, where they were welcomed by the former mayor, Theodore Berry, who reflected on his experience of being elected in a proportional representation system.<sup>41</sup> A new, national CPR soon after formed and elected a board, with Rob Richie as its first director and John B. Anderson as board chair. Over the next few years, CPR changed its name to the Center for Voting and Democracy, and moved to Washington, DC. From DC, the Center published reports on Congress and voting reforms, held a series of national conferences, and advocated for proportional representation remedies in voting rights cases. In 2005, the Center changed its name again to FairVote, as it is still known to this day.

In 1995, Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney (former, GA-11) introduced the Voters’ Choice Act for the first time.<sup>42</sup> If it had passed, it would have given states the option of electing representatives to the U.S. House with proportional representation. Still, this marked another major milestone for the movement, as the Center and its allies continued to publish papers and advocate for municipalities to consider proportional representation systems, including ranked choice voting.

In 1996, a campaign for San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors to place ranked choice voting on the ballot fell short of its goal, but the effort successfully drew the attention needed to propel the movement forward. Shortly after, the Center doubled its

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<sup>38</sup> Robert Burnham, “Reform, Politics and Race in Cincinnati: Choice Voting and Black Voters in Cincinnati,” *Journal of Urban History* ([January 1997](#))

<sup>39</sup> “June 2002 Newsletter: Celebrating 10 Years of Seeking Fair Elections,” FairVote Archives ([Accessed 5 July 2020](#))

<sup>40</sup> John Patrick Thomas. “The History of FairVote: The Founding Years,” FairVote ([18 October 2017](#))

<sup>41</sup> “Ted Berry at CPR’s 1992 Cincinnati Conference,” FairVote ([Accessed 5 July 2020](#))

<sup>42</sup> Congresswoman Cynthia McKinney introduced the Voters’ Choice Act in 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001 and 2005. “Legislation Sponsored or Cosponsored by Cynthia A. McKinney,” Congress.Gov ([Accessed on 6 July 2020](#))

outreach in other cities.<sup>43</sup> In 1998, Santa Clara County, CA voted to make ranked choice voting an option in county elections.<sup>44</sup> In the next year, legislation to enact ranked choice voting picked up strong support in Vermont, New Mexico and Washington.

And then in 2000, the close contest for the presidency helped to draw national attention to the movement. U.S. House Representatives Peter DeFazio (OR-04) and Jim Leach (former, IA-01) reached across the aisle and jointly introduced the Federal Elections Review Commission Act to study electoral reform, including proportional representation and ranked choice voting.<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile, grassroots organizers in Oakland, CA and other jurisdictions began pursuing ranked choice ballot initiatives on their own — a welcome development that helped to set the tone for the movement over the decades that followed.<sup>46</sup>

Between 2000 and 2010, single-winner ranked choice voting was adopted in cities across California, Colorado, Maine, Maryland, Minnesota, and New Mexico. In the last decade, the use of ranked choice voting has continued to increase, with cities and counties in Michigan, North Carolina,<sup>47</sup> and Utah using the system for the first time. By 2020, interest in the voting system has become widespread, highlighted by two statewide wins in Maine. In 2018, Republican Governor Gary Herbert signed Utah House Bill 35, which has since allowed municipalities to pilot ranked choice voting.<sup>48</sup> And in 2019, New York City voted to re-adopt ranked choice voting for city elections, which will go into effect in 2021.

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<sup>43</sup> “June 2002 Newsletter,” FairVote Archives ([Accessed 5 July 2020](#))

<sup>44</sup> Ibid

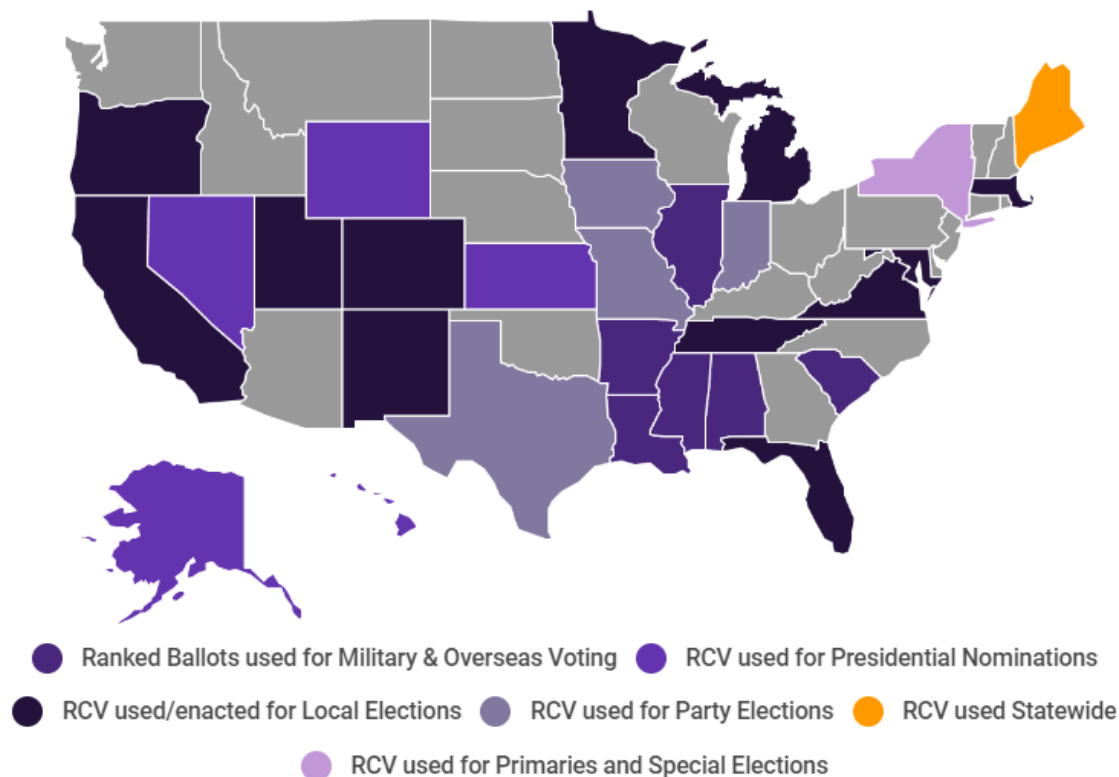
<sup>45</sup> Rob Richie. “Newsletter: Next Steps After the Post-Election Whirlwind,” FairVote ([30 December 2000](#))

<sup>46</sup> Caleb Kleppner. “Victories in Oakland and San Leandro!” Center for Voting and Democracy ([8 November 2000](#))

<sup>47</sup> North Carolina held the first statewide ranked choice general election in the fall of 2010, to fill a vacancy on the Court of Appeals. Three (county-level) Superior Court vacancies were also filled with ranked choice voting. These were the last ranked choice elections in North Carolina. “North Carolina uses Instant Runoff Voting for state, county-wide elections,” FairVote ([3 November 2010](#))

<sup>48</sup> “Utah Legislature Looks Toward Ranked Choice Voting,” Utah Ranked Choice Voting ([Accessed 2 May 2020](#))

## Where is Ranked Choice Voting Used?



Source: FairVote

Almost 10 million voting-age adults live in jurisdictions that have opted to use ranked choice voting.<sup>49</sup> And while ranked choice voting has a long history in the United States, the number of cities that have opted to use it since the early 2000s has drastically risen. Over the last decade, 19 cities and counties across 10 states have used ranked choice voting. In 2016, Maine became the first state to pass legislation implementing ranked choice voting at the federal level.

This year, five states used ranked choice voting as part of the Democratic presidential primaries for the first time. At the local level, Benton County, Oregon will use ranked choice voting to elect county commissioners for the first time this November. Additional upcoming implementations include: New York City special and primary elections, starting in 2021; Easthampton, MA city elections, starting in 2021; and Palm Desert, California city council elections in November 2022.

<sup>49</sup> “Data on Ranked Choice Voting”, FairVote ([Accessed 27 March 2020](#))

Ranked choice voting is also recommended by Robert’s Rules of Order,<sup>50</sup> and is used at many colleges and universities,<sup>51</sup> and by the Academy of Motion Pictures.<sup>52</sup>

<b>Where Ranked Choice Voting Was Used ‘10-‘20<sup>53</sup></b>					
<b>City</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Adopted</b>	<b>First Use</b>	<b>End</b>	<b>Office</b>
<b>Berkeley</b>	<b>CA</b>	2004	2010	—	Mayor, City Council, City Auditor
<b>Oakland</b>	<b>CA</b>	2006	2010	—	Mayor, City Council, City Attorney, City Auditor, School Director
<b>San Francisco</b>	<b>CA</b>	2002	2004	—	Mayor, City Attorney, Board of Supervisors, Sheriff, District Attorney, Treasurer, Assessor-Recorder, Public Defender
<b>San Leandro</b>	<b>CA</b>	2009	2010	—	Mayor, City Council
<b>Basalt</b>	<b>CO</b>	2002	2020 <sup>54</sup>	—	Mayor
<b>Telluride</b>	<b>CO</b>	2008	2011	—	Mayor
<b>Cambridge</b>	<b>MA</b>	1940	1941	—	City Council, School Board (multi-winner)
<b>Takoma Park</b>	<b>MD</b>	2006	2007	—	Mayor, City Council
	<b>ME</b>	2016	2018	—	U.S. House and Senate primaries and general elections, Governor and State Legislature primaries
<b>Portland</b>	<b>ME</b>	2010	2011	—	Mayor, City Council, School Board <sup>55</sup>
<b>Eastpointe</b>	<b>MI</b>	2019	2019	—	City Council (multi-winner)
<b>Minneapolis</b>	<b>MN</b>	2006	2009	—	Mayor, City Council, Park Board, Tax Board
	<b>NC</b>	2006	2007	2013	Judicial Vacancy Elections, County Elections, Statewide Elections
<b>Las Cruces</b>	<b>NM</b>	2018	2019	—	City Elections
<b>Santa Fe</b>	<b>NM</b>	2009	2010	—	Mayor, City Council, Municipal Judge
<b>St. Louis Park</b>	<b>MN</b>	2018	2019	—	City Elections
<b>St. Paul</b>	<b>MN</b>	2009	2011	—	Mayor, City Council
<b>Payson</b>	<b>UT</b>	2018	2019	—	City Council, (Mayor in 2021)
<b>Vineyard</b>	<b>UT</b>	2018	2019	—	City Council, (Mayor in 2021)

<sup>50</sup> “RCV and Robert’s Rules of Order,” FairVote ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

<sup>51</sup> “RCV on Campus,” FairVote ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

<sup>52</sup> Zaid Julani. “The Oscars Use a More Fair Voting System,” *The Intercept* ([4 March 2018](#))

<sup>53</sup> Upcoming implementations include: Benton County, Oregon commissioners starting Nov. 2020, New York City special and primary elections starting in 2021, Easthampton, Michigan city elections starting Nov. 2021 and Palm Desert, California city council elections starting Nov. 2022.

