



Rank the District

Grow Democracy DC
Civic Education Fund

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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13 Days Left: What to Watch in Washington, DC's First Ranked Choice Voting Election

June 3, 2026 – This primary season, DC voters are using ranked choice voting for the first time. Ranked choice voting passed with 73% of the vote in 2024 as part of Initiative 83, which also included a provision to let independents vote in DC's primary elections.

Ranked choice voting experts available for interviews include:

- [Lisa D.T. Rice](#) - Project Lead, [Grow Democracy DC Civic Education Fund](#)
- [Kenyatta Smith](#) - Engagement & Outreach Director, Grow Democracy DC Civic Education Fund
- [Deb Otis](#) - Senior Director of Research and Policy at FairVote. [FairVote](#) has studied ranked choice voting elections since 1992, and is an expert on RCV implementation and uses across the country.

Here are ways ranked choice voting is impacting the Washington, DC election, as well as additional data and resources on RCV as you cover the primary:

1. DC candidates and organizations are quickly adapting to RCV, including with “cross-endorsements.”

With RCV, voters are able to express support for several candidates. This encourages candidates to demonstrate areas of common ground with their opponents, in order to earn second and third choices from voters ranking those rivals first. This type of collaboration is almost impossible to imagine in a “choose-one” election.

So far, several pairs of candidates have “cross-endorsed” each other in DC; these candidate pairs encouraged their supporters to rank them first and second. This includes the [Ward 1 council race](#), the [At-Large council](#) race, and the [special election](#) for At-Large council.

There are several examples of local unions, organizations, and elected officials endorsing multiple candidates – like [Jews United for Justice](#), [DMV New Liberals](#), [Greater Greater Washington](#), the [Washington Teachers Union](#), and others.

2. Voters have a more powerful voice, because they can still weigh in between the strongest candidates if their favorite can't win. For example, in last year's New

York City primary, 243,808 voters ranked a non-frontrunner first but had their vote count for one of the finalist candidates because of RCV.

In RCV elections, more candidates can run without playing “spoiler” or splitting the vote with ideologically or demographically similar candidates. In choose-one elections, candidates are often pushed out of the race.

With RCV, voters can rank their preferences without fear of wasting their vote – and know that if their first choice can’t win, their vote will simply count for their backup choice.

3. Ranked choice voting elects majority winners.

To win, candidates build a majority coalition – which includes both deep (1st-choice) and broad (backup-choice) support. Candidates are rewarded for making positive connections with more voters, even if it’s as those voters’ 2nd or 3rd choice.

For DC, this is a significant change – dating back to 2012, every citywide office and council seat (except Wards 4 and 6) has seen at least one candidate win the Democratic primary without a majority.

4. Ranked choice voting benefits consensus-building candidates who engage with the system, not any ideology.

Ranked choice voting is completely party- and ideology-neutral, and candidates across the political spectrum have run strong RCV campaigns and won RCV elections.

There is extensive evidence that voters follow candidate cues on how to complete their RCV ballot, and candidates help both themselves and their supporters if they encourage voters to rank multiple candidates. Many Washington, DC campaigns and organizations have done so.

5. Everywhere it’s used, voters like and understand ranked choice voting.

From New York City to Alaska, [exit surveys](#) consistently show that voters understand and like RCV. The median rate of valid ballots in RCV elections is 99.8%.

Finally, here’s what voters should know about ranked choice voting:

- Vote for your favorite candidate 1st.
- Rank your backup choices – 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th.
- You can rank as many candidates as you like, up to five – only rank candidates you support!
- Remember, ranking gives your vote more power. And there are no downsides to ranking more candidates – ranking backup choices never hurts your favorite.
- If your first choice loses, your vote simply moves to your next choice.
- The winner always gets over 50% support.

And here’s a full description of how votes are counted in a ranked choice voting election:

Voters can rank candidates in order of preference: first, second, third and so on.

If a candidate receives more than half of the first choices, that candidate wins, just like in any other election. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated. Voters who ranked that candidate “number 1” will have their vote count for their next choice. This repeats until a candidate wins with more than 50% of the votes.

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Additional Resources:

- [Rank the District](#)
 - [How to rank your ballot](#)
 - [Rank the District videos](#)
- [DC Board of Elections Ranked Choice Voting page](#)
- FairVote:
 - [Where RCV is used](#)
 - [RCV exit polling](#)
 - [How ranked choice voting is impacting the Washington, DC primary](#)
 - [How to display RCV results](#)
 - [Ranked Choice Voting Candidate Strategy Guide](#)
 - [Impact of cross-endorsements in ranked choice voting elections](#)
- [The 51st/Bolts Magazine](#): DC gears up for first ranked-choice election with citywide voter education effort
- [DC News Now](#): Ward 1 council candidates cross-endorse each other
- [Washingtonian](#): Your guide to ranked choice voting in DC primaries
- [Ben's Chili Bowl ranked choice voting explainer video](#)
- [Outvote DC](#): Rank the Divas