<sup>54</sup> Ranked choice voting was first used in Basalt, Colorado in April, four months after the data for this report was collected. For more information, please see Adam Ginsburg’s blog, “Basalt Mayoral Race Features Ranked Choice Voting,” FairVote ([14 April 2020](#))

<sup>55</sup> With 81% of voters in favor of the proposal, Portland voters expanded the use of ranked choice voting to cover city council and school board elections in March of 2020. Randy Billings. “Portland overwhelmingly approves expansion of ranked-choice voting,” *Portland Press Herald* ([3 March 2020](#))

## Ranked Choice Voting in the 2020 Presidential Primaries

The Democratic Party in five states — Alaska, Hawaii, Kansas, Nevada<sup>56</sup> and Wyoming — empowered voters to use ranked choice voting in the 2020 presidential primaries for the first time. The results, as tracked by [FairVote](#), were very encouraging, and some key takeaways are as follows:

### The Nevada Caucus: February 22, 2020

In the first-ever presidential caucus to feature early voting, the Democratic Party utilized ranked choice ballots to give a voice to voters who could not participate in in-person voting on Election Day. More than two-thirds of voters participated in ranked choice voting in the Nevada caucuses. Almost 75,000 Nevada voters cast their ballots in the early voting period — a 16,000 increase from 2016.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, more than 99.5% of voters avoided making a single mistake as they ranked the mandatory three slots, further demonstrating the simplicity of ranked choice voting.

### The Alaska Primary: April 10, 2020

In spite of the global pandemic, turnout in Alaska's first-ever ranked choice primary was nearly double that of its last caucus in 2016. By the numbers, 19,813 voters were empowered to cast their ballots by mail in the Democratic primary, whereas 10,610 votes were cast in 2016. Notably, around 11% of voters in Alaska would have had their votes "wasted" without ranked choice voting, since their first-choice candidates have since dropped out.<sup>58</sup> But unlike voters in states that have not opted to use ranked choice voting, Democratic voters in Alaska had the option of indicating "backup choices" through their next-ranked picks.

### The Wyoming Caucus: April 17, 2020

In Wyoming, voter turnout was over double that of the 2016 primaries and fewer than one in 500 voters made errors that would render their ballots unusable and 99.8% of all ballots were valid.<sup>59</sup> This further dispels concerns that ranked choice voting is too complicated or hard to understand. Moreover, the Wyoming Caucus illustrated how ranked choice voting gives more voters a voice in elections. Without ranked choice voting, more than 10% of ballots cast for candidates other than frontrunners Biden or Sanders would not have been counted in the final tally.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>56</sup> In Nevada's case, ranked choice ballots were permitted to be used by early voters.

<sup>57</sup> "Vox: Ranked Choice Voting a 'Winner' of Nevada Caucuses," FairVote, ([Accessed 15 July 2020](#))

<sup>58</sup> "Alaska RCV 2020," FairVote, ([Accessed 15 July 2020](#))

<sup>59</sup> "Wyoming RCV 2020," FairVote, ([Accessed 22 June 2020](#))

<sup>60</sup> Ibid



## **The Kansas Primary: May 2, 2020**

In Kansas, ranked choice voting was used with great success. Voter turnout was three and a half times the turnout of the 2016 primaries and 99.8% of voters' first choices were correctly filled out and valid. In the 2016 caucuses, only 39,230 voters cast ballots, but in this year's caucuses, 147,000 voters participated. Thanks to ranked choice voting, 17,489 voters who cast ballots for candidates other than Biden or Sanders did not have to risk wasting their vote — as would have happened if the state had stuck to using a single-winner plurality system — and almost all of their ballots were able to aid in making a choice between which candidate should gain delegates at this year's convention."<sup>61</sup>

## **The Hawaii Primary: May 22, 2020**

In response to the pandemic, Hawaii ran their primaries entirely by mail. Though most voters in Hawaii cast their support for Joe Biden before he became the presumptive nominee, the field of candidates was significantly whittled-down by the time voters were filling out their ballots. Still, voter turnout reached a record-high, and Joe Biden won the primary 63% to Bernie Sanders' 37% in the final round. According to the Chair of the Democratic Party in Hawaii, Kate Stanley, the state's decision to use ranked choice voting in the primaries proved timely this year. In her words:

"We decided to implement ranked choice voting because it makes common sense: ranked choice voting ensures more votes count. We had no idea a global pandemic was on the horizon, but we're glad we instituted voting from home and ranked choice voting when we did."<sup>62</sup>

## **The Case for Ranked Choice Presidential Primaries in 2024 and Beyond**

In June, the Unite America Institute released a study of the 2020 ranked choice primaries to assess how well the system mitigates the problems posed by the current plurality winner system, such as wasted votes and unrepresentative outcomes. The Institute further argues that ranked choice voting is the solution to these problems, as it ensures that 1) all ballots count, even if voters' first-choice candidates are no longer in the running, 2) delegates are more fairly allocated, and 3) voting is made accessible to those who cannot appear in-person on Election Day.<sup>63</sup>

Following the success of the 2020 ranked choice primaries, party leaders and election officials would be prudent to consider implementing ranked choice voting for all presidential primaries, moving forward.

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<sup>61</sup> "Kansas RCV 2020," FairVote, ([Accessed 22 June 2020](#))

<sup>62</sup> Ashley Houghton. "Hawaii Democratic Presidential Primary Models Ranked Choice Voting," FairVote ([23 May 2020](#))

<sup>63</sup> Beth Hladick and Tyler Fisher. "Ranked Choice Voting: The Solution to the Presidential Primary Predicament," Unite America Institute ([June 2020](#)): 3-4

## Ranked Choice Voting Around the World

Australia, Ireland, Malta, New Zealand, Canada, and parts of the United Kingdom use ranked choice voting for both single- and multi-winner districts. According to our research, women in Australia and New Zealand have particularly benefited from the use of ranked choice voting.

Australia is the only country to use ranked choice voting for both houses of their national legislature. Notably, both the upper and lower houses have exceeded the 30% “critical mass” of women considered the minimum for sustained progress towards gender parity. Australia’s upper house, the Senate, uses multi-winner ranked choice voting and, as a result, currently has near-parity with women constituting 49% of elected representatives.<sup>64</sup> Similarly encouraging results are seen in other parts of the country. The Australian Capital Territory elects its legislative assembly by ranked choice voting; as of 2016, just over 50% of the elected members are women.<sup>65</sup>

New Zealand has also experienced huge success in women's representation using ranked choice voting. Multi-winner ranked choice voting is used to elect district health boards, and as of 2020, women make up 49% of elected district health board members.<sup>66</sup> Since 2004, ranked choice voting has appeared on all ballots as it is enforced nationwide to elect district health boards. Following the national implementation of ranked choice voting, many of New Zealand's largest cities have introduced the system for their local elections. Wellington, New Zealand’s capital and second most populated city, has used ranked choice voting to elect mayors, councilors, and community board members since 2004. Today, 79% of Wellington city councilors are women and two of the last three mayors have been women.<sup>67</sup> Comparatively, Christchurch, the city closest in size to Wellington, elects its local council by plurality voting and has only 31% women councilors.<sup>68</sup>

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) tracks women’s representation in national legislatures around the world. Of the 193 countries the IPU tracks, Australia ranks 51st in the world for the number of women in its lower house, and New Zealand ranks 20th. The United States, with its single-winner plurality system is still far from reaching the “critical mass” of women represented; with less than 25% of women in the U.S. House, the U.S. ranks 81st worldwide.<sup>69</sup> RepresentWomen tracks the rules and systems used in countries that are electing more women to office, and doing so at a faster pace, than we are in the United States. To learn more about these best practices and how they might apply in the context of our own politics, turn to our [international research](#).

<sup>64</sup> “Where Ranked Choice Voting is Used”, FairVote ([Accessed 27 March 2020](#))

<sup>65</sup> “Members of the Assembly,” Legislative Assembly for the Australian Capital Territory ([15 June 2020](#))

<sup>66</sup> “District Health Boards,” Ministry of Health New Zealand ([Accessed 8 June 2020](#))

<sup>67</sup> “Councilors,” Wellington City Council ([Accessed 4 June 2020](#))

<sup>68</sup> “Deputy Mayor and Councilors”, Christchurch City Council ([Accessed 4 June 2020](#))

<sup>69</sup> “Percentage of Women in National Parliaments,” Inter-Parliamentary Union ([March 2020](#))

## How Does Ranked Choice Voting Help Elect More Women?

Ranked choice elections mitigate some of the barriers to representation that prevail in single-winner plurality systems. Specifically:

### 1) Ranked Choice Voting Eliminates Vote Splitting and Spoilers

In a single-winner plurality election, it is possible for the majority of votes to be split between similar candidates, allowing a third candidate to win with plurality support. The potential for vote-splitting often appears when more than one woman or person of color enters a race that follows single-winner plurality rules. As a result, women and people of color are frequently targeted in elections for being spoiler candidates, especially when there is more than one woman or person of color in the running.<sup>70</sup> But in a ranked choice election, there are fewer incentives for gatekeepers, or party leadership, to discourage women and people of color from running, and fewer reasons for would-be candidates to refrain from running in the first place.

Consider, for example, San Francisco's 2018 special mayoral election, a competitive open-seat race that attracted eight well-qualified candidates to the field. Among these candidates were three women of color: London Breed, Jane Kim, and Ellen Lee Zhou. Since this was a ranked choice election, voters were empowered to vote their conscience, without having to worry about splitting the vote. In the final rounds of tabulation, London Breed, Mark Leno, and Jane Kim were top contenders. After eight rounds of counting, London Breed was declared the winner with 63% of the vote.<sup>71</sup>

### 2) Ranked Choice Voting Incentivizes Positive Campaigning

Too often, candidates in plurality elections win by barraging their opponents with expensive, negative ads. Recent research suggests that women are often deterred from running in the first place due to the prevalence of negative campaigning in single-winner plurality systems.<sup>72</sup>

Under ranked choice voting, elections are more civil because candidates have an incentive to find common ground as they seek support from their competitor's supporters. Ranked choice voting encourages coalition building and grass-roots community campaigning, both of which tend to focus on the positives and similarities between candidates. Anecdotal evidence suggests that women are more likely to run

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<sup>70</sup> Black women candidates in particular tend to be singled out as potential spoilers. Both Shirley Chisholm and Carol Moseley Braun were accused of spoiling elections for Black men when they announced their candidacies for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1972 and 2002. Diane M Blair. "Hillary Clinton's '18 Million Cracks': The Enduring Legacy of the Presidential Glass Ceiling," *Hillary Rodham Clinton and the 2016 Election: Her Political and Social Discourse* ([19 November 2015](#)): 4

<sup>71</sup> Nancy Lavin. "Ranked Choice Voting Was Also a Winner of San Francisco's Special Mayoral Election," *FairVote* ([5 October 2020](#))

<sup>72</sup> Sarah John, Haley Smith and Elizabeth Zack, "The alternative vote: Do changes in single-member voting systems affect descriptive representation of women and minorities," *Electoral Studies* ([2018](#))

in a positive campaign environment and are comfortable asking voters to rank them as their second or third choice. The first step to increasing the number of women in elected office is to increase the number of women who run in the first place.

Former Minneapolis mayor Betsy Hodges has commented on the benefits of ranked choice voting, such as positive campaigning, saying: “the campaign was remarkably positive, there was relatively little elbowing and attacking [...] because of course every candidate wanted to be the second choice of their opponent’s supporters. As a candidate it played to my background, and as a candidate what I would do anyway.”<sup>73</sup> Hodges won the 2013 mayoral race which had 35 candidates in the 33rd round of vote counting with 61% of the votes.

### **3) Ranked Choice Voting Rewards Issue-Focused Campaigns**

Rather than expending time and money on attacking opponents and defending themselves from attacks, candidates in ranked choice elections can focus on leading more substantive, issue-focused campaigns. Such campaigns open up time for civil debates regarding policy and constituency-specific issues, helping voters get a better idea of who they want to vote for.

Consider, for example how, during the 2017 Minneapolis mayoral race, Raymond Dehn, one of the 17 candidates, commented on the benefits of ranked choice voting during the race saying: “We had a huge dialogue all the way up to Sunday before Election Day. We raised issues around affordable housing, police accountability, and climate justice. Without ranked choice voting, we wouldn’t have had that dialogue.”<sup>74</sup>

Building off of this, ranked choice voting encourages a grass-roots campaign style that rewards candidates who focus on making community connections that make them favorable second- and third-ranked choices among their opponents’ supporters. A 2015 study on diversity and representation found that coalition building and grass-roots campaigning benefits women candidates who are already “predisposed to adopt coalition building strategies,” when it comes to running for office.<sup>75</sup>

### **4) Ranked Choice Elections Are More Affordable**

Ranked choice elections also eliminate the need for voters to return to the polling booth for a runoff election. Because this consolidates the election season, cities and candidates save money. In 2013, a runoff election in New York City cost the office of

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<sup>73</sup> “Mayor Betsy Hodges on the Impact of RCV in Minneapolis,” FairVote ([10 February 2015](#))

<sup>74</sup> “Ranked Choice Voting Wins Again in MSP Elections,” FairVote Minnesota ([9 November 2017](#))

<sup>75</sup> Pei-te Lien. “Reassessing Descriptive Representation by Women and Men of Color: New Evidence at the Subnational Level,” *Urban Affairs Review* ([February 2014](#)): 239-262

public advocate an estimated \$13 million.<sup>76</sup> The office itself had budgeted only \$2.3 million for the election. Not only are runoff elections costly, but they also tend to have lower voter turnout, especially for communities of color and women.<sup>77</sup>

Relating back to the representation of women, ranked choice elections also lower the cost of running for candidates. The majority of women run as challengers or in open seats, often with fewer financial resources and smaller donor networks than incumbents. Since ranked choice elections reward an overall less expensive grass-roots style of campaigning and eliminate costly runoff elections, women candidates compete on a more level playing field. This can be particularly important for women candidates who are running for local-level positions for the first time, especially if they are balancing their campaign with other life priorities, including work and family care.

## **5) Ranked Choice Elections Ensure More Representative Outcomes**

Overall, ranked choice voting ensures that candidates win with a true majority, rather than a plurality of the vote. In elections with three or more candidates, the winner rarely wins a majority of the votes. In a democracy, this is crucial because elected officials — especially those considered ‘non-traditional’ candidates — govern better when they have the mandate to lead.

In single-winner ranked choice voting elections, the winner must get 50% + 1 of the vote. If no candidate receives this in the first round, then the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and the voters’ second choice votes are re-distributed among those who remain, until a candidate wins with a majority.

In multi-winner ranked choice voting, rather than reaching a 50% + 1 election threshold, candidates must reach an alternate threshold or quota, as defined by the jurisdiction holding the election.<sup>78</sup>

To learn more about what threshold of votes a candidate needs to receive in a multi-winner ranked choice election, please consult the [Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center](#), as they offer a more detailed explanation and additional visualizations.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Kate Taylor. “High-Cost Runoff for Public Advocate’s Post Prompts Calls for Reform,” *The New York Times* ([29 September 2013](#))

<sup>77</sup> Maya Wiley. “Ranked-choice voting will help underrepresented New Yorkers,” *New York Daily News* ([4 November 2019](#))

<sup>78</sup> “The Single Transferable Vote (STV),” ACE the Electoral Knowledge Network, ([Accessed 9 July 2020](#))

<sup>79</sup> “Multi-Winner Ranked Choice Voting” The Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center ([Accessed 14 July 2020](#))



## Our Data: A Decade in Review

### Ranked Choice Voting Outcomes for Women at the Local Level

Ranked choice voting has a strong impact on women's representation in the United States. Between 2010 and 2019, there have been a total of 156 local-level ranked choice elections with three or more candidates running. In these elections, 34% (308 of 907) of all candidates were women, and 35% (109) of these women won.<sup>80</sup> Of the women who won, 38% (41) were women of color. Overall, women won 48% (109 of 227) of the individual seats up for election.

Ranked Choice Voting Outcomes for Women at the Local Level								
Cities and Counties that Used RCV between 2010 - 2019		RCV Races	RCV Seats	Candidates	Women Candidates	Percent Women Candidates	Women Winners	Seats Won by Women
Berkeley	CA	16	16	63	24	38%	8	50%
Oakland	CA	22	22	120	51	43%	17	77%
San Francisco	CA	27	27	184	65	35%	11	41 %
San Leandro	CA	10	10	34	14	41%	6	60%
Telluride	CO	3	3	9	1	11%	1	33%
Cambridge	MA	10	75	168	56	33 %	32	43%
Takoma Park	MD	5	5	15	6	40%	3	60%
Portland	ME	3	3	22	3	14%	1	33%
Eastpoint	MI	1	2	4	2	50%	1	50%
Minneapolis	MN	30	32	158	38	24%	12	38%
St. Louis Park	MN	1	1	3	1	33%	0	0%
St. Paul	MN	16	16	75	29	39%	8	50%
Buncombe	NC	1	1	3	2	67%	0	0%
Cumberland	NC	1	1	3	1	33%	1	100%
Rowan	NC	1	1	3	1	33%	1	100%
Las Cruces	NM	3	3	17	7	41%	2	67%
Santa Fe	NM	4	4	14	4	29%	3	75%
Payson	UT	1	3	5	1	20%	1	33%
Vineyard	UT	1	2	7	2	29%	1	50%
TOTALS	—	156	227	907	308	34%	109	48%

<sup>80</sup> Please note that these numbers include duplicate counts for candidates who filed to run and won multiple times in the past decade. To learn more about the unique candidates (both men and women) who filed to run between 2010 and 2019, please consult [our data](#).

## Our Data: 2020 Office Holders

### Meet the Mayors: Who Holds Office in Ranked Choice Cities?

Thirteen cities have used ranked choice voting to elect their current mayors. At the start of 2020, six out of twelve mayors elected by ranked choice voting were women. These women include Mayors Libby Schaaf (Oakland, CA), London Breed (San Francisco, CA), Pauline Cutter (San Leandro, CA), DeLanie Young (Telluride, CO), Kate Stewart (Takoma Park, MD), and Kate Snyder (Portland, ME).

2020 Mayors in Cities that Use Ranked Choice Voting							
Cities and States		First Name	Last Name	Gender	Identity	Candidates	Years Elected <sup>81</sup>
Berkeley	CA	Jesse	Arreguín	Man	Latinx	8	2016
Oakland	CA	Libby	Schaaf	Woman	White	15, 10	2014, 2018
San Francisco	CA	London	Breed	Woman	Black	8, 6	2018, 2019
San Leandro	CA	Pauline	Cutter	Woman	White	3, 4	2014, 2018
Basalt	CO	Bill	Kane	Man	White	3	2020
Telluride	CO	DeLanie	Young	Woman	White	3	2019
Takoma Park	MD	Kate	Stewart	Woman	White	2, 1	2015, 2017
Portland	ME	Kate	Snyder	Woman	White	4	2019
Minneapolis	MN	Jacob	Frey	Man	White	17	2017
St. Louis Park	MN	Jake	Spano	Man	White	2	2019
St. Paul	MN	Melvin	Carter	Man	Black	10	2017
Las Cruces	NM	Ken	Miyagishima	Man	API, Latinx	10	2019
Santa Fe	NM	Alan	Webber	Man	White	5	2018

### Update: Basalt, CO Held its First Ranked Choice Mayoral Election in April

In April 2020, Basalt, Colorado used ranked choice voting for the first time to elect its mayor and elected Bill Kane, who ran in a three-way race and received over 50% of the vote in the first and final round. Because he received majority support in the first round of tabulation, there was no reallocation of votes and Kane was declared the winner.<sup>82</sup>

<sup>81</sup> Only elections that took place between 2010 and 2020 are listed here, so please note that 2010 incumbent winners will have participated in earlier elections that are not listed. Please also note that mayors who won in city council elections prior to becoming mayor (ie Mayor Arreguín in 2010 and 2014) do not have their council wins listed here. Please refer to [our data](#) to learn more.

<sup>82</sup> "Basalt Mayoral Race Features Ranked Choice Voting," FairVote ([14 April 2020](#))

## Meet the Councils: Who Currently Holds Office in Ranked Choice Cities?

Between 2010 and 2019, fourteen cities used ranked choice voting to elect city council members. At the start of 2020, nearly half (49%) of all city council members elected in cities that use ranked choice voting were women, and over a third (37%) of all city council members were people of color.

2020 City Councils that Use Ranked Choice Voting								
Cities and States		Seats <sup>83</sup>	Women	Percent Women	People of Color	Percent People of Color	Women of Color	Percent Women of Color
Berkeley	CA	8	6	75%	4	50%	2	25%
Oakland	CA	8	4	50%	6	75%	3	38%
San Francisco	CA	11	3	27%	5	45%	1	9%
San Leandro	CA	7	3	43%	4	57%	1	14%
Cambridge	MA	9	4	44%	3	33%	2	22%
Takoma Park	MD	7	4	57%	2	29%	1	14%
Eastpointe	MI	5	2	40%	1	20%	1	20%
Minneapolis	MN	13	5	38%	5	38%	2	15%
St. Louis Park	MN	7	4	57%	1	14%	1	14%
St. Paul	MN	7	5	71%	3	43%	2	29%
Las Cruces	NM	7	4	57%	3	43%	1	14%
Santa Fe	NM	8	5	63%	3	38%	2	25%
Payson	UT	6	2	33%	0	0%	0	0%
Vineyard	UT	5	2	40%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>—</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>36%</b>

## Ranked Choice Voting is Helping City Councils Reach Gender Parity

Seven cities that use ranked choice voting to elect city council members have either achieved or surpassed gender parity. These cities include: Berkeley, CA (75% women), St. Paul, MN (71% women), Santa Fe, NM (63% women), Takoma Park, MD (57% women), St. Louis Park, MN (57% women), Las Cruces, NM (57% women) and Oakland, CA (50% women).

<sup>83</sup> Please note that the mayor is included as a member of the city council in the following cities: San Leandro, Telluride, Cambridge, Takoma Park, Portland, Eastpointe, St. Louis Park, Las Cruces, Payson, and Vineyard.

## Case Study: Ranked Choice Voting in the Bay Area 2004 - Today

Over the past decade, 19 cities and counties have used ranked choice voting in local-level elections across the United States. Today, the California Bay Area is home to the highest concentration of cities that use ranked choice voting in the country. Given the high presence of municipalities that do not use ranked choice voting but are otherwise demographically, culturally, and geographically similar to these four RCV-cities (San Francisco, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro), the Bay Area makes for an interesting case to study the impacts of ranked choice voting on representation.

In California, there are 244 cities with populations of 30,000 and above; 50 of these cities are part of the Bay Area.<sup>84</sup> According to our research,<sup>85</sup> women presently hold 37% (488) of 1332 city council seats across California, and 44% (129) of 294 city council seats in the Bay Area.<sup>86</sup> People of color hold 37% (496) of city council seats statewide, and 36% (106) of the seats in the Bay Area. Women of color hold 15% (196) of statewide seats, and 16% (47) of seats in the Bay Area. And then when it comes to local-level executives, women hold the office of mayor in 30% (72) of 244 cities in California, and in the Bay Area, women hold 38% (19) of these offices.

Ranked choice voting has been used in the California Bay Area since 2004. San Francisco became the first city to use ranked choice voting in the region when its voters moved to adopt a ranked choice voting amendment to their city charter in March 2002. Ranked choice voting has been used in local-level elections in San Francisco since 2004. Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro adopted ranked choice voting between 2004 and 2009, and all three cities first used the voting system in 2010.

Our research has shown and continues to show that ranked choice voting has had a positive impact on descriptive representation in the United States. And our evidence is as follows:

### 2016 Report Recap: Ranked Choice Voting in the Bay Area 2004 - 2014

In 2016, Sarah John and Haley Smith led a [study](#) on ranked choice voting that compared outcomes for women and people of color in Berkeley, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro with election outcomes in neighboring cities and counties that had not adopted ranked choice voting, including San Jose, Alameda, Richmond, and Santa Clara.

For this study, the team examined election outcomes for women and people of color before and after ranked choice voting was introduced in the Bay Area, over a period

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<sup>84</sup> RepresentWomen consults the 2010 Census for population data.

<sup>85</sup> The data we cite here is actively being collected for future research by the RepresentWomen team. To learn more about the status of this work, or to obtain a sample, please [contact us](#).

<sup>86</sup> RepresentWomen only evaluated representation in municipalities with populations of 30,000 and above for this report; these are also the parameters we use in our [Gender Parity Index](#).

of 19 years (1995 to 2014). The team found that, holding other variables constant, women — and women of color — were more likely to win in Bay Area cities that were using ranked choice voting than in neighboring cities that were not using the new voting system.<sup>87</sup>

Of the 100+ ranked choice contests that took place in the California Bay Area between 2004 and 2014, we found that women (42%), people of color (60%), and women of color (22%) were more likely to win in ranked choice elections than in a plurality election. As of the report's release in 2016, women held 59%, people of color held 60%, and women of color held 28% of the 53 Bay Area offices elected by ranked choice voting. For all three groups, these outcomes tracked higher than the regional average.

Four years later, our research shows that ranked choice voting has continued to have a positive impact on descriptive representation in the United States, and our updated review of outcomes for women, people of color, and women of color over the last decade help to support this, as all members of all three groups have continued to run and win in ranked choice elections in greater numbers.

## 2020 Report Data: Ranked Choice Voting in the Bay Area 2010 - 2019

Over the past decade (2010-2019), there have been 75 ranked choice elections with at least three candidates in the running in the California Bay Area. Of the 401 people who filed to run, 38% (154) were women,<sup>88</sup> 27% (42) of all women candidates won, and women won in these elections 42 (56%) times.

California Bay Area 2010 - 2019						
RCV Cities	Seats Contested	Candidates	Women Candidates	Percent Women	Women Winners	Seats Won by Women
Berkeley	16	63	24	38%	8	50%
Oakland	22	120	51	43%	17	77%
San Francisco	27	184	65	35%	11	41%
San Leandro	10	34	14	41%	6	60%
<b>TOTALS</b>	75	401	154	38%	42	<b>56%</b>

<sup>87</sup> Sarah John. "The Alternate Vote can increase representation of women and people of color in US elections," FairVote ([27 July 2018](#))

<sup>88</sup> It may be worth noting that this candidate count, for both men and women, includes those who filed to run multiple times over the past decade. We also tracked the number of unique candidates who filed to run; you may find this information if you consult [our data](#).

## Outcomes for Women in the California Bay Area Between 2010 and 2019

Of the 75 Bay Area ranked choice elections that had at least three candidates in the running between 2010 and 2019, 12 were mayoral contests and 55 were city council races.<sup>89</sup> In the mayoral contests we studied, 34 women ran, of whom, 35% (12) were women of color.<sup>90</sup> Women won 58% (7) of the mayoral contests; of the seven times a woman won, the winner was a woman of color three times (Jean Quan in 2010; London Breed in 2018 and 2019). In the 55 city council elections, women won 55% (30) of the seats; women of color won 27% (15).

California Bay Area 2010 - 2019								
RCV Cities	Ranked Choice Mayors				Ranked Choice Councils			
	Seats	Women Candidates	Women Winners	Seats Won by Women	Seats	Women Candidates	Women Winners	Seats Won by Women
<b>Berkeley</b>	2	3	0	0%	14	21	8	57%
<b>Oakland</b>	3	12	3	100%	15	33	10	67%
<b>San Francisco</b>	4	14	2	50%	20	47	8	40%
<b>San Leandro</b>	3	5	2	67%	6	9	4	67%
<b>TOTALS</b>	12	34	7	<b>58%</b>	55	110	30	<b>55%</b>

## Notable Races in the California Bay Area Between 2010 and 2019

In November 2010, Oakland held its first ranked choice mayoral election. Of the 10 candidates who ran, Jean Quan won in the ninth round with 51% of the vote. At the time of her election, Quan's win was seen as a major upset to the perceived favorite Don Perata, who in a non-ranked choice voting election, would have won with only 33% of the vote.<sup>91</sup>

Despite Perata's higher spending and name recognition, Quan's strategy of aligning herself with the other candidates by campaigning for voters' second and third choices proved successful.<sup>92</sup> With ranked choice voting, Oakland avoided electing a mayor

<sup>89</sup> The remaining contests include races for city auditor, city attorney, district attorney, sheriff, school director, treasurer, assessor-recorder, public defender that had three or more candidates in the running.

<sup>90</sup> Please note that this does include women who ran in multiple elections between 2010 and 2019.

<sup>91</sup> Maura Reilly. "Ranked Choice, Fair Choice: Recapping the RCV(ictories) of the Last Decade," *Ms. Magazine* ([27 December 2019](#))

<sup>92</sup> Zusha Elinson and Gerry Shih. "The Winning Strategy in Oakland: Concentrate on Being 2nd or 3rd Choice," *The New York Times* ([11 November 2010](#))



with only a plurality of support and instead elected the city’s first woman and Asian-American mayor with majority support.

Another notable election took place just four years later, when Oakland’s current mayor Libby Schaaf won in a crowded, 15-candidate field, and became the second mayor elected with ranked choice voting, and second woman to hold the office in Oakland. During the 2014 mayoral election, Schaaf won with 63% of the vote in the 15th round, beating several well-funded candidates including the incumbent mayor Jean Quan.<sup>93</sup> When Schaaf ran again for re-election in 2018 in a 10 person race, she won in the first round with 53% of the vote.

Finally, San Francisco’s mayor, London Breed, won a special election in 2018 that was held following the death of sitting mayor Ed Lee. Breed was one of eight candidates and won the election with 63% of the vote after eight rounds. The following year, Breed ran for re-election and won the six-person race in the sixth round of counting with 75% of the vote. Breed is the second woman and first Black woman to serve as mayor in San Francisco.<sup>94</sup>

## 2020 Outcomes for Women and People of Color in the California Bay Area

Presently, there are 53 seats in the California Bay Area that may be filled in a ranked choice election. Women hold 51% (27), people of color hold 64% (34), and women of color hold 28% (15) of these seats. Oakland, San Francisco, and San Leandro each are led by RCV-elected women mayors in 2020; Mayors Libby Schaaf (Oakland) and London Breed (San Francisco) are further renowned as two of the 28 women mayors who lead the top-100 most populous cities in the United States.<sup>95</sup>

Ranked Choice Voting in the California Bay Area 2020							
RCV Cities	Seats	Women	Percent Women	People of Color	Percent People of Color	Women of Color	Percent Women of Color
<b>Berkeley</b>	10	7	70%	6	60%	3	30%
<b>Oakland</b>	18	12	67%	13	72%	8	44%
<b>San Francisco</b>	18	5	28%	11	61%	3	17%
<b>San Leandro</b>	7	3	43%	4	57%	1	14%
<b>TOTALS</b>	53	27	<b>51%</b>	34	<b>64%</b>	15	<b>28%</b>

<sup>93</sup> “2014 Oakland Mayor Election, A Visual Demonstration,” FairVote ([17 November 2014](#))

<sup>94</sup> “About Mayor London N. Breed,” Office of the Mayor ([Accessed 7 July 2020](#))

<sup>95</sup> This list builds off of the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP) list of women mayors in 2019 with important updates from the Fall of 2019 and Spring 2020. “Women Mayors in US Cities 2019,” Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

As was the case in 2016, members of each group are overall better represented in ranked choice cities than they are in neighboring Bay Area cities. On average, women hold 44%, people of color hold 33%, and women of color hold 16% of the available seats in the city councils of non-RCV cities in the California Bay Area.<sup>96</sup> Comparatively, the representation of women, people of color, and women of color is higher in ranked choice cities. In 2020, 47% (16) of all RCV-elected city councilors are women, 56% (19) are people of color, and 21% (7) are women of color.

As encouraging as these outcomes have been over the last fifteen years and counting, the RepresentWomen team will continue to monitor and research the impact of ranked choice voting in the California Bay Area — and other parts of the country — as part of our ongoing effort to understand the role of systemic change in advancing women's representation and leadership in the United States in 2020 and beyond.

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<sup>96</sup> There are 50 municipalities in the California Bay Area with populations of 30,000 and above; of these cities, four use ranked choice voting while 46 have not adopted and implemented ranked choice voting.

## Ranked Choice Voting in Statewide Elections: 2018 - Today

Another great story of success for the electoral reform movement has been Maine's adoption of ranked choice voting over the course of the past decade. While efforts to have ranked choice voting adopted in Maine date back to 2001,<sup>97</sup> it wasn't until 2016 that Maine voters approved the Maine Ranked Choice Voting Initiative, otherwise known as "Question 5," which (upon its re-confirmation in 2018)<sup>98</sup> enabled the state to enact ranked choice voting for statewide elections.

To this day, Maine is the first and only state to have adopted and implemented ranked choice voting legislation for the statewide elections of governor, the state legislature, and Congress. So far, in addition to Portland, which has conducted local-level ranked choice contests since 2010,<sup>99</sup> voters in Maine have had an opportunity to use ranked choice voting in the 2018 primaries and the 2018 general election for a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Of these elections, the 2018 gubernatorial primary presents another interesting case to study through a gender lens.

### Maine's First Woman Governor, Janet Mills

In June of 2018, Janet Mills was one of seven candidates in Maine's first ranked choice gubernatorial primary. In the first round, Mills earned 33% of voters' first choices; since this fell shy of the 50% +1 majority she would have needed to win after the first round, an instant runoff took place and the candidate who had received the fewest first-choice picks was eliminated and the ballots were counted again. After seven rounds of vote counting and redistributing, Janet Mills was declared the winner with 54% of the vote - a higher show of support than any Democratic candidate had received since the 1980s.<sup>100</sup>

Before ranked choice voting was introduced statewide in Maine, an average of 83,652 had turned up for the state's last three open-seat gubernatorial primaries in 2002, 2010, and 2014. But in 2018, more voters (126,00) turned out to vote in this primary than in any before.<sup>101</sup> This higher-than-usual turnout was not only extraordinary in its own right, but it also made for a broader show of support for the RCV-nominated candidate. In November, Janet Mills went on to be elected the state's first woman governor.

<sup>97</sup> "Ranked Choice Voting in Maine," Maine State Legislature ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

<sup>98</sup> Ranked choice voting ought to have gone into effect on January 1, 2018, but the state legislature approved a bill to delay implementation until December 2021 to review the constitutionality of ranked choice voting in Maine. Ranked choice voting supporters collected enough signatures for a veto referendum against the state bill, and in June 2018, Maine voters decided in favor of keeping ranked choice voting. The full history of ranked choice voting in Maine can be found on Ballotpedia: "Implementation of ranked choice voting in Maine," Ballotpedia ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

<sup>99</sup> "Portland: Ranked Choice Voting in Portland, Maine," FairVote ([Accessed 13 July 2020](#))

<sup>100</sup> Rich Robinson. "Ranked Choice Voting Decides Key Primaries in Maine," FairVote ([22 June 2018](#))

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

## Maine's Statewide Ranked Choice Elections in 2020

The next statewide ranked choice elections in Maine were held on July 14th.<sup>102</sup> A key race to watch was Maine's U.S. Senate Democratic primary, which featured two women, Sara Gideon and Betsy Sweet, and the first openly nonbinary person to run for the U.S. Senate, Bre Kidman.<sup>103</sup> Sara Gideon won the primary and this November, she will face the incumbent U.S. Senator Susan Collins, which has been rated by the non-partisan Cook Political Report as a tossup.<sup>104</sup>

Ranked choice voting was also used in the Republican Party's primary election for Maine U.S. House District 2. This seat is presently held by Jared Golden, the first-ever U.S. Representative elected by ranked choice voting. Candidates Adrienne Bennett, Eric Brakey, and Dale Crafts sought the nomination in a close ranked choice contest.<sup>105</sup>

A little further down the ballot, voters in Maine also had the chance to use ranked choice voting in seven state senate and house primaries on July 14th. Of the 21 candidates who filed for these races, 52% (11) were women. According to the final tally, women won in 57% (4) of these state primaries.<sup>106</sup>

## The Status of LD 1083 and Path to a Ranked Choice Presidential Election

Maine has also explored future opportunities to use ranked choice voting in presidential elections. In September 2019, Governor Mills announced that she would allow ranked choice voting to be used in presidential elections, beginning in 2020. In the governor's statement explaining her acceptance of the bill (LD 1083), she noted:

*"My experience with ranked-choice voting is that it gives voters a greater voice and encourages civility among campaigns and candidates at a time when such civility is sorely needed."*<sup>107</sup>

In June 2020, GOP leadership in Maine attempted to repeal LD 1083 with a people's veto, claiming that they had the 63,000 signatures they needed to challenge the law in November.<sup>108</sup> But on July 15, 2020, Maine Secretary of State Matt Dunlap ruled that Maine would still be the first state to use ranked choice voting in a presidential election this November, as planned.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>102</sup> "Live: Maine State Primary Election Results 2020," *The New York Times* ([Accessed 15 July 2020](#))

<sup>103</sup> "United States Senate Election in Maine 2020 (July 14)" Ballotpedia ([Accessed 14 July 2020](#))

<sup>104</sup> Emily Cochrane. "Sara Gideon Wins Democratic Nomination to Challenge Susan Collins in Maine," *The New York Times* ([Accessed 22 July 2020](#)).

<sup>105</sup> "Maine's 2nd Congressional District election, 2020 (July 14)" Ballotpedia ([Accessed 14 July 2020](#))

<sup>106</sup> "United States Senate Election in Maine 2020 (July 14)" Ballotpedia ([Accessed 14 July 2020](#))

<sup>107</sup> "Governor Mills Statement on Ranked Choice Voting for Presidential Primary and General Elections in Maine," Office of Janet T. Mills ([6 September 2019](#))

<sup>108</sup> "Maine Ranked-Choice Voting for Presidential Elections Referendum (2020)" Ballotpedia ([5 July 2020](#))

<sup>109</sup> Caitlin Andrews. "Maine to use ranked choice voting in presidential election after GOP veto effort fails," *Bangor Daily News* ([15 July 2020](#))

## **The Future of Ranked Choice Voting: Presidential Elections**

Although this report primarily tracked outcomes for women in local-level elections and state-based campaigns, the nation's appetite for reform is growing, and we may be one election cycle away from seeing ranked choice voting used broadly across the United States. According to our research, a national rollout of ranked choice voting in presidential primaries and general elections is an important next step for creating more space for women candidates to run, win, serve, and lead.

### **Single-Winner Plurality Systems Do Not Produce Consensus Nominees**

To recap a few key points we made at the start of this paper, single-winner plurality systems are not designed to produce a candidate who has earned majority support. Plurality voting systems are prone to a “spoiler effect,” in which a crowded field of similar candidates is likely to split the vote, thus enabling unrepresentative candidates to win with less than majority support. As a result, party leadership and other gatekeepers, including most major donors, are often less likely to back candidates — especially women and people of color — from running in the first place, for fear of having them damage the odds of party success if they are not deemed “likeable” or “electable” enough by all voters.

In the 2020 election cycle, Democrats were presented with a diverse slate of candidates but the large field and plurality voting rules yielded fractured results in early primaries and caucuses where women candidates jockeyed for the “women’s vote” and the now-front runner ran well-behind other candidates.

For any who recall the crowded field of candidates who sought the Republican nomination in 2016, this is a familiar story. Given what took place over the last two election cycles, we find that Democrats and Republicans alike would benefit from using ranked choice voting in future elections. As things stand now, the “all-or-nothing” single-winner plurality system we follow in the United States is failing voters in both parties. Crowded primary fields have been proven to fracture voters in both parties to the point where they (presumptively) nominate candidates who then cannot securely claim majority support. And candidates from non-major parties - who represent the views of many voters - are perennially derided for “spoiling” election outcomes.

Presidential elections ought to be designed so that the voice and will of the voters will prevail in finding the candidate who best represents them. A system that penalizes voters for “wasting” their vote by choosing their favorite out of a diverse field of candidates and permitting a single candidate to be nominated with plurality support. does not deliver a reflective democracy.

## The “Straightforward and Elegant Solution” is Ranked Choice Voting

As one can see, national-level reform is long overdue. In February, *The New York Times* editorial board endorsed ranked choice voting as the “straightforward and elegant solution” to the challenges our “all-or-nothing” single-winner plurality system creates when a large field of candidates vie for a party’s presidential nomination.<sup>110</sup> As has been argued throughout this paper, ranked choice voting can fix the deficiencies in our current electoral system that stymie our path to a true democracy where majority rules. On the merits of ranked choice voting, the *Times* editorial board notes:

*“Polls consistently show high voter satisfaction with ranked-choice voting, and it’s no surprise. By allowing voters to express their support for more than one candidate, ranked choice voting makes more votes count. By allowing voters to rank a personal favorite first, even if that candidate is unlikely to win, it eliminates the risk of “spoiler” candidates. And by encouraging voters to find something they like in multiple candidates, it fosters consensus.”*<sup>111</sup>

As we consider the merits of using ranked choice voting in presidential elections, RepresentWomen also urges readers to recall how the present system stacks against women candidates. In the leadup to the 2020 Democratic primaries, we had six well-qualified women in the running, but most discourse failed to move past whether they were “likeable” enough to garner broad support from the electorate without “spoiling” the election for other candidates in the running.<sup>112</sup>

Implementing ranked choice voting in presidential primaries and general elections ahead of 2024 would enable multiple women to run for the presidency without having to engage with the perception that they were competing against each other first and foremost to be “the woman candidate.” Finally, ranked choice voting would ensure that a party’s nominee wins with majority support. If we hope to elect a woman president in our lifetimes, this is vital.

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<sup>110</sup> The Editorial Board, “The Primaries Are Just Dumb,” *The New York Times* ([26 February 2020](#))

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>112</sup> Cynthia Richie Terrell, “Warren exits, and our hope for a woman president once again are dashed,” ([8 March 2020](#))



## **The Future of Ranked Choice Voting: Federal Legislation**

There is still work to be done to implement ranked choice voting more broadly across the United States. Federal legislation, individual state commitments, and future presidential primaries are areas to watch and get involved in to bring ranked choice voting to the forefront of voters' minds.

### **HR 4000: The Fair Representation Act**

The Fair Representation Act (HR 4000), introduced by Representative Don Beyer in July 2019, calls for sweeping electoral reform “to establish the use of ranked choice voting in elections for Representatives in Congress, to require each State with more than one Representative to establish multi-winner congressional districts, to require States to conduct congressional redistricting through independent commissions, and for other purposes.”<sup>113</sup>

### **HR 4464: The Ranked Choice Voting Act**

The Ranked Choice Voting Act (HR 4464), introduced by Representative Jamie Raskin in September 2019, would replace federal runoff elections and “establish the use of ranked choice voting in (primary, special, and general) elections for the offices of Senator and Representative in Congress, and for other purposes.”<sup>114</sup> The bill would also authorize the government to use federal funding to help states implement this change, to cover costs associated with reprogramming or replacing voting equipment (as necessary) and conducting voter education.

### **S 3340: The Voter Choice Act**

On February 27, 2020, Senator Michael Bennett (D-CO) introduced the Voter Choice Act (S 3340). The bill would provide \$40 million in federal grants to cover up to 50% of the cost for local and state governments that voluntarily choose to transition to ranked choice voting.<sup>115</sup> The earmarked money would cover the costs to ensure voting machines are equipped for ranked choice voting ballots and voter education programs.

To learn more about federal ranked choice legislation and how to take action, please turn to the end of this report, where we outline a few key opportunities to get involved with the movement.

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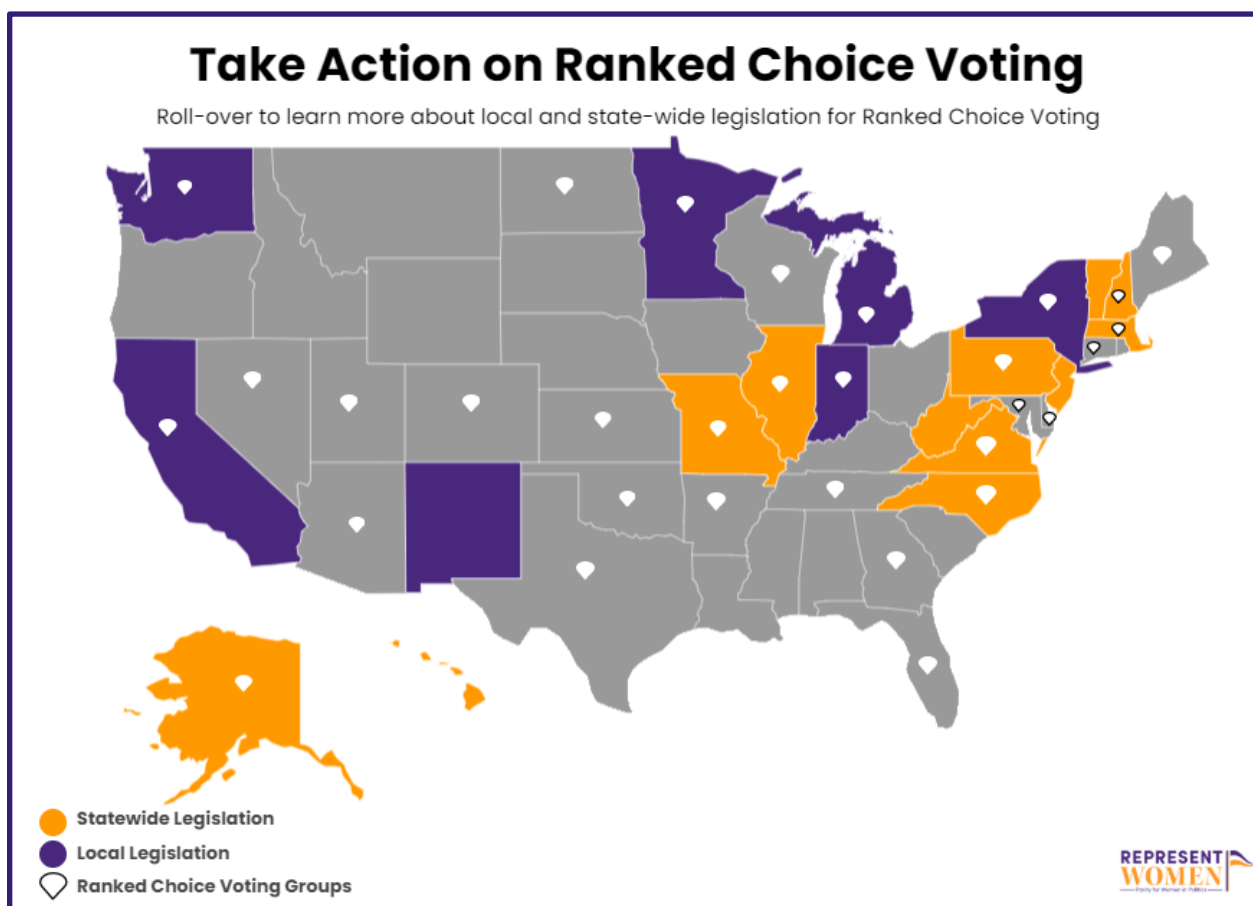
<sup>113</sup> Fair Representation Act, HR 4000, 116th Congress ([Introduced 25 July 2019](#))

<sup>114</sup> Ranked Choice Voting Act, HR 4464, 116th Congress ([Introduced 24 September 2019](#))

<sup>115</sup> “Bennet, King, Phillips Introduce Bill to Promote Ranked Choice Voting,” Official Press Release, Office of US Senator Michael Bennet ([27 February 2020](#))

## The Future of Ranked Choice Voting: Movement in the States

In the past decade, years of grassroots campaigning and growing support for ranked choice voting came to fruition with the adoption and implementation of the voting system in 19 cities and counties across ten states. Many proponents of ranked choice voting, including FairVote's co-founder and president Rob Richie, believe that ranked choice voting is an election cycle away from being widely recognized and accepted as an electoral alternative up and down the ballot.<sup>116</sup>



Source: RepresentWomen and FairVote <sup>117</sup>

More municipalities are slated to implement ranked choice voting in the near future, with some cities and states even expanding their existing use of ranked choice voting following much success. There are currently 62 bills in state legislatures which propose implementing ranked choice voting at some level statewide or permitting localities to adopt ranked choice voting.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Russell Berman. "A Step Toward Blowing Up the Presidential-Voting System," The Atlantic ([20 September 2019](#))

<sup>117</sup> This map is a still from our interactive RCV Action map ([Updated 20 July 2020](#))

<sup>118</sup> To learn more about legislation advancing ranked choice voting, please refer to FairVote's legislation tracker. "Ranked Choice Voting in States," FairVote ([Accessed 15 July 2020](#))

Voters in [Alaska](#), [Arkansas](#), and [North Dakota](#) will have the chance to approve final-four voting — a powerful combination of nonpartisan primaries with ranked-choice voting for the top four finishers in the fall — for state and federal elections. RCV will also be on the ballot in [Massachusetts](#), where more than 2,000 volunteers recently successfully completed the first online petition gathering drive to qualify for a ballot in the country's history. [Florida](#) could improve its standing, too, where voters will be asked to approve a top-two nonpartisan primary system.<sup>119</sup>

Local and national campaigns advocating for ranked choice voting also include efforts in 32 states and the District of Columbia including: Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, and Wisconsin. Here are a few highlights:

## **Maine**

In 2016, Maine voters passed a ballot measure and reaffirmed it in 2018 to become the first state to pass legislation implementing ranked choice voting for general elections at the federal level, along with state and federal primary elections. Maine's legislature then passed a law to have Maine use ranked choice voting in presidential elections, both in general elections and post-2020 primary elections. Additionally, Portland, Maine which has been using ranked choice voting for mayoral elections since 2011, voted in March 2020 to expand ranked choice voting to all city council and school board elections.

## **Massachusetts**

Massachusetts has a long history of using ranked choice voting at the local level, including Cambridge since 1941 and recent charter wins for it in Amherst and Easthampton. Looking forward, voters in Massachusetts will be voting on ranked choice voting in November of 2020 after Voter Choice for Massachusetts collected and submitted 136,000 signatures which the Secretary of the Commonwealth has now certified and approved. If adopted, the ballot measure would enact ranked choice voting for the following primary and general elections; state executive officials, state legislators and federal congressional representatives.<sup>120</sup> Follow [Voter Choice Massachusetts](#) to stay up to date on how to get involved to ensure it passes in November.

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<sup>119</sup> Tyler Fisher. "State by state, electoral reform is happening — but not fast enough," *The Fulcrum* ([9 July 2020](#))

<sup>120</sup> "Voter Choice for Massachusetts 2020 Submits Record-Setting Number of Signatures for Ranked Choice Voting Ballot Initiative," *Voter Choice 2020* ([June 17 2020](#))

## Minnesota

Founded in 1996, FairVote Minnesota has a long track record of success building strong coalitions for voting system reform that are reflected in adoption of RCV in Minneapolis in 2006, St. Paul in 2009, and St. Louis Park in 2018. Ranked choice voting is now being considered in additional communities including: Bloomington, Minnetonka, and Rochester. Before the COVID crisis disrupted the legislative session in Minnesota in the spring of 2020, a ranked choice voting local options bill (HF 983, SF 3380) had gained widespread support and was poised to pass on the House floor.

## New Mexico

Voters in Santa Fe adopted ranked choice voting by a wide margin in 2008 but it wasn't implemented until 2018 after an order from a district judge in New Mexico. The city council in Las Cruces voted unanimously to adopt ranked choice voting in 2018. Three women were elected to the council in 2019 - the first election conducted with ranked choice voting - making it majority female for the first time. Now more cities are starting to consider adopting ranked choice voting, including Albuquerque. Given these recent changes, we estimate that New Mexico is likely to become another hotspot for ranked choice voting in the coming years.

## New York

In 2019 the New York City Charter Revision Commission was created to evaluate prospective amendments to the city's charter, including the implementation of ranked choice voting in all primary and special elections for city offices. A copy of the city's assessment of ranked choice voting (and other proposed revisions) can be found [here](#). In November 2019, New York City voted to adopt ranked choice elections for all special elections and all primary elections, including for mayor, starting in 2021; as the largest city in the country, the results will be crucial to the future of ranked choice voting and dramatically increases the number of voters using ranked choice voting.

## Virginia

In April 2020, Virginia's governor signed a bill which grants local governing bodies autonomy over the decision to conduct elections by ranked choice voting. The bill passed in the state house with bipartisan support from 53 Democrats and 10 Republicans.<sup>121</sup> Arlington County may be the first to act, as local parties regularly use ranked choice voting in party-run primaries.

This year, Virginia Republicans used ranked choice voting in several party run congressional primaries, including the 10th Congressional district primary. Aliscia Andrews, a retired Marine, won the nomination with 57% of the vote beating out her three male competitors. Andrews will face incumbent Democrat Representative

<sup>121</sup> "Roll Call: VA HB506", *Legiscan* ([Accessed 22 June 2020](#))

Jennifer Wexton on November 3rd.<sup>122</sup> Republican use and support of ranked choice voting suggests promise for higher level adoption of the voting system.

## Utah

Utah is a state where both Democrats and Republicans are embracing ranked choice voting, with both parties using it at their online state conventions in 2020. Legislation to advance ranked choice voting has regularly won bipartisan support, including in 2018, 2019 and 2020. The 2020 legislation congratulated Vineyard and Payson for their success including ranked choice voting in 2019, and a number of additional cities are considering joining them for using ranked choice voting in 2021. The state may also entertain new legislation to use ranked choice voting for more state and federal elections.

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<sup>122</sup> Josh Janney. "Aliscia Andrews wins Republican nomination for 10th Congressional District," *The Winchester Star* ([22 June 2020](#))

## Questions About Ranked Choice Voting

While there are many proponents of ranked choice voting, there remain questions around the voting system. Below, we have addressed some of the most common questions raised about the implementation of ranked choice voting.

### Does it cost more?

Local elections often require runoffs before a winner can be declared, which not only leads to lower and less diverse voter turnout, but also costs municipalities more money over time.<sup>123</sup> Ranked choice voting allows for instant runoffs, thus eliminating the need for multiple rounds of elections, while saving localities, taxpayers, and candidates money. This said, while any new system would involve some costs, cities are more likely to experience net savings by implementing ranked choice voting.

Consider for example the case of New York City. In the 2019 New York City campaign to adopt ranked choice voting, the New York Independent Budget Office estimated that the implementation of ranked choice voting could cost between \$100,000 to \$500,000 upfront, to cover re-programming the voting machines that are presently in use. However, the city would ultimately save up to \$20 million every election cycle by eliminating the need for runoff elections.<sup>124</sup>

In 2018, the Fiscal Policy Institute conducted a study on ranked choice voting that evaluated the costs and benefits of its implementation. They concluded that, even in localities where there would be an additional cost to cover new voting equipment, adopting ranked choice voting would prove favorable in the long-run, given how much higher future savings are likely to be, compared to short-term costs.<sup>125</sup>

Therefore, while it is true that municipalities may need to spend some money upfront to cover voter education programs, programming and equipment, the cost is often less than that of a runoff election, not to mention the fact that the costs associated with ranked choice voting are often diminishing or non-recurring costs over time. And moving forward, federal legislation could also help to offset the cost of adopting ranked choice voting, if it is passed. Senator Michael Bennett's bill, the Voter Choice Act (S 3340), for example, would provide municipalities with grants to cover 50% of the costs associated with implementing ranked choice voting.

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<sup>123</sup> "Benefits of RCV," FairVote ([Accessed 1 July 2020](#))

<sup>124</sup> "Eliminate the Need for Citywide Run-Off Elections," New York Independent Budget Office ([22 October 2019](#))

<sup>125</sup> David Dyssegaard Kallick and Jonas Shaende. "Ranked Choice Voting: Saving Money While Improving Elections," Fiscal Policy Institute ([28 June 2018](#))



## **Do results take longer?**

Delays in reporting come from the usual manner in which states administer elections, not the voting system. In Maine, for example, elections are handled on the municipal level, rather than by the state; in a largely-rural state with a few hundred municipalities, it can therefore take a week or more for the results to reach the capital. Maine also prohibits electronic ballot counting, which also has an effect on the time it takes to report election results. As FairVote once reported, this is unlikely to be the case in other states, where elections are run at the county-level and results may be transmitted electronically.<sup>126</sup>

## **Is it difficult to administer?**

At first glance, ranked choice voting may seem to involve significant changes to the election administration system. However, all voters need to do is rank the candidates in order of preference, which many Americans already do intuitively before they cast their ballot. The most time-consuming aspect of implementing ranked choice is educating the electorate, but there are already volunteers at polling places ready to help voters learn the new system. Educational materials can be distributed online or in conjunction with voter registration materials.

A 2004 survey of voters at their polling places in San Francisco<sup>127</sup> found that 86% of people who showed up to vote understood ranked choice voting to some degree (52% understood ranked choice voting perfectly well and another 35% understood ranked choice voting fairly well). Only 11% did not understand entirely, and 3% did not understand ranked choice voting at all.

And then more recently, exit polling in Maine 2018 showed that more than 74% of people said ranked choice voting was either somewhat or very easy, with only 10% of voters saying that it was either somewhat or very hard.<sup>128</sup> And then exit polling done by FairVote New Mexico found 94% of those who voted in the 2018 Santa Fe mayoral and city council elections were either “very satisfied” or “somewhat satisfied” with their first use of ranked choice voting.<sup>129</sup>

## **What about inactive ballots?**

Inactive ballots occur when ballots “exhaust” all their votes before a candidate reaches a majority. For example, inactive ballots in Oakland, Pierce County, San Francisco, and

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<sup>126</sup> Rich Robinson. “Ranked choice voting doesn’t cause counting delays,” FairVote ([13 June 2018](#))

<sup>127</sup> Francis Neely, Leisel Blash, and Corey Cook. “An Assessment of Ranked-Choice Voting in the San Francisco 2004 Election,” Public Research Institute: San Francisco State University ([May 2005](#))

<sup>128</sup> Michael Shepherd. “Exit Polling Finds Narrow Majority of Mainers Back Expansion of Ranked Choice Voting,” Bangor Daily News ([12 November 2018](#))

<sup>129</sup> “Santa Fe Voters Support Ranked Choice Voting and Have High Confidence in City Elections,” FairVote New Mexico ([15 March 2018](#))

San Leandro ended with the winner receiving less than 50% of the votes in the final round.<sup>130</sup> According to FairVote, however, the rate of inactive votes in a ranked choice election (around 12%) is still not as high as they would be in a traditional runoff, where voter turnout decreases by approximately 23%.<sup>131</sup> It also has been lower in recent elections where voters can rank more candidates. Evidence gathered by David Kimball and Joseph Anthony further reinforces the impact that ranked choice voting has on voter turnout, as they found that ranked choice voting in general elections experiences a 10-point increase in voter turnout.<sup>132</sup> This again, in turn, results in comparatively lower rates of inactive votes in ranked choice contests.

## Does it have bipartisan support?

The movement to adopt ranked choice voting in America has long been a bipartisan effort. As ranked choice voting proponents Katherine Gehl and Michael Porter remind us in their new book [\*The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy\*](#), Senator John McCain recorded a robocall urging Alaskans to support a ranked choice voting ballot measure in 2002, stating that ranked choice voting would “lead to good government, because voters will elect leaders who have the support of a majority.”<sup>133</sup> That same year, State Senator of Illinois, Barack Obama, sponsored a state senate bill that would have implemented ranked choice voting for use in state and congressional primaries.<sup>134</sup>

Since the start of the year, the Utah Republican Party, the Minnesota Democratic-Farm-Labor Party, the Indiana Republican Party, and Butler County, Iowa Democratic Party have all adopted ranked choice voting for internal party elections.<sup>135</sup> Despite the wide spectrum of political beliefs held by these parties, all have recognized the partisan-neutral benefits of ranked choice voting. In the words of Utah County Clerk Amelia Powers Gardner, adopting ranked choice voting isn’t a partisan issue because “ranked choice voting makes elections better, faster, and cheaper,”<sup>136</sup> meaning this is an important reform that politicians should be able to agree on, regardless of party.

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<sup>130</sup> Craig M. Burnett and Vladimir Kogan. “Ballot (and voter) “exhaustion” under Instant Runoff Voting: An examination of four ranked-choice elections”, *Electoral Studies*, Volume 37 ([March 2015](#)): 41-49

<sup>131</sup> “RCV Elections and Runoffs: Exhausted Votes vs Exhausted Voters in the Bay Area”, FairVote ([19 October 2016](#))

<sup>132</sup> David Kimball and Joseph Anthony, “Voter Participation with Ranked Choice Voting in the United States,” University of Missouri-St. Louis ([October 2016](#))

<sup>133</sup> Katherine M. Gehl and Michael E. Porter. *The Politics Industry: How Political Innovation Can Break Partisan Gridlock and Save Our Democracy* ([23 June 2020](#)): 127

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Adam Ginsburg. “Regardless of Party, Ranked Choice Voting Scores Local Wins,” FairVote ([10 April 2019](#))

<sup>136</sup> Emily Risch. “FairVote Honors Utahns as Champions of Democracy,” FairVote ([10 December 2019](#))

## Conclusion

Dissatisfaction with modern democratic institutions is on the rise, globally. Earlier this year, researchers at the Bennett Institute's Centre for the Future of Democracy found that democratic dissatisfaction is higher in countries that use majoritarian, (single-winner plurality) voting systems than it is in countries that follow more consensus-based, proportionally representative systems. Worryingly, these researchers also found that discontent is trending highest in the United States, where respondents were found to be 34% less satisfied with the performance of their government than they were thirty years ago.<sup>137</sup>

According to the Centre's analysis, democratic dissatisfaction also seems to coincide strongly with rising polarization between major political parties in countries such as the United States. In its "winner-take-all" (single-winner plurality) system, the U.S.'s two-party model incentivizes people to split into opposing "camps" that are decreasingly likely to seek compromise with one another.<sup>138</sup> This, in turn, leaves people feeling increasingly voiceless and frustrated when the "other" party holds power, thus severely undermining the legitimacy of U.S. democratic institutions. Researchers and other political observers in the United States voice similar concerns.

In January, a senior fellow with New America's Political Reform program, Lee Drutman argued that plurality voting in the United States is locking the country into a "two-party doom loop," in which politicians and voters are rewarded for "all-or-nothing hyper-partisanship," but at the cost of alienating Americans from one another and from their government.<sup>139</sup> In place of the current system, Drutman advocates for a multi-winner proportionally representative model for the United States, or, as we've outlined in this paper — a fair representation system (multi-member districts with ranked choice voting).

As we have discussed, fair representation voting is a key component of democracy reform in the United States. With the current, single-winner plurality system, women and people of color are often at a disadvantage, and may even be counselled against running in the first place. But in multi-winner ranked choice elections, party leaders are incentivized to recruit multiple women and people of color to run, while voters are empowered to state their preferences on Election Day without having to worry about splitting votes. In a multi-winner ranked choice system, representatives win seats proportionally and/or based on how the voters rank each candidate, and the results are much more likely to be representative.

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<sup>137</sup> Foa, R.S., Klassen, A., Slade, M., Rand, A. and R. Collins. 2020. "The Global Satisfaction with Democracy Report 2020." Centre for the Future of Democracy ([Accessed 9 July 2020](#)): 18-19

<sup>138</sup> Ibid

<sup>139</sup> Lee Drutman. "The two-party system is killing our democracy," Vox ([23 January 2020](#))

Ranked choice voting has been used in the United States since 1912. U.S. cities, including New York and Cincinnati, used multi-winner ranked choice voting until 1962, when only Cambridge was left using the system. But in the 1990s, election reformers found their spark again out of a desire to “resuscitate” American democracy and began pushing for proportional representation systems in the United States once more. In 2002, San Francisco adopted single-winner ranked choice voting for use in municipal elections; additional cities have since followed.

In 2016, RepresentWomen (then Representation2020), wrote the precursor to this report, *The Impact of Ranked Choice Voting on Representation*, to track how well women, people of color, and women of color fared in 100+ ranked choice elections that took place in the California Bay Area between 2004 and 2014. The team found that women (42%), people of color (60%), and women of color (22%) were more likely to win in ranked choice elections than in a plurality election. As of 2016, women held 59% of the 53 Bay Area offices elected by ranked choice voting, and people of color held 60%.

Four years later, our research shows that ranked choice voting has continued to have a positive impact on the representation of women, people of color, and women of color in the United States. Over the last decade, 19 cities and counties used ranked choice voting to select local-level officials. In 156 RCV-qualifying elections, a total 227 individual seats were contested. In these elections, 34% of all candidates were women and 35% of these women won. Of the women who won, 38% were women of color. Overall, women won 48% of the individual seats up for election. At the start of 2020, half of all mayors (46% as of April) and nearly half (49%) of all city council members elected in ranked choice contests are women.

In the Bay Area, 75 of all RCV-qualifying elections had at least three candidates in the running between 2010 and 2019; 12 of which were mayoral contests and 55 city council races. Of the mayoral contests, women won 58% of the time; in the city council races, women won 55% of all contests. Of the 53 RCV-elected seats in the California Bay Area, in 2020, women hold 51% (27), people of color hold 64% (34), and women of color hold 28% (15). Overall, members of each group are better represented in ranked choice cities than neighboring Bay Area cities.

As more cities — and now states — begin adopting and implementing ranked choice voting, RepresentWomen will continue to track outcomes for women and people of color. It is our goal to discover and share the “best practices” that help more women run, win, serve, and lead in this country, and so far, the results in ranked choice cities have been encouraging. Our research indicates that, in ranked choice elections, women *win*. Whereas single-winner plurality systems are more likely to protect (largely white and male) incumbents and discourage women and people of color from running in the first place, we have found that ranked choice elections can mitigate structural barriers to representation.

Specifically, ranked choice voting: 1) eliminates split voting and spoiler elections, 2) incentivizes positive campaigning, 3) rewards issue-focused campaigns, 4) are more cost-effective (for both candidates and municipalities), and 5) produce representative outcomes. In the United States, elected representatives receive their mandate to govern from the people. Whereas our single-winner plurality voting system restricts voter choice and falls short of that goal, ranked choice voting would help to ensure that all voters can vote according to their preferences, thus yielding outcomes that are more likely to reflect the will of the people.

In 2020, the nation's appetite for reform is growing, and we may be one election cycle away from seeing ranked choice voting used broadly across the United States. And according to our research, a national rollout of ranked choice voting would create more opportunities for women candidates to run, win, serve, and lead. As an organization that cares about identifying the systemic barriers — and solutions — to women's representation, we have found that the movement to adopt ranked choice voting is a natural home for our advocacy.

As an organization that works both with women's organizations and electoral reform advocates, it is our goal at RepresentWomen to help connect our audience with this movement at the national, state, and local levels. The last several sections of this report tracked the future of ranked choice voting, from presidential elections, to pending federal legislation, to movements within the states that are picking up incredible momentum as we near the elections this fall. For a quick guide on how to get involved and share the resources we have pooled together, please turn to the next and final section of this report.

## Get Involved in The Movement for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV)

Whether you are experienced in politics or a newcomer to the conversation there are plenty of ways that you can get involved with the work for ranked choice voting:

- **Share RepresentWomen's 2020 RCV report with legislators** and ask them to support ranked choice voting — if you find that your representatives are interested, [we can help](#) provide sample legislative language and the [Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center](#) can help with implementation questions.
- **Check out our [RCV Action Map](#) (in progress)** to find local and state groups near you that are working on ranked choice voting, then sign up to get involved and help to amplify their work on social media platforms.
- **Contact your member of Congress** and ask them to support:
  - HR 4000, Fair Representation Act**, which combines ranked choice voting and multi-winner districts to elect all members of the U.S. House.
    - Find your representative and ask them to co-sponsor HR 4000 [here](#).
  - HR 4464, The Ranked Choice Voting Act**, which calls for ranked choice voting in all House and Senate elections.
    - Find your representative and ask them to co-sponsor HR 4464 [here](#).
  - S 3340, the Voter Choice Act**, which provides federal grants to cover costs for states to transition to ranked choice voting.
    - See if your Senator co-sponsors this bill [here](#).
    - If not, email them to co-sponsor S.3340, [using this prompt](#).
- **Educate members of your community** about the benefits of ranked choice voting with some of the following resources:
  - RepresentWomen's RCV [handouts](#) and [slideshow](#)
  - NBCLX's [video](#) and Hasan Minhaj's [video](#) on RCV and U.S. democracy
- **If you are an educator**, check out the [Ranked Choice Voting Toolkit](#) from the Ranked Choice Voting Resource Center.
- **If you work with groups that advise and prepare women to run for office**, use our resources to equip women candidates to become agents of change by including electoral reform in their campaign platforms.
- **Hold a ranked choice voting election** with your friends, family, or co-workers using FairVote's [RankIt App](#) to learn more about how it works.



